LOCAL NEWS

Pickens Council OKs budget

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Pickens County Council members approved a $57.3 million budget Monday night. They did so by shuffling around the funding for several agencies to cope with the loss of almost $1.15 million in state money.

The county's 2009-10 budget cut 14 open positions, including those of risk manager and fire coordinator, but added seven new positions, including four "call-in" firefighters for the Dacusville Fire District and one for the Vineyards Fire District.

Those will be paid for through fire fees and millage, County Administrator Chappell Hurst wrote in an introduction to the budget.

In order to help make up for the $1.15 million expected from the state, council cut funding from several areas, including $25,000 for training, $101,139 in contingency funds, and $50,000 for economic development.

However, council members protected funding for agencies that directly serve residents, such as $5,000 for Meals on Wheels, $20,000 for Seniors Unlimited and $2,000 for Harvest Food Bank.

Council Chairman G. Neil Smith warned that further cuts in state funding might be on the way.

"If you read the paper this morning, they're talking about the projections and it's going to be short again, so we've got to deal with possible mid-year cuts in the funding," Smith said.