

Lee's Summit R-7 Board of Education, Citizens' Advisory Committee meet in special session to discuss school district's budget challenges

The Lee's Summit R-7 School District Board of Education and Citizens' Advisory Committee met Oct. 7 in a special work session to begin discussions on how to best address the school district's financial challenges.

Dr. David McGehee, R-7 superintendent, and Dr. Tom Kurucz, associate superintendent for management services, presented information on growing financial concerns caused by arbitrary changes in Jackson County property-assessment procedures, combined with a flawed state education funding formula.

Lee's Summit R-7 officials hosted a meeting in early September involving county officials and leaders from Jackson County school districts. The meeting focused on the impact of financial losses suffered by local schools, resulting from unwarranted lowering of property assessments. Due to these actions by the county assessor, the Lee's Summit R-7 School District lost approximately \$3.4 million in local revenue for 2008-09. Districts throughout the county lost a combined total of \$22 million this school year. Next year's losses could be even more dramatic if the assessor's office continues these procedures.

In addition, the R-7 School District is challenged by inadequate funding at the state level. Unless the flawed state education formula is corrected this year, the school district will lose an estimated \$5 million in state funding over the next five years.

Due to these recent financial losses, the school district has made budget cuts this school year, maintaining its constant focus on solid financial planning and careful stewardship of resources.

The Citizens' Advisory Committee will continue to study the district's financial challenges at additional meetings this fall and is expected to make a recommendation to the Board of Education later this winter. The Lee's Summit R-7 Citizens' Advisory Committee has served as an advisory council organized to make recommendations to the Board of Education since its establishment in 1952. The group currently has approximately 40 members, including parents and non-parents as well as representatives from the R-7 Board of Education, school district staff, Lee's Summit Educational Foundation, Economic Development Council, Chamber of Commerce, PTA, Lee's Summit Ministerial Alliance, higher education, health care and small business.