

School cuts aired for Isle board

By **Paul Lane**

Updated: March 5, 2011, 7:28 AM

Members of the Grand Island School Board Thursday evening got a preview of possible cuts in its 2011-12 budget.

Facing a \$4.8 million funding gap because of a \$2.2 million cut in state aid and a \$2.6 million increase in contractual expenses, the district is exploring all options for economies, Superintendent Robert Christmann said.

Even with the district dipping into \$13 million in reserve funds, cuts in programs and personnel and a tax-rate increase are inevitable, he said.

“We’ll have a smaller district next year in terms of personnel,” he added.

Teachers of the district’s elective courses might not be spared, Christmann said.

“Something we’re proud of is the value of our electives to the students’ overall education,” said Christmann.

Other candidates for the chopping block include elementary teachers, school psychologists, librarians and administrators, and reducing the kindergarten program from a full day to half a day.

Other suggestions: elimination of the modified athletic program, the reduction of varsity sports and the elimination of summer school.

Board members expressed concerns about eliminating or reducing some programs, such as sports and music. Board President Richard Little Jr. also pointed to the importance of reading enrichment at the kindergarten and first-grade levels.

“There is a guaranteed return for every penny we spend at the elementary level later on,” said Little, citing improved performance later in students’ academic careers.

Trustee Glenn Bobeck cautioned that desires and needs have to be kept separate during the budget process.

“We’re going to have to make some sacrifices,” he said. “Something has to give.”