

A Message From the Moorestown Board of Education 2017-2018 Budget Proposed

The Board would like to notify the Moorestown community that the preliminary 2017-2018 budget passed unanimously and maintains all requested staffing as well as current curriculum and programs.

It is the Board's responsibility to review and approve a budget for the next calendar school year. Developing the initial 2017-2018 budget was a collaborative process beginning in fall 2016. Although suburban public schools continue to face financial difficulties, it remains our priority to ensure that the education for which Moorestown is known continues, while simultaneously being fiscally diligent and responsible. The development of this budget occurs under the leadership of the Superintendent and Business Administrator with input and collaboration from the building and district Administrators. The Board of Education commends the work of our Superintendent, Dr. Scott McCartney for his leadership on this year's budget.

The preliminary budget was supported unanimously by Board Members at the March 15th presentation. The budget has been reviewed and approved by the Executive County Superintendent. The Board has scheduled a public hearing and final approval of the budget during the April 25th Board meeting.

The 2017-2018 budget includes a general fund 2% tax levy increase. Due to the retirement of debt service, the overall net impact to the taxpayer will be approximately a 1.9% tax increase. For the average assessed home of \$534,100, this amounts to approximately a \$102 annual increase in taxes. Simply maintaining existing programs and staffing into the 2017-2018 school year would increase the budget beyond the allowable 2% tax levy cap. This is due to increases in salary and benefits, utilities, transportation and other fixed costs. Salaries and benefits alone account for 81% of the school budget.

The Board is addressing the financial challenges through initiatives including:

- Projected revenue generation of over \$770,000, which includes facility usage agreement for summer camp delivery, before and after school care, Academy of Excellence, Summer Enrichment, and 2017-2018 tuition student opportunities
- Projected savings from operational efficiencies, including monitoring energy usage, upgrading inefficient systems as planned replacements occur, and proactively seeking rebates under energy efficiency programs
- Negotiated costs for health care benefits in labor contracts, which resulted in over \$1.8 million in cost avoidance over the contract terms

In the upcoming year's budget, we are pleased that curriculum and programs not only remain, but are expanded. The proposed budget includes investments in curriculum, new science and math textbooks, fine and performing arts equipment, and technology to support the implementation.

As budgetary constraints continue, there are ways our community can help. First, is advocacy for fair state funding. Contact your elected representatives to discuss how Moorestown is impacted by the consistent inadequate funding since the 2008 legislation of the School Funding Reform Act (SFRA). Only 5.4% of Moorestown's budget comes from state aid, and we are neglected entirely in categories of aid such as Adjustment Aid and Equalization Aid. Second, we welcome any revenue generation ideas you may have, including sponsorship opportunities within the District. Third, we encourage you to use the District programs, including student before and after care, extended day kindergarten, and the Academy of Excellence, among others.

Please attend our public meeting on April 25th in the William Allen Middle School at 7:00 p.m. We thank you for your continued support.