

No property tax increase in D.B.S.D.

By Denise Larive; News Writer

The preliminary 2009-10 budget for the Daniel Boone School District shows no millage increase for the first time in about 12 years. Property taxes will remain at 27.65 mills. A property assessed at \$100,000 would continue to be billed \$2,765 in real estate taxes.

Finance committee chairman Richard C. Fidler said the district's original \$1,364,932 deficit was eliminated with increased revenues and federal government stimulus money of \$840,919, which also allowed the district to cut expenses by \$524,013.

The proposed budget is \$49,469,762.

The board must approve the final budget by June 30.

The board will vote on May 18 on whether to authorize the district administration and solicitor to negotiate the necessary contract with Architerra P. C., Coopersburg, for Phases 1 and 2 of the proposed Outdoor Facilities Project, subject to final approval by the board.

The anticipated Phase 1 cost is \$3 million and Phase 2 would cost between \$500,000 and \$900,000.

Combining both phases could save the district between \$80,000 and \$130,000.

David Horn, president of Architerra, presented on May 11, the company's final master plan for the Campus Open Space and Extra Curricular Activity Facility Enhancement Feasibility Study.

Their goal and objective was to determine the quality and quantity of current extracurricular venues and usage in the school district and develop a long-term strategy for and how to get the biggest bang for the buck.

The study began with the board considering renovations to the high school stadium.

Architerra examined sports fields at the high school, Daniel Boone Middle School and Amity Community Park, the Amity Intermediate Center and Amity Primary Center site, Birdsboro Elementary Center, Union Township Recreation Area, Amity Athletic Club, and the Borough of Birdsboro's Texas Field and Optimists Field.

Horn said none of the fields have under-field drainage and all are deficient with lighting, spectator amenities, player and spectator safety, and field surface, but the district's most significant need is for 20 additional sports fields. He said the high school averages 285 events per field and is 23 field short. The middle school fields have 1,438 annual events and the average of 240 events per field, which makes the site 18 fields short.

"You're numbers are jumping off the chart, more than any other school district we've looked at" said Horn.

"The district needs to maintain and sustain fields which are averaging two to three times as much use than the industry standards for healthy fields. Cannot restrict usage. You're already rotating fields at the middle school and restricting some field usage. Purchasing land and constructing new fields is cost prohibitive and not an option."

He said 20 additional fields could be achieved with the use of all-weather synthetic turf, which drains well and lasts eight to 12 years regardless of the amount of use; turf longevity is affected by ultraviolet rays and time. The district could have two to six times the number of annual events with synthetic turf. "A natural grass field can support a maximum of 55, two-hour events per year," said Horn.

If the board approves the contract, the bidding process would begin in October and November, and if construction work begins by mid May the stadium would be completed by mid August 2010.

Phase 1 would be funded by \$3 million the district set aside last year from a bond swap.

Fidler said the district's available construction funds are \$1,250,129, which could be used to fund Phase 2.

Interim business manager, Ernest W. Werstler, Jr., said the construction fund is not intermingled with tax revenues and is not mixed in any way with the general fund.

Horn said \$3 million would include a new six-lane, 400-meter, oval synthetic track, additional seating for 1,800 people, seating for handicapped individuals, a press box, food court for portable food, a four-foot high fence, and new field lighting, bleachers, and a scoreboard.

He said a synthetic track surface would cost the district \$1,200 per year to maintain versus the current natural grass and cinder track with an annual maintenance cost of \$23,250.

New storm water management would eliminate the auxiliary field. "Better bang for the buck with three synthetic fields at the high school," said Horn.

Restrooms would be destroyed and portable toilets used until permanent facilities are constructed in Phase 2. Phase 2 would include resurfacing the tennis courts with synthetic turf for a new usable field area, an enhanced food concession area,

with synthetic turf for a new usable field area, an enhanced 1000 concession area, two-gender restrooms, an officials' room, training room, construction of a softball field to replace the lost auxiliary field, as well as increased parking.

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