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higher sales tax is getting closer to majority support in the state Senate but is stalled in the House of Representatives.

Jul. 12, 2013

A proposal to replace the school property tax with a higher personal income tax and a higher sales tax is getting closer to majority support in the state Senate but is stalled in the House of Representatives.

State Sen. David G. Argall, a Schuylkill County Republican who represents part of Berks County, and Rep. Jim Cox, a Spring Township Republican, delivered that news to about 70 area residents during a 75-minute town hall meeting Thursday in the Spring municipal building.

Argall, prime sponsor of the Senate version, said 26 votes are needed to pass the measure in the Senate, and he's got 22. Enough votes could be gathered by the fall to get it done, he said.

Support does not exist to impose any new tax, so the only other options are the higher personal income and sales taxes, said Cox, prime sponsor of the identical House version.

Under the proposal, the personal income tax would increase by 1.27 percent to 4.34 percent. The sales tax would increase to 7 percent and would be charged on more goods and services. The state would begin taxing items such as landscaping, haircuts, sports and theater tickets, dry cleaning, gum, magazines, clothing valued at more than \$50, candy and some other foods.

The proposal would raise the \$13 billion needed to fund schools, Argall and Cox said.

Cox said he might be able to pick up a few more sponsors than the 68 he has, but he

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Also at the town hall, the Rev. David Kistler asked the elected officials to help the Blue Mountain Concerned Citizens with their fight against an emergency radio communications tower the county is planning to build in Bethel Township.

Argall said he would have his staff look into it.

Cox said he did all he could without crossing the line drawn in the law that gives county commissioners and township supervisors the power to govern locally.

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