

Press Clippings - 12/13/2023

- The Examiner -

Trend of tax levy hikes continues for Dist. U-46

By: Seth Hancock

December 13, 2023

Without discussion, the Board of Education in School **District U-46** voted unanimously (7-0) to approve a \$373.8 million property tax levy at its meeting on Monday, Dec. 4.

As usual, it is the largest levy increase allowed under the law. Approved were a resolution and a certificate of tax levy.

The estimated tax rate is 5.1632. The district estimates sharp rises on individual homeowners tax bills on the U-46 portion for DuPage and Kane counties but a drop for Cook County taxpayers.

Using a home valued at \$200,000 in the 2020 tax year, a Kane County taxpayer would pay 16.2 percent more (\$3,902 to \$4,535) and 11.6 percent increase (\$3,655 to \$4,077) in DuPage County. The Cook County home would pay \$3,265, down 6 percent or \$207 from \$3,472.

The corporate and special purpose levy rise 8 percent from the 2022 extension of \$315.8 million to \$341 million and debt service from \$32.1 million last year to \$32.8 million.

The corporate and special purpose levy includes education (\$223.6 million), operations and maintenance (\$45.9 million), special education (\$40.6 million), transportation (\$10.3 million), tort immunity (\$7.9 million), fire prevention and safety (\$5.7 million), working cash (\$3.2 million), Social Security (\$2.2 million) and Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund (\$1.7 million).

The \$341 million corporate and special purpose levy is a defensive levy with the district expecting \$339 million, a 7.3 percent increase. The defensive levy is “to insure receipt of all property tax dollars to which the District is entitled,” the determination of tax levy presented on Nov. 6 stated.

“In order to have the maximum tax extensions, levy amounts must be high enough to reach the maximum amounts to be calculated in accordance with the ‘Tax Cap’ legislation. Since the equalized assessed valuation (EAV) of property and new construction numbers are unknown, it is a common practice to establish a defensive levy,” the proposal stated.

- The Examiner -

U-46 Board poised to vote on bond issue, expenses

By: Seth Hancock

December 13, 2022

The Board of Education in **School District U-46** is set to vote on a resolution authorizing the issuance of bonds not to exceed \$62 million at an upcoming meeting.

Additionally, the board will vote on expenditure items totaling \$122,843 that were presented on Dec. 4.

The bond issuance is part of the voter approved referendum allowing for the creation of new debt up to \$179 million.

The bond resolution, which sets the parameters, states that the bond will be dated “not later than June 18, 2024.”

The principal payment would be between January 2025 to January 2037, with the first interest payment on July 1, 2024, levy years 2023 to 2035, maximum annual principal of \$14 million, maximum annual debt service \$15.5 million, a maximum interest rate of 6 percent, a minimum purchase price of 98 percent and a call date of Jan. 1, 2033.

“Obviously, we’re selling bonds where an interest rate is high, and I know in the past we’ve refinanced to get lower rates,” said Sue Kerr, the board’s president. “Will we have to wait a number of years?”

“Yes, that is the call date of 2033, so we’d have to wait 10 years,” said Ann Williams, deputy superintendent of operations.

As for the expenditure items, the largest is \$72,843 with Apple Inc. that will be paid for by the nation’s taxpayers through grant funds. It’s to purchase 100 iPads with Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) tools for communicating with “students with speech and language challenges,” the proposal states.

“This proposal aims to purchase AAC devices and corresponding accessories for the district wide AAC department,” the proposal states.

“The intent is to enhance the learning and communication experience of our students 3 through 22 years of age, empowering them with tools tailored to their unique needs.”

Costing \$50,000 (education fund), the district is seeking a contract with Collaborative Leadership Consulting Group for bargaining facilitations.

“In the school year 2023-2024, School District U-46 Administration, on behalf of the Board of

Education, continues to bargain a successor agreement to the one-year extension with the Elgin Teachers Association (ETA)," the proposal states. "Facilitation of this work by the CLC Group provides support for creating structures, systems, culture, and communication practices to reach a successful collective bargaining agreement."

Editor's note: The Examiner is aware that the U-46 School Board has chosen to utilize an optional Monday, Dec. 11 meeting to include votes on these items despite the proposals stating they would be voted upon on Dec. 18. A follow-up story will appear in next week's editions of The Examiner to summarize the votes on the proposals.

