

MIDDLETOWN

Budget proposal calls for tax hike

Rising costs and more money for public works equipment and ambulance squads were among the reasons for the proposed \$43.50 tax increase.

By CHRIS ENGLISH COURIER TIMES

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The average Middletown property owner would pay about \$43.50 more in township property taxes next year under a proposed 2008 budget that should be on display at the municipal center starting Wednesday.

The proposed budget was adopted by the supervisors at Monday night's budget workshop meeting, but they have until at least Dec. 11, when they are tentatively scheduled to adopt a final budget, to make changes if they wish.

Under the proposal, township property taxes would increase by 1.5 mills in 2008, or about \$43.50 for a resident with a property assessed at the township average of \$29,012. There will also be a \$9 increase next year in the per-household cost for trash collection under the township's contract with Waste Management. The increase would bring the total perhousehold cost to \$304.

If the proposed budget is adopted as final next month, total township property tax millage next year would be 14.84, or \$430.54 for the average property owner.

Among the reasons for the proposed tax increase are rising salaries, benefits and health insurance costs, said township Manager Richard Gestrich. Also, the township is proposing \$129,500 more for the parks and recreation department next year for improvements to township parks, \$88,000 more for public works for replacement of equipment, \$38,800 more for ambulance squads serving the township and \$64,700 more for fire companies serving the township.

"Is it possible to get that millage increase down?" Supervisor Jasper Caro asked at Monday's meeting.

"It's pretty tight," Gestrich answered.

Instead of floating another bond issue to pay for items like repaving more roads in the Levittown sections of the township, the supervisors tentatively agreed to borrow from the \$41 million the township has in the bank from the sale of its water and sewer systems several years ago. Board member Robert McMonagle said the money would likely be repaid at the same interest rate as the money is currently drawing for the township.