

Board to vote on \$12.2 million budget

WATCHUNG - The average homeowner would pay about \$63 more in taxes to the grades K-8 school district next school year under the district's tentative budget.

The property tax levy would increase by about two percent.

The Board of Education voted at a Wednesday, March



MARGO LANGER

get to the Somerset Coun-

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ty Superintendent's Office for approval. A budget presentation, public hearing and adoption vote are sched-

uled for the next meeting at 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday, April 25, at Valley View Middle School.

The proposed budget features a tax rate of 62.7 cents per \$100 of assessed valuation, or \$627 per \$100,000, up from 62.5 cents per \$100 in this year's budget, or \$625 per \$100,000.

The average Watchung homeowner, with a home assessed at \$710,718, would pay \$63.56 more in local school taxes next year, according to Interim Business Administrator Mark Resnick. The figure is impacted by the average borough home value

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rising by \$10,015 from last year.

Total appropriations in the budget amount to \$12,250,259, up by \$440,986 from the budget.

Enrollment is projected to decline by 22 students, from 707 students enrolled to 685.

The tax increase would help offset rising costs related to healthcare, special education and more, Board of Education President Margo Langer said.

"The board continues to work hard to strike a balance between ensuring that the district has the resources necessary to deliver the high quality education our

community desires while ensuring the educational programs provided by our schools are effective and efficiently delivered," she said in an email.

"As we all know, costs continue to rise, including healthcare costs, continued security enhancements, special education programs, upgrading of technology, infrastructure maintenance costs, et cetera. Furthermore, we want to maintain the strongest teaching staff possible as we believe that teachers are the most important piece of the education puzzle.

"We continue to strive to bring these and many other pieces of the budget togeth-

er in the most cost-effective and productive way possible for all of our students and staff. We very much appreciate the community's continued support of the district."

Superintendent Barbara Resko noted the board and district administration begin working on the budget in the late fall, and seek public input at meetings and through an online suggestion box dedicated solely to budget recommendations.

"Every effort is made to provide our students and teachers with an effective and efficient program of instruction supported through a variety of resources," said Resko