

School budget is squeaky tight again

Written by Deb Egenberger

Wednesday, 08 September 2010 20:00 -

BRADY SCHOOL BUDGET			
The following is the proposed 2010-11 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. 13.			
	2010-11	2009-10	Difference
Valuation.....	\$164,158,274	\$155,631,245	5.5%
Operating Budget.....	\$2,264,547	\$2,104,933	7.1%
General Fund Levy.....	\$1.0480	\$1.0461	0.2%
Bond Fund Levy.....	\$0.2161	\$0.2161	0%
Capital Fund Levy.....	\$0.0388	\$0.0464	-16.4%
Total Levy.....	\$1.3029	\$1.3086	0.15%

Brady district looking at tiny levy increase.

Brady school superintendent Bill Porter knows the district has to think ahead when it comes to budgeting.

State education officials have warned districts of a looming “cliff effect” that will drastically affect funding.

“We have to be prepared for what lies ahead,” Porter said, “but you can only do one budget at a time.”

The Brady district is looking at a 7% increase in operating budget for the 2010-11 school year.

Porter said only one major purchase is planned this year: Approximately \$66,000 will cover the cost of 80 laptop computers to implement the one-to-one initiative in grades 9-12.

All of that money will be refunded through the federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

“We will only spend those federal dollars on one-time purchases,” Porter said. “Right now we feel like the best use of those funds is for students needs.”

But while the hardware purchase will be covered by federal stimulus dollars, the technology coordinator’s salary and all software upgrades and maintenance come from the general fund.

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“Money spent for student improvement is money well spent,” Porter said.

The difficult portion of the budget for Porter to swallow is a \$50,000 annual debt payment.

When the district’s operating budget was too tight to handle a few years back, the entire cash reserve was spent along with a large bank loan.

The bank note was paid off using excess building funds when an addition and renovation to the school were completed in 2007 but that debt to the district itself still has to be repaid.

“We’re spending \$50,000 every year to pay back borrowed money when we could be putting those dollars toward educational programs or rebuilding the cash reserve,” Porter said.

Still, the district has been conservative in the 2010-11 budget raising the general fund levy only .2% with an overall levy increase of .15%.

“When we look down the road, we may be forced to make some major adjustments,” Porter said. “So far, the district has been lucky. If we can keep the student numbers up and the state aid formula doesn’t change too much, we should be all right.”