



Change in Mankato homeowner taxes*

On a \$149,200 home

	2007	2008
County tax	\$500	\$501
City tax	\$446	\$459
School tax	\$359	\$373
Total	\$1,308	\$1,332

*Totals include the impact of the homestead credit (which reduces taxes for this property by \$238) and the Region 9 levy (which raises taxes less than \$3.) The 2008 taxes assume no increase in the valuation of the home. The 2008 school district figure includes an estimate for the impact of the levy referendum approved by voters in November. City figures do not include a proposed utility fee, which would decrease property taxes.

Source: Blue Earth Co. Auditor's Office J. Malmanger

Mankato taxes stabilize with home values

City, schools responsible for most of slight increase

By Dan Linehan
Free Press Staff Writer

MANKATO — Despite some big levy increases and a new school referendum, growth in the tax base and stability in home valuations means that Mankatoans' taxes will rise in most cases by only a few percent for 2008.

Using a median assessed Mankato home of \$149,300 as an example, taxes from all

three local governments — Mankato, Blue Earth County and Mankato schools — are expected to rise by \$24, to \$1,332.

That's assuming the home doesn't increase in value, but for the first year in awhile that may be a good assumption.

The total taxable value of residential property in Mankato rose by less than a percent, county assessor Julie Roisen said. But that comes

If You Go
Truth in Taxation hearings for Mankato residents: **Mankato City Council**, 7 p.m. Monday, council chambers of the Intergovernmental Center.
Mankato Area Schools Board, 5:30 p.m. Tuesday, Minnesota River Room of the Intergovernmental Center.
Blue Earth County Board, 6 p.m. Thursday, courthouse board room.

with a big jump for many commercial properties, some by 50 percent or more.

Of course, local government budgetary decisions played a large role.

The city of Mankato and the Mankato school district are responsible for most of

the increase over last year. That's thanks in large part to a voter-approved school referendum and an 11.87 percent increase in the city levy.

County taxes on a median assessed home rose by less than \$1 if the valuation was stable.

City levy changeup

The city of Mankato levy has a few new components, including a possible 1 percent tax on electricity and natural gas bills.

Counter-intuitively, this new tax would actually decrease the property tax levy by about \$400,000, turning a 11.87 percent increase into an 8.06 percent rise. That's because about 61 percent of the new tax would be used to fund existing initiatives.

If that happened, taxes on our median assessed home

Please see MANKATO, Page B5

Victorian Christmas

A holiday celebration at the Tacy house



Text and photos by Matt Gorrie
Free Press photographer

The warmth of hot cider and the smell of ginger bread cookies filled the air at the Tacy house Saturday afternoon as people gathered for the fourth annual Victorian Christmas Party.

The snow gently fell outside the window as Susan Hynes did a reading from Maud Hart Lovelace's book, "Betsy and Tacy Go Downtown." Door prizes were also handed out to a few lucky visitors. The



Minnesota Valley Chorale put people in the holiday spirit with a variety of Christmas songs.



Above: Susan Hynes reads from "Betsy and Tacy Go Downtown" where the girls go out Christmas Shopping.

Far left: The Minnesota Valley Chorale performed a variety of Christmas songs on the staircase of the Tacy House.

Left: A picture of the three Betsy-Tacy girls sits on a table among Christmas decorations.

Change in Waseca homeowner taxes

On a \$150,000 home

	2007	2008
County tax	\$791	\$830
City tax	\$942	\$942
School tax	\$543	\$575
Total	\$2,276	\$2,347

Source: Waseca Co. Auditor's Office J. Malmanger

Waseca taxes: Lower

Decrease result of more property, finished facility

By Brian Ojanpa
Free Press Staff Writer

WASECA — Waseca homeowners have received an early Christmas present of sorts — notices telling them the city portion of their property taxes will decrease in 2008.

Waseca Finance Director Teresa Walters said the average person will receive a 1.4 percent reduction from their 2007 tab.

She said the reason for the decrease primarily rests with new housing starts.

"It hasn't been a huge growth, but enough to make a difference," she said.

The city portion of the proposed tax levy reflects a 4.5 percent increase over 2007 — a figure Walters said is relatively small compared to proposed increases in many other towns.

Please see WASECA, Page B5

BRIEF

'The Wizard of Oz' production postponed

MANKATO — The Mankato Loyola production of "The Wizard of Oz" scheduled for Saturday evening was postponed because of the winter storm.

Today's performance is to go on as scheduled at 2 p.m., and a 7:30 p.m. Monday performance has been added.

All performances will be at the Fitzgerald Theater at Loyola.

To report news or provide a news tip or story idea, call the weekend news line at (507) 344-3685.

For more local and state news visit
www.mankatofreepress.com.

Scrabble tournament brings out wordsmiths

Top two advance to national competition

By Dan Linehan
Free Press Staff Writer

MANKATO — Andrew Westberg is already behind when his opponent empties his rack, spilling all seven letters onto the board with the word "untread," netting him 74 points — including the 50-point bonus for using all seven tiles.

"I gotta challenge," the North Mankato man says after pondering for a few moments. "You're too far ahead." So the pair walks to a nearby computer to check if "untread" is indeed a word or just a lucrative bluff.

Westberg types in "untread," and

can't like what he sees: "Yes, the play is acceptable."

They walk back to the board, Westberg shaking his head because an unsubstantiated charge will cost him his next turn.

Westberg and nine others braved wind and snow Saturday to participate in Mankato's first Scrabble tournament, though only three of the competitors are from the Mankato area. The top two finishers are advancing to a national tournament in Bloomington in June.

And while they play with the same



Pat Christman

Marlys Feder, 70, faces off with 13-year-old Jason Vaysberg Saturday in Mankato's first Scrabble tournament. The Twin Cities residents have been playing for different amount of time — 15 years versus 2 — but both say they play because it's fun.

point bonuses and 100 tiles that we're used to, this isn't your carefree, family-friendly game.

For one, a finished board looks to

contain a whole bunch of made-up words. Vrows? mm? Outtest?

Please see SCRABBLE, Page B5

