

Pickens

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the daily pay for substitute teachers from \$62 up to \$75. Both moves are intended to make Pickens County schools more competitive with surrounding districts that pay better and regularly poach SDPC teachers and staff.

Rising property tax collections will cover some of those added costs. Eby said the ongoing construction booms around Clemson and Easley would

mean a net increase of \$2.3 million in revenue for the district in 2017-18.

Board chairman Phil Bowers said the spending in the budget is all "good and necessary" — especially putting police into all of the district's buildings. However, he wishes the school district didn't have to help pay down the state's unfunded pension liability.

"I'm upset that we have to pay over a million dollars to bail out the pension problem created by the Statehouse," said Bowers, who is also county's Republican Party chairman. District officials also projecting an

\$85 increase in state funding per pupil in the new budget, from \$2,350 this year up to \$2,435; however, county legislative delegation members said Tuesday that a per-capita raise of \$75 was appropriate and sent to Gov. Henry McMaster.

Eby said SDPC could handle the difference between the projected and final numbers.

The school board will move about \$1.5 million from its general fund balance to pay for renovations and other building improvements around the district, including the conversion of the

now-closed A.R. Lewis Elementary School into an alternative school.

Eby said that transfer would eliminate the need to raise the debt service millage for capital projects, yet still leave a cash balance of about \$20-22 million (19 percent) on hand for emergencies, as is standard practice for school districts and municipalities.

The Pickens County school board will meet Friday at 8:30 a.m. at the district's administrative offices on Griffin Mill Road.

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Pickens schools to add two mills for security, pensions

\$119 million spending plan up for vote by district board on Friday

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The Pickens County school board will vote Friday on the final version of its proposed \$119 million budget for 2017-18, which includes a two-mill increase to cover added security and pension costs.

School District of Pickens County spokesman John Eby



Brian Swords

and the hiring of new school resource officers to share with

the pickens county sheriff's office.

Eby said the millage hike would amount to an extra \$12 to the annual tax bills on properties worth \$100,000, and about \$1 for a vehicle valued at \$9,000.

School board member Brian Swords defended the move Tuesday at a community meeting in Liberty. He said the extra money would address the board's lingering safety concerns after last fall's shootings at Townville Elementary School.

"The board is looking to put school resource officers in every one of our outlying schools," said Swords. "The Sheriff's Office has been great to work with on that. One of the costs you can't help (pensions) and the other is just the day and age we live in (officers)."

Eby said the new hires would assure police coverage at all 14 SDPC elementary schools in the county.

"The board looked at all of the things to do to make the schools safer, and this is the best one," said Eby. "The board

has really made safety a priority, there's even new money to address bullying, too."

The pension fix approved by the General Assembly this year will cost the district an extra \$1.3 million in the new budget, Eby said. The increases were mandated to begin to fill a \$24 billion shortfall in available pension funds for public employees around the state.

The board is also improving pay across several full-time job classifications and bumping up

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