- The Examiner -

Streamwood boys hoops rally falls short in loss

By: Seth Hancock

December 13, 202

A second half rally fell short for the **Streamwood** boys basketball team in a 62-56 Upstate Eight Conference loss to Elgin on Friday, Dec. 8 at Streamwood.

The **Sabres** trailed 29-20 at halftime and faced a 13-point deficit early in the third quarter. That's when they started to rally, largely behind Byron Walton who scored all 16 of his points in the second half, including two three-pointers.

Walton hit a three-pointer followed by a bucket to pull to 35-33 midway through the third quarter, and **Streamwood** trailed just 46-42 entering the fourth. The **Sabres**, however, were unable to close the gap to more than two points, which they did a couple times in the fourth.

"We've just got to be stronger mentally," said **Streamwood** coach Quentin Ruff. "The biggest thing that we're fighting is how to handle adversity. I think they responded well but not as well as we needed them to. Overall though, I'm happy because it's something we can build off of."

Ruff added: "Our top players are still trying to figure out their rhythm. We still have guys who are out, guys who still aren't fully healthy. We are constantly driving these guys to take care of their bodies, take care of their grades so we can be together as one." James Donato led the **Sabres** with 19 points, including a pair of treys. Francis Sagadraca added seven points and Aden Strong six.

The **Sabres**, now 1-7 overall and 0-3 in the UEC, dropped a 75-47 conference game against Glenbard East on Tuesday, Dec. 5 at Streamwood.

At Downers Grove South, the **Sabres** fell in a 66-24 nonconference game on Wednesday, Nov. 29. At East Aurora, they dropped their UEC opener 83-43 on Thursday, Nov. 30.

"I think this is a good group, an awesome group," Ruff said. "I just think they don't know how good they can be when they're together."

Ruff added: “I love this group. The biggest thing is we’ve just got to build that mental toughness and teach guys to lead each other and keep on working. We’re working every day. We’re going to turn things around.”

- Chicago Tribune -

Streamwood boys hoops rally falls short in loss

By: Paul Johnson

Dec 13, 2023



Bartlett's Colin Taylor (1) and Gio Scivittaro (22) talk after a timeout against Elgin during an Upstate Eight Conference game in Elgin on Tuesday, Dec. 12, 2023. (H. Rick Bamman/The Beacon-News)

On a team breaking in several new varsity players, chemistry can take time to develop.

Two newcomers for **Bartlett**, however, have that aspect completely covered.

Junior forwards Colin and Keegan Taylor can't be any closer. They're twins.

“The chemistry is obvious,” Colin said. “We’ve been with each other our whole lives.”

They both played big roles Tuesday night in a 58-44 Upstate Eight Conference win at **Elgin**. Colin Taylor scored 14 points, with 12 coming in the second half as the Hawks pulled away.

Keegan Taylor scored nine points off the bench, while Nathan Searce ended up pacing **Bartlett** (3-6, 3-1) with 15 points. Dimitre Petrasiunas added 10, all in the first half.

Elgin (3-5, 1-3) was led by a huge game from Maddox Hollian, who scored 28 points. He had all 18 for the Maroons in the third quarter. Angel Nunez added 12 points on four 3-pointers.

Colin Taylor said he and his brother have enjoyed going through the varsity experience together for the first time.



Bartlett's Colin Taylor (1) and Gio Scivittaro (22) go after a rebound with Elgin's Maddox Hollian (24) during an Upstate Eight Conference game in Elgin on Tuesday, Dec. 12, 2023. (H. Rick Bamman/The Beacon-News)

"It just feels great," Colin said. "We need to step up and fill that role."

So far, Colin likes the way he's fit in.

"I feel like I'm doing pretty well," he said. "It's a lot of pressure. You get held to high expectations."

With Hollian scoring 18 points in the third for **Elgin**, Colin Taylor helped keep **Bartlett** in the lead by scoring the first six points in that quarter for the **Hawks**.

He then kicked off a 16-2 spurt to start the fourth with a 3-pointer and added another 3-pointer near the end of the run as the **Hawks** iced it.

"We were slow going into the second half," Colin said. "We started hitting shots and we had some good defensive stops that gave us some momentum, brought us some energy."

Thanks to Hollian's effort in the third, **Bartlett** had to switch defenses.

"Maddox can ball," **Bartlett** coach Jim Wolfsmith said. "He had himself a game, forced us to go into a gimmick defense to slow him down. We got lucky they missed some open shots."

Hollian still managed to shake loose for four 3-pointers in the third quarter, cutting **Bartlett's** lead to 41-39 heading into the fourth.

