

School plan No tax increase from school budget cut down 4/10/91

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WINSTED — After presenting a spending plan that will not raise taxes, the Board of Education last night asked selectmen to restore money to its fiscal 1992 spending plan.

With about \$467,879 cut from its original \$11,715,208 proposal, the school board's impact on the tax rate is minus 0.22 mills, board Chairman Thomas M. Condon claimed.

Including cuts, the proposed school budget currently stands at \$11,247,329, a 4.3 percent increase over the current \$10,777,889 spending plan.

Last week the Board of Selectmen told the school board to reduce its budget so that there would be no increase in the tax rate. But the board went beyond that directive, Condon said so he asked selectmen to consider reinstating \$35,100 to bring the budget back to a zero-tax-rate increase.

Selectmen made no promises at last night's public hearing but Selectman David A. Cappabianca said he was not in favor of further cuts. "I think you've made an earnest effort to cut (the budget)," Selectmen are meeting today and tomorrow to talk about the school and town budgets.

Parent Eileen Storey told the 70 people gathered for the meeting: "Our schools are really in trouble ... our kids can't read, they can't write ... and you're just cutting the bottom out from under them."

At last night's hearing various members of the school board presented aspects of how the current and the proposed spending plans are affecting the school system.

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"Of the identified needs, many have not been addressed because of the fiscal restraints imposed upon the Board of Education," School Superintendent Norman T. Michaud said.

The school board has been negotiating with teachers and administrators since January for contract concessions. However, Condon said nothing has been decided yet but should be within two weeks.

Teachers' salaries came under fire by Selectman Walter D. Miller, an outspoken opponent of the state's binding ar-

bitration law. Miller asserted that money is going "into people's pockets," and not into educating children. The audience, which consisted of several teachers, groaned at Miller's accusation.

Under the latest proposal by the school board, about seven teaching positions would be eliminated. Some of those are proposed positions. Also included in the proposed cuts is \$60,000 that may be an administrative position, or a cut in administrative salaries.

Community lawyer Charlene LaVole admonished the board for implying in its budget numbers that administrators

would be taking a salary cut.

Condon explained that because the school board does not know if an administrator would be cut or salaries reduced, it spread the reduction in salaries.

LaVole charged the board with "misleading" the public. "I'm suggesting that's not an appropriate way to show a cut that doesn't exist."

Although the meeting was relatively tame, both boards did occasionally jab at each other. Board member Wayne Ellsworth said that selectmen have elected to restore positions to its budget.