



SUBMITTED

Samuel Pressure Vessel's Clayton Reindl and John Gromosko explain a circumferential welding system to Peshtigo students



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BPM quality technician Steve Elie explains the operations process to Peshtigo students.



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BPM marketing specialist Melissa DeMoulin with quality technician Steve Elie show Peshtigo students part of the paper manufacturing process.



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Peshtigo 8th-grade students pose on the deck of a littoral combat ship (LCS) after touring Fincantieri Marinette Marine.

Manufacturers support Peshtigo students

8th graders visit 3 local industries

SPECIAL TO THE EAGLEHERALD

PESHTIGO—October is Manufacturing Month in Wisconsin and the NEW Manufacturing Alliance recently sponsored free transportation for Peshtigo eighth-grade students to visit three local advanced manufacturers.

"Manufacturing employs 23% of all the jobs in the region, contributing \$17.9 billion to the regional economy annually," according to executive director of the NEW Manufacturing Alliance, Ann Franz.

Peshtigo students were able to tour BPM Inc., Samuel Pressure Vessel Group and Fincantieri Marinette Marine.

Manufacturing is a critical sector to our economy. "We service dozens of industries on a global platform," states Samuel Pressure Vessel Group's Melissa Schultz. "Advanced manufacturing technology is critical to the growth of our Wisconsin economy. There are over 2,000 manufacturing companies in northeast Wisconsin alone. Manufacturing has the highest wages and benefits of all of the private sector careers."

"We take pride in something real," Schultz explains, "Our products are used in everyday life and can be seen in the real world."

"A career in manufacturing is very rewarding and lucrative," Melissa DeMoulin of BPM emphasizes, "You can take pride in creating something that will benefit someone else."

She expresses that manufacturing industries offer a variety of positions, ranging from productions to accounting, sales and engineering, to even safety and medical. DeMoulin emphasizes that manufacturing careers are stable and offer good pay and benefits.

When young people are considering career options, they often



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BPM plant manager Ryan Day explains the converting process to Peshtigo students.

focus on hourly wages paid. Many manufacturers offer health insurance and 401k matching programs. Both BPM and Samuel Pressure Vessel do. In addition many manufacturing companies pay toward vision and dental care, as well as other benefits.

"We're looking for individuals that want to learn and advance in their careers, are team-oriented and looking for long-term employment," shares Schultz.

DeMoulin states similar characteristics, "We want people with a good attitude, strong work ethic, willingness to learn, and desire to better themselves."

Peshtigo High School's Vocational Studies Program is designed to help students gain the skills necessary for pursuing careers in the manufacturing sector.

"The manufacturing industry is currently experiencing a skills gap. There are more available jobs than qualified workers," states Schultz. The Peshtigo School District is working to address this need.

"Support from local businesses has been outstanding. Our business partners drive what we teach," Vocational studies teacher Dan Vanidestine explains, "We have recognized the need to incorporate college level certifications

for work ethic, safety, and precision management."

Peshtigo students, while in high school, can earn multiple work certifications, including: Snap-on Precision Measurement Instrument certifications, State of Wisconsin Employability Skills Certification, Certified Production Technician certification, as well as Mike Rowe Works Work Ethic Certification.

Vanidestine reveals, "We are always open to ideas from our business partners to help us continuously improve."

Many hope that voters support the Nov. 8 referendum to add on to and update the technology education learning space. Fincantieri Marinette Marine is donating 140 bars of steel 20 feet in length valued at about \$10,000 to help improve welding training at Peshtigo High School.

"This recent donation from Marinette Marine is awesome, but I'm not sure where I'm going to store it. One of my welding classes has 22 students, yet we only have space for nine welders," said technology education teacher Mike Paquette. "For our auto class, we have 6 cars donated, but space for

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Samuel Pressure Vessel's John Gromoske and Clayton Reindl show Peshtigo students how welder-fabricators use blueprints.

Industry

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only three. The biggest factor limiting us from adding to our technology curriculum is space."

Paquette and Vanidestine are appreciative of the businesses that support technology education programming, and are hopeful for the possibility of an addition.

Students are encouraged to consider careers in manufacturing. Many local manufacturers

reach out to students to share the opportunities available for good paying, long-term careers with benefits. Students can learn manufacturing skills like welding and certifications through the vocational education program and they wouldn't be able to learn as effectively without partnerships with local manufacturers like BPM Inc., Samuel Pressure Vessel Group, and Fincantieri Marinette Marine.

This article was submitted by the Peshtigo School District.

Budget

Continued from Page A1

Stanovich — were excused.

This year's operations levy tax rate will be \$3.373 per \$1,000 of equalized value. That's a decrease of about 41 cents per \$1,000 and 59 cents per \$1,000 from 2021 and 2020, respectively. Total expenditures (about \$74.055 million) fell by 0.69% and total revenue (about \$55.281 million) fell by 5.17%. Equalized value in the county increased by about 17% to \$4.989 billion.