“It’s going to be hard to stop Maddox,” **Elgin** assistant coach Leo Jackson said. “I’m very impressed with him. I call him all-state. I think he has a great chance.”

Bartlett held Hollian scoreless in the fourth, however.

“It was kind of the way we wanted to play,” Wolfsmith said. “A lot of times good defense leads to good offense. We got them a little bit out of sorts. Got some buckets, got some steals, hit some threes in transition.

“I thought that’s the way we needed to start the game.”

Wolfsmith has been impressed with how the 6-foot-4 Colin Taylor has fit into the starting lineup so far this season.



Bartlett's Colin Taylor (1) drives to the basket against **Elgin's** Santiago Ortiz (4) during an Upstate Eight Conference game in Elgin on Tuesday, Dec. 12, 2023. (H. Rick Bamman/The Beacon-News)

Wolfsmith doesn’t have to look far for a comparison — just take a glance at Scarce, Tuesday’s leading scorer.

“Colin has all the skills Nate had last year as a junior,” Wolfsmith said. “He can shoot it from deep. He can score around the basket. He can handle it like a guard.

“It’s just a matter of getting used to the varsity level.”

Colin confirmed he's taking advantage of having Searce as a teammate.

"Nate is a great player," Colin said. "I learn a lot from him. We have a similar skill set. He just helps me a lot, reps in practice, helps me with my shot. It gives me a lot of confidence.

"I just have to keep working."

- Daily Herald -

Fenton continues strong start with 20-point win over Larkin

By: Bill Esbrook

December 12, 2023

Fenton guard Xavier Gonzalez says that he plans to "cherish every moment" of his senior year.

Chances are, if the Bison keep playing the way they have been all season, he'll have plenty of magical moments to remember.

Tuesday night in Bensenville, Fenton defeated visiting **Larkin** 67-47 in an Upstate Eight matchup, improving to 8-1 overall and 4-0 in conference.

The Bison led at halftime 44-10.

"It's very rewarding playing with these guys," said Gonzalez of his teammates. "Working hard every day in practice and not taking any day for granted. Just keeping my head up no matter what the outcome and staying on the grind."

Fenton takes the court with 5 senior starters, and coach Chaz Taft said they've been together since "about the sixth grade."

"It's still early," said Taft, "but we're just playing like we play, trying to get after it defensively, and offensively trying to share the ball."

Gonzalez scored a game-high 22 points, while classmate Alejandro Diaz tallied 15.

"I really credit these two guys (Gonzalez and Diaz)," said Taft.

"You see a lot of high school kids (these days) go to the transfer portal thinking that the grass is always greener on the other side. These two guys are making Fenton a special place right now and I couldn't be more proud of them."

Larkin competed with intensity the entire game, and came out after intermission to outscore Fenton in the second half 37-23.

“They played hard,” said **Royals** coach Deryn Carter of his team, “and I give them a lot of credit.

“We’ve just got to be better in the first half. Taking care of the ball has been a huge issue for us and we’ve got to get that corrected.”

Carter added that he’s not surprised at all that Fenton has been on a hot streak in the early part of the season.

“We’ve known this was coming for a couple years with them,” said Carter.

“Coach Taft had a young group two years ago, and last year they were knocking on the door. Now they’re the rabbit we’re going to be chasing. He (Taft) has done a heck of a job and so have the kids.”

Larkin kept pace with the Bison early, and after **Royals’** 6-2 senior guard Logan Leaver hit two long 3s, the score was 6-6.

Then Fenton went on a 38-4 run the remainder of the opening two quarters, with many of their points coming off of steals and runout layups.

Gonzalez and Diaz nailed back-to-back 3 pointers to open the second half, and they exited the game with 6:40 remaining in the third quarter as both teams substituted freely in the final 2 quarters.

Andre Jones and DeAngelo Mister led **Larkin** with 8 points apiece.

Miguel Sanchez finished with 7 points for Fenton, while Damian Harnish pitched in with 6 points.

Gonzalez added that it sometimes crosses his mind that it’s the final prep season for he and many of his teammates, but he doesn’t dwell on it.

“I think about that sometimes,” he said, “but I just like to live in the moment and play.

“I want to do as much as I can and not waste any time at all. Keep moving forward and (hopefully) end up with a championship.”

- Chicago Tribune -

Izzie Castro goes on a scoring tizzy for Elgin. The parental advice? It's paying off. 'A lot of it comes from my dad.'

