

State budget has additional money for municipalities, schools

By RICK GREEN
THE LACONIA DAILY SUN

LACONIA — The city will receive an additional \$828,087 in state aid in the two-year state budget signed by Gov. Chris Sununu last week.

City Manager Scott Myers said the city will receive half that amount this year, about \$414,000, and the remainder next year.

In anticipation of this money, the City Council amended the municipal budget before adoption in July, increasing revenue by \$414,000 and adding an additional appropriation of \$414,000 to a contingency account, Myers said.

It's not clear yet if or what they will be spent on.

"The funds, when available, are subject to further action by the City Council," Myers said. "Staff will have recommendations at the appropriate time but it will ultimately be a City Council decision."

Meanwhile, the Laconia School District will get a \$1.46 million stabilization grant from the state in the 2020 fiscal year under the new state budget, according to a list compiled by

the New Hampshire Municipal Association.

Superintendent Steve Tucker said Wednesday the district was still awaiting the official notification about the size of its stabilization grant.

"It will be helpful," he said. "We've faced some challenges in the past and significant cuts had to be made, even two years ago.

"We need to sit down at the table and see what we need to do to support education in Laconia. This just gives us another opportunity to evaluate what we are doing. Hopefully, we can come up with ideas to support schools and kids."

Belmont will receive an additional \$319,069 over two years, and its school district will get a \$1.2 million stabilization grant for the 2020 fiscal year. Gilford will receive \$172,961 and its school district, \$363,818. Franklin will receive \$458,621, and its school district, \$4 million.

Tilton will receive \$151,073, and its district, \$566,664. Plymouth will receive \$170,430, and its district, \$1.7 million.

Not every local town and school district will come out ahead, however. While Meredith will receive \$176,373, no stabilization grant is included for its school district.

Laconia gets \$2.3 million federal grant to bolster student services

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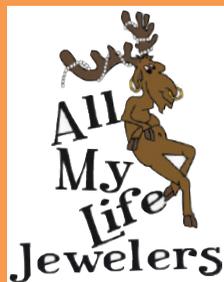
LACONIA — The school district will expand after-school programs, increase mental health services and boost social work programs under \$3.2 million in grant money it will receive from the U.S. Education and Justice Departments.

"The Laconia School District is so excited to be the recipient of these federal grants, which will help us to improve student wellness by continuing to expand our supports and services for all of our students within our Multi-Tiered System of Support for Behavioral Health and Wellness," said Harrington-Bacote, Laconia School District's Office of School Wellness Program Administrator.

The money is intended to support efforts to prevent youth violence in the school system, bolster student and family engagement and better support school and community-based mental health services.

The grant was announced Wednesday by Sens. Jeanne Shaheen

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ment upgrades will reduce heating costs and save water.

Maintenance will be easier.

"The great thing is that the difference in maintenance in replacing ballasts and things like that," Caruso said. "Most of these fixtures have a 15- to 20-year lifespan.

"You might get one or two of these that go out, but we were replacing a lot of ballasts. That was just an old technology type of thing and a lot of maintenance went into keeping those up."

As part of the project, new switches were installed that dim the lights.

Also, the new lights are bright as soon as they are turned on. Gone are the days when gymnasium lights had to warm up before they were bright.

"It almost felt like 10 minutes," Caruso said. "It might have been five. But everybody was like, 'What's taking so long?'"

"So now it's like instant on, instant off. People are happy with that."

There's also a safety advantage. If a ball hits a light, no glass rains down.

Caruso removed the lens of a hallway fixture. A single strand of LED lights replace and are much brighter than the four fluorescent bulbs that were in use before the fixture was converted.

There are retrofit kits that allow workers to use the shell of the old fixtures and replace the inner workings.

Superintendent Steve Tucker said the work was done under a "performance contract" where an audit is done to determine costs and a solution is conceived to reduce that expense enough to ultimately pay for the upgrade.

"It makes sense to try to conserve energy and save costs down the road," Tucker said.

"I like how the lights work. They can dim. They shut off automatically. And I like that they are saving taxpayers' money."

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States say OxyContin maker Purdue should not be able to pay out bonuses

WHITE PLAINS, N.Y. (AP) — OxyContin maker Purdue Pharma should be prohibited from giving \$38 million in employee payouts as it goes through bankruptcy, attorneys general from 24 states said in a court filing Thursday.

Purdue has said it needs to make bonus payments to keep employees and maintain operations at a time of high turnover, which also is requiring the company to provide severance packages for employees heading to the exits.

