

Restructured school jobs mean cost savings

Written by Steve Ostermann
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Grafton board hires directors for two reorganized posts in move designed to pare \$100,000 from 2011-12 budget

Citing a cost-saving option in the face of a major budget crunch, the Grafton School Board on Monday filled two newly created administrative positions for the district.

The board hired Mark Powell as the director of business services and human resources and Jamie Scofield as director of buildings and grounds. They will both begin their new positions in the 2011-12 school year.

Powell will take over in a post that combines jobs currently held by Business Manager Don Amundson and Human Resources Director Susan Dannemiller. Amundson and Dannemiller are both stepping down in June.

Powell, who is currently assistant superintendent of business operations for the Round Lake Area School District in Illinois, will be paid \$115,000.

Scofield has worked for the district as a heating, ventilation and air conditioning specialist and is being reassigned to his new position. He replaces Buildings and Grounds Director Mike Karrels, who is retiring. Scofield will be paid \$77,000.

Supt. Jeff Pechura said the pending retirements of longtime employees paved the way for the job consolidations, which he estimated will save the district more than \$100,000 in salaries and benefits next year.

With school districts throughout Wisconsin awaiting the impact of pending aid cuts in the state budget, the new positions will provide welcome relief, Pechura said.

“It’s a way to retool and save money as we wait for the shoe to drop in Madison,” he said.

Powell was recommended for hiring by an interview team that included Pechura, board members, other district administrators, teachers and staff members. Scofield’s hiring was recommended by Pechura in consultation with administrators and the Finance Committee.

Powell, who has also worked as director of business services for the Cedarburg and Waukesha school districts, told the board he is looking forward to his new job.

“I appreciate the opportunity to be back in Wisconsin,” Powell said. “I know I have big shoes to fill with Don leaving.”

Although a number of districts — including Northern Ozaukee locally — have issued preliminary layoff notices to teachers, Pechura said Grafton has no immediate plans to do the same.

“We have looked at numbers but have some time yet under our contract to make decisions,” he

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said.

Board member Paul Lorge said the Finance Committee, of which he is chairman, is continuing to explore cost-savings options but will not make any recommendations until the specific impact of Gov. Scott Walker's budget-repair bill is known.

"We expect to lose at least \$900,000 (in aid), but it could be as much as \$1 million to \$1.2 million," Lorge said.

"Right now, the administration continues to look at recommendations from the Finance Committee, teachers and staff members to prepare a balanced budget."