



LEHIGH COUNTY

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PRESS RELEASE

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No Lehigh County Tax Increase for 2018 *One-time opportunities contribute to a stable tax rate*

(South Whitehall, PA) Lehigh County Executive Tom Muller today released his administration's Proposed 2018 Budget at the County-owned Cedarview Apartments in South Whitehall.

The \$476.3 million budget features no tax increase and \$68 million for bond-financed renovation and expansion of the Cedarbrook nursing home in South Whitehall. Excluding the Cedarbrook investment, the proposed budget is slightly lower than this year's.

The County's millage rate will remain at 3.64 and the average homeowner will pay \$645 in County real estate taxes, which is lower than neighboring counties.

"Proposing a budget with no tax increase is no easy task when we start each year with a deficit driven in part by small, politically-driven tax cuts." said Muller. "Thanks to the efforts of all of our employees and some fortunate one-time opportunities, we project an opening General Fund balance of \$8.7 million which helps balance the 2018 budget." The County will also be drawing down \$3.3 million from its "rainy day" fund, which will remain above recommended guidelines.

This is the fourth consecutive year that Muller's administration has successfully overcome a budgeted deficit and been able to deliver a proposed budget with no tax increase.

After 9 years of personnel reductions and for the first time since 2000, the County's personnel count will be increased by two positions—to 1,964--and another three open positions included in the 2017 budget have been filled. Four of the five positions are in public safety areas and the overall personnel count is below where it was 30 years ago.

The Proposed 2018 Budget also makes the full required contribution to the pension fund and provides pay increases of 2.75% for non-union employees. The County's self-insured healthcare costs are rising a modest 4% partially due to the implementation of wellness programs over the past several years.

The Proposed 2018 Budget also includes the \$2 million for farmland preservation that was approved in 2017.

The Lehigh County Board of Commissioners will now begin a series of hearings in September leading up to a final budget vote by the end of October.

The full, detailed Lehigh County Proposed 2018 Budget may be viewed on the County's website starting next Tuesday and a budget overview presentation has already been posted on the website:

www.lehighcounty.org

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