A government bankruptcy trustee objected to the request last week, and the bankruptcy judge has scheduled an upcoming hearing on the issue. Purdue filed for bankruptcy protection last month as it tries to settle 2,600 lawsuits against it over the toll of the nation's opioid crisis.

Members of the billionaire Sackler family, which owns Purdue, also are trying to use the bankruptcy process to halt the roughly two dozen lawsuits they face in state courts.

In a statement, North Carolina Attorney General Josh Stein blasted the idea of the company paying bonuses.

"Multi-billionaires who are giving millions in bonuses to their employees are the opposite of bankrupt," he said. "The Sacklers have extracted billions out of Purdue for their own financial profit and thrown what remains of the company into bankruptcy. Now their company wants to give millions of dollars from what's left of Purdue to Purdue executives. That's outrageous."

Thursday's filings on the bonus question come a day before the deadline on a key matter in the bankruptcy proceedings: Whether states can continue their lawsuits against members of the Sackler family.

The company has said the family members may not be willing or able to contribute the \$3 billion to \$4.5 billion they have pledged if they must face the separate state lawsuits. Including the Sackler money, the company has said the settlement offer could eventually be worth up to \$12 billion.

While attorneys general in about half the states have signed on to settlement terms, two dozen others have not and said they will push back against the tentative deal.

California Attorney General Xavier Becerra on Thursday amended that state's lawsuit against Purdue to include eight additional members of the Sackler family. The state had already sued Richard Sackler, a former company president who was a major promoter of OxyContin sales.

Nearly all the states objecting to the settlement terms have sued Sackler family members.

Pennsylvania made its own filing objecting to the bonuses on Thursday. The District of Columbia and 23 other states filed jointly. They are: California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, Washington and Wisconsin.

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and Maggie Hassan and Rep. Chris Pappas.

Hassan brought McKenzie Harrington-Bacote to the 2018 State of the Union to emphasize the importance of focusing on preventing substance misuse and addressing students' behavioral health and wellness.

The grant money includes \$775,000 awarded over three years through a Justice Department initiative known as Project Safe Schools. The Education Department awarded \$2,437,500 over five years through the Project Prevent program.

Both programs provide grants to local school districts in support of efforts to address youth violence and victimization through the implementation of proven deterrence and mediation methods in schools and help provide affected students greater access to emotional and social support programs.

The Laconia School District will use these funds to expand after-school programs for high school

students, increase school-based mental health services offered onsite by Lakes Region Mental Health Center, convert the status of their existing family outreach social workers from part-time to full-time, and strengthen their partnerships with the Laconia Police Department and Family Resource Center, Shaheen's office said in a news release.

Last year, Hassan visited the school district and discussed its efforts to prevent substance misuse and address students' behavioral health and wellness.

"Students should always feel safe when they're in school. As our school systems look to bolster their programming to better support the mental and physical wellness of our students, it's imperative that they have the necessary resources to respond to the needs of both kids and faculty to foster a healthy and safe learning environment," Shaheen said.

"I'm pleased that the Laconia School District received these federal funds and as a senior member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, I'll continue to

fight for resources that invest in the safety and well-being of New Hampshire schools."

"As young people across our state deal with severe trauma resulting from the opioid crisis, it is especially critical that school districts like Laconia are finding innovative approaches to support at-risk students," Hassan said. "I am grateful for the important work that student wellness administrators like McKenzie Harrington-Bacote are doing to bolster mental health services in our schools, and I will continue fighting to ensure that students have the resources and support that they need to thrive."

"No child or educator should feel unsafe when walking into their own classroom," Pappas said. "These federal dollars will go a long way in allowing the Laconia School District to invest in evidence-based programs that support the physical and mental health of our students, ensuring we continue to foster a safe and welcoming environment for all of our children to learn and grow."

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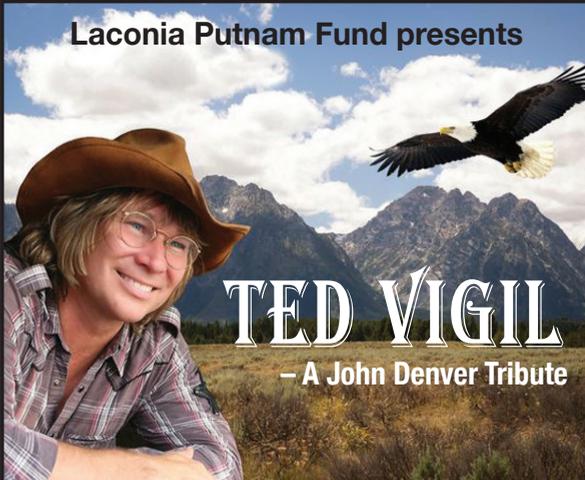
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