

West Irondequoit finalizes cuts

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IRONDEQUOIT — Field trips, modified sports and a variety of class offerings have all been canceled in West Irondequoit for the fall, the final reckoning of the district's failure to pass its proposed 2014-15 budget.

In May and again in June, the board and administration asked residents to approve a 3.9 percent property tax increase. In both votes, more than 50 percent voted yes to the budget, but because the request exceeded the state property tax cap, a 60 percent approval rate was needed, and that did not come to pass. It was the only district in Monroe County not to pass its budget and one of few in the state.

As a result, the district had to keep its property tax levy the same as in 2013-14, meaning about \$1.46 million less than its 2014-15 proposal. Among the cuts are field trips and outdoor education, modified sports for grades 7 and 8 and subsidies for outside groups, such as youth athletic organizations, that use the district's facilities.

Rates to rent out district facilities will be about triple what they were this year: \$100 for the first hour for the high school gym, \$140 for the auditorium, \$80 for the varsity stadium during the day and \$40 for a classroom. Programs for senior citizens, such as open swimming, will also be affected.

Michael Vadala, a Catholic Youth Organization basketball coach with a child in the district, predicted many children in the town would no longer be able to participate on teams because of the higher rates.

"I think that experience for kids at that age is critical, and it's been a program for all socio-economic backgrounds," he said.

The Helmer Nature Center, which was funded with about \$111,000 in district money, closed last week. Superintendent Jeffrey Crane said the district has talked with the town of Irondequoit and East Irondequoit school district about reopening it at some point under a different model, likely with significant community funding.

Among other cuts, announced Tuesday or earlier:

- » 16.5 employee positions, including the equivalent of at least six teachers.
- » The fall and spring plays at Irondequoit High School and some student clubs, yet to be determined.

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