

Hartford Jt. 1 taxpayers to see tax cut for 8th straight year

Joint 1

Public approves 2018-19 school district budget at annual meeting

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HARTFORD — For the eighth straight year property owners within the Hartford Joint 1 School District should see a decrease in the amount of money they pay in taxes to the district after action taken Tuesday night by district residents at the annual district meeting.

A small crowd turned out for the meeting, but they approved the school district's proposed 2018-19 budget that calls for a small decrease in the taxes district property owners will pay per thousand. The budget, which still needs the Board of Education's final approval after they receive more financial information from the state calls for a drop from about \$5.99 per thousand in 2017-18 to about \$5.98 per thousand for the 2018-19 budget year.

According to information provided by the school

district, the owner of a \$200,000 home paid \$1,198 in taxes to the district for 2017-18 and will pay slightly less for 2018-19 of about \$1,196 — a decrease of about \$2.

“The district total levy for the 2018-19 school year will be \$9,997,988 compared with the levy of \$9,788,739 for 2017-18,” said District Director of Business Services John Stellmacher. “But we are anticipating a larger drop after a significant increase in fair market values and new construction in the city of Hartford over the past year.”

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From left, Greg Erickson, Don Pridemore and Mark Smits listen to John Stellmacher present the budget Tuesday evening during the Hartford Joint 1 School Board meeting in Hartford. **John Ehлке/Daily News**

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Stellmacher said the balanced budget being proposed includes a 0 percent base wage increase for teaching staff but nearly \$283,000 in merit pay increases for teaching staff. These increases were approved in March.

“With research showing that highly effective teachers are the biggest factor in student success, we’ve invested a record amount for our District in high quality professional development,” Stellmacher said.

In an executive summary of the budget Superintendent Mark Smits said the preliminary budget is approved at the annual meeting in September before adopting the final budget in October once all of the state factors and student count are known.

“Our spending per student has increased by 1.17 percent per year over the last 12 years for a total of 14.9 percent. Inflation over the same period has been

He said the district continues to use the Act 10 Tools effectively.

“Our average health insurance renewal the past 7 years has been under 2 percent. We have a rate guarantee for an under 2 percent maximum increase for 2019-20,” Stellmacher said. “The district has been able to accomplish this through purchasing power in the Waukesha County Area Schools Health Cooperative and through competitive bidding. We also have a highly engaged staff and robust wellness program that emphasizes healthy lifestyles and consumerism. Our teaching staff has a base employee contribution rate of 21 percent toward their health insurance as we’ve worked to model benefits closer to the private sector.”

Stellmacher said stability in health insurance rates has allowed the district to invest in merit pay, small elementary class sizes, facility maintenance, and high quality professional development.

29.5 percent. This year the district is spending \$2.9 million less than we would have we increased our spending by inflation over the last 12 years,” Stellmacher said. “We remain one of the most frugal school districts in the state.”

Stellmacher said on Oct. 15 the district expects to receive final budget numbers from the state and on Oct. 30 the board is then expected to adopt the budget with the final numbers.



John Stellmacher, left, speaks with Greg Erickson concerning the budget Tuesday evening during the board of education meeting for the Hartford Joint 1 School District in Hartford. **John Ehlke/Daily News**