



COUNTY LEVY

Board, staff whittle levy

by JUSTIN R. LESSMAN
Publisher

+1.4%

The Jackson County Board of Commissioners this week approved one of the lowest property tax levy increases in the last decade.

Commissioners on Tuesday signed off on a property tax levy collectible in 2020 of a little more than \$10.85 million, an increase of around \$155,000 over what was collected the year prior. The 1.4 percent tax hike the final levy represents is the third lowest since 2011.

Earlier this year, commissioners approved a preliminary levy of \$11.23 million, a 4.9 percent increase

over the year prior. That would have represented the second highest year-over-year percent increase this decade.

However, between then and now, commissioners and county staff members worked to whittle the county budget down by around \$375,000. Jackson County Auditor-Treasurer Kevin Nordquist said key reductions included a \$215,000 decrease in the buildings and improvements budget thanks to reserves, a \$50,000 reduction in the planned use of compensation plan reserves to cover

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JCC LEVY

School board keeps promise

by JUSTIN R. LESSMAN
Publisher

-0.8%

PRE-BOND APPROVAL

+26.5%

POST-BOND APPROVAL

The Jackson County Central Board of Education on Monday held tight to a promise made earlier in the year not to raise the district's property tax levy one bit — unless, that is, voters decided to do it themselves in the form of a school building bond referendum.

Voters did just that, approving a \$35.4 million

bond issue in the November election. Accordingly, while the school board this week

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CITY LEVY

Council cuts its levy hike in half

by JUSTIN R. LESSMAN
Publisher

+2.9%

The Jackson City Council has approved one of the smallest property tax levy increases this decade.

Council members on Tuesday signed off on a final property tax levy collectible in 2020 of nearly \$1.6 million, an increase of close to \$44,100 — or 2.9 percent — over the year prior.

That increase is about half of what the council proposed back in September when it approved a preliminary levy of more than \$1.6 million, or a 5.9 percent year-over-year increase. Council members at the time challenged themselves to reduce that amount, and they did — to

the tune of nearly \$46,000.

“The finance committee over the last couple of months has been working very diligently to pare that levy back and reduce the impact to taxpayers as much as possible,” Jackson City Administrator Matt Skaret reported Tuesday evening.

Jackson Mayor Wayne Walter said he could attest to that fact, adding the finance committee looked in every nook and cranny of the 2020 city budget for unnecessary spending.

“The fluff is gone,” Walter said.

“And now we have to live

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A SWEET TREAT



PHOTOS BY JUSTIN LESSMAN
Above: Asher Peterson Tweedt is all concentration as he decorates his gingerbread house last week at the Jackson campus of Discovery Place Preschool. Left: Discovery Place Preschool student Fynlee Peterson Tweedt gets the frosting just right on the roof of her gingerbread house.



PHOTOS BY JUSTIN LESSMAN AND MIKE JORDAN
GETTING IN THE SPIRIT

Left: Riverside Elementary School third-grader William Washington portrays Santa Claus himself during the school's presentation of “Christmas Around the Clock” last Wednesday at the Jackson County Central Performing Arts Center in Jackson. Above: Tellef Landherr plays air guitar while he and Delaney Krumwiede dance to “Rock Around the Shop Tonight” during Pleasantview Elementary School's Christmas program, “Santa's Stuck in the '50's,” performed last Thursday at the JCC Middle School in Lakefield. More photos from last week's programs are inside.

Building process moving forward

Architect hired, financing plan put into motion

by JUSTIN R. LESSMAN
Publisher

Plans for \$35 million in school building improvements at Jackson County Central are moving forward on two fronts, as members of the local school board this week contracted with an architectural firm for design services and put the financing in place to



Brad Anderson

pay for it all. The JCC Board of Education on Monday hired JLG Architects out of Sioux Falls, S.D., to design the improvements, which include the addition of middle school space onto Pleasantview Elementary School in Lakefield. School board member Brad Anderson said the board's facility committee recommended JLG for the job over three other firms vying for the work.

“They brought very good, progressive ideas on what this new facility could look like,” Anderson said. “It's a whole different learning environment. They have a progressive vision for the district, a vision that will serve our

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