

## Brockport, Brighton try again for school budget approval

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Rochester Democrat and Chronicle USA TODAY NETWORK

The Brighton and Brockport school districts have taken different approaches in their second attempts at budget passage Tuesday, with the former presenting a pared-down spending plan and the latter trying again with the same proposal.

Residents in both districts rejected proposed budgets last month, though under different circumstances. State law provides districts with a second try at passing a budget before an austerity budget is automatically imposed.

Brighton was attempting

to override the state property tax cap and received 55 percent support, short of the needed 60 percent.

After soliciting feedback from voters, Brighton decided to put forth a reduced budget that is below the property tax cap and therefore needs just a simple majority to approve.

The district was clear, though, that some positions are being filled with one-time funding sources and are likely to be cut in the next two years if more revenue, particularly from New York state, does not come through. Alternately the district could again seek a budget override in 2020-21.

Cuts in 2019-20 are in the fields of professional diversity and instructional coaching; summer school; some clubs and activities; and planned funding increases for mental health as well as diversity and equity.

One of the main drivers for the initial budget spending level was the need to pay debt on an ongoing capital improvement project. That is being put off in part until next year, but cannot be postponed indefinitely.

“We’ve created a funding cliff,” the district wrote in its budget newsletter. “If additional state funding is not secured, we will make further reductions.”

The amended spending plan is for \$53.5 million, a tax levy increase of 2.34%. It is an estimated tax rate increase of 43 cents per \$1,000 in assessed value, or \$64.50 on a \$150,000 property.

The vote is from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. Tuesday at Brighton High School.

Brockport’s original budget proposal was beneath the tax cap but failed nonetheless for the second time in four years. This year as in 2016, the district’s two labor unions pointedly declined to endorse passage of the spending plan.

The Brockport UPSEU Support Staff union’s contract expires at the end of June and negotiations for a new deal have been contentious. It and the Brockport Teachers Association said the failed budget in May was due to “community frustration regarding the lack of transparency and accountability on the part of district administration (and) district employees whose work and commitment to our students is unappreciated and undervalued.”

Brockport is presenting its original \$82.5 million budget proposal for a second vote. The tax levy increase is 3.35%, within the tax cap, and will result in an estimated tax rate increase of 37 cents per \$1,000 in assessed

value, or \$55.50 on a \$150,000 property.

The BTA recently posted a joint statement from the two unions endorsing passage of the budget revote. The support union first posted the same thing, but President Al Hansel said he removed it from the union Facebook page after some members objected.

“There’s people on both sides of it,” he said. “We did release something with the teachers union asking people to vote for the budget, but not everyone really agreed with that, so I took it off the page. ... Personally I think we need to vote the budget in, but that’s just my own opinion, not the opinion of the group.”

The vote in Brockport is from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. Tuesday at the Technology and Training Center, 40 Allen St., building 800.

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