



Muskego

School district closes deficit by cutting teachers

Reductions will save \$245,000 next year

By JANE FORD-STEWART

Posted: March 30, 2010 | [\(2\) Comments](#)

Muskego — Muskego - The Muskego-Norway School Board hit its target Monday night of wiping out a projected budget deficit of \$435,000 for next school year, but it will mean cutting the equivalent of 5.2 full-time teachers.

The reductions would save an estimated \$245,000, more than half the deficit that is expected because of an anticipated drop in state aid. All the teacher cuts are due to lower enrollment at the elementary schools, and because students are taking fewer classes in business, technical and physical education at Muskego High School.

The high school will lose the equivalent of 3.2 full-time teachers. But the school will hire 1.6 full-time equivalent Spanish teachers because more students are taking those classes. The net loss at the school is 1.6 FTEs.

Two elementary school teachers will be cut through attrition, while layoffs are called for at the high school. Aide time at the high school will be cut by three hours each day, which will save another \$10,000.

An initial recommendation to reduce the number of police resource officers at the secondary schools was withdrawn because the board was cool to the idea.

But what the board hotly debated before approving it was transferring the cost of custodial and secretarial time needed for the district's lunch program to the food service budget. That shift reduced the budget deficit for next year by \$50,000, but increased the separate food service budget by the same amount. The food service budget is self supported through lunch fees.

Board member Eric Schroeder, who opposed the shift, said taking steps to have some school costs paid for by fees could become an easy way to fix a deficit.

"I think that's a bad practice to get into," he said.

He acknowledged that because there is a surplus in the food service budget, the additional \$50,000 expenses won't mean higher lunch prices next year, but said the shift means prices will have to go up sooner than they otherwise would, or increases would have to be higher than normal.

But board member Rick Petfalski said many people do not have children in school and their tax dollars should not pay for the optional school lunch program.

"The food service ought to be paying for itself, not my tax dollars," Petfalski said.

Other adjustments to deal with the deficit are reducing the maintenance budget to historical levels to save \$125,000; refinancing the district debt, which will save \$35,891; and reducing special education by \$54,500 mainly because the schools will not be buying a van for student transportation next year.

The board also expects \$50,000 in additional revenue from a Focus on Energy rebate from its energy conservation improvements and \$7,500 in fees for the district's new kindergarten for 4-year-olds, which starts this fall.

Find this article at:

<http://www.mymuskegonow.com/news/89505392.html>

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.