

School board approves higher budget

By Kathryn Burke
The Goodland Star-News

The Goodland School Board approved a \$6,359,532 budget for the 2005-2006 school year on Monday, including a 5.6 percent tax increase.

The board started its meeting with an open public hearing on the budget. No one showed up to comment, but board members did have several questions.

Member LeAnn Friedrichs asked Superintendent Marvin Selby if he puts the budget together on his own or if he asks for help from the board and administrators.

"Do you pretty much do this all by yourself?" she asked.

Selby said he tries to figure out the needs of each building. Throughout the year, he said, the principals determine what they need. He said they look at what supplies they go through quickly and what they had left over.

As he works on the budget, he said, he meets with administrators to work out details.

This year, Selby said, the Legislature held up his budget review as it wrangled over school funding. He said the district was in the dark about budgeting until July.

Because the district has had less money the past few years, Selby said, teachers have been looking at what they can do without instead of what they need.

Board member Marty Melia said he was voting no on the budget because of the tax increase.

The budget includes an estimated tax rate at 15.004 mills, or 0.916 of a mill more than last year's 14.088. A mill produces roughly \$90,000 this year, about \$20,000 more than last year. That means the less-than-a-mill increase will equal about \$122,716 more for the school for this year.

Selby said the increase will equal about \$11 more per year on a \$100,000 home or \$5.50 per year on a \$50,000 home.

Melia said as a small business owner and in light of the current

economy, he couldn't vote for an increase.

While he said he is happy about raising teacher salaries, he believes the district could get by without a tax increase.

Friedrichs said she agreed with Melia, but fears the district will have increased expenses because of rising fuel prices this winter.

Board member Amy Sederstrom said farmers have been warned about the increased energy costs this winter and the district should be wary, too.

"You've got to have some leeway with the energy crunch," she said.

Selby said even with a tax hike, the board is below the state average.

The budget, Selby added, has to be reviewed by the state before it can be approved.

Board clerk Pat Juhl brought out a chart showing the taxes over several years. Board member Dick Short had requested the chart.

Selby said the numbers for the local budget were higher in the past because the district used to get less money from the state.

Selby said the budget will once again have a negative amount in the local option budget slot. He said that number will remain negative until they get the first payment from the county in October.

Short moved to approve the budget, seconded by board member Fritz Duke.

The budget was approved 5-1 with Melia casting the dissenting vote.

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Students head back to school

Dallas DeLaRosa (above) chained his bicycle outside of North Elementary on the first day of school Wednesday. Brianna Lawrence waited inside of North's cafeteria before being sent to class.

Photos by Kathryn Burke
The Goodland Star-News



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