



U.D. budget calls for \$98 tax hike

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UPPER DARBY — A scant five residents recently engaged in a question and answer session with the school board at the public hearing for the \$151.5 million budget.

The 2009-2010 budget calls for a 0.98 mill increase from 28.74 mills to 29.72 mills.

The average homeowner with a house assessed at \$100,000 will pay \$2,972, an increase of \$98 over last year's amount in school taxes.

Angelo Roman, of Lindale Avenue, who announced he had hoped for a reduced or status quo tax rate or not greater than the 2.5 percent inflation rate, wanted to know the percentage increase of the budget.

Business Manager Ed Smith announced the budget increase was 3.4 percent.

Marcia Brunelli, of Agnew Drive, asked the board to consider allowing a little more time between introduction of the budget and the hearing than two weeks.

"It's not enough time for taxpayers to digest," Brunelli said of the 97-page document.

One of her concerns was hiring seven new special education staff members funded with federal money.

"It sounds good but the reality is the fact that federal money is taxpayer dollars and when this money dries up the salaries and benefits and those seven individuals will be absorbed into our budget and onto the backs of our taxpayers," Brunelli said.

She wanted to know the affect on the budget for the costs for substitute teacher service and Upper Darby Educational Support Personnel Association contracts and objected to the high salaries for administrators.

"We are paying for (substitute teachers) as they are provided," Smith said. "It really depends on how many (substitute teachers) are needed," estimating the contract increase was 8 percent.

Assistant Superintendent Louis DeVlieger announced the Upper Darby Educational Support Personnel Association three-year contract, to be approved, allows for 3 percent the first year and 3.5 percent each year for the next two years.

A Roberts Avenue resident questioned the district's position on policing out-of-district students after riding the SEPTA El train and seeing them board at 48th and 52nd streets in Philadelphia and viewing info on YouTube.

"The district takes the issue of student residency very seriously," president Vincent Gordon said. "Residency requirements are important and we have increased staffing at Central Registration. If you have proof we do have a process," inviting the taxpayer to provide the information to officials.

The school directors will vote on the budget at a special meeting 7:30 p.m. June 23 in the board room at the high school.