

16.Up to 215 Huntsville teachers could lose jobs under proposal to cut \$22 million from budget [HT, Campbell, 2/17/10]

HUNTSVILLE, AL -- Up to 215 teachers in Huntsville City Schools could lose their jobs under a proposal to cut costs in 2011.

Faced with another year of money troubles, Superintendent Ann Roy Moore on Tuesday presented the school board with an unofficial plan to trim \$22 million in fiscal 2011.

In addition to the teachers, the plan calls for 10 fewer counselors, nine fewer assistant principals, and numerous other cuts, including \$1.5 million in bus transportation.

"I think it's going to upset the apple cart a little bit in some cases," said Moore.

The cuts would have to be approved by the board. Moore hopes to save by not replacing some retirees. She also hopes to save \$150,000 in utilities.

But with salaries and benefits consuming about 80 percent of the school system budget, some employees will have to be let go, Moore has said in previous interviews.

Moore said early budget projections from the state Department of Education forecast low tax revenues, the root cause of recent money woes.

The trouble started in December 2008, when low revenues forced the state to reduce its monthly payments to local school systems by 9 percent.

Another 2 percent was reduced the next spring, and school systems will lose 7.5 percent of their state dollars through October, when the new fiscal year begins.

The cost-cutting plan doesn't include potential sale of closed schools. Two elementary schools and one middle school closed last summer, and another two elementary schools will close this summer as part of a consolidation plan.

School leaders estimate \$9 million in savings next year from closing the last two schools, Lincoln and East Clinton.

Board members resurrected talk of offering employee buyouts and building commercial billboards at schools. In a recent meeting, Moore said the system has no incentive money to offer buyouts. On Tuesday, she said businesses are not as likely to advertise on billboards during a recession.

Board member Topper Birney insisted that Moore and other school leaders explore ways to generate money before laying off employees. In a recent meeting, Birney suggested buyouts, billboards, advertising at Milton Frank Stadium, and asking the City Council for help.

Board member Jennie Robinson called for another work session to discuss school finances. That meeting could come next month.