Winsted

Budgets have gone up every year since 1983

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WINSTED — Despite claims to the contrary, the school system's budget has increased each year since 1983-84, said Democratic Selectman John F. Gauger Jr.

The town's education budget has more than doubled during that period, from $4.4 million in 1983-84 to $11.25 million this year. The proposed 1992-93 budget is $11.4 million.

Gauger presented the spending record during the selectmen's meeting Monday, as school board members complained about a $353,744 budget cut made by the selectmen. The board had originally proposed an $11.75 million budget.

Despite the cut, next year's proposed budget represents a $150,000 increase over this year's spending.

School board Chairman Thomas M. Condon told selectmen Monday that the education budget has been cut for the past three years and that the town should look at the "long-term effects about what we are doing to our educational system."

But Charlene LaVoie, the town's community lawyer, said that the education budget has not been cut, but has increased each of the past three years, even though the school board did not get its originally requested amount.

Town Finance Director Henry L. Centrella Jr. said school spending showed a steady increase each year for the past nine years. Spending in 1983-84 was $4.41 million; 1984-85, $5.04 million; 1985-86, $5.69 million; 1986-87, $6.42 million; 1987-88, $7.51 million; 1988-89, $8.82 million; 1989-90, $10.06 million; 1990-91, $10.77 million; and in 1991-92, $11.24 million.

School board member Raymond T. Pavlak told selectmen that teachers are scheduled to receive a 2.5 percent wage increase next year and incremental increases were frozen. Pavlak said he would seek a zero increase in salaries for teachers next year. Teachers had received an 8.5 percent pay increase in each of the three previous years.

The school board has given selectmen a list showing the effect of budget cuts since 1990. The list included the elimination of the Pearson School graduation exercises, which had cost $500.

Services eliminated in the 1990-91 school year included: three part-time custodians, a kindergarten aide, a part-time central office clerk, a library skills teacher, a sixth-grade teacher, field trips, cultural programs, middle school soccer and middle school basketball.

The items cut during the 1991-92 school year included: an extended year librarian, part-time music teacher, part-time preschool teacher, seventh-grade teacher, remedial teacher, two kindergarten aides, four special education aides, curriculum development, professional development and one bus.

A proposed town budget of $19.71 million, including the $11.4 million education budget approved by selectmen, will be put to a vote at the annual budget meeting May 4 unless a petition is circulated to force the budget vote to a referendum.

The town budget decreased by 0.12 percent over this year's budget of $19.73 million and calls for no tax increase.