Acadia Board OKs budget, with cuts

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CROWLEY - After reviewing almost $750,000 in cuts in personnel and support services, the Acadia Parish School Board Tuesday approved its $35.9 million budget for the coming year.

Superintendent James Griffin told those present for the public hearing prior to the approval of the budget the board could expect a decrease in revenues from state and local sources for the coming year.

"In view of this," he said, "it was necessary to recommend cuts in personnel through attrition and in support services."

Using a combination of cuts, along with some of the fund balance from previous years, the board was able to balance the budget, Griffin said.

This year's budget reflects a deficit of $414,514 over last year, with a fund balance of $7,412,678.

During the hearing, Charlie Daigle of Church Point told the board a three-year overview of the budget shows only two increases.

One was in state mandatory increases in fees paid to tax collectors for the pension fund for parish and city officials.

The other increase, Daigle said, was an increase in salary the board voted for themselves last year, an increase of 43 percent.

"In view of 50 percent cuts in important areas, such as school supplies, funds for substitutes and maintenance, which will result in longer, harder hours for teachers and other school board employees with no increase in their pay," Daigle said, "sustaining the board members' salaries at $8,000 or more per member sets a very poor example, to put it mildly."

Daigle told board members a return to their previous salaries would mean only a 30 percent cut and would release approximately $80,000 for other uses.

Later during the meeting, board member Johnson Yeager suggested board members discuss a possible pay cut.

But his motion to add the item to the agenda failed 4-4.

Voting with Yeager were Emery Doguet, Frank Savoie, Johnny L. Smith, M.W. "Micky" Scanlan Jr. and Grand Link.

Daigle also suggested a 50 percent cut in the substitute pay scale rather than paying the present scale and depleting the fund halfway through the year.

"This would enable the sub to work all year rather than half and earn approximately the same amount for the school year," Daigle said.

The board took no action on Daigle's suggestion.

In other business, the board heard the sales tax report for the month of August.

Sales tax revenues were $230,653.38 in August, a decrease of $49,066.64 or 18.96 percent from same month last year.

For the year to date, a two-month period, the sales tax revenues show a decrease of $16,460.88 or 19 percent.

In other action, the board recognized Randall Johnson of Rayne High School, recently named "Outstanding Agriculture Teacher" for the state.

The board also recognized six teacher who recently attended the Direct Instruction Training and Information Convention in Eugene, Ore.

The convention focused on aspects of teacher training and supervision; teaching techniques in use of direct instruction; programs for reading, spelling and arithmetic, and oral and written languages; solutions to classroom management problems or behavioral problems, and techniques for working with severely handicapped students.

The teachers who attended the conference will instruct other educators in the parish on the approach.