

School budget up but levy will fall

Written by Deb Egenberger

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BRADY SCHOOL BUDGET			
The following is the proposed 2009-10 Brady Public Schools budget district property valuation and proposed tax levy as compared to last year. The school board will vote on the budget following a public hearing during the regular monthly meeting on Sept. 14.			
	2009-10	2008-09	Difference
Valuation	\$355,031,245	\$142,798,960	+8.38%
Operating Budget	\$2,384,803	\$2,182,409	+10.75%
General Fund Levy	\$1,9461	\$1,9487	-0.34%
Construction Levy	\$8,2161	\$8,2374	-0.97%
Capital Fund Levy	\$3,0464	\$3,0468	-0.05%
Total Levy	\$1,2900	\$1,3239	-2.94%

Valuation increase covers the difference.

The dice in the crap shoot of the school budgeting process haven't quit bouncing yet but it looks as though Brady area property owners will see a slightly lower school levy on the next tax bills.

Brady school board members worked through the numbers crunch last week and will vote on the 2009-10 budget following a public hearing during the regular monthly meeting on Monday.

The general fund levy, construction levy and capital fund levy are all set to drop despite a 10.75% increase in the district's operating budget. The lower levy is possible because of a 9.38% increase in district valuation.

Superintendent Bill Porter said nearly half of the \$232,000 hike in the operating budget can be attributed to salary related items.

Wages, insurance, retirement and social security account for about 69% of the district's overall budget, Porter said.

With the natural pay increases from the step system for certified employees, salaries increased approximately 4% this year or \$104,000.

Thankfully, Porter said, state aid will go up roughly \$100,000 to cover that change and a jump in property values will take care of the rest.

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"It's going to be tight. That's the least you can say," Porter said.

Utility costs will likely continue to be volatile, he said, making estimating that budget line a gamble.

"It's such an unknown," he said. "All you can do is go through the history, look at the trends and make your best guess."

Property owners will continue to pay bond levies for the renovation and addition to the school building approved by voters in 2005.

The 20-year construction bond and 10-year qualified capital purpose undertaking (QCPU) fund are only two years old.

Porter said he hopes to pay off the QCPU fund in another couple of years to help alleviate some of that financial strain on taxpayers.

"As far as the overall budget goes we've kept things pretty tight and we're going to be all right," Porter said. "It's the cash flow situation that could get pretty scary."

Because cash reserves were used to pay large outstanding bills in the past, carry-over is minimal.

"We'll just hope like heck it all evens out in the end," Porter said.