The tax rate was approved 23-2 with Anderson and Hanson voting no.

The total tax levy is \$17,757,698—which is a 3.98% increase from \$17,077,767 in 2021.

Much of Tuesday's discussion on the budget pertained to the Carlson-Dettmann wage study, which will be further discussed and approved Nov. 8. The board, in June, approved a 2.5% wage increase to take effect Jan. 1, 2023, and any employee below Step 6 will advance a step. Lefebvre has recommended the board adjust the pay plan to reward employees with less than four years experience. Any employee in the current position for four or more years shall remain in their current 2023 rate of pay.

Three county employees spoke during public

comment, all against the proposed changes to the wage plan.

One longtime employee said the 2.5% increase for all is good, but adjusting pay for the less experienced employees is not fair to those with a lot of experience. He said one employee with more than 30 years experience will be making the same as someone he trained four years ago.

"If you change the bottom—four years or less—is not going to help the county," he said. "Those people above four years are the ones keeping the wheels moving."

Jail Administrator Bob Majewski, with 32 years of experience, agreed. "It seems like you're devaluing the people who stuck it out and fought for it (wage increase) that makes it all the harder," he said.

The board approved an amendment to the budget that basically moves about \$837,000 around. "All we are doing (with this amendment) is putting some funds aside that in the future we could make some changes to the salary scale," Supervisor Rick Polzin said. "That program and how it is implemented is yet to be determined. I share some of your same concerns about the compression it puts on the upper parts of the wage scale. All we're doing is approving extra money for wages at this particular point."

"That's correct," Lefebvre said. "We are

earmarking \$837,000 to be put in a contingency fund so that whatever decision the county board makes on that implementation, you have at least \$837,000 to use."

"There isn't a whole lot of fat left in this budget, if any," he continued. "We really had to scrape to come up with \$837,000—let me tell you."

Lefebvre pointed out that \$150,000 of that money is coming from a fund balance, the stabilization account. "That is money that we will have to make up next year," he said.

He pointed out that there are some departments that receive a percentage in reimbursement (for instance from Medicare) that will bring the \$837,000 down.

Lefebvre said this money, combined with the 2.5% wage hike, is all going toward employee wages. "We are now putting \$1.6 million or more to our staff," he said. "You can tell that the staff isn't really happy. They don't think we are rewarding those individuals who are one step away from market or a couple of steps above market. The problem is there is no money."

He said the dilemma is staying competitive in the marketplace with newer employees, while trying to reward those with longevity who have done a good job.

Supervisor Gail Wanek, a retiree who worked 28 years for the

county, said the major reason she retired is because new employees were making the same salary as she was making.

Anderson said the reality in county government is that employees will have to be paid more, but there will be fewer people, which means a reduction in services. "That's part of the reason I'm voting against this budget, it doesn't start that process," he said. "The hardship for our administrator is trying to balance the budget with no revenue."

Supervisor Tim Pelzek spoke in favor of four positions being funded—a diversion coordinator in the district attorney's office, an inmate education officer, a deputy clerk of courts and a recreation patrol officer. He said public safety should be the top priority for the county. The cost for those four employees would be \$241,057. He made a motion to fund those four positions.

Several supervisors said they are in favor of those positions, but there is no money to fund them at this point.

Hanson said there would be money for these positions if the county wouldn't have spent money "foolishly" on a bike trail. "This is more important than a bike trail," he said.

Pelzek's amendment to fund the four positions failed, 21-4. He, along with Ginger Deschane, Hanson and Oleszak voted in favor.

School

Continued from Page A2

of the project," he said.

However, residents will pay less money this time. The school's referendum last year asked for \$130 per \$100,000, he said.

Rau listed the price and tax impact as reasons why the last referendum did not pass. If this new referendum doesn't pass, Peshtigo schools will reassess and not give up on the project.

"The facility needs do not go away," he said. "We're still left with a facility in badly need of upgrades."

If the referendum passes, the school will replace the boilers, install air conditioners and do other infrastructure upgrades like electrical and plumbing. He said that teachers will control the heating and cooling room-by-room

and have enough outlets in each classroom to accommodate the technology used in schools.

"The interior of the building will look like new," he said.

Remodeled classrooms will feature new ceiling tiles, carpeting, LED lighting, paint, doors and windows that serve as a second exit in armed shooter situations, he said.

The referendum will increase the school's square footage with a fitness center, a two-station gym for sports and performances and a bigger technical education lab for manufacturing and construction.

In Wisconsin, the only way a school district can proceed with a major capital project is to seek voter approval to borrow the money to do so, Rau explained. This is called a capital referendum.

Rau noted that

construction of a new facility would cost \$11 million more than the district is legally allowed

to borrow.

All district residents are invited to attend a community meeting to

learn more about the referendum on the Nov. 8 general election ballot.

The meeting is Tuesday, Nov. 1, at 6:30 p.m. in the Peshtigo Middle/High School Library.

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