

# Grand Island stays under tax cap in 2018 budget, but taxes go up

By [Nancy A. Fischer](#) | Published November 9, 2017 | Updated November 9, 2017

The Grand Island Town Board adopted a \$22 million 2018 budget Thursday, which increases taxes slightly and keeps the overall tax levy at the 2.7 percent tax cap.

The tax rate on the general fund, the largest amount raised by taxes, decreased by 3.1 percent. Other special funds, such as fire protection, sewer, lighting and refuse, will increase. The entire increase for taxes was due to a 16 percent rise in the sewer district tax, which is taxed on land value only, according to town accountant Pam Barton. Barton said the 20 percent of non-sewered residents, who only have septic systems, will see virtually no increase in taxes.

The average town homeowner, in a home assessed at \$210,600, will pay a total of about \$1,263 per year, including all special districts, from the current bill of \$1,236. That's an increase of \$27 per year.

Town Supervisor Nathan McMurray said this year the town was able to transfer \$50,000 from the general fund to avoid going over the tax cap, but he said taxpayers need to be aware that with mounting costs for state-mandated sewer infrastructure repairs, it may not be an option to continue to stay under the state tax cap in the future.

"The state has us between a rock and a hard place," McMurray said. "We got through it this time, but eventually it will cut into our balances where it will jeopardize the town." He said the town currently has healthy fund balances and could ride it out for few more years, contributing from the fund balance to make up the deficits, but if the town continues to spend the money it has saved, eventually it will affect these balances and the town's excellent credit rating.

The budget holds the line on salaries for Town Board members, which have been frozen at \$19,597. It includes a scheduled raise for the supervisor, an increase of \$2,142, to \$70,387. That represents 3.1 percent.

Barton said salaries are dropped when elected officials, such as the supervisor or highway superintendent, first take office, but then are raised incrementally each year for five years. In 2018, newly-elected highway superintendent Richard Crawford will make \$83,000, less than the \$87,938 earned by J.T. Tompkins, the current highway superintendent. Barton said the system has saved the town over \$400,000 since 2004.