

2009 in review

continued from page A1

later when Gov. Christine Gregoire included \$370 million of cuts to K-12 schools in her initial budget proposal.

The picture isn't much rosier in Sumner: Several Sumner School District employees were forced to pile on additional duties. At the beginning of the current school year, the district saved \$15,000 by asking middle school principals to take on ASB advisory roles.

The problems in both districts could multiply if voters fail to renew maintenance and operations levies in February. The current levies support more than 20 percent of the districts' budgets. In Sumner, this pays for 58 para-educators, 31 bus drivers and transportation staff, seven campus safety officers and the majority of extracurricular activities and curriculum-related materials.

"If we were going to have a levy failure, it effectively means that we have to look at the people portion of our budget," Aungst said. "It would markedly change the way in which we would have to operate our schools."

The state is using \$3 billion in federal stimulus money to balance its budget, but that money disappears in 2012. Those cuts could filter into Puyallup's special education program, for example, which received a stimulus backfill in 2009, Aungst pointed out.

The district was able to rehire some librarians and reinstate or modify a few bus routes originally cut this year, Aungst said. The district's instructional coaching and professional programs were almost entirely eliminated, a fix that will eventually need to be readdressed, Aungst felt.

"That's problematic in the long run because you do need to be able to plan for some ongoing training for staff," she said.

Officials in the Sumner School District are continuing to stay positive. Communications Director Ann Cook said they have not laid off any teachers and have found other duties for employees in positions that have been eliminated.

"We knew we had to make reductions," Cook said. "We really (want) to find every possible way to maintain programs and opportunities for kids."

SCHOOL BUDGETS

The Puyallup School District eliminated \$13.8 million from its 2009-2010 budget, reductions that were necessary because the state passed along a large chunk of its \$9 billion deficit to K-12 education.

Debra Aungst, the district's deputy superintendent, said this month that Puyallup schools must anticipate another cut in state funds for the 2010-2011 year. Her statement was proven truthful a week

*Please see **2009 in review**, page A2*