

W. Aurora to seek tax increase

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AURORA – A 50-cent tax increase to shore up West Aurora School District’s finances and address student growth will be on the April 17 election ballot.

School board members on Monday voted to put the question on the ballot.

“I believe we are asking for a modest increase that will allow us to move forward,” School Superintendent James Rydland said.

The district projected a \$1.9 million deficit for its 2006-07 fiscal year. Board members approved the budget in June.

“Without a voter-approved rate increase, that deficit will swell to approximately \$2.9 million by 2008 and go even higher in future years,” Rydland said.

A 50-cent tax increase would boost the district’s operational tax rate to \$3.53 per \$100 of assessed valuation, from its current \$3.03 per \$100 of assessed valuation.

The owner of a \$100,000 home would pay an additional \$166.67 next year in taxes if the referendum was approved.

As proposed, the operational tax rate would remain at \$3.53 through 2010.

A citizens committee has been formed to campaign for the referendum. Chairing that committee is Debbie Nardone, president of the Fearn Elementary School PTA in North Aurora.

One of Nardone’s concerns is overcrowding at Fearn. The proposed tax increase would fund the cost of mobile classrooms to help ease the overcrowding at Fearn.

“No parent wants to have mobiles, but no parent wants to have 30 kids in a classroom,” Nardone said.

A recent study estimated that enrollment at Fearn would increase from 636 students in 2006 to 656 in 2007 and 698 in 2008. Eventual plans call for the school to get an eight-classroom addition.

Among 15 area school districts, West Aurora had the second lowest operational tax in 2005. East Aurora had a lower tax rate at \$2.91 per \$100 of assessed valuation.

Residents have not approved an increase in the district's operational rate since 1988.