By: Paul Johnson

Dec 11, 2023



Junior guard Izzie Castro, who tied her own program record with eight 3-pointers last week for **Elgin** against **Streamwood**, poses at practice on Monday, Dec. 11, 2023. (Paul Johnson / The Beacon-News)

Early on in her career, junior guard Izzie Castro didn't look at herself as a scorer for **Elgin**.

She was more of a facilitator, content to set things up rather than take on a leading role. Her father, Michael, helped get her into a more aggressive scoring mindset.

"A lot of it comes from my dad," Castro said of her improving offense. "He tells me, 'You can't always shoot. You have to drive.' So, I've been trying to drive a little bit more to create more space — so people don't think I'm just a shooter and that's all I do.

"It's really helpful. He gives me a lot of advice and helps me a lot."

Castro started turning into a reliable scorer in the second half last season. After her strong summer, dad's advice is paying off in a big way this winter for the **Maroons** (6-3).

The 5-foot-7 Castro leads **Elgin** in scoring this season, averaging 13.6 points. She has hit 32 3-pointers. Her 63 3-pointers last season set a new program record.

She's well on her way to another new overall mark. And she tied her program single-game record with

eight 3-pointers last week in a 26-point performance against **Streamwood**.

“The two games before that, I wasn’t really hitting any of my shots, so I was a little worried for that game,” Castro said. “My team did a good job getting me open, and I guess I kind of got lucky with my shots.”

Continuing to shoot through her slump was something coach Nick Bumbales liked to see.

“She has the green light,” Bumbales said. “Part of it is just confidence. A lot of people, after they miss a couple in a row, are like, ‘I need to shut it down.’ She knows that part of her responsibility for us is to score.

“If she misses 10 in a row, No. 11 is going to go in. She can’t just shut it down. She’s responded to that role really well, and she’s done a good job playing defense. Her all-around game keeps improving.”

Her play has helped the **Maroons** to a solid start in Bumbales’ final season before he retires. He has been a fixture for 36 years at **Elgin**, the first 21 as the team doctor in boys basketball.

In addition to various other coaching assignments, he’s led the girls basketball program the past 15 years.

“Jocelyn (Bardesi) and I have definitely talked about that,” Castro said. “We really need to step it up this year as captains and make it a good last season because he’s been here so long.

“We just want it to be a good ending for him.”

Scott Stewart, Bumbales’ assistant for all 15 seasons, hopes for the same.

“Basketball, obviously, that’s what we do, but the amount of girls that he’s gotten to go to college or graduate or help them with things at home,” Stewart said. “Everything, it’s amazing.

“They’re all like his grandkids or kids.”

Bumbales is grateful for the outpouring of support but wants this season to be about his team.

“The sentimentality from them has been very nice and they’ve been very generous,” Bumbales said. “I keep reminding them it’s about them. My time has come and gone a couple times.”

And whatever happens, Castro — the newfound offensive star for the **Maroons** — will be in the middle of it.

“It’s really surprising to me because when I first started playing I wasn’t a big scorer,” Castro said. “I was more of the assist type person.

“The end of last year and this year, scoring a lot of points has been really surprising to me, but I’m really happy.”

- Chicago Tribune -

It’s Greek to South Elgin’s Demetrios Carrera. Spanish, too. And his effort speaks volumes. ‘Not scared of anyone.’

By: Patrick Z. McGavin

Dec 11, 2023



South Elgin sophomore Demetrios Carrera improved his record to 17-1 after going 5-0 in the Beat the Streets Tournament at Hope in Chicago on Saturday, Dec. 9, 2023. (Patrick McGavin/Daily Southtown)

South Elgin sophomore Demetrios Carrera is a pretty skilled linguist.

His mother Sophia, a native of Athens, taught him Greek. His father, Leo, is from Quito, Ecuador. Demetrios walks the walk, but quite literally, he can talk the talk.

“Greek is a really hard language, one of the toughest in the world to learn,” he said. “I was much more fluent in Spanish when I was younger. I’m conversational in both languages.”

Carrera’s effort has spoken volumes this season at 120 pounds. He went 5-0 Saturday with three falls at

the Beat the Streets Tournament in Chicago, improving his record to 17-1.

Carrera led the Storm to a second-place finish in the tourney.

“My style is kind of a scramble, a bit funky on my feet, and I like to wrestle a lot of fun moves,” he said. “I am always staying in the best position and looking to get to my attacks.”

