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Tax rate declines in Beloit

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City of Beloit residents living in the Beloit School District got an extra surprise last month when they received their property tax bills - their taxes actually decreased slightly.

Although the levies of other taxing bodies increased, the Beloit School District's tax levy dropped from last year's \$13.6 million to \$11.8 million. As it has since the 1994-95 school year, the district's tax rate also fell this year. It dropped from \$9.27 per \$1,000 of equalized value to \$7.64.

The \$7.64 rate was the maximum the district could set without going to referendum as determined by the revenue limit formula, School District of Beloit Business Manager Cathy Mark told the Daily News in October. A 33 percent increase in state aid also helped keep the tax rate down.

The net tax rate for city residential properties in the Beloit School District fell from \$22.55 per \$1,000 of assessed value in 2007 to \$21.48 in 2008, a decrease of a \$1.08, according to city documents.

"The typical residential property should have their tax rate go down," said City Assessor Dan McHugh.

For most city residents, assessments stayed flat last year.

"Virtually all residential properties did not change, unless there was a sale of the property or the owner did some type of improvement," McHugh said.

A decreased school district levy combined with flat assessments means many city residents are paying less this year, said Beloit Assistant City Manager Steve Gregg.

But city residents living in the Turner and Clinton school districts saw slight increases in their property taxes this year. The Turner School District's tax rate increased from \$8.94 per \$1,000 of equalized value in 2007 to \$9.98 in 2008, while the Clinton School District's tax rate increased from \$9.87 per \$1,000 of equalized value to \$10.32, according to city documents.

The net tax rate for city residential properties in the Turner School District climbed from \$22.42 per \$1,000 of assessed value to \$23.72, an increase of \$1.30. Much of that increase came from the \$6.1 million referendum passed in April, which includes mechanical upgrades and improvements to Turner Middle and High School and Powers Elementary School.

The net tax rate for city residential properties in the Clinton School District climbed from \$23.35 per \$1,000 of assessed value to \$24.01, an increase of about 72 cents.

Tax rates for the remaining taxing bodies also increased. These include a .08 cent increase for Rock County, a .005 cent increase for Wisconsin and a .064 cent increase for Blackhawk Technical College, according to city documents.

Gov. Jim Doyle's office said property taxes are going up just one-tenth of 1 percent, which is the smallest increase in nine years. Property tax bills increased an average of just \$4 for a median-valued \$184,000 home. The tax went from \$2,839 to \$2,843.

Doyle attributed the small increase to a tax credit he and the Legislature approved in 2007, exempting the first \$4,135 of a home value from property taxes for schools. Doyle's office says the average homeowner saw a credit of \$35 from that. But that credit may be in jeopardy as the state deals with a projected \$5.4 billion shortfall.

The Associated Press contributed to this story.

Paying your bill

- All personal property taxes are due in full by Jan. 31 except buildings on leased land which have the four installment option.
- Bills can be paid in person, by mail, or by using the drop box located directly outside of the Rock County Treasurer's office located at 51 S. Main Street in Janesville. They can also be reached by calling 608-757-5670 between 8 a.m.-5 p.m., Monday through Friday.
- Bills can also be paid by credit card or E-Check. For more information, log on to the Rock County Treasurer's office Web site at: <http://www.co.rock.wi.us/Dept/Treasurer/PayOptions.htm>

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