

By Jan Rahn

Managing Editor

Good news for the district again this budget year is a levy decrease and downturn in tax asking. This is the second consecutive year that both the levy and overall tax request are down.

The newly adopted \$11 million 2011-12 budget has a general fund levy of 0.652 which is nearly a 10 cent decrease from the tax rate in last year's budget.

Even with an increase in the special building fund for the proposed budget, the overall levy of 0.753 is nine cents below that of last year.

The total tax asking for the 2011-12 school year is \$4,724,355. —a decrease of \$120,000 from last year's figure of \$4,844,626.

Some other points of interest in this year's budget include a general fund budget amount that is significantly increased from previous years.

Buchanan explained that the school district has historically had a large amount of unused budget authority that would allow the district to increase the budget if needed. There are some implications that the legislature may seek to eliminate this authority to keep overall spending in the state down.

"Over the years, the board has grown this authority to have it available should we ever need to grow our budget to that amount," said Buchanan.

In order to protect that authority the board set the general fund budget at \$7.8 million, well above what they have expended from the general fund historically.

"Setting the general fund budget at this amount is to protect the budget authority we have worked to create, it is in no way an intent to increase spending," Buchanan said.

Buchanan went on to state

that he would anticipate that the district would come close to spending between \$5 and \$5.5 million to operate, which is the same as it has been over the past several years.

With expectation of state aid a thing of the past, the district has used revenues from the depreciation fund for updates to the facilities.

During the spring and summer, tuck-pointing the brick in the original portion of the high school building took place. Heating and cooling upgrades have been done in the elementary and high school building, along with lighting upgrades, window replacement, roof replacement and maintenance.

The 2011-12 depreciation fund stands close to \$970,000.

Pointing to the special building fund portion of the budget, which has nearly \$1.8 million saved up for construction or land acquisition, Buchanan said, "We continue to build up the special building fund due to the fact we realize the three-story portion of the middle school has expended its useful life—we need a solution in the near future."

Although the budget seems to become a priority each fall, Buchanan stresses the fact that the overall mission of Perkins County Schools remains the same.

"We continue to feel extremely fortunate to be in such a good position to provide quality education for our students," he said.