

## **Adopted budget calls for 1% increase**

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The Westwood Borough Council unanimously passed the 2010 municipal budget at its May 18 public council meeting.

Because of four grants the borough just received, the budget grew slightly by about \$63,000 after its introduction to a total of \$16,439,651. The change will not affect the \$11,619,129 to be raised through taxation.

The tax rate will increase slightly from last year's rate of 0.675 to 0.682. The owner of a \$398,000 average assessed home will see an increase of \$27 on the municipal portion of their tax bill.

The borough lost \$262,618 in state aid from last year's amount, a reduction of about 20 percent, and the cost of metered water services and fire hydrant rates increased dramatically in the past year.

Presenting the budget, Councilman William Phayre said: "For the third year in a row we started off the year by losing state aid, yet we were able to offer residents a budget with approximately a 1 percent increase in municipal taxes through a team effort."

The borough did not have to resort to layoffs of furloughs of employees to reduce costs, but will not be replacing a zoning officer. The officer's duties have been absorbed by others in the department and will save Westwood about \$50,000.

In the capital budget, \$190,000 has been allocated for the purchase of a new garbage truck and \$57,000 for a stump grinder. About \$807,500 in bonds has been allocated in 2010 for improvements to Westvale Park, a former landfill that will be turned into a recreational complex. Another \$237,500 has been reserved for road repaving.

Approximately half of last year's surplus went towards the budget, with \$1,397,615 remaining. The borough's long term debt, totaling \$1,851,534, has decreased seven of the past eight years.

Westwood's recent bond rating increase will assist the borough in gaining a better interest rate in future loans, said Phayre, including the recently approved \$2.5 million Westvale Park project.

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