

Boone School Board approves tax increase

Published: Tuesday, July 05, 2011

http://www.berksmontnews.com/articles/2011/07/05/southern_berks_news/news/doc4e1335a5b19e075978747.txt

**By Denise Larive
News Write**

The Daniel Boone School Board approved on June 27 by a 7-2 vote a .54 millage tax increase effective July 1 that helps to balance the \$49,479,072 budget for 2011-12.

The current 28.42 millage rate will increase to 28.96 mills.

Property taxes in the Daniel Boone School District will increase \$54 for every \$100,000 of assessed property value for a total of \$2,896 for every \$100,000 of assessed value.

The board also approved transferring two teachers, 66 classroom aides, and furloughing 17 aides and two district secretaries in order to balance the budget.

According to the June 27 agenda, 15 building aides were transferred to be special education aides and four special education aides will now be building aides.

The board had tabled on June 13 its vote on the personnel issues in order to verify that all the correct transfers and furloughs were being made according to qualifications, tenure, and relationships.

Tammy Matthews, Douglassville, whose aide hours were reduced June 27 from seven to three hours per day, said the board had “ping-ponged back and forth about who was making decisions about the aides” and questioned the final determination.

“We are all highly qualified and I don’t think any of that has been looked into,” said Matthews. “It seems to be the money, but when you look at it it’s not a lot of money; we’re cents of the dollar.”

Board President Andrew Basile said the district was required to consider aides’ qualifications and tenure, as well as the relationships that have been established with individual students.

“We’ve been through this with our solicitor, assistant superintendent and [Special Education Director] Shelly Mieczkowski to make sure this was done correctly,” said Basile, adding that the district considered seniority “but where an aide is directly involved with a student, that is given consideration over seniority.”

Business Manager Danielle Penza said a preliminary budget from the state Senate indicates Daniel Boone could receive \$11,000 less in basic education subsidy money but possibly \$154,000 in accountability block grant money.

Superintendent Dr. Gary L. Otto said after the meeting that the district could receive just \$50,000 of that block grant money, he didn’t know how the district would be permitted to spend the money, and

didn't know if anything could be restored to the budget.

Otto said \$50,000 would fund the salaries of two furloughed staff.

Union Township resident Perry Templin commended the board for its tough decisions to balance the budget.

"I wonder if the parents know of the devastation done to their kids" by the decrease in state level basic education funding, said Templin, adding, "I can't believe the people in Harrisburg can sleep at night knowing they put a bullet in our kids education."

The board approved a revised Fund Balance policy that would allow district officials to reduce its fund balance to one percent provided that there is a plan in place to restore that money to the account.

Board member Alan D. Ross opposed the revised policy saying that it would jeopardize the school district by allowing the board to reduce the fund to one percent.

"As a school board member, I would want as much flexibility to save programs, classes, staff, etc.," said Basile on June 13 adding that there is nothing that says the district must spend the fund balance down to one percent, and then there must be a plan in place.

In addition to the millage increase, the budget was balanced with \$766,000 from the district's projected \$3.15 million fund balance, as well as \$1 million of concessions from the Daniel Boone Education Association.

The revised Extracurricular, Cocurricular Activities and Athletics policy with the new activities fee was also approved.

The fee structure is a \$150 fee for a student's first extracurricular activity, \$75 for their second activity, the third activity would be free, a family cap at \$500, and a yearly one-time club fee of \$50 per student.

Students who receive free and reduced lunches would be exempt from the activity and club fee policy.