

WCASD School Board to Seek Act 1 Exceptions for 2017-18 Budget Preparation

At their meeting on December 19, the West Chester Area School District's School Board voted to obtain Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) approval of exceptions to increase taxes above the ACT 1 index to balance the 2017-18 budget. Applying for exceptions does not mean the board will use them when it ultimately has to pass a final budget in May of 2017.

The Act I index – an annual cap set by the state that determines how much school districts can raise taxes each year – is set at 2.5%. The exceptions would allow for an additional 3.1% increase to cover rising mandated costs associated with special education costs, which increased this year by \$5.4 million, and PSERS retirement contributions, which are estimated to increase by \$1.3 million.

While receiving approval from PDE permits the School Board to raise taxes above the Act 1 index to 5.6%, the Board may not actually do so. "We are so early in the budget process and we won't know what the state subsidies will be until June, so we need to keep our options open until we prepare a final budget with a better analysis of revenue and expenses," said School Board President Chris McCune.

"The state law requires school districts to make preliminary budget decisions prior to knowing its revenues, and prior to the process of reducing expenses," said Jim Scanlon, Superintendent of the West Chester Area School District. "Our board has given clear direction to make the necessary adjustments to provide excellent programs at the lowest possible tax rate."

The Board is scheduled to approve a preliminary 2017-18 budget at its next meeting on January 23.

For more information, please contact Dr. Jim Scanlon, Superintendent, at 484-266-1018 or jscanlonwcasd.net.