

# \$9.3M Spending Plan Goes Before CPCS Voters In May

By LARRY ROBINSON

COLTON - School officials at Colton-Pierrepoint Central School have adopted a tentative \$9.3 million spending plan for next year that calls for \$378,000 in new spending and an 8.4 percent increase in the tax levy.

The budget must now be approved by voters in the district in early May.

The total proposed budget being offered by the school board for the 2008-09 academic year is \$9,344,000. Approximately \$6 million of that amount will be generated by local tax dollars, according to school officials.

Superintendent Martin Bregg had said earlier in this year's budget process that he was hoping to trim what had originally been pegged as a 9

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percent tax levy increase down to about 6 percent.

However, he noted last night that the board had chosen to limit the depth of any proposed budgetary cuts because of concerns that slashing the budget more deeply would adversely impact the quality of existing programs at the rural district.

"The board decided they

could not reduce any more without getting into programs," said Bregg.

School officials at Colton-Pierrepoint have admitted throughout this year's budget process that crafting a new spending plan for presentation to taxpayers for the upcoming year would essentially be a hard row to hoe.

The district is grappling with trimming what was originally projected to be a \$490,000 operating increase next year over the current year's spending plan.

The nearly half million dollar jump over last year's budget was due in part to rising costs related to fuel, labor and insurance and a sizable jump in special education costs from

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BOCES, according to school officials.

On top of those increases, the district was forced to offset a projected \$40,000 decrease in state aid revenue.

Of the originally projected spending increase of \$490,000 the board has now trimmed that figure down to the \$378,000 number presented Wednesday.

At last night's school board meeting, board members cautioned the public that the district has now reached the

point where there is no place to cut additional spending without starting to eliminate jobs and reduce programs and services.

In short the board suggested that their decision to not make those staffing cuts this year does not mean eliminating jobs will not happen in the future.

"Unless we want to get into actual jobs, I don't think it's going to get any better," said school board President Jeff Angleberger.

He pointed out that future cutbacks could likely include

positions in the cafeteria, the bus garage, the business office and the superintendent's budget.

Likewise, fellow board member Lawrence Peck told teacher representatives at the meeting that he would like to begin discussions this year aimed at bracing for the reality of possible teacher reductions in the future.

"I would like to meet with the teachers staff as well," said Peck. "Two or three years down the road we need to agree that we may have to eliminate."