



**SUMMER BLAST** — The Bollinger sisters — Adriana, left, and Mia — enter the bounce house at Summer Blast, sponsored by the Amherst Recreation Department at Clearfield Community Center on Sunday. The department will wrap up its summer programming as youths prepare to head back to school the first week of September.

Photo by Jim Smerecak  
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*Williamsville*

# School tax rate increase is less than 1 percent

by **JESSICA L. FINCH**  
Associate Editor

Amherst and Clarence residents living in the Williamsville Central School District will pay a slightly higher tax rate this year, while Cheektowaga residents will see a small decrease.

Thomas Matuski, assistant superintendent for finance and management services, explained the reasoning behind the figures during the Aug. 12 Board of Education meeting.

“The projected tax rate increase was .86 percent,” he said.

Projections are made during the budget process to give residents an idea of the impact when voting on the budget in May.

The projection was based on the town’s assessment staying at 92 percent, which it did, but the projected assessed values increase fell short, at 1.38 percent, not reaching 2 percent.

Due to the shortfall, the tax increase would have had to be 1.23 percent, but Matuski said \$800,000 was added to revenue to take the burden off taxpayers.

“The revenue side will offset the decrease in assessments,” he said.

The district used increased state and federal aid and increased the sales tax estimate by \$500,000. Also, \$50,000 from the surplus was used.

Matuski said the total sales tax revenue for the district is \$8.7 million.

The 2008-09 tax levy (amount raised in taxes) is \$99 million of the \$151 million budget.

The tax rates are as follows:

- Amherst — \$19.73 per \$1,000 assessed value, a .43 percent or 8 cent increase from 2007-08
- Clarence — \$18.15, a .43 percent or 8 cent increase
- Cheektowaga — \$29.28, a .25 percent or 7 cent decrease

The motion to accept the rates passed by a vote of 6-2. Trustees Stephen Munschauer and Carrie Kahn voted against the resolution.

Prior to the vote, Munschauer had suggested using more sales tax to further reduce the taxes.

That suggestion was not accepted by the board. Matuski said the board felt it was better to be conservative with this budget

because many of the items are very reliant on the economy.

The board also accepted the retirement of Maple East Elementary Principal Mary Mallon. Her retirement will be effective the end of January. She has been in the position for seven years.

The district will begin the replacement process for that post, in addition to finding the next South High School principal.

In another matter, the district announced it is eligible for \$564,300 from the state to be used for the Universal Pre-K program. The funding will allow for expansion of the program, with space for 209 children, 63 more than last year.

Six preschool sites are part of the program: World of Discovery, Page One Preschool, Pixie Village Learning Center, Audubon at College Park, Doodle Bugs Child Care and Preschool, and Aunt Pat’s School House.

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## Board questions how proposed YMCA will affect traffic

by **JESSICA L. FINCH**  
Associate Editor

The YMCA Northeast Branch is hoping to move and expand its facility, but the Amherst Town Board had some concerns about the size and traffic.

During Monday’s board meeting, a public hearing was held concerning the project. Because it is a landlocked parcel, the board has to grant access, which would be on Tech Drive.

YMCA is eyeing a 14-acre parcel, owned by Randall Baptist Church at 6301 Main St. It would neighbor Windsong Apartments and Erie Community College’s North Campus, near Wehrle Drive and Youngs Road.

Council Member Guy Marlette said the board wants a traffic study done to see how the increased traffic would affect the roads surrounding the proposed YMCA.

The plan calls for 550-640 spaces. With a lot that size, the board has concerns about that many people traveling to the facility.

“The question here is the access road.

With 550 parking spaces you are expecting quite a bit of traffic,” Supervisor Satish Mohan said.

YMCA Buffalo Niagara President John Murray said he didn’t think the development would add a lot of new traffic. He anticipated higher use in the morning and after work. He added that ECC and the YMCA are busy at different times of the day.

The vote was tabled until September to allow time for a traffic study.

Murray said an 82,000-square-foot structure has been proposed and will include the typical YMCA amenities: pool, gym, fitness center, activity areas and child care.

The current YMCA Northeast Branch is located at 4433 Main St., and was built in 1962. Currently there are 3,400 members. That building is 26,000 square feet, Assistant Planning Director Gary Black said.

If the Town Board approves the access, part of the open development process, then the project would proceed to the Planning Board for site plan approval, he said.

The Planning Board recommended approval for access.

Council Member Deborah Bruch Bucki said the Fire Chiefs Association has concerns about the site, in regard to access and mobility onsite.

Many of the board’s concerns will be addressed in the site plan review process. A representative from Windsong Apartments spoke, requesting that YMCA consider a berm between the site and the apartments and use of less intense lighting.

In other news, Interim Clerk Marjory Jaeger announced that the town had received a grant from Sen. Mary Lou Rath, R-Amherst, to cover a portion of the cost of a Datacard Photo ID System.

It’s anticipated the town will also receive funding through Assemblyman Jim Hayes, R-Amherst, which will cover the system in full. If the funding is not received, costs will be covered by the clerk’s operating budget and/or items will not be purchased.

Jaeger said that former Town Clerk Sue Jaros deserves a lot of credit for applying

for the grant and moving the program forward. The system will cost approximately \$20,000 including initial supplies.

The cards would be accepted as appropriate ID for border crossings and would cost about \$25. There are three employees in the clerk’s office certified and registered through New York to run the system.

The cards would only be available to people born in the town. Those born in a Buffalo hospital, but having lived their entire lives in Amherst, would not be eligible. They would have to go through the City of Buffalo, which is currently operating a pilot program.

Jaeger said she didn’t have a start date because funding was still pending.

The board also passed a resolution naming Supervisor Satish Mohan as a marriage officer for the town. He sponsored the resolution, saying he receives several requests every year from residents to perform marriages.

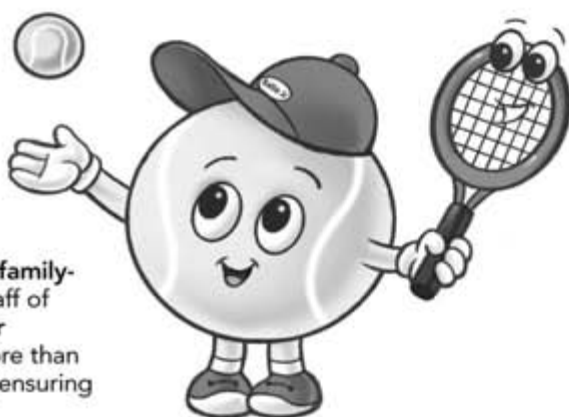
His resolution was amended to include council members Dr. Barry Weinstein, Mark Manna and Guy Marlette as marriage officers.

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