



Jackson Board of Education Introduces Tentative Budget

March 26, 2018 (Updated April 19)

JACKSON - The Jackson Board of Education introduced a Tentative Budget that supports curriculum and safety projects, but limits investments in other areas in the face of rising costs.

“Given rising health insurance and other costs, it took a lot of work and a lot of hard choices to get to this budget,” said Superintendent of Schools Stephen Genco. “We are able to make investments in our curriculum and to continue safety and security projects, but we had to dial back a number of other elements of our facilities improvement and technology plans.”

In accordance with the district’s five-year curriculum plan, this tentative budget includes investments in the district’s math curriculum in grades 6-12, as well as district wide programs in media, technology and business. It also supports programs related to responsive classroom training, which provides practical strategies to emphasize social, emotional and academic growth in a strong, safe school community.

Genco said the tentative budget, which was introduced at a public board meeting on March 20, provides maintenance and investments in the district’s technology infrastructure, but does not include additional promethean boards requested by the technology department. It includes the last phase of the district’s plan to install security vestibules at each school and to accomplish limited facilities improvements such as re-siding modular classrooms, window projects, parking lot repairs and electrical work.

The budget also include a reduction in staff - we would lose 14 positions through attrition/retirement.

“We scaled down our budgets and our facilities improvements drastically, which is discouraging but was necessary for this year,” he said. “We are doing what we need to do to provide a safe learning environment, but just like many homeowners need to prioritize and strategize for another day, so do we.”

The \$153,830,585 tentative budget is up a total of 1.77 percent from the previous school budget. The General Fund Tax Levy is increasing by 3.13 percent, or \$2,547,602. The district is utilizing a state-permitted cap waiver allowed because it is facing healthcare costs that exceed the state limits to increase the general fund tax levy beyond the normal 2 percent cap.

The total school tax rate under this tentative budget is \$1.33 per \$100 of assessed home value, which is an increase of 2 cents from the previous year's budget. It will cost the average homeowner approximately \$92 more per year in school taxes, based on the average home assessment of \$327,046 as provided by the tax assessor's office.

Helping to offset costs for taxpayers this year is a \$486,500 increase in state aid - which at a less than a one percent increase is still the biggest state aid increase the district has seen in six years. The district is also returning \$378,504 in unused funds from an old bond question to bring down the district's debt service tax levy.

The board and administration will continue to work on the tentative budget until the Public Hearing on the budget, which will take place Tuesday, April 24 at 6:30 p.m. in the Fine Arts Center of Jackson Memorial High School.

"We aren't finished trying to find ways to maximize every dollar entrusted to us," Genco said. "This is still a work in progress and will be right up until the public hearing."