

## School district explores options for \$2.4 million deficit

By Jessica Garcia  
jgarcia@nevadaappeal.com

The Carson City School District will be exploring options to address its anticipated \$2.4 million deficit for the 2020-21 school year and beyond early in its budget process, as presented to the district's Board of Trustees on Jan. 28.

The district's projections this early in the year remain conservative, chief financial officer Andrew Feuling reported to the board in his presentation regarding early budget assumptions for the coming year. Fiscal year 2020-21 to date shows an expected \$69.1 million in revenue but \$69.5 million in expenditures.

Feuling said more work needs to be done to reduce the \$2.4 million figure before the tentative budget is presented in April. Other possibilities also are available for funding that could relieve some of the pressure for staffing and operating costs.

While the district still awaits tax projections and other information from the Nevada taxation and education departments, Carson City has at least some known data in hand. Carson City's per-pupil funding is increasing from \$7,184 for 2020 to \$7,285 for 2021. At the same time, enrollment figures are likely to remain flat. Last year's average daily enrollment was 7,788. For 2021, projections dip to 7,740.

The small boost in funding combined with stagnant enrollment increases impacts any potential

tax revenue sources with the state's Senate Bill 543 hold harmless provisions for the next several fiscal years, Feuling reported. It's hardly enough to cover inflationary costs and to account for the expected growth, which the district has been eyeing and planning for, particularly at the middle school level.

The district also will keep an eye on allocations for special education. Rural charter schools such as Carson Montessori also expect to take certain key revenue losses, Feuling said.

However, administrators will be seeking strategies through grant funds, according to Feuling and Superintendent Richard Stokes, to support programming and staffing positions. This could offset costs to the general fund that impact district services the most.

"There are 25 different state grants that we manage and some just have more flexibility than others," Feuling told the Appeal.

The specific plan on these grants would be announced at a later time, but Stokes said they greatly help in reducing positions or services that might otherwise be eliminated.

Resources, too, likely could be shifted as the district considers rezoning for Eagle Valley and Carson middle schools.

"If the idea is to move kids over to Fremont (Elementary School), that'll be, in the end, more cost neutral," Feuling said. "There will be some utility costs, but they wouldn't be as significant. Snyder would be significant if it became operational

right away."

The environmental studies continue before the district can move forward with purchasing the 1600 Snyder Ave., property, but if it is established as a site, it, too, assists with the shift in expenditures.

"It really is an investment into the future with two land parcels that large," Stokes said. "That can become anything, and we have the ability to do that with this other pot of money from the rollover bond."

For now, the district will continue to seek ways it can reduce its deficit and remain fiscally solvent. Feuling, a member of the Commission on School Funding created by SB543 last year, told the board it will be approaching an ending fund balance of 17 percent at the end of this fiscal year. If the fund balance drops below 4 percent, he said, as was the case with White Pine County School District for fiscal year 2014, Carson City would have to relinquish control of its services to the state.

The district will prepare for its annual budget process in the coming months with its usual deadlines. On Feb. 15, Carson City will receive preliminary revenue projections from the state Department of Taxation, followed by final projections on March 25. On April 14, the board will hear a presentation on the tentative budget and hear discussion and input, then submit it the next day to Taxation. At its May 26 meeting, the board will hold a budget meeting for approval and submit the final budget to the state by June 8.

## Proposed attendance for Eagle Valley

### Carson City School District

Carson City School District officials will hold three meetings to discuss new middle school attendance zones and variance options.

The meetings will be:

■ Eagle Valley Middle School: Wednesday, 6 p.m. in the gym

■ Carson Middle School

## 'Colonizing Space,

### Western Nevada College

Mike Thomas will present "Colonizing Space" tonight at Western Nevada College. Jack C. Davis Observatory.

The lecture is free to the public and begins at 6:30 p.m.; doors to the observatory open at 6 p.m.

The observatory is open

## BRIEFLY

### Carson City Republican Party presents precinct organization Feb. 27

The Carson City Republican Party is presenting a precinct organization on Feb. 27. The meeting begins with social networking at 6:30 p.m. and the event



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