

School Board approves slightly higher tax levy at 1.04

Written by Wauneta Breeze
Wednesday, 25 September 2013 18:58 -

By Sheri Hink-Wagner

The Wauneta Breeze

The Wauneta-Palisade Public Schools Board held two budget hearings at their September meeting on Tuesday, Sept. 17. At the end of the night, they approved a tax levy of 1.04, up .028768 from their 2012 tax asking of 1.011232.

The 2013 tax rate includes 1.02 for the general fund and .02 for the special building fund. The 2013 total personal and real property tax requirement is \$3,183,083.81. The school board is asking for \$374,083.81 more this year than last.

Only one member of the public, Mick Majors, attended the budget hearings last Tuesday. Majors asked the school board to reconsider their tax asking for 2013.

During the public forum Majors told the school board, "I believe the district needs to address the issues I've been saying for years. How can the tax payers afford to have two facilities to heat, to cool and to staff 12 months out of the year? I believe you can provide the same education in one facility."

Majors went on to reiterate that he knew the changes he proposed were not easy decisions to make, "I know it's not easy, you shouldn't expect it to be easy."

School Board approves slightly higher tax levy at 1.04

Written by Wauneta Breeze

Wednesday, 25 September 2013 18:58 -

School board members acknowledged Majors' recommendations, saying that the possibility of closing one of the attendance centers is "looked at every year."

School board members were quick to point out that the district's state aid has gone down drastically in recent years, resulting in the necessity of raising the tax levy.

After discussion, the school board determined the proposed tax asking was needed to support the school in the coming year. Superintendent Randy Geier stated that 75-80 percent of the school's budget is payroll and related expenses. Board members also expressed that the national health care law has the potential to raise the district's health care costs substantially.

The proposed tax levy was passed unanimously.

2013-2014 Budget passed

The 2013-2014 budget of expenditures for the Wauneta-Palisade district was passed during the school board meeting.

The approved budget totaled \$5,290,181.00. Line items in the budget summary included \$4,532,000 for the general fund, \$56,071 depreciation, \$150,000 for activities, \$231,500 in the lunch fund and \$320,610 for the special building fund.

Board members also approved an additional 2 percent allowable growth, which gives the school board the authority to spend 2 percent more than last year's budget if there is money available.

The school board approved Superintendent Geier as a fiscal agent for state and federal funds,

School Board approves slightly higher tax levy at 1.04

Written by Wauneta Breeze
Wednesday, 25 September 2013 18:58 -

allowing him to sign paperwork for state and federal funding.

A chart summarizing the school's budget, tax levy and state aid for the past five years is included in this issue.

New school bus

The district will soon be the owner of a new school bus. The school board's transportation committee reported to the full board on the need to purchase a new school bus.

One of the school's existing school busses has major mechanical issues which require a new motor, which with parts and labor is estimated to cost \$6,000.

Due to the age of the bus, school board members voted to replace the bus with a 2013 22-passenger bus for \$52,950. John Jutten voted against the purchase but the motion passed.

The new bus will have air conditioning and is the school board's first step in trying to create a bus replacement schedule. The committee reported that most of the school's busses are getting older, ranging in age from 1999 to the early 2000s. All the school's busses have over 100,000 miles.

The school's depreciation budget will be used to make the purchase.

School Board approves slightly higher tax levy at 1.04

Written by Wauneta Breeze
Wednesday, 25 September 2013 18:58 -

New Title I teacher

School board members approved a .6 FTE teacher contract for Dawn Doetker to serve as a Title I teacher.

Principal Roger Reikofski explained Doetker will serve as an instructional facilitator, team teaching in all classrooms, spending about two hours in each room every week.

She will also be in charge of special education and will fill in as a substitute teacher when needed.

Reikofski explained that W-P Schools made the decision to offer Title I school-wide last year, which enables Title I funds to serve all students, not just those targeted as at risk. He said W-P Schools can make this designation because of the poverty level in the district.

Doetker started before Labor Day and Reikofski said she is doing a “great job.”

Propane contracts

The transportation committee met and reported their recommendations for propane contracts for both attendance centers.

The board approved a propane contract with Crossroads for 3,750 gallons at \$1.50/gallon. They will pay 10 cents down to secure the contract.

School Board approves slightly higher tax levy at 1.04

Written by Wauneta Breeze
Wednesday, 25 September 2013 18:58 -

They will also contract 4,000 gallons with Wauneta Co-op Oil at \$1.48/gallon. The Wauneta Co-op Oil contract will be paid in eight payments.

Board members noted the new boiler at the Palisade Attendance Center will most likely use propane instead of heating oil.

Principal report

Reikofski informed the board of a new incentive program started at the Palisade Attendance Center. The program, "Mr. R's Stars," is designed to "catch kids doing something right."

Students who get caught doing something right earn stars, which are placed on a bulletin board. Once students earn enough stars they earn rewards such as extra recess or a snack.

Reikofski reported the old boiler has been removed from the building. They are currently waiting for the new boiler, expected to be a propane boiler, to be delivered and installed.

He also informed the board of a recent visit from the Fire Marshall. The Fire Marshall was on site to check on the fuel oil storage tank for the old boiler.

Evidently the school had been cited for issues with the tank three years ago and nothing was done with the report.

Reikofski said the Fire Marshall gave the school until Nov. 15 to correct the issue. He does not expect it to be an issue because the tank will be removed as part of the installation of the new boiler.

School Board approves slightly higher tax levy at 1.04

Written by Wauneta Breeze

Wednesday, 25 September 2013 18:58 -

Superintendent report

Superintendent Geier shared that the school recently purchased 45 iPads for students, using less than \$2,000 of general funds. The iPads were purchased with grant funds. The total cost was \$15,160 and grants covered \$13,216 of the purchase.

The iPads will go to freshmen, sophomores and juniors, now all high school students will have iPads.

Other business

Other business items discussed at the school board meeting included substitute teacher pay and a policy review.

The board approved substitute teacher pay at \$95/day, the same rate paid last year.

Under the heading of policy review Board President Jon Anderjaska proposed a change in the punishment given to students put on the down list.

He stated the current policy restricts school activities for those on the list, however it offers little, if any, impact on students who do not participate in school activities such as sports or FFA.

School Board approves slightly higher tax levy at 1.04

Written by Wauneta Breeze

Wednesday, 25 September 2013 18:58 -

Board member discussion included a decision to gain teacher input on the issue and readdress the issue at a future meeting.