

## Press Clippings 12/5/2017

---Daily Herald--- 12/5/17

### **U-46 board adopts tax levy increase**

**BY MADHU KRISHNAMURTHY**

Citing a shortage of funds for future capital projects and a desire to be competitive, Elgin schools' officials authorized raising taxes Monday night.

The Elgin Area School District U-46 school board voted 5-2 adopting the tax levy certificate and resolution for a total levy extension of roughly \$272.8 million. Officials agreed on a 2.1 percent levy increase for 2017 based on the tax cap limitation. With new construction value added, the final extension would amount to a 2.53 percent increase. The levy must be filed with the clerk's office in Cook, DuPage and Kane counties by the last Tuesday in December.

In September, the school board adopted a roughly \$518 million spending plan for the 2017-18 academic year.

Total revenues projected for fiscal year 2018 are roughly \$509 million -- \$3.1 million less than the previous year's budget. Expenditures are projected to increase by \$6.6 million over last year's budget and will draw down the total fund balance by \$8.9 million, documents show.

School board member Jeanette Ward, who voted against the budget, said she couldn't support a levy increase when enrollment is projected to decline 2 percent yearly over three years. Ward and board member Phil Costello voted against the levy adoption.

"I'm concerned about the overall state of the budget," Costello said. "I would liked to have seen more cost containment. If we can get more people in, the tax rate itself goes down. I'm concerned about people leaving the district because of what U-46 is."

Ward and Costello said high property taxes are forcing people to flee the state.

Board member Sue Kerr said the district is living with cuts made in 2010, affecting class sizes and limiting some sports.

"We still as a district spend over \$1,200 less than the state average," Kerr said.

Kerr wants the district to stop relying on working cash bonds to fund capital improvements to maintain existing buildings.

"At some point we are going to have to look at how we fund future capital improvements," she said.

Beyond recent cutbacks, the district hasn't restored cuts made in the early 2000s, board member Melissa Owens added.

"We don't have art in our kindergarten classes. We don't have music in our kindergarten classes. That's important," Owens said. "It's a high levy, but we are still only raising less than \$7,000 per student. Our families and our students are asking us for services that they should be getting. And

we are competing with other districts that are able to give their students those services because they can raise more money with their property taxes."

Board member Traci O'Neal Ellis said U-46's graduates are competing with students from other states and must be prepared.

"Regardless of who is moving out, we need to be able to provide our students a competitive education," Ellis said. "Our students deserve services and programs and it is our job to figure out how to provide them."

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## **U-46 schools join in 'Hour of Code,' introducing students to computer science**

**SUBMITTED BY ELGIN AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT U-46**

Several Elgin Area School District U-46 schools will participate this week in the global "Hour of Code" as part of Computer Science Education Week. Coding is essentially a process to make a computer follow specific instructions, an in-demand job skill.

The Hour of Code began in 2013 as a fun one-hour introduction to computer science, designed to demystify "code" and to show that anybody can learn the basics, according to organizers of the event. Microsoft, Apple, Amazon, Boys and Girls Clubs of America and the College Board are among those that support the effort. In the last four years, more than 100 million students have participated in an Hour of Code event.

Among the U-46 schools participating in the coding fun is Glenbrook Elementary. Many of the Glenbrook Elementary students are already familiar with coding through teacher Ellen Smith. Her fourth graders spend about an hour a week throughout the school year working on computer science skills using activities on Code.org or Scratch, another free computer programming destination. Smith also oversees a coding club for fourth through sixth graders to further develop their coding skills.

"It gives my students a basic understanding of computer science," Smith said. "There is only going to be more of a demand for coding skills going forward, and they all seem to enjoy it."

Fifth-grade Dual Language Teacher Carol Romero at neighboring Heritage Elementary, also in Streamwood, started Hour of Code events two years ago and has seen the lessons grow in popularity among students and teachers alike. Next week she hopes to expand coding events to more classrooms at her school and launch a coding club in the spring.

