

Retirement fund contribution to rise

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An increase in the Grand Island School District's contribution to the state's teacher retirement system is expected to add more than \$400,000 to the budget next year.

During a School Board meeting Monday, Superintendent Robert Christmann said that schools' contribution rates statewide are going to increase from 8.6 percent of total teacher salary to 11.1 percent. That means, with a teacher payroll of nearly \$22 million, Grand Island's teacher retirement costs will go up \$423,300 to about \$2.1 million, he said.

That means that 8 percent of the property tax rate would be used to pay for retirement costs, board member Glenn Bobeck said.

"The expectation would be that next year will be even higher than that," he said, in terms of the district's contribution. "It's going to be harder and harder to sustain that in the future."

Offsetting that cost will be the addition of a sixth tier for new hires. If enacted, the sixth tier would increase the teacher retirement age to 65 from 62, increase teachers' contribution to their retirements to 6 percent for life and eliminate the cashing out of accrued sick and vacation time. This proposed tier would affect hires made only after the tier becomes law.

"Long term it's great, but short term there's little impact," Christmann said.

Also Monday:

- The board is considering making an exception to its new policy of not providing transportation for sporting events outside of Erie County. The district was asked to provide busing for four fall athletic contests in Rochester, a proposition that Christmann said was double-edged.

“Certainly, the safety would be greater with the bus. But if we provide the bus, we have to make it clear that we can’t be scheduling events when our direction is not to schedule these events,” he said.

The board will consider the matter at its next meeting, Christmann said. If approval is given, it will be made clear that long-distance matches should not be scheduled and that approval for such contests won’t be granted in the winter and spring.

“It is permissible, but there are issues,” he said.

The district eliminated intercounty sports transportation as part of its budget that was passed in May.