

City starts reviewing budget with no tax hike

Written by Kristyn Halbig Ziehm
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The Port Washington Common Council was expected to review the proposed 2011 budget for the first time Wednesday night.

The \$8.7 million proposed general fund budget reflects an increase of 2.38% from this year's budget, City Administrator Mark Grams said.

To support the budget, the tax levy would be \$4.89 million, an increase of .37%, he said. The tax rate needed to raise the levy would be virtually the same as this year — \$6.03 per \$1,000 assessed valuation.

"People shouldn't see an increase in taxes from the city," Grams said. "If they do, it should only be a cent or two."

That's because the difference in tax rates amounts to hundredths of a cent per \$1,000 valuation, he said.

If the proposed budget is adopted as recommended, a house assessed at \$200,000 will pay \$1,205.56 in city taxes for next year. This year, taxes on that house were \$1,205.67, Grams said.

Although he doesn't have all the figures in yet, Grams estimated that city taxpayers will see their overall property tax bill increasing by about 15 cents per \$1,000.

The tax rate for the Port Washington-Saukville School District is expected to increase by about 22 cents per \$1,000, Grams said, while the rate for Milwaukee Area Technical College will decrease about seven cents.

But, he said, he expects Ozaukee County's tax rate to be stable or to decrease slightly. He's not sure what will happen with the state tax rate or the state school tax credit.

The proposed 2011 City of Port Washington budget meets the city's goal of keeping the tax rate stable while providing residents with the same level of services as in the past, Grams said.

As agreed earlier this year, the budget maintains the city's shared-ride taxi service and other municipal services at their current levels, he said.

The only exception is for the ambulance, which will become a paramedic service, Grams said. The increased level of service is expected to cost the city \$33,000, but that will be paid through increased fees.

"Other than that, what you've got now is what you're getting next year," Grams said. "To be able to do that and keep the tax rate stable is quite an accomplishment."

A public hearing on the proposed 2011 budget will be held at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 16, during the Common Council meeting.