

Montgomery increases spending, leaves few happy

By Michael Laris

The Montgomery County Council unanimously passed a \$4.37 billion budget Thursday that will increase spending by 2.2 percent.

The current year's budget shrank for the first time in more than 40 years. But the overall uptick in fiscal 2012, which begins July 1, will be [felt unevenly](#), and left many dissatisfied.

[Funding for schools is down slightly](#), employees [face cuts to health and retirement benefits](#) and spending on recreation, fire and rescue and some social service and other programs is being reduced. The council upped the property tax rate by 4.2 cents, but also included a credit that moderates the increase for homeowners, officials said. Money was also set aside for reserves and to cover [future retiree health-care costs](#), though less than the county says it should be saving.

Thursday's formal vote confirmed decisions made last week. It was greeted with shouts from assembled police officers angry at benefits cuts and the elimination of a pay increase.

The council on Thursday also voted down several proposals made by the county's [Organizational Reform Commission](#), though spending and staffing in some related areas was reduced through council budget actions.