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No tax increase in Tulpehocken schools budget proposal

Anthony Orozco
Reading Eagle

■ Tulpehocken School District officials have provided a glimpse of the next school year's proposed budget and were proud to announce that the property tax would not increase.

The \$27.98 million budget would preserve the 27.70-mill tax. At that rate, the annual tax bill on a property assessed at \$100,000 is \$2,770.

Business Manager Thomas Kowalonek said Tuesday night that the ability to forgo a tax increase was due to the Berks County Industrial Development Authority's Berks Park 78.

"Real estate tax collections were \$370,000 over budget this year, thanks to the Bethel industrial park," Kowalonek said. "The park is key; it is the main reason we are not having a tax increase this year."

The announcement should be welcome in a district where a 0.25-mill tax increase last spring, to 27.70 mills from 27.45, produced some outspoken discontent. Even with that increase, the district will draw down \$384,241 of its fund balance this year, Kowalonek said.

Kowalonek also proposed refinancing a 2008 bond issue. The bond will be reviewed by district accountants and options will be presented next month. In January, the board approved refinancing a 2007 bond, a move that is projected to save the district a total of \$733,000 in the next 27 years.

Overall, projections look favorable for the coming school year, according to Kowalonek.

"There is no significant program reductions or administrative turnover," he said, "and that is a great thing for us."

Officials expect the board will advertise the proposed budget in May and vote on adoption at its meeting June 18, Kowalonek said.

Contact Anthony Orozco: 610-371-5015 or aorozco@readingeagle.com.