

Board hopes to avoid tax increase in new budget

By ELIZABETH ANDERSON
Post Correspondent

LEHMAN TWP. — The Lake-Lehman School Board approved a proposed tentative budget with expenditures of \$19,168,182 and revenues of \$18,539,850 for the 2002-2003 fiscal year.

There will be no millage increase this year, but Business Manager Kathleen Williams said she expects the cushion the district has had in the capital reserve fund will decrease. However, Williams added she is hopeful the numbers will change and the district will break even and not have to use any of the fund balance this year.

"I'm counting on the government giving us another \$120,000 and I am hopeful that the health insurance will go down," Williams said. "I'm optimistic that once we get the [health insurance] number we're not going to be using the fund balance for operating expenses this year."

The fund balance as of June 30, 2002 is estimated at \$2.2 million with an estimated ending fund balance on June 30, 2003 of \$1.57 million.

"I am concerned," she said about the tentative budget. "We have budgeted to the penny in so many categories and we have so many unknowns, including not having a contract for our professional staff." Williams cited health care costs to be the most significant increase in expenditures with a 26 percent rise.

Board members had questions concerning the health care consortium finances and its effect on the budget. The consortium, formed to save area school districts on health benefits over Blue Cross Blue Shield, has acquired a cumulative deficit of \$4.9 million in the last four years, including the current year's deficit of \$1.9 million. Member school districts have been advised to expect an approximate 26 percent increase in health insurance premiums.

Charles Boytin, school board president, questioned if the school district would be asked to pay more than the proposed increase. "Is this 26 percent going to cover all the extras?" he asked. "Or will it turn out to be a lot more than that because of these assessments?"

Lake-Lehman was asked to make another extra payment to the health consortium, after making 13 payments instead of the 12 originally required for this school year. The thirteenth payment was an advance payment, made in November 2001, for the month of June 2002. The most recent payment of \$33,389 is being called an "assessment." Williams said the district had made two other additional payments of \$107,000 and \$230,000 last fiscal year.

There have been many person-

nel changes at the consortium. Angelo DeCesaris, consortium board trustee, said while he finds the situation embarrassing to some extent, there has been a sincere attempt "to insure this thing is done right."

"These are growing pains," advised DeCesaris. "We are in [the consortium] and we have to do what we can to make this thing work."

Other areas with significant increases included transportation costs and liability insurance premiums. Premiums for the district will increase 44 percent, rising from \$60,000 per year to \$100,000. Williams said because of the September 11 tragedy, the number of companies that will insure public schools has decreased.

Transportation costs will increase \$62,000 over the previous year due to the changing schedule of the Lehman-Jackson and Ross Elementary schools to include common planning time. Common planning time will save the district the salary of one teacher. There will be separate elementary and secondary buses next year. Lehman-Jackson students will start the day at 8:20 a.m. and Ross students at 9:05 a.m. Dismissal times will remain the same as last year.

In other business:

- With much regret, the board accepted the letters of retirements of Lake-Lehman High School Principal John Oliver, effective June 30, 2002; LLHS English teacher, Carol Oliver, effective June 8, 2002; and Middle Level Building Guidance Counselor Barbara Evans, effective July 15, 2002.

"To John, Carol and Barbara, thank you for many, many dedicated years," said Roberts. "I know you have touched the lives of thousands of students in a very, very positive way."

- Barbara Simms, guidance secretary, will retire June 7, 2002. The board joined member Michelle Coombs in thanking her for her many years of service to the district.

- Superintendent Robert O. Roberts said the Standard and Poor's report on academic conditions at Lake-Lehman was "very glowing." Standard and Poor's report can be viewed online at www.ses.standardandpoors.com.

- Moderno Rossi, board member, has resigned as a representative on the West Side Area Vocational-Technical School joint operating committee, effective May 21, 2002. Board member Lois Kopcha was appointed as his replacement.

The next committee-of-the-whole meeting will be held June 4 at 7 p.m. in the high school auditorium. As construction at the high school will begin June 8, the next regular meeting for general purposes will be held on June 18 at 7 p.m. at a site to be announced.

Teachers

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our repeated successful job performance that is recognized by so many neighboring districts."

Jean Lipski, district teacher, parent, coach and taxpayer, continued in the same vein. "We don't expect or want to be the highest paid faculty with the fattest contract," she said. "We're asking to be given a contract which would keep us very comparable with Northwest Area. It would put us in the middle of

the other districts considering pay scale, keep us in the health consortium and give us a small retirement incentive, which is more than reclaimed when a long-time teacher leaves and a younger teacher is hired."

"The community must realize since we have never taken these measures in the past we must feel very strongly that we have not been dealt with fairly," Lipski added.



POST PHOTOS/M.B. GILLIGAN

Wycallis students take audience to Oz

The fifth grade class at Wycallis Elementary School, Dallas Township, performed the Wizard of Oz at their recent year-end concert. Students worked on the script, scenery, choreography, costumes, and music with their music teacher, Debbie Pike. These photos were taken at a dress rehearsal the day before the performance.

The leading characters, top photo, were Erica Miller as the Scarecrow, Abby Mulhern as Tinman, Christina Touissaint, and Kathleen Montz played Dorothy. Above left, members of the Lullaby League included, from left, Molly Gilligan, Megan Hine, Jill Jackson, Abbey Baltimore and Adele Hawk. Karyn Henry played the role of the good witch, Glenda, and Kathleen Montz played Dorothy.

Groundbreaking June 2 for church addition

Truckville United Methodist Church has scheduled a groundbreaking ceremony Sunday for the new wing that will be added to the Educational Facility. The wing will house the church Sunday School, the Truckville Nursery School and the Back Mountain Food Pantry. It will also provide meeting space for Boy Scout Troop 155 and Cub Scout Troop 155.

The event will take place Sunday at 11:15 a.m. on the Southwest lawn of the present Educational Building, on Church Rd., just off Rt. 309.

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