

Tax rate climbs 6.1% in PW-S school budget

Written by Bill Schanen IV
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But drop in district's equalized valuation expected to hold increase on most residents' bills to \$40

Most Port Washington-Saukville School District residents will see their school taxes increase by at least \$40, according to 2010-11 budget approved by the School Board Monday.

The \$14.3 million levy represents an increase of \$356,130 (2.6%) over last school year.

That will result in a 6.1% increase in the tax rate, which is \$9.44 per \$1,000 of equalized valuation. Last school year's rate of \$8.90 was 54 cents less.

But the impact of the rate increase will be mitigated by a decrease in the equalized value of all property in the district.

For instance, if the values of homes in the district remained the same as last year, the owner of a \$175,000 house would pay \$94 more in school taxes under the new tax rate.

But property values in the district decreased by 3.3%. The impact the school tax rate will have on individual property owners depends on how much the value of property in their city, village or town decreased in relation to the district average.

Property values in the small portion of the Town of Grafton that is in the district decreased by only .2%, which means that these property owners will see the largest school tax increase — \$91 for a \$175,000 home.

But Town of Saukville residents living in the School District will see their school tax bills decrease by nearly \$49, presuming they own homes valued at \$175,000, because they experienced the largest decrease in equalized value — more than 8.6%.

Other communities in the district, their decrease in value and the estimated tax increase on a \$175,000 home as calculated by school officials are:

- City of Port Washington, -3.27%, \$40.
- Village of Saukville, -2.49, \$53.
- Town of Port Washington, -4.65%, \$17.

The School District, which is taxing the full amount allowed under its levy limit, was able to balance this year's budget without eliminating educational programs, laying off teachers or increasing class sizes beyond internal standards.

In addition, the district did not use reserve funds to balance the budget.

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The largest expenditure, which totals \$29.7 million, is wages and benefits, which will cost \$21.7 million this school year.

Among the key factors influencing the budget is the increase in per-pupil state aid, which is frozen at last year's amount of \$200 per student, and a slight increase in enrollment.