As a freshman, Carrera burst onto the scene last season. He went 40-4 at 106, winning conference and regional titles and finishing second in the sectional to qualify for the Class 3A state meet.

He went 2-2 in Champaign, just one match away from placing. The bittersweet experience was fundamental to his growth and development.

“Throughout the year, I had a lot of tough matches,” Carrera said. “That prepared me for when I went on that stage. I didn’t get what I wanted, but to be honest, it was a good thing that happened.

“Being that close just made me work that much harder in the offseason and made me hungry.”

Carrera’s flair for the orthodox and unpredictable has captured the imagination of his teammates, including senior Julius Avendano, who also finished 5-0 Saturday at 106.

“He’s scrappy,” Avendano said. “He likes to scramble and be in unusual positions, and he’s not scared of anyone.

“He’s my training partner most of the time. We build off each other. The positions he gets into helps me work on what I need to work on to get better.”

Leo Rosas finished 5-0 in the tournament at 150. Like Carrera, he’s a sophomore. And his friend is an inspiration.

“It’s really great working with him because he gives me the confidence I need,” Rosas said. “Having somebody my own age and accomplishing what he has is a really good thing.

“He is always doing extra work and putting in extra time.”

Carrera’s favorite activity outside of wrestling is playing video games, the perfect avenue for his intensely competitive nature.

Wrestling brings out his own creative impulses.

“I’ve learned a lot from my coaches,” Carrera said. “But I think a lot of the sport is about developing your own style from what you learn.

“I pick up a lot from watching others. I’ll think to myself, ‘that’s pretty cool,’ and try it. The move might be funky or weird, but it’s about making the least amount of mistakes possible.”

Carrera’s actions are always grounded in the fundamental actions, according to **South Elgin** coach James Gloudeman.

“He is one of the hardest working kids I’ve ever been around,” Gloudeman said. “The success he had last season, and now the experiences of wrestling tougher kids in the spring and summer, has just elevated his confidence.”

The way Carrera thinks about the sport is outside the normal parameters.

“I just love that it’s six minutes of constantly attacking,” he said of wrestling. “Your goal is to take them in deep waters. Even if they’re stronger, you take them to the edge of where they’re not comfortable.”

- Chicago Tribune -

Rick Armstrong’s Aurora-Elgin area boys basketball rankings and player of the week

By: Rick Armstrong

Dec 11, 2023



Batavia's Jax Abalos (23) plays defense against a shot by St. Charles North's Parker Reinke (12) during a DuKane Conference game in St. Charles on Wednesday, Dec. 6, 2023. (Mark Black/The Beacon-News)

Waubonsie Valley takes over the top spot with West Aurora next, while **South Elgin** enters the rankings. Batavia's Jax Abalos is the player of the week.

Top 10

With records through Monday and previous rankings in parentheses.

1. Waubonsie Valley 8-0 (4)

Moses Wilson steps up with 17 points for Warriors in 52-39 win over district rival Metea.

2. West Aurora 7-2 (2)

Wins over Oswego East, Plainfield North lift Blackhawks into Southwest Prairie West lead.

3. Oswego East 6-3 (1)

Wolves get back on track, beat Yorkville as Jehvion Starwood scores 15 points.

4. Batavia 6-2 (6)

Junior guard Jax Abalos makes 3-pointer to beat buzzer, down Wheaton North 44-41.

5. Kaneland 6-1 (7)

Freddy Hassan leads Knights past Marmion with 12 points, nine rebounds, two blocks.

6. Metea Valley 4-3 (3)

Jake Nosek steps up with 11 points, seven rebounds, two blocks in loss to Waubonsie.

7. Aurora Christian 9-1 (8)

Cameron Morel drops 20 points on Bishop McNamara as Eagles roll to 63-42 win.

8. Burlington Central 5-2 (10)

Myles Lowe averages 22 points in two wins as coach Brett Porto hits 301 on career win total.

9. Geneva 4-4 (5)

Vikings draw sixth seed for Dayton Classic in DeKalb, will open against Dundee-Crown.

10. **South Elgin** 5-4 (NR)

Ishmael George gets three steals as Storm win third straight, 44-41 over Schaumburg.

Player of the Week

Left-handed Jax Abalos, a 6-foot-6 junior forward, was perched on the right wing Saturday and took a pass from senior point guard Nate Nazos, who was at center court. Abalos launched a 3-point shot that beat the buzzer and was good as Batavia topped Wheaton North 44-41.