

Board OKs budget hiking tax rate 2.4%

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The Grand Island School Board on Monday unanimously adopted a nearly \$53.1 million budget for the 2012-13 school year that will carry a tax levy increase under the allowable state cap.

Superintendent Robert Christmann noted that under the state budget adopted last week, Grand Island will receive another \$20,000 in supplemental state aid, bringing the total state aid to a little over \$13 million. But, he noted, state aid to the district has decreased about \$3 million in the past three years.

The budget carries a 3.25 percent increase in the tax levy — just below what the district is allowed under the new tax cap law — expected to yield \$920,000 in additional revenue. The property tax rate increase would be 2.4 percent.

Christmann said Grand Island is one of the few area municipalities to have an expanding tax base. Without that, the tax rate increase would be higher, given that the district has to close a \$7 million gap between expenditures and revenues.

School Board President David Goris said, “We are a fortunate as a district to have a budget that doesn’t have a serious negative impact on the students. And I would like to thank all the administrators for their input.”

Revenue increases — coming mostly from reserve funds — total nearly \$6 million and include: \$920,000 from the tax levy; \$85,000 in sales tax; \$2.2 million from the appropriated fund balance; \$1 million from the debt service reserve; \$100,000 from the unemployment reserve fund; \$840,000 from employee retirement reserves; and \$800,000 from employee benefit reserves. Christmann said that without the use of reserves, the district would experience “massive layoffs,” similar to some other area districts.

Details of the proposed budget, which will be voted on by district residents May 15, are on the district’s website at www.k12.ginet.org.

The board also approved hiring Joseph Giarrizzo of Niagara Falls as director of business and finance, replacing Loraine Ingrasci, who is retiring. Giarrizzo, administrator for business and financial services for the Tonawanda City School District for the past three years, starts May 21.