

# County OKs '17 Budget

By NOLAN STOUT

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**HARRISONBURG** — Rockingham County property owners are going to see an increase in their real estate taxes.

The Board of Supervisors approved the hike as part of the budget for fiscal 2017, which begins July 1, at its meeting Wednesday.

Supervisors Pablo Cuevas, Rick Chandler, Michael Breeden and Bill Kyger voted in favor of the budget. Supervisor Fred Eberly was not present.

The \$ 361 million spending plan for the upcoming fiscal year includes investments in public safety, infrastructure improvements and the school division's digital conversion initiative seeking to integrate technology into classrooms.

It represents a 7.2 percent increase over the current fiscal year's \$336.5 million budget.

A 2 cent increase in real estate taxes included in the 2017 budget brings the total levy to 70 cents per \$100 of assessed value.

For the average county home valued at \$215,000, owners will see a \$43 increase in real estate taxes per year — or \$21.50 per billing cycle.

Kyger said the tax hike was difficult but necessary.

"These budgets are never easy to do, particularly ... when tax increases are involved," Kyger said. "We do believe that ... the reasons for them are prudent and responsible, and they have been well thought through and they have been discussed."

The increase is estimated to generate about \$1.5 million in additional revenue.

Investments in public safety and education are ongoing costs, Cuevas said, and steady revenue is needed to meeting the county's growing needs.

"They don't go away," Cuevas said. "The technology program in the school system will never go away. Our young folks need to be educated in a little different manner than folks like me were educated."

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