

Taxes going down slightly in Sewickley as council adopts 2019 budget

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The Sewickley Borough Building.

Come next year, Sewickley residents will see a decrease in their real estate taxes.

At a Nov. 13 meeting, borough council voted to approve a 2019 budget that is supported by a real estate tax rate of 6.25 mills, down from this year's rate of 6.5 mills.

According to budget documents, real estate taxes go to the borough's general fund, as well as a road construction, capital improvement and restricted reserve fund. General

fund revenues pay for public safety, public works, employee salaries and other costs. The capital improvement fund covers the replacement of vehicles, particularly in the public works and police departments. It also covers costs associated with maintaining Sewickley's parks.

At the meeting, council voted to adopt an ordinance that established the new tax rate, which includes 3.74 mills for general fund purposes, 1.55 mills for road construction and maintenance, 0.5 mills for capital improvement and 0.46 mills for restricted reserve funds.

"Just for a comparison basis, I know it doesn't sound like much, but if you have a home appraised at \$200,000, you'll have \$50 less in taxes this year," said councilman Hendrik van der Vaart.

This year, council has also made an effort to recoup lost tax revenues from past years, with the help of turnKey Taxes, a software firm based in Warrendale. According to a document on the borough's website, turnKey is now the appointed business privilege tax and license examiner for Sewickley.

Based on a conversation he had with a representative of turnKey, Neff said that by the end of the year, the company should be able to identify significant amounts of business privilege tax money that the borough hasn't seen.

Van der Vaart added that 27 businesses in Sewickley have already arranged agreements to pay back past taxes that they owe.

According to a June Sewickley Herald article, the use of turnKey's services is part of a due diligence effort to raise revenues without increasing taxes.

Earlier in the Nov. 13 meeting, Van der Vaart indicated his hope for more tax cuts in the future.

"I'm definitely hopeful that this next year we'll be able to cut even more and return it to taxpayers and also clean up what we do so that we're focusing on key priorities and not spreading ourselves too thin," he said.

Sam Bojarski is a Tribune-Review contributing writer.