

Carlsbad Unified makes first budget cuts

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CARLSBAD – Carlsbad Unified School District board members approved Wednesday the first set of budget cuts for the fiscal year that begins July 1.

District officials presented a list of \$4 million in cuts that included the loss of at least three administrative positions, the delay of the opening of the district's second high school and a reduction in employee compensation in hopes of filling a \$10.6 million hole in the district's \$82 million budget.

Board members, teachers, staff and parents were visibly shaken by the concept of cutting such a large chunk from the budget of the 11,000-student district.

After questions from fellow board members and comments from the public, board member Ann Tanner told the audience that she felt that every cut on the list would in some way affect students. Still, she and others agreed that the financial outlook for the district, and districts around the state, is grim.

Board members did not agree to all cuts. They protected most programs and avoided cuts that parents had feared, including cuts to services in special education classrooms.

Instead, the five board members went through the suggestions line by line and used a show-of-thumbs approach to determine which items to cut from the budget. Preliminary cuts to the 2012-2013 budget include:

- A \$200,000 reduction start-up costs for the new Sage Creek High School. The school will still open as scheduled in the fall of 2013.
- A \$450,000 reduction in administrative costs.
- A \$60,000 reduction in travel and conference costs.

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- A \$614,000 reduction in school discretionary accounts.
- A \$530,000 cut in special education. This reduction will come from a change in how the district pays instructional aides. Cuts to compensation and jobs are not part of this reduction.
- A \$15,000 cut to employee compensation. The district will have to negotiate with the Carlsbad Unified Teachers' Association for any other cuts.

District officials said that while Wednesday's cuts are a start to balancing the budget, the rest of the cuts will likely have to come from employee pay. Any cuts from teacher pay will be negotiated with the teachers' union. Those talks are set to begin in December.

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