

Board holds line on school taxes

Written by MARK JAEGER

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Declining property values prevent a more substantial tax reduction

If it wasn't for the vagaries of the local real-estate market, property owners in the Northern Ozaukee School District would see a significant drop in their school taxes under the 2012-13 budget approved by the School Board last week.

The spending plan includes expenses of slightly more than \$14 million, but \$4.2 million of that amount is linked to the reimbursed costs for operating the district's charter school, Wisconsin Virtual Learning.

The budget authorized district spending of \$9,897,144.

Business Manager Julie Wicker walked board members and the lone district resident who attended the public hearing through the components of the budget.

One of the crucial factors in determining the tax impact of the budget is outside the district's control — an average decline of property values of 4.8%, according to figures provided by the Wisconsin Department of Revenue, Wicker said.

Although the school tax levy dropped about 3%, she said the district tax rate will rise about 22 cents per \$1,000 of equalized valuation — to \$10.69 per \$1,000.

Due to the decreased valuations, however, the average school tax burden is still expected to fall, according to Wicker.

A home valued at \$200,000 last year is now valued at \$190,400, according to the equalized valuation provided by the state.

With last year's school tax rate of \$10.47 per \$1,000, the owner of that property faced a tax bill of \$2,094 last year, Wicker said. With a tax rate of \$10.69 per \$1,000 for the new budget, the school taxes on the reduced value of that same home will be approximately \$2,036.

That would result in a \$58 drop, Wicker said.

"If our average valuation had remained steady, the tax rate for this budget would have been in the area of \$10.16 per \$1,000," Supt. Blake Peuse said.

The budget included adjusted enrollment numbers showing 836 students. An earlier report showed an enrollment of 860, but officials said that number mistakenly counted children in the preschool and 4-year-old kindergarten programs as full-time students.

With no objections raised to the plan, the board approved a tax levy of \$5,332,941, with additional support from state aids of \$2,864,395. That state aid figure is about \$282,000 higher than originally estimated.

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Board member Rick Hamm cast the only vote against the budget and levy, but made no comments on the reasons for his opposition.