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County board fails to pass 27% tax hike, proposed budget

DANVILLE—The Vermilion County Board's finance committee will have to go back to the drawing board after the board defeated a proposed 27 percent tax hike.

In an 8-18 vote Tuesday night, the board rejected the proposed budget and, in a 7-20 vote, nixed the tax increase.

According to District 1 board member Gary Weinard, officials were given two options: raise taxes by 27 percent or cut 80-90 people from the county payroll. "If that's the legacy the Democrats want, that's fine," Weinard said in a telephone interview Wednesday. "That's not anything I want to be part of when there are other solutions that could be helpful."

Weinard, also a member of the seven-person finance committee, said the county needs to make cuts. "The things that need to be cut in the county are sacred cows to the Democrats," he said. One cut would be selling the county nursing home. "(The Democrats) won't even discuss it. The big place where they could quickly get some relief is the nursing home but they won't touch it."

By divesting itself of Vermilion Manor, the county could save more than \$1 million, Weinard said. Another option is to find someone to lease the facility and cut the \$760,000 levy for it, he said.

Weinard said at Tuesday's meeting and the Oct. 27 truth-in-taxation hearing, several people suggested getting rid of the nursing home.

In a referendum last year, the issue of selling the facility was defeated but "more and more people feel they've been duped," he said, referring to scare tactics claiming Vermilion Manor residents would be put on the street if the county could not find a buyer for the nursing home. "They're finding out you can't

just throw people out. Facts and truth eventually come out."

Another option is bottom line budgeting, giving each department a figure that it is allowed to spend. "We'd tell the assessor 'this is how much money you've got,' we'd say to the sheriff 'this is all you get,'" Weinard said.

A third option is to pass a levy equal to this year's. The drawback to that option is that the county would run out of money 10.5 to 11 months into the budget. The budget could be amended at that time but "the problem is the revenue side," he said. "They're not going to have it."

Still another option would be cutting funds to probation and juvenile detention, which are lagging in state reimbursement, he said.

One suggestion made Tuesday was to cut bailiffs' positions but "all the bailiffs don't make that much," Weinard said. "When you look at the total budget, you're talking chicken feed."

Board member Bill Donohue suggested the board form a special committee to review the budget process but Weinard said that suggestion "adds more bureaucracy. There's more than enough already."

The finance committee will meet at 10 a.m. Saturday to try to find a solution. The county has just seven days to come up with a new plan because it must be on public display for 15 days before the full board can vote on it.

By state statute, the budget must be in place by Dec. 1, the beginning of the new fiscal year.

The full board will meet at 6 p.m. Nov. 15 about the budget and tax levy issue.

Where the budget issue will go is a mystery to Weinard. "I honestly don't have a feel for where this is going," he said. "My guess is they're going to compromise on a 14-20 percent increase and pass it."

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Classes will be held from 5:30-8:30 p.m. Nov. 15, 22, 29, Dec. 6 and 13 in Hoopeston Area High School's main computer lab at 615 E. Orange.

Larry Jahn will be the instructor for the classes, which will include:

Session 1 - Computer Concepts: computer systems, units of measure, inside the system unit, selecting peripherals, computer software.

Session 2 - Working with Windows Programs: introduction to Windows, working with files and folders, saving files, editing files, printing files, moving and

copying files, deleting files and folders.

Session 3 - Word Processing: Microsoft Word basics, type a basic letter changing font style, size and color, indent and justify, print, save and print files.

Session 4 - Computer Basics: Internet and Searching the Web: connect to the world wide web, search using browsers, download and install freeware, basic security of using the web.

Session 5 - Computer Basics/E-Mail: connect and disconnect from ISP, check, compose and send email including attachments, receipts and personalize appearance including background templates and auto signatures.

To register for classes, call the Multi Agency, (217) 283-5544.

Briefly

Miracle Tree screenings

Screenings for Grant Township Food Cupboard, Lions Club Christmas baskets, Jaycees Toys for

Kids, and Grant Township Miracle Tree will be held Thursday, Nov. 17 through Friday, Dec. 9. Screenings will be conducted from 9-11 a.m. and 1-3 p.m. at the Grant Township business office, 525 S. Market St. Please bring proof of address, in-effect LINK card, proof of income, and Social Security cards for everyone in the household.

No screenings will be done before Nov. 17.

Weather



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