

Officials say tax rate will have to increase if reductions aren't made

The Cedar Grove-Belgium School Board has asked staff members to look for ways money can be saved in their departments to help make up what is expected to be a \$468,000 budget deficit.

On Wednesday, June 27, the board was to continue working on the budget and review potential cuts suggested by the staff.

On June 16, the board approved paying off a \$136,000 land purchase loan this year using money from the fund balance rather than levy taxes for it in the 2012-13 budget.

That still left \$332,000 that must be trimmed or the tax levy will have to be raised, business manager Kris DeBruine told the board.

The \$10.3 million budget for 2011-12 called for a tax rate of \$9.30 per \$1,000 of equalized valuation. Due to increasing enrollment and funds from the federal American Recovery and Reinvestment and JOBS acts, the district has not taxed to its maximum for several years.

"We're well under the state average," Supt. Steve Shaw said. "We would have to go up 6.6% to get to the state average, and that's not going to happen."

"We have put off the inevitable. If we didn't have the federal money, we would have faced this earlier."

The board wants to keep the tax levy rate the same as last year, but that may not be possible, Shaw said.

"We have a four pages of ideas that we're going to go through. I gave it to the board to look over (prior to Wednesday's meeting) and they need to prioritize what they as individuals value and take it from there," he said.

"Our goal is not to affect the education of students or the teacher's ability to teach."

Board member Dan Bruhn noted the budget projections are based on student enrollment staying the same and no change in property values.

"If we all look at our piece of the pie, that's how we're going to best be able to come up with it," DeBruine told the board and staff. "What do we need to make sure kids aren't hurt? If it's stuff we don't need right now, then don't put it in."

DeBruine noted that sometimes people pad a budget under the belief that if they cut their budget, it will mean less the following year. This is not the time to do that, she said.

Board President Jim Lautenschlaeger said teachers should let the board know if something

CG-B School Board seeking \$332,000 in cuts

Written by CAROL POMEDAY
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cut from the 2012-13 budget will be needed for the 2013-14 school year.

Teachers had heard rumors there were going to be staff cuts, but board member Chad Hoopman assured them the board is not looking at cutting teachers.

However, a copy aide and a classroom aide in the elementary school who retired will not be replaced.

Board member Gina Sotelo suggested teachers seek the help of parents for some things an aid might do, such as bulletin boards and making copies.

The district's health care package, which was changed last year from the WEA Trust and resulted in an 18% decrease, is expected to increase 4.4%, but that could be offset by saving money on dental, long-term disability and life insurance premiums, DeBruine said. Recommendations were made by Matt Rolling of Benefit Partners who analyzed the district's benefit packages and obtained bids for new coverage. The board is considering bundling insurance coverage under one carrier for an additional savings.

Refinancing its bond issues will result in a savings of \$70,156 after deducting refinancing fees with a savings of \$12,471 in 2012-13. DeBruine said. A resolution to allow the refinancing will be considered at the board's July 11 meeting.

Although not related to the budget, the board on June 16 listened to a presentation by Deb Lukovich of Alinea. Lukovich is working with the nonprofit Cedar Grove-Belgium Education Foundation to increase its fund-raising potential. As part of that, she will work with the school district on long-range planning.

The foundation, headed by former district superintendent Mike Salkowski, provides scholarships, equipment and supplies not included in the budget and manages tax-deductible donations for scholarships and educational programs.