

\$12.6M Amount school district officials are trying to cut

\$3.6M Estimated 3 percent cut in revenue

46 Teaching positions that would be eliminated

76 Support staff positions that would be eliminated

\$3.4M Money needed to restore reserve to required 4 percent of budget

\$1.4M Reserve money needed to cover anticipated mid-year cut

\$2.2M Money to give raises per union contracts

SCHOOL BOARD WEIGHS MASSIVE BUDGET CUTS



BY COLLEEN WIXON
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INDIAN RIVER COUNTY —

Indian River County taxpayers could be asked to pay extra to help fund schools next year as a way to avoid massive budget cuts.

School District staff is proposing eliminating 116 positions as well as cutting several programs and requiring student-athletes to “pay to play” sports next year.

Field trips, reading courses, dropout prevention programs and extra-curricular activities also are on the table to be cut along with administrative salaries and textbook purchases.

But raising taxes could help reduce those cuts.

Faced with potentially having to chop \$12.6 million from the budget, Indian River County School Board members discussed Tuesday the idea of levying an additional tax.

By a supermajority vote, the board could levy an additional 25 cents per \$1,000 of assessed property value. If approved, the average owner of a \$159,600 home with a \$25,000 Homestead Exemption could pay about \$34 more in school taxes. The additional tax would provide about \$3.5 million in revenue to the district, according to district officials.

Parents and teachers urged the board at its regular meeting to pass the quarter-mill tax rate.

Holly Michaels, parent of three children,

“Our community is currently paying more than \$7 million for more sand. Sand can be washed away in one storm, our children’s education needs to last a lifetime.”

Holly Michaels, parent

Janet Olsson, a reading teacher from Glendale Elementary School, holds up a sign while trying to persuade the Indian River County School District not to cut reading programs to save money during its meeting Tuesday evening. “I sure hope they were listening,” Olsson said after the meeting.

Photos by SAM WOLFE • Correspondent

MORE INSIDE

• School Board urged to keep reading classes. **A9**

- Programs that could be eliminated. **A8**
- Administration changes. **A8**
- The School District’s proposal. **A8**

WHAT’S NEXT?

Here is a tentative look at what comes next in the budget process:

- April 8:** Possible board workshop to further discuss budget cut recommendations
- April 13:** Review and board vote on budget cut recommendations
- May 20:** Board review on final report from the state Legislative

- Conference, expected to give a better idea of how much money the district will get from the state
- June 22:** Board workshop on preliminary budget and tax rate
- July 29:** Preliminary adoption of tentative budget and tax rates
- Aug. 24:** School board election — three board members up for re-election.
- Sept. 9:** Final adoption of budget and tax rates



Caroline Manera, a seventh-grade student at Gifford Middle School, holds up a petition signed by students from her school urging educators not to cut reading programs.

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HIGHLIGHTS OF THE PROPOSAL INCLUDE

• 116 positions cut

- No money for new textbooks other than math
- Sports becomes “pay to play”

Coaches brace for possible sports cuts

BY LAUREL PFAHLER
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INDIAN RIVER COUNTY

Indian River County schools could be seeing major changes in their athletic departments as a result of statewide budget cuts, and coaches are concerned about what it might mean for their programs.

The district will propose to the school board in its April 13 meeting the implementation of a pay-to-participate

fee in all high school sports, as well as the possibility of cutting supplements for coaches and leaders of extra-curricular activities and clubs by 25 percent. The district is expecting a 3 percent reduction in state money and is trying to reduce the budget by about \$12.6 million.

“It’s a shame to see cutbacks in athletics,” Sebastian River High School boys basketball coach Mark

Adams said. “When you look at how powerful and meaningful athletics can be in a kid’s life, it’s very disheartening because it should be about the kids and the lessons they learn in athletics.”

“They say it’s the sign of the times, but it’s sad.” According to the proposal, the supplement cuts would save an estimated \$200,000, while the pay-to-participate fee, of which the amount has not been released, would

save \$104,000.

Vero Beach High School football coach Gary Coggin said he is worried about the possibility of losing assistants as a result of the cutbacks.

“You’re always concerned about cutbacks with staff and personnel and whatnot,” Coggin said. “We’ve had a good program, and part of that is we have the number

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File photo

Kenneth Jackson, a defensive back for the Vero Beach High School football team, stretches out with his team before a game.

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