"Coding enhances problem solving and higher level thinking skills," Romero said. "The students love creating lines of code!"

Other U-46 schools participating in the Hour of Code during Computer Science Education Week, Dec. 4-10, or offering ongoing coding clubs and lessons include:

- Genius Hour Projects at Eastview Middle School, 321 Oak Ave. in Bartlett, during school time;
- Computer Programming 1-2 and 3-4, Web and Media Design, and Multimedia and Design Presentation at Elgin High School, 1200 Maroon Drive, Elgin;

- Hour of Code Dec. 4-8 and Dash & Dots Robotic Club from 2 to 3:30 p.m. Mondays at Glenbrook Elementary School, 315 Garden Circle in Streamwood. Also, Scratch Coding & 3-D Printing Club from 2 to 3:15 p.m. Thursdays, starting in January.
- Hour of Code Dec. 4-8 at Heritage Elementary School, 507 Arnold Ave., Streamwood;
- Sylvan Learning from 2:15 to 3:45 p.m. Wednesdays and Fall Coding Programs through Dec. 20 at Highland Elementary School, 190 N Melrose Ave., Elgin;
- "Let's Code It-The Digital Dimension," provided by Afterschool Enrichment Solutions, from 2:05 to 3:05 p.m. at Hilltop Elementary School, 1855 Rohrssen Road, Elgin;
- Larsen Robotics Club from 3:30 to 5 p.m. Mondays and Wednesdays at Larsen Middle School, 665 Dundee Ave., Elgin;
- Hour of Code Dec. 4-8 at Liberty Elementary School, 1375 W. Bartlett Road, Bartlett;
- Hour of Code Dec. 4-8, 2nd Dual One Way at 1 p.m. Tuesdays, and Tech Club 2 to 4 p.m. Mondays and Fridays at Oakhill Elementary School, 502 Oltendorf Road, Streamwood.

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## **U-46 teachers union chief, lawyer file as candidates in state House race**

BY RAFAEL GUERRERO



Dan Ugaste (left) and Richard Johnson. (Handout)

The head of the Elgin-based **School District U46** teachers union made his interest in a state representative seat official Monday, filing petitions on the last day to declare for the March primary election.

Richard Johnson, the president of the Elgin Teachers Association, filed Monday afternoon as a Democrat for the Illinois House 65th District primary, according to state election records. As of Monday afternoon, he was the only Democrat in the race.

One Republican made his run official last week. Dan Ugaste, a Geneva lawyer, submitted paperwork to run for the 65th District when filing opened last Monday. Ugaste, 54, had announced plans to run in the summer.

Ugaste previously ran in 2014, garnering a third of the vote in a three-way Republican primary, finishing second behind incumbent Rep. Steve Andersson.

Johnson, 39, is in the last year of a two-year term as president of the Elgin Teachers Association, which has approximately 2,500 members. The Elgin resident had said earlier in the fall that he was planning a run for the state House.

For more than a decade, Johnson was a high school teacher, spending it all at Bartlett and Elgin high schools until he stepped down to take over as union president. During his U46 stint, he also earned master's and law degrees. Johnson graduated from law school in 2014 and passed the Illinois bar the same year.

Both Johnson and Ugaste hope to replace Andersson, of Geneva, who announced earlier this year he would not seek a third term in office.

The 65th Legislative District includes the westernmost parts of Elgin, South Elgin, Geneva, St. Charles, Pingree Grove and Hampshire.

## **SPORTS SECTION**

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### **West Aurora topples Sabres**

**DAILY HERALD REPORT**

The West Aurora girls basketball team moved to 6-2 overall with a 57-42 road win over Streamwood Monday in Upstate Eight crossover action.

Dajour Miles led the Blackhawks with 12 points while Olivia Vanderwoude had 10 points. West Aurora used a 23-10 third quarter to break away from the Sabres (1-7), who received a game-high 16 points from Andrea Bracy and 10 points from Mandy Mien.