

## CARLSBAD: School trustees discuss potential budget cuts

By STACY BRANDT [sbrandt@nctimes.com](mailto:sbrandt@nctimes.com) | Posted: Thursday, October 13, 2011 5:30 am

School officials in Carlsbad discussed a list of potential spending cuts Wednesday that included considering closing schools, asking employees to take pay cuts and delaying the opening of Sage Creek High School.

The [Carlsbad Unified School District](#) is looking for ways to close a projected \$11 million shortfall in next year's budget.

No specific cuts were proposed or made at Wednesday's meeting. Instead, the board of trustees reviewed a list compiled by district administrators and decided which potential cuts were more palatable than others.

None of the cuts would be easy, trustees said.

"I don't see one item on this list that anybody wants to get rid of," Trustee Elisa Williamson said.

They decided that increasing class sizes further and laying off counselors were out of the question.

However, they said they would seriously consider a long list of spending cuts, including reducing salaries and benefits, delaying the opening of the new high school set to open in 2013, eliminating administrative positions, cutting employee stipends, and working to spend less on special education and textbooks.

They said they could consider closing schools, laying off support staff, reducing athletic and other programs, and shortening the school year, but those would be done only as a last resort.

Either layoffs or salary reductions will probably be necessary to balance the budget next year, because about 85 percent of the district's spending goes toward employee salaries and benefits.

A lot could change between now and when the school board approves a budget in June, but so far, it looks as if the district could have a shortfall of nearly \$11 million in the 2012-13 school year.

That number is based on the district's revenue and expenses this year, assuming they'll be similar next year, said Devon Vodicka, assistant superintendent in charge of business services for the district.

This year, district officials expect to bring in about \$71 million and spend roughly \$82 million. The district has enough in reserves to cover the difference this year, but won't have enough next year, Vodicka said.

Over the past four years, revenues have declined in the district from \$89 million in 2008-09 to \$83 million last year and a projected \$71 million this year.

"We're not looking at a pretty picture right now," Trustee Ann Tanner said.

The district needs to present potential budget cuts to the San Diego County Office of Education in December or risk losing some autonomy, Vodicka said.

This year, the district raised class sizes to about 30 students per teacher in most grades.

Before the budget discussion, several parents complained to the board about this move, saying it was affecting children.

"There's no room in the classrooms," said Heather Benson, a district parent. "If children are not educated now, our community will suffer in the long run."