

# District issues initial list of proposed cuts

BY SUE BUCK

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Farmington Public School officials Tuesday released a preliminary list of proposed budget cuts.

The district must shave \$5.2 million from its \$132 million budget. Officials stressed this is not the final budget, but part of a continuing metamorphosis.

"Our shortfall is \$5.4 million and targeted reductions need to be at \$5.2 million," said Cheryl Cannon, assistant superintendent of business, finance and operations. "We are applying \$1.2 million of revenues over

expenditures to the shortfall." She explained the \$1.2 million results if "one-time only" type expenditures are removed from the 2001/2002 budget. "Our thinking is, we carry this excess over into 2002/2003 to reduce the targeted reduction amount."

A shared time proposal with Our Lady of Sorrows private school, expected to be approved by the board next month, will net \$175,000. Changing phone carriers should save \$90,000.

The district plans to hold an as yet unscheduled public forum on the budget in March.

"If the economy recovers for

2003/2004 and we receive a (state aid) increase, it is unlikely that the increase will exceed inflation or make up for an increase in 2002/2003," Cannon said. "Our expenditures are increasing 4.3 percent on the salary schedule, with steps."

Payments to Michigan Public School Employees Retirement System, required by state statute, will increase by 13 percent each year, Cannon said.

The district, which planned to purchase eight buses to replace current 12 year old buses may drop that number to four, know-

ing this means increased maintenance costs.

"Enrollment will play a significant factor in future budgets," Cannon said. "Reductions should be seen as long range and not one-year actions."

## The proposals

Among the other proposed cuts and amounts saved are:

- Increase class size by one child per grade level in grades 1-12, cutting 19 positions: \$1,333,500
- A reduction by 30 percent in the Student Assistance Program:

- \$189,000
- Technology/buses/equipment: \$895,000
- Supplies/purchasing services: \$600,000
- Administrative reductions: \$400,000
- Four Elementary Spanish positions: \$280,000
- A 25 percent reduction in media technicians: \$193,000
- A 30 percent reduction in student assistance program coordinators: \$189,000
- Two media specialists: \$140,000
- Two staff development positions: \$140,000

- Sixth grade Spanish: \$105,000
- Non-supporting summer school: \$100,000
- Two in office support: \$100,000
- Reading Recovery/noon aide/bilingual aide at Fairview and Alameda Early Childhood Centers: \$84,600
- Community education programs: \$75,000
- One physical education coordinator: \$70,000
- Field trips: \$60,000
- School-of-choice transportation: \$60,000
- Driver education: \$21,000

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The district expects an early retirement incentive for teachers, he said. "With the break coming up, we thought this would be a perfect time (for them) to talk to their families about it."

While hiring less experienced teachers would be an initial cost savings over those farther up on

the scale, eventually the younger teachers move up to the same level, Maxfield said. Bottom scale teachers are paid about \$36,000; top of the scale teachers, \$70,000.

Some people will be moved around to other positions, said Larry Lobert, personnel director. "We don't know our retirement

factor," he said. "Retirement always save us. They save us a lot of positions. We don't know our leave factor yet."

Some teachers are also expected to go on maternity leaves.

## Quality programs, new efficiencies

Maxfield believes the district

can continue quality programming while increasing efficiency. "The next three months will be challenging for all of us," he said.

"Every decision we make has faces attached to it. February, March and April will be tough."

While some have asked why the district doesn't simply spend its fund balance, maintaining it at 8-12 percent is important, Maxfield said. Also, once that money is spent, it's gone and can't be used to fund the same programs the following year.

One method of efficiency will

be filling elementary home schools first, which could eventually translate into expanding preschool programs at Alameda and Fairview Childhood Centers. Alameda has kindergarten through second grade classes; Fairview houses kindergarten.

Both schools are used as overflow sites from elementary schools now.

Because the preschool programs are tuition-based, expanding would create new revenues and result in savings.

If, for example, Fairview

offered only tuition-based programs next year, the district will consider having it staffed with a community education supervisor, rather than a principal. This amounts to a savings of about \$25,000, Maxfield said.

He added this year's budget cuts will likely have a different impact than last year's.

"Last year we were able to cut specific line items that didn't affect people," he said. "We anticipate it will affect all employee groups."

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