

## Tax rate

Written by Christina Dimeo, Correspondent  
Thursday, 10 March 2016 16:45 - Last Updated Thursday, 10 March 2016 17:23

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### Supervisors to advertise 94-cent tax rate

The Fluvanna County Board of Supervisors decided Wednesday night (March 9) to advertise a real property tax rate of 94 cents for fiscal year 2017 (FY17).

With the current tax rate at 89.9 cents per \$100 valuation, the 94-cent rate would constitute a 4.6 percent tax increase for Fluvanna homeowners.

But supervisors set the rate at 94 cents to give themselves a little wiggle room. After adding up the expenses that received majority approval throughout the night, they discovered the tax rate necessary to support the budget would be 93 cents.

A 93-cent rate would raise taxes by 3.5 percent.

Though supervisors decided amongst themselves to advertise a 94-cent rate, they did not formally take action. They will officially decide to advertise a tax rate on March 16.

By law, supervisors must advertise a tax rate and hold a public hearing before they can adopt a final rate. Advertised tax rates are typically set higher than needed because, while supervisors can ultimately adopt a tax rate lower than advertised, they cannot adopt a higher rate without re-starting the advertising process.

Of course, not all supervisors were in agreement. While Supervisors Tony O'Brien and Mozell Booker advocated for a rate of 93 cents, Chairman Mike Sheridan said he preferred a 91.5-cent rate. Supervisor Trish Eager said she wanted to keep taxes level with an 89.9-cent rate.

To keep a rate of 89.9 cents, supervisors will have to cut programs and staff, warned County Administrator Steve Nichols.

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“Are you willing to do that?” Booker asked Eager. The conversation shifted and her question went unanswered.

There are only a few areas in the budget that can change, said O’Brien, advocating for the 93-cent rate. Supervisors can choose to “take out this or that,” but they’ll “be right back at it next year,” he said.

“There is no way to avoid tax increases in Fluvanna,” said Nichols.

Supervisors spent the work session going over budget requests and informally voting on what to put into the FY17 budget. New spending that made the preliminary cut with support from three or more supervisors included:

- New sheriff’s deputy
- New E911 communications officer;
- New child protective services worker for social services;
- \$1.1 million increase for school funding;
- Covering county staff health insurance increase;
- Capital depreciation fund for county property.

The schools revised their FY17 budget request from \$1.7 million in additional county dollars to

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\$1.6 million, because their health insurance numbers came back more favorably than anticipated, said Ed Breslauer, school finance director.

Supervisors informally agreed to set aside for technology \$300,000 of the funds the schools returned to the county last year. They also put \$800,000 additional school dollars in the FY17 budget.

Kim Mabe, social services director, made a passionate request for an additional child protective services worker. “We do have kids who die in Fluvanna,” she said, or go to the hospital, are physically abused, sexually abused, or neglected. “We’re talking about our most vulnerable people. I’d hate to see one slip through the cracks because we weren’t adequately staffed.”

While looking over the budget numbers, Supervisor Don Weaver exclaimed, “Where do we stop on all this? There never seems to be any end to all this.”

“This is a tough year,” said Eager.

“Every year is a tough year,” replied Nichols.

“I’ve never been on the Board when it was easy,” said Booker.

“You’re talking taxpayer dollars,” said Nichols. “You’d be hard-pressed to say that any [request] you heard tonight wasn’t well thought out...but how can you pay for everything?”