

# Third year of teacher raises included in Laconia school budget

- By RICK GREEN, THE LACONIA DAILY SUN

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LACONIA — The school district has submitted a budget to the City Council that complies with the tax cap and includes money for teacher salary raises under a collective bargaining agreement.

The spending plan, which totals \$40 million, with \$25.1 million to be raised by taxes, also includes money for capital improvements, two new teachers, an additional social worker and energy-efficiency improvements.

Superintendent Brendan Minnihan said there are currently three social workers in the district, one at Woodland Heights school, one who splits time between Elm Street School and Pleasant Street School and one who splits time between the middle school and the high school.

Money in this budget and grant funding will allow each elementary school to have its own social worker.

The plan also calls for the addition of a social studies teacher at the middle school and a science teacher at the high school.

“These positions used to exist, but because of budget challenges of three and four years ago, they were cut,” Minnihhan said. “We’re starting to slowly climb out of the cuts we had to do previously. I think this will be beneficial for our kids.”

The budget also calls for significant energy efficiency upgrades, including the replacement of 6,000 light bulbs with more efficient lighting. These upgrades are to result in more than \$180,000 in yearly savings, Minnihhan said.

A total of \$10.1 million is to be spent on the collective bargaining agreement with the Laconia Education Association, compared to \$9.59 million approved for 2018-19 and \$8.7 million spent in 2017-18.

This will be the third year of a five-year agreement intended to put teacher salaries at or above the pay level of colleagues in nearby districts.

A state report dated March 29 lists the Laconia School District’s salary range as starting at \$38,312 for a new teacher with a bachelor’s degree, while the top pay for a teacher holding a master’s degree and having 30 years of experience is \$76,250.

“The contract has made it easier to recruit teachers and has resulted in fewer vacancies,” Minnihhan said. “For the most part, we’ve been very stable.”

He provided a list of projects to be funded under the new budget:

- Woodland Heights School — Install new flooring in the nurse’s office, repair and strengthen the ballfield fence, install new swings.
- Pleasant Street School — Roof repairs, playground upgrades.
- Elm Street School — Roofing repairs, paving repairs to bus loop and parking lot, replacement of gym door.
- Laconia Middle School — Interior painting of four classrooms, repave front walkway.

- Laconia High School — Security and access control improvements.
- District office — Repairs to portico.
- Huot Technical Center — Interior painting of three classrooms, observation window in automotive classroom, LED lighting on front exterior.