

County Board raises tax levy 7.95 percent

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Body

Nov. 15--A larger than normal number of supervisors made symbolic votes Monday night against La Crosse County's 2007 budget.

Eleven of the 35 supervisors voted against the \$177.9 million spending plan, compared with five dissenters last year.

But when it came time to actually raise the taxes to pay for that budget Tuesday morning, only Supervisor Ralph Geary voted no.

The county's property tax levy will increase 7.95 percent, to \$25.92 million, in 2007, but like fuel economy ratings, your mileage may vary.

Because of growth in the tax base, the county's tax rate will decrease from \$3.74 this year to \$3.70 in 2007. Those lucky enough to have avoided property reassessment will see a small decrease in their bills, while those with higher property values will likely see slightly higher bills.

Supervisors looked a bit bleary-eyed Tuesday morning after a marathon session Monday night, when they approved County Administrator Steve O'Malley's budget without major spending cuts.

A robust debate early Monday evening resulted in using short-term borrowing instead of reserves to fill a \$1.1 million gap in the budget. Afterward, the board turned to smaller matters as supervisors offered a litany of minor budget amendments, trying to shift money to pet projects or away from programs they consider less-deserving.

Some ideas died for lack of seconds, while others received only a handful of votes. Just one of those amendments passed -- to give an additional \$40,000 to Stepping Stones, an agency that helps the district attorney's office investigate sexual abuse cases involving children.

In other nonbudget business Tuesday, the board:

Approved a consulting contract with the Carey Group of Arizona to study jail issues and make final recommendations for expanding the Law Enforcement Center by spring. The board approved \$55,250 for the first part of the contract, and will consider \$88,988 for the final phase of the study in January.

Outlawed the feeding of deer at Goose Island County Park for recreational viewing as part of a new deer management plan. Violators could face fines of \$50 to \$200.

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n Approved plans to create a tax incremental financing district and a revenue sharing agreement with the village of West Salem to pay for improvements in the county-owned Lakeview Business Park.

How members voted

Amendment to use sales tax reserves instead of borrowing, failed 15-20:

Yes: Ralph Geary Jr., Gerald Sebranek, Leon Pfaff, Andrea Richmond, Patrick Schippers, Ray Ebert, Bernie Maney, Lyell Montgomery, Donald Bina, Jeffrey Schroeder, Jim Berns, George Hammes, Charles Spiker, Joe Bilskemper, Terry Hanson

No: Roger Plesha, Sharon Hampson, Brian Kapanke, Margaret Wood, Jill Billings, Keith Belzer, Jacie Gamroth, Maureen Freedland, John Medinger, Tom Rauk, Jason Gillett, Robert Keil, Jai Johnson, James Ehram, Donald Meyer, Tara Johnson, Vicki Burke, Steve Doyle, Ann Fisher, Brad Pfaff

2007 budget, passed 24-11:

Yes: Plesha, Sebranek, Hampson, Kapanke, Wood, Billings, L. Pfaff, Belzer, Gamroth, Freedland, Medinger, Rauk, Gillett, Keil, J. Johnson, Ebert, Ehram, Meyer, T. Johnson, Burke, Doyle, Bilskemper, Fisher, B. Pfaff

No: Geary, Richmond, Schippers, Maney, Montgomery, Bina, Schroeder, Berns, Hammes, Spiker, Hanson

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