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Redbank debates music program's future

By EVANNE GAREIS
L-V Staff Writer

NEW BETHLEHEM — Renewed attention to the Redbank Valley School District music program was necessitated earlier this week as last month's resignation of elementary music/vocal teacher Emily Fields, brought the district's music staff from three full-time and one half-

time positions to two full-time and one half-time positions. During the school board meeting Monday night, Redbank Valley School District superintendent Michael Drzewiecki explained that he and his administrative team met with the three remaining music department teachers — full-time el-

ementary band director Eli Terwilliger, half-time high school band director Sarah Williams and full-time high school choir director Carrie McIntire — to explore possible solutions for the open position in the district's kindergarten through 12 music program. Drzewiecki presented two pos-

sible solutions to school board members during Monday night's meeting. The first option would maintain the current three-and-a-half music positions within the district. Drzewiecki noted that if this option is used, the district would post a notice of the open position and proceed with the hiring process.

The second option includes reducing the K-12 music department to three positions, while maintaining all course offerings beginning in January. Drzewiecki explained that if the second option were to be approved, Terwilliger would rearrange his schedule to cover band in grades four through 12. Terwilliger would spend morn-

[Continued on Page A-3]

Budget impasse forces Union to take out tax loan

By JOSH WALZAK
L-V Editor

RIMERSBURG — With the new year fast approaching, and the state budget impasse offering no relief for local school districts, Union School District officials last week moved ahead with borrowing money to keep schools running in 2016.

By unanimous vote, the school board authorized the administration to pursue the issuance of a \$1.5 million tax anticipation note.

Union business manager John Stevens said that the board's approval now allows him to start the process of preparing the loan from Clarion County Community Bank.

According to documents included with the school board's meeting agenda last week, the tax revenue anticipation note would be for a term of up to six months at a fixed interest rate of 2.75 percent or a variable rate of 2.5 percent.

Stevens said he hoped the state would approve a budget and begin funding schools before Union needs to draw money from the loan. He said that he doesn't expect the district [Continued on Page A-2]



TWO-YEAR-OLD Brynlee Alexander of New Bethelhem (above photo) was all smiles as she met Santa Claus last Saturday at the annual Snack With Santa event in New Bethelhem. The meet-and-greet with Santa was held after the Christmas parade on Broad Street (right), sponsored by the Redbank Valley Chamber of Commerce. For more photos from the two events, see Page A-12.

[L-V photos by Josh Walzak]



Rmbg. tax hike to fund hydrant repairs

By JOSH WALZAK
L-V Editor

RIMERSBURG — A 2016 Rimersburg Borough budget that raises property taxes and hikes water and sewerage rates was made official Monday night.

Borough council members who proposed the \$340,000 general fund spending plan and 2-mill property tax increase in November, unanimously approved the budget Monday with "minor changes."

Council president Roger Crick said that the increase in the fire protection tax to 1.2 mills will help the community cover needed repairs and replacements for the many fire hydrants on the Rimersburg Municipal Authority's (RMA) water system. He explained that other authorities, as well as private water companies such as Pennsylvania American Water, charge municipalities a fee of roughly \$15 per month per hydrant to offset upkeep costs.

Although it was too late in the budget process to ask the townships in which the RMA's hydrants are located to chip in for 2016, Crick suggested that they would be asked in future years.

"We're trying to lead by example," he said, noting [Continued on Page A-9]



The Christmas season is in full swing in the region, with colorful lights, decorated trees and lots of special events going on — including visits by Santa Claus himself.

Youngsters can bend the ear of the Man in Red by stopping in at the Festival of Trees in the former Family Dollar location in the New Bethlehem Plaza from 4 to 6 p.m. on Dec. 12, 19 and 23.

The Festival of Trees got off to a great start last [Continued on Page A-6]

HAVIN DIRECTOR Jo Ellen Bowman (left) and Encore! Artisan's Boutique manager Kelly McCoy show the wide array of unique artisanal items offered at the new shop along Kittanning's Market Street. The boutique will benefit HAVIN's Children's Advocacy Center, Kay's Cottage.

[L-V photo by Josh Walzak]



Boutique benefits child abuse victims

By JOSH WALZAK
L-V Editor

KITTANNING — Buying Christmas gifts for family and friends will make a person feel good during the holiday season; but those who shop for gifts at a new boutique in Kittanning, will also feel good knowing that their purchases helped the

county's Children's Advocacy Center.

The Encore! Artisan Boutique, located at 215 Market Street in downtown Kittanning near the Rite Aid pharmacy, is well stocked with unique gifts for its first holiday season after opening its doors earlier this year.

The boutique, which features a wide [Continued on Page B-11]

Final county budget holds tax levels

By EVANNE GAREIS
L-V Staff Writer

CLARION — Budgets topped the agenda of the Clarion County commissioners' meeting held Tuesday morning in Clarion.

The first order of business for Commissioners Wayne Brosius, Butch Campbell and Greg Fallor was to approve Clarion County's 2016 general fund budget.

"I would like to thank the department heads and county employees for all their diligence," Brosius said after the meeting.

As projected in the preliminary budget, county residents will not see a tax increase for the upcoming year, with the county's millage remaining at 20.5 mills for the general budget and 1.5 mills for debt service.

"Tax rates are all remaining the same," Brosius noted during the meeting, explaining that per capita tax rates will also remain the same at \$5.

The 2016 budget, which once again required no carryover funds to balance out, totaled \$18,739,275 [Continued on Page B-11]



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