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## School district hit with state budget cuts

By Jesef Williams

The Lancaster County School District is bracing itself for what appears to be a continuing gloomy economic trend.

District Finance Director Tony Walker presented the school board Tuesday night with information on the most recent state funding cut, the second since the board approved its 2008-09 budget.

In September, the district lost \$909,475 from the state that was designated for salaries and other operations costs. The district, though, recently brought in an extra \$1.2 million in local property taxes that offset the cut, Walker said.

But earlier this month, the district was hit with a \$666,526 cut that went toward its special revenue budget, which is funded primarily by the state.

That money goes toward salaries, school improvements and training, among other uses.

Walker said the district had to make cuts across several programs to absorb the loss in funds.

The money was taken from areas that had "carry-over" funding.

"It didn't affect expenditures at all," Walker said. "We haven't had to cut any budgets."

The two state cuts total more than \$1.5 million, and district officials expect more before the school year ends.

Superintendent Dr. Gene Moore said he and district officials are talking about future cuts and will meet for a retreat to plan for next year's budget. Moore said he wants to get input from principals about what services and programs are needed more than others.

Reducing energy costs, reassessing supply needs and limiting travel are some ways the district may cut costs.

Moore said the last area he wants to touch is personnel.

He said he doesn't foresee the district having to cut jobs or reduce salaries, but he said leaving vacancies unfilled might be an option.

"We might be freezing positions," Moore said. "I don't want to push that button."

### School board positions

The school board elected its officers for 2009 at Tuesday's meeting.

All three positions remain the same: Charlene McGriff is chairwoman, Bobby Parker is vice chairman and Margaret Gamble is secretary.

Gamble won re-election this month, as she defeated Robert Pelot for the District 6 school board seat, which represents the Kershaw area. McGriff also won re-election, but she was unopposed.

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