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Options for cuts a shock

Prom, yearbook, sports, teachers on schools' hit list

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MERIDEN — No prom. No yearbook. No sports. Twenty-seven teachers gone.

The Board of Education's Finance Subcommittee stared down a daunting list of cuts that could make up the \$1.8 million shortfall the district will face next year if the City Council can't find additional money in its budget for education.

The list of options, which totals \$2.3 million in optional cuts for the finance committee to consider, was presented by the district's administration Tuesday.

The subcommittee voted to suggest that the board reduce its budget request in light of the \$4.9 million it will receive as part of the American Recovering and Reinvestment Act of 2009, but that money must be budgeted over two years and there are strict limits on how it can be used.

Assistant School Superintendent Glen Lamontagne suggested that \$2.8 million is a reasonable number to use in next year's budget to make up for shortfalls, and an additional \$146,000 will be saved because of a lower-than-

expected tuition increase for Thomas Edison Middle School, where the district pays to send students.

But even with these savings, the board is asking for \$100.9 million, down from the original \$103.9 million request. City Manager Lawrence J. Kendzior's budget recommendations to the City Council suggested it give the board only \$99,133,340, so if the board can't convince it to give more, \$1,856,253 in cuts will have to be made.

Perhaps most shocking would be the elimination of 27 teacher positions. The old budget request already assumes that 14 would be laid off, and firing or not replacing 13 more would save the board \$865,891. This would be on top of the 23 teaching positions eliminated last year.

Completely eliminating all sports programs at the high schools and middle schools, which were slashed last year, is one option. Lamontagne suggested that they had already been reduced to such a degree that the board should either

keep them at current funding or eliminate them completely.

Another big chunk could come out of extracurricular programs. These include the stipends that pay for teachers to manage the creation of the yearbook, and for organizers and chaperones for the prom.

Other cut options include one computer technician, part of the adult education program, two custodians, the assistant manager of buildings and grounds, and the account that pays for the Youth in Government and Upward Bound extracurricular programs.

Board President Mark Hughes is still hoping more of the federal money will become available with help from elected officials, but said the board must be prepared if that doesn't happen.

The subcommittee will now put together an exact list of what the board will eliminate at Kendzior's suggested funding level and other possible funding levels, said subcommittee Chairman Thomas E. Bruenn.

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Options for school budget cuts

13 more (for a total of 26) teacher positions:	\$865,891
Two custodian positions:	\$115,086
One computer technician:	\$52,082
One assistant manager of buildings and grounds:	\$84,839
Reduce adult education budget:	\$56,700
Halve budgeted contingency funds:	\$250,000
Reduce extracurricular stipends:	\$128,399
Eliminate middle and high school athletics:	\$730,194
Various programs such as youth in government:	\$98,000