

Grand Island schools talk possible personnel cuts, solar panels

Board of Education is facing budget gap

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In Grand Island schools, it may come down to cutting people – to close a looming gap.

The Grand Island Board of Education is considering about 25 personnel reductions in an effort to close a \$1.5 million gap between expenses and revenues in the 2013-14 budget.

The move would preserve programming and would not increase the use of reserves or fund balances in the estimated \$54.7 million fiscal plan, said Joseph Giarrizzo, the district's assistant superintendent for finance, at Monday's board meeting.

Interim Superintendent Paul Hashem and Giarrizzo said the proposed reductions are based on enrollment, class size and current staffing levels.

In addition, there might be six retirements in the district, which could save between \$314,972 and \$296,620, school officials said.

Currently, the district is looking at a potential increase in the tax levy of 2.68 percent, or \$784,441.

Budget deliberations will continue, and another update will be given at the School Board meeting March 25, officials said.

In other business, the board named James Dempsey interim high school principal, replacing Sandra Anzalone, who is leaving at the end of the week to be superintendent of Eden Central Schools.

The board gave Anzalone, who replaced the retiring Dempsey as principal seven years ago, a certificate of appreciation. Dempsey came out of retirement to fill the vacated position.

The board also heard a presentation about installation of solar panels on the new transportation center, slated for the site behind Sidway Elementary School on Baseline Road.

William K. Zografos, vice president of Cannon Design, which is serving as architect on the project, said the solar panels would cost \$96,000 to install on the new 16,000-square-foot building; that figure does not include the cost of reinforcing the roof to handle the panels' weight. He said state incentive programs could lower the cost to \$58,500.

The district pays about 3.87 cents per kilowatt-hour for electricity. On the current 12,000-square-foot facility, the bill between December and January was about \$374. For the new, larger building, it would be about \$499.

Zografos projected the potential annual savings in energy costs with solar panels would be \$1,025, "so the payback is 57 years."

The state Education Department "won't give aid on a payback of that length," he said.

