

East Troy Community Schools Finalizes 09-10 Budget and Adopts Tax Levy

One month ago on September 28, the East Troy Community Schools held their annual meeting in which the 09-10 budget and tax levy were approved in an advisory motion. Last night, the final budget and tax levy were adopted by the Board. Between the two dates, figures for state aid and equalized property values were released from the state. The student count on the third Friday of September was also finalized into a "revenue limit formula" which calculates the allowable amount of revenues without an approved referendum. The two primary sources of revenue are local property tax and state aid. While the District's estimate for the overall tax levy increase at the annual meeting was 9.85%, the actual figures have decreased slightly, down to 9.02%.

The decline in state aid and transfer of services from Walworth County contributes to 5.19% of the levy increase.

District Administrator Dr. Hibner reports, "At the end of June the governor passed Act 28, decreasing state aid to all districts by approximately 3%. Some districts were hit harder than others, as the percentage varied between districts. The decrease meant we dropped from \$4,785,305 to \$4,443,317 in state aid from last year to this year, a 7.15% decrease. This was in addition to already cutting \$455,000 toward balancing the budget for the 09-10 year."

In addition Dr. Hibner added, "The economic challenge facing our nation, state and local areas are also challenging our educational landscape. We continue to assess all of our resources, but in the process of reform, it becomes evermore difficult when state funding does not assist in the necessary reform and puts even more of a burden on the local taxpayer."

Why East Troy Community Schools were dinged more in the state aid formula is based on property value per member, which in turn depends on the relationship of that amount between the school district and the entire state. Kathy Zwirgzdas, Business Manager for the school adds, "Complicating numbers further, our property value per member in the state aid formula is based on Spring 09 values. At that time our district increased at a faster rate than the state average: 6.39% for us in comparison to 3.41% for the entire state. Our most recent values in October had equalized values drop 5.5%, but that isn't reflected in the computation for the amount of aid we receive for this budget cycle. We look "richer" to the state than other areas at this time, and therefore received less aid." This reapportions some of East Troy's state aid to other districts.

On average, an owner of a \$100,000 fair market home this year will see school taxes of \$885, up from \$811 last year, or a \$74 increase.