

# LONG HILL TOWNSHIP SCHOOL DISTRICT

## 2010-2011 Budget

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### **I have read about budget cuts and reduced state aid. What is going on with the budget process this year?**

The state's fiscal crisis has hit New Jersey School Districts extremely hard this year. Due to a gap in school funding of nearly a billion dollars, Governor Christie slashed state aid to local school districts in an amount equal to 5% of their budget. For Long Hill, this translates to a loss of \$750,000 or 75% of our state aid. The Board of Education has enacted a number of cuts in order to absorb as much of the reduction as possible. The district administrators and the Board of Education have recommended a budget for 2010-2011 that we feel best balances the interests of the students and the taxpayers.

#### **How much is the budget increasing?**

The district's Current Expense Operating Budget of \$14,340,113 represents an increase of 1.39% over the 2009-2010 budget.

#### **How much is the tax rate increasing?**

The total tax increase of the 2010-2011 budget, including debt service, is 5.39%

#### **I thought districts were restricted to a 4% maximum increase in the tax levy. How is our tax levy increasing by 5.39%?**

The law allows districts to exceed the 4% limit to compensate for lost state aid. Unfortunately, the Long Hill Township School District does not have surplus funds that could be used to minimize the tax impact. Rather than ask the taxpayers to make up for the entire loss of \$750,000 in state aid, the budget was cut extensively to reduce the tax increase.

#### **Is there any way to get back the programs and positions that have been eliminated due to these cuts?**

Unless there is a significant change in circumstances (unanticipated revenue, unforeseen retirement, or restoration of state aid) that would either increase our projected revenues or reduce expenses, the district would not have the resources to restore those items that have been cut from the budget.

#### **How much will the new budget cost the average taxpayer?**

The average home in Long Hill Township is assessed at \$392,380.00. The annual tax increase on the average home would be \$215.80 or \$17.98 per month.

### **What items have been cut from the 2010-2011 Budget?**

Many of the staff reductions are driven by the district's declining enrollment.

- Reduce Kindergarten from 5 sections to 4
- Reduce Second Grade from 5 sections to 4
- Eliminate two part time special education positions (Central and Gillette)
- Eliminate one part time language arts position at Central (bubble class)
- Eliminate one speech language position
- Eliminate .5 Library Media Specialist
- Eliminate two part time cycle class positions at Central
- Eliminate one part time Spanish position at Millington
- Reduce part time physical education position by .29 at Central (bubble class)
- Reduce French and Spanish positions to .80 at Central
- Reduce Business Administrator Secretary to .80
- Reduce Superintendent's Secretary to .88 during the school year and .40 during July and August
- Staff development funding eliminated from the general fund budget, only No Child Left Behind funds will be used for this purpose.
- General classroom supplies reduced by \$25,000
- Extended School Year program reduced to 20 days.

### **What would be considered for cuts if more are required due to a failed budget on April 20?**

The following cuts would need to be seriously considered by the Board:

- Elimination of additional classroom teacher positions, which would result in higher class size
- Elimination of subscription busing
- Deferment of purchase of language arts textbooks
- Replacement of some full time positions with part time positions

### **Can we close a school next year to save money?**

The district recently had a demographic study prepared to forecast enrollment through 2015. The student was presented at the March 8<sup>th</sup> Board of Education meeting. A copy of the report can be viewed on the district's website. Projected enrollment at Gillette and Millington Schools for 2010-2011 exceeds the Millington School capacity. Central School does not have the capacity to house the addition of 5<sup>th</sup> grade in 2010-2011.

Based on the enrollment projections in the demographic study, the district will be undertaking a feasibility study to explore our options and formulate long range plans to address the district's future facility needs.

**Can the Board freeze all salaries and have there been any contract givebacks from employees?**

The Board requested that the Long Hill Education Association (LHEA) consider a salary freeze or some other contract modification that might generate budgetary savings for the district. The LHEA has declined our request. The Board cannot unilaterally impose a salary freeze on its employees while a contract with the association is in place.. We are bound to implement the terms of the labor contracts as negotiated.

**Are any administrative positions being eliminated?**

No. New Jersey Administrative Code requires a full time non-teaching principal in each school building unless the district has an alternate plan approved by the Commissioner (which Long Hill does not have). The administrative staff is not top heavy in Long Hill. We have one principal for each building, a school business administrator and a superintendent. Among the 5 districts that comprise the Watchung Hills Regional sending area, Long Hill has the highest administrator to pupil ratio (1:204). The district has a part time consultant that handles the responsibilities for supervision of special education. This is a cost effective relationship for the district, as the position does not require benefits. Both the Superintendent and Business Administrator's secretarial positions have been reduced in the 2010-2011 budget.

**Is the district eliminating World Language instruction at Millington School?**

No. The district will be purchasing materials that will allow the classroom teachers to provide this instruction. This change in the method of instruction will save the district approximately \$17,000.