

As Deerfield opens, school board looks at budget options

By Susan Campbell
Editor

The opening of the new Deerfield Elementary School on State Route 53 is right around the corner, and, as anticipated, it may lead to some tough budget decisions for both the Coffee County School Board and the Coffee County Commission.

The school board heard very preliminary budget numbers from director of schools Kenny Casteel Monday in anticipation of a planned joint meeting with the county Budget and Finance Committee Thursday.

"This is very rough, but I would like to present this (budget) to the budget and finance committee as a place to start," Casteel told the board during Monday's work session.

The budget includes

nearly \$1.6 million in requests above last year, a large portion of which are due to the addition of the new elementary school plus a one percent salary increase for employees; and an additional \$349,000 to cover this year's deficit and a \$215,000 step increase for some employees.

According to budget director Frederica Williams, the school system has \$170,000 in state-mandated reserves.

"We have been hit with a large increase in the cost of retirement (benefits)," said Williams. "These are set by the state and have been a tremendous impact to our budget of \$428,000."

The board is expected to tweak the budget after an initial meeting with the budget and finance committee before final approval this summer.

New Budget Requests

1% salary increase: \$250,000

Deerfield librarian: \$45,000

Deerfield head custodian: \$25,000

Deerfield technology manager: \$25,000

Deerfield guidance counselor: \$45,000

*3 Deerfield teachers: \$135,000

Utilities at Deerfield: \$85,000

Step increases: \$215,000

State-mandated changes: \$428,000

*if needed



Staff Photo by Jaime Stanford

Several school board members and those involved with the construction of Deerfield Elementary School attended a walk-through of the new school Monday. In the back, left to right, are Terry Hollingsworth, Bill Lyle, Mark Zook, Kenny Casteel, Zach Baldwin, Joe Pedigo, Jim Hastings and Reggie Johnson. In the front, left to right, are Esther Sims, Kathy Norton and Janet Galyen.