

# BOE discusses 2024-25 budget

Anticipates tax increase for \$87,200,000 general fund

BY ALEX LAMATTINA  
THE COAST STAR

WALL TOWNSHIP — In an hour-long workshop meeting, Wall Township education officials discussed a tentative budget for the 2024-25 school year that would raise average school tax bills by \$87.

The tentative school budget — at \$87.2 million — marks a 2.1% increase from the previous school year, according to district Business Administrator Brian Smyth. The budget translates into a \$87.43 school tax increase for the average assessed home in Wall Township valued at \$492,700, or monthly school tax levy increase of \$7.29.

The board of education's [BOE] workshop meeting in the Wall Intermediate School [WIS] cafeteria had three different themes pertaining to the funding of next school year, according to Superintendent of Schools Tracy Handerman: technology, staffing and personnel and miscellaneous operations, such as support services, capital projects, maintenance and student transportation.

Mr. Smyth told the BOE that, along with \$75,674,851 being raised in taxes for the district's operating budget, \$2,574,085 will be raised in taxes for the district's repayment of debt fund, which totals \$3,695,634. Roughly 30% of the total debt amount is being administered through state aid.

Mr. Smyth said the goal of using the township's \$66 million referendum passed in 2022, approving various construction projects across the district served as a replacement to debt the district acclimated over time, which was successful.

"Regarding the debt service budget, we retire all debt in the current school year...with regard to the referendum...our debt service for 2024-25 is only interest," said Mr. Smyth. "There's no principal being paid as part of this, and we only have interest due. Principal will be due starting in the 2024-25 school year."

Principal is the amount of funding borrowed by an entity, according to the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. Interest is the cost of borrowing the money.

"The district made final payments on all prior debt in the current school year. This was discussed at length at the time of the 2022 referendum. The referendum was planned and scheduled so that the new debt created by the 2022 referendum would start once all the prior debt was paid off," Mr. Smyth told The Coast Star. "The repayment of the district's 2022 referendum [\$66,599,000], that was approved in December 2022, makes up the district's debt service budget starting in next year's 2024-25 budget and is factored into the annual school tax starting in 2024. The tax rate based on the new 2022 referendum debt is less than it was with the prior debt."

The district is also allocating \$1,067,000 for its "Grants and Entitlements" fund, according to budget documents, which was not raised via taxation.

It was reported that the 2024-25 school budget includes \$299,638 as banked

SEE BUDGET PAGE 20

# Girl Scout troop earns vision awareness patch

THE COAST STAR

WALL TOWNSHIP — Members of Girl Scout Troop 1867 from Central Elementary School earned their vision awareness patch during a visit to Shore Family Eyecare, in Manasquan, the office of optometrists Maria Richman and Kathleen Kinzley, a press release says.

The troop consisted of five fourth-graders and their troop leader, Deandra LaFrance. This patch program is designed to connect scouts with eye doctors as a public health initiative to spread the importance of quality eye health and proper vision care through an eye exam with an eye doctor.

According to Ms. Richman, the scouts had an opportunity to tour the office and experience a day as an optometrist. They were able to role-play as an eye doctor and understand the purpose of an eye exam, trying on simulators that patients with vision loss would experience from conditions such as glaucoma, cataracts, macular degeneration and diabetic retinopathy. Discussions also included glasses, contact lenses, digital eye strain and advanced topics such as cranial nerves and the eye brain connection.

Following the event, the girls successfully earned their vision awareness patch, and went home with a Lou-

is Braille handout and an activity sheet to decipher a message that was written in Braille.

"As a Girl Scout leader, it is important to instill the values of leadership, education, integrity, and community service in our girls. We want to encourage the girls to challenge themselves, try new things, and take initiative in their own growth and development," said Ms. LaFrance. "My hope for these girls is that seeing strong and intelligent female doctors, such as Dr. Maria Richman and Dr. Kathleen Kinzley, breaking barriers, achieving great things, and helping their community that it will inspire them to also pursue a career in STEM or follow their dreams, whatever they may be."

The history of this program dates back to its inception in 2018 by Ms. Richman, a former Girl Scout and troop leader herself, the press release states. Its success was with the guidance and support of the New Jersey Society of Optometric Physicians [NJSOP] and the Richard J Favreau Health Foundation [RFHF], a charitable organization in New Jersey that was named for a former NJSOP president.

Both NJSOP and RFHF assisted in contacting optometrists and scout troops across



COURTESY OF MARIA RICHMAN

Troop 1867 Scouts Nina Messenlehner [front, from left], Madelyn Squire, Zarra LaFrance, Maddyn Wobser and Sierra Mockler, of Central Elementary School, earned their vision awareness patch after a visit to Shore Family Eyecare, in Manasquan. Scouts tried on simulators to show what patients with vision loss would experience and held discussions on glasses, contact lenses, digital eye strain and more.

the country to partake in the program, the release says.

"What better way to teach young people about optometry and the importance of vi-

sion care and eye health, than to let them experience it in person," said Ms. Richman.

The vision awareness program is available to all levels of Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts.

# Come Join Us at Monmouth Jet Center's Easter Egg Hunt

Saturday, March 30th  
at 11:00 am

1717 Rt 34. Wall, NJ  
(Front of Airport Grounds)

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