

Tax Rebates Shake C'ville Budget

By MARIE MCGEE

State-ordered cash refunds due landowners who have appealed and won lower property assessments may force Clarenceville's Board of Education to dip even further than it planned into its financial "cushion" for the future.

Their only hope is to convince the Legislature give back Clarenceville's share of a \$23 million contingency fund set up when a portion of state aid to all school districts was withheld last year. The money was never used.

Clarenceville's share would amount to \$47,600—more than enough to cover the refunds amounting to approximately \$20,000 that are due the Occidental Investment Co.,

VA Ups Grants

An increase from \$12,500 to \$17,500 in Veterans Administration grants to eligible veterans for the purchase of "wheelchair homes," effective July 10, 1972, was the second hike in three years.

owners of an apartment complex in the district, and a Farmington trailer court owner.

Both parties recently appealed '70-71 assessments before the State Tax Commission and subsequently won lower property valuations that entitled them to a cash refund.

IF THE STATE doesn't come through with the rebate which Clarenceville officials claim is "rightfully ours," the district will be forced to use funds from the "planned" surplus that occurred last year.

The budgeted surplus of \$91,000 is the result of the board's decision last year to save at least one mill of a two-mill levy the district was forced to raise two years ago because of a lardy state aid plan, explained Supt. David McDowell.

Actually, through careful budgeting, the district was able to save more than the one mill and had hoped to keep the money in reserve as a "cushion against the future."

It's this surplus, too, that will make up the \$28,000 deficit in this year's budget, McDowell added.

Now the board may have to dip into it even further to pay off the tax rebates that are due immediately, under a new state law. Previously, refunds could take the form of credits and be applied against future taxes, it was explained.

Salisz went to Lansing Friday to confer with state tax officials to present Clarenceville's case. He learned that the state has already begun a study of the problem that faces other school districts as well as Clarenceville. One of those is the Plymouth School District which is reportedly "harder hit" than Clarenceville.

The financial dilemma surfaced during the discussion that preceded the public hearing on the budget at the board's Nov. 9 general meeting.

There were no objections to the \$3,950,000 budget that

provides basically the same instructional program as last year but at a higher price tag and 160 fewer students.

District revenues are due to climb by \$130,000 because of an increase in local valuation, it was noted.

The new state aid formula will also give the district an added \$8,000, Salisz pointed out, even though the district lost 160 students.

Another saving factor was the increase of government help with special programs that qualify under the federal grants. One of these is the district's \$35,000 reading program that will be

underwritten by a federal grant.

Salisz noted that the district managed to save money this past year in salary expenditures due to the wage freeze, but this savings was offset somewhat by increased building maintenance costs.

The cost of operating building additions and the fixed charges covering property insurance and increased cost of medical insurance are also higher than in previous years, he added.

A breakdown of personnel shows that the staff is down by five persons, three from the instructional staff and two from the cafeteria.



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