

## Coventry School Budget

# Almeida: Schools could need \$1.6M more

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COVENTRY — School superintendent Mike Almeida brought preliminary numbers to the Coventry Town Council during the first of many budget presentation workshops for 2014-2015 held Monday between the school committee and the council.

He wanted to make it very clear to the council that the \$1.6 million budget increase he's projecting is just that — a projection.

He explained some of the unanticipated challenges the district is facing are a steady cut in federal funding since fiscal year 2009, less in state aid

## Superintendent tells council that projected increase results from unanticipated costs, drop in state aid from declining enrollment

since 2008, transportation, common core curriculum challenges and student placement to name a few.

The superintendent explained that through the Senate 3050 bill, the school district can make a request to the town for an increase in the budget but by law, there is a four percent cap so there is only so much money the town can provide.

"We expect to be saving money through attrition when teachers retire but because it's too soon for teachers to let us know, we don't have set figures yet; not that we want to lose good teachers but that will be some savings," Almeida said.

Another issue that has an effect is a drop in enrollment, which also means a drop in state aid.

He pointed out that a handful of students recently came into the district that need additional supports, which count as unanticipated costs.

"The needs of some of the students in the district are so diverse that we just don't have the resources to do things cheaper, but we're exploring options," he said.

A big concern of the superinten-

dent's, which is not addressed in the budget, is obtaining the necessary resources to fulfill the common core transition requirements (part of the national Race to the Top program) such as textbooks, teacher workshops and professional development training and other types of supports required by the state.

"Not having enough in the budget is a real concern of mine," he said.

"I don't think the Coventry residents can handle much more," Almeida added. "I'm very concerned about the common core requirement and I'm really working hard to make sure we are being as fiscally

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# More money needed for schools?

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responsible as we possibly can be.”

Another item not addressed is all-day Kindergarten.

School and town officials have held numerous conversations about any possibilities of providing all-day Kindergarten to address overcrowding, but the fact is that it simply isn't in

the budget to implement at this time, which, according to Almeida, only further complicates the district's situation.

Coventry Town Council President Gary Cote shares the same concerns for providing an all-day Kindergarten and wonders if by not having it, if the students fall short when the move on to grade school.

“The bottom line is that I

fully do not expect your final request to be an increase of \$1.6 million,” said Coventry Town Council President Gary Cote. “We've all worked together successfully in the past to work with the numbers and come up with good solutions and I expect to do the same here.”