

# Daily Herald

Big Picture . Local Focus

## District 207: Teachers will be cut

By Madhu Krishnamurthy | Daily Herald Staff

Published: 12/15/2009 6:16 PM | Updated: 12/16/2009 9:39 AM

Maine Township High School District 207 will cut roughly 75 teaching jobs for the next school year following a decision by the teacher's union not to reopen contract negotiations.

Most of the jobs cut would be of nontenured teachers across all departments, District 207 Superintendent Ken Wallace said Tuesday.

District 207 is trying to whittle down a projected \$17 million deficit next school year. The deficit is largely due to the district spending down its reserves and a flat Consumer Price Index, the measure used by government to determine the property tax levy each year. Districts had grown used to expecting 3 percent to 5 percent growth in the index.

"What has happened here is not their (the teachers') fault," Wallace said. "The teachers have begun a movement to do a voluntary give back program where teachers would donate money back through our education foundation to save teaching jobs, which I think speaks to the quality and character of our teaching staff."

The school district had asked the union to forego a roughly 3.2 percent wage increase in 2010, which could have saved up to 55 jobs, District 207 Superintendent Ken Wallace said.

Maine Teacher's Association President Emma Visee could not be reached for comment Tuesday.

The union has roughly 600 members, meaning the staff reduction is about 12.5 percent. Per the current four-year teacher's contract which expires Aug. 15, 2012, teachers are guaranteed a cost-of-living increase of between 3 and 3.5 percent annually on top of yearly step raises for about 76 percent of teachers. Both certified teachers and teaching assistants are covered in the contract.

District officials propose to cut expenditures by about \$15 million and raise about \$2 million in revenues. That may include cutting nonunion personnel, scaling back on technology upgrades and trying to increase advertising revenue at games.

Last month, the school board approved \$1.1 million in administrative cuts, which includes dismissing seven administrators at the end of the current school year.

Wallace said administrators' salaries already have been frozen for next school year.

"All cost-of-living increases are frozen," Wallace said. "We have a few of our new administrators who are on a salary adjustment, kind of like step raises."

However, administrators will still receive merit pay based on annual performance reviews. Merit pay amounts to roughly 10 percent to 15 percent of administrators' salaries.

"They are not increases," Wallace explained. "That merit is part of their salary. The district, over time, has tried to make that a larger percent of their salary. We could do away with the program but what would happen is we would have to increase our base salaries for our administrators."

The administration will present its plan for layoffs at the Jan. 11 school board meeting. The public can give input at the Jan. 20 school board committee of the whole meeting. The final staff reduction plan will be adopted at the Feb. 1 school board meeting.