

Hartford Jt. 1 School Board gives final OK to 2018-19 budget

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HARTFORD — For the eighth consecutive year, taxpayers in the Hartford Joint 1 School District will see a reduction in the portion of their tax bill that's paid to the district.

Tuesday night during their regular monthly meeting at the district offices Board members gave final approval to the budget which had been tweaked slightly following the annual district meeting after final financial numbers were received from state officials.

The tax cut includes a reduction in the mill rate from \$5.99 per thousand in the 2017-18 school year to about \$5.75 cents per thousand — a cut of about 24 cents per thousand. That means the owner of a home in the district valued at \$200,000 could see their district tax bill reduced by about \$48.

“That’s a reduction by about 3.8 percent,” said District Director of Business Services John Stellmacher.

“The 2018-19 District budget demonstrates the values of our school board and our community. For nearly the past decade, the Hartford community has asked our district to ‘live within our means,’ and we’ve done so while putting the resources we do have to work,” said District Superintendent Mark Smits. “An edition of Milwaukee Magazine named us an Overachieving School District, last year, the Department of Public Instruction identified Rossman Elementary and Lincoln Elementary with the highest rating possible (significantly exceeds expectations). Our district continues to deliver results, improve facilities, and attract/retain high quality staff while spending significantly below the state average.”

As part of the final budget, Board members also approved the annual district tax levy for 2018-19 of about \$10,117,000.

Stellmacher said the district continues to look for new ways to “share services, leverage economies of scale and competitive bidding, and ensure our resources are aligned with our priorities of high quality instruction, student safety, and student achievement.”

elementary schools through the Nov. 6 referendum that’s on the ballot.

“We are in a position to add the needed capacity at Rossman Elementary and Lincoln Elementary through the referendum process without raising taxes as a result of an eight year approach to continually reducing property taxes and setting clear budget priorities,” Smits said.

The approved 2018-19 budget includes \$22,794,162 in the General Fund and \$27,406,353 overall. The budget has a projected (per student) cost of \$10,348, as measured by DPI shared costs, versus a projected statewide average of \$10,972.

“The district continues to spend significantly below the state average,” Stellmacher said. “Based on our student count, the district is spending \$1.8 million dollars less (per year) than we would be if we were spending at the state average.”

Other key parts of the new budget include:

- The district switched compensation philosophy from automatic pay increases to merit raises after Act 10. The 2018-19 budget includes merit raises provided to Hartford Jt. 1 professional teaching staff after Lincoln Elementary and Rossman Elementary Significantly Exceeded Expectations and Central Middle School Exceeded Expectations on the 2017-18 School Report Card.

- A drop in health insurance rates for the school district (and Waukesha Area Schools Health Cooperative) following competitive bidding.

- Nearly \$380,000 in mid-level facilities projects which includes replacing original classroom flooring and an obsolete gymnasium floor at Central Middle School.

- Implementation of the Wisconsin School Safety Grant at Rossman Elementary, Lincoln Elementary, Central Middle School and the Early Learning Center.

- Savings of nearly \$35,000 (per year) after competitive bidding process for district copying equipment and toner.

Smits said the budget has put the district in good financial shape for adding space at the two

■ Significant investments in classroom technology, instructional materials and software, and high quality professional development for Hartford Jt. 1 teaching staff.