

Grand Island waits on school budget

Hopes for aid lead to postponing vote

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The Grand Island Central School District's proposed \$54.1 million budget for 2012-13 remains a work in progress, with the Board of Education postponing the adoption date by a week to April 2.

Superintendent Robert W. Christmann on Monday night presented Phase 3 of the plan, which had a few changes from the version aired Feb. 27. He also said the slogan for this year's budget deliberations is "Developing a World Class School District in a New Economic Reality."

One reason for delaying the adoption date is the belief that the State Legislature will adopt a budget before April 1, which could slightly alter the school aid picture. It is possible that \$200 million of the \$250 million set aside by Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo in his proposed budget for school competitive grants will be reallocated by the Legislature to regular state aid for schools.

"There is potential for additional revenue," Christmann told the board, which canceled the meeting of March 26, when the budget was going to be adopted.

He said he will have more details at the board's meeting Monday, which also will include an update on the capital project.

The gist of Phase 3 is that with a projected 3.2 percent increase in the tax levy yielding \$921,000 in additional revenue, the property tax rate increase would be 2.4 percent.

Christmann said that if the maximum increase in the tax levy is adopted by the board, the amount of reductions that could be restored to the budget would total \$491,492.

The superintendent reiterated that Grand Island is one of the few area municipalities to have an expanding tax base. Without that, the increase in the tax rate would be higher, given the district's need to close a \$7 million gap between expenditures and revenues.

Overall, the Phase 3 shortfall is \$1,110,508, compared with \$1,390,508 in Phase 2.

Phase 3 shows a slight change in revenue increases — from \$5.7 million to \$5.9 million — by using an additional \$250,000 from the appropriated fund balance and \$100,000 from the unemployment reserve fund allocation.