

Five fired in Minford budget cuts

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By FRANK LEWIS

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Minford Schools are facing what is referred to by the Ohio Department of Education as "Financial Caution."

"We are looking at a deficit budget of about \$500,000 this year, and next year, it will be higher," said Minford Schools Superintendent Dennis Meade.

"So we did one of those things we hate to do," he said. We non-renewed five one-year teacher's contracts at Wednesday (April 19) night's school board meeting."

Meade said the school has not yet been notified of the status. "Once we are notified, we will have 60 days to show we have a plan to return to fiscal soundness."

Some criticism of the non-renewals included the renewing of the contract of Assistant Superintendent Glen Franke, who returned to an administrative position after retiring

several years ago.

"We are actually down 2.63 in supervisor coordinators, and we could have hired those supervisors like other schools, but we didn't," Meade said. "So Glen Franke is actually doing the job of at least 2.63 people."

Meade said Franke has had a "target on his back" since he retired and returned. "What people don't know is that we are actually saving money with him, because we don't pay an insurance premium for him, and he doesn't have a vacation package," he said.

Meade blames several factors in acknowledging the deficit.

"Inadequate funding by the state, the cost of the capital improvements we made," he said. "The cost of operations went up. Maintenance and utility costs, the rising cost in salaries and fringe benefits including a 10-percent increase in health benefits premiums, all contributed to the deficit."

In response to a question concerning the new athletic complex, and its effect on the deficit, Meade said, "It absolutely was a contributing factor. When we began the project, we were not experiencing problems, and our five-year forecast looked good. Then there was a February count. The state took our count in October, and we had everybody in, but when the February count came up we were really down in enrollment. So the state reduced our funding."

Minford had attempted to keep the class sizes low and had gone below the state recommended 23 to 1 ratio. Meade said that ratio now will go up.

"We are going to lose some top-shelf teachers. Our hope is to get them back, but we know it's going to be a long process," he said.

Another problem Meade cited is a declining enrollment.

"Some of the students who

came here through open enrollment found out we have high expectations, and have chosen to go back to their original schools," he said.

Meade said a teacher in the system has been circulating a letter throughout the community, but that it is not representative of the majority of Minford schools employees.

Meade said it was going to take a team effort to return to solvency.

"We have to become solvent. Our union, administration and board are all in agreement that we need to work together to maximize our academic program," he said. "Our employees have a good positive outlook. Our union personnel all understand. I really appreciate our faculty and staff. They're the best, and they are determined to help us succeed."

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Franke resigns new contract at Minford

Assistant superintendent has been part of school system since 1973

By **FRANK LEWIS**

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Amid a controversy surrounding Minford schools' financial problems and the nonrenewal of five teachers' one-year contracts, Assistant Superintendent Glenn Franke has resigned his new contract.

"This ends all of the

things we have been doing for the past 21 years," said Superintendent Dennis Meade.

On April 17, Meade announced the system had a \$500,000 deficit, and five teachers had one-year contracts that were not renewed for the 2007-08 school year.

The controversy began

when Franke's contract was renewed.

"This all started in 1986 when the board created the position of assistant superintendent," Meade said.

Franke said he made his decision, "because I personally feel it's the best thing to do in these financial times."

"If I can help save some-

one's position by doing so, that is what I want to do," he said.

Franke said he has been a part of the Minford school system since 1973.

He said there is a perception on the part of some people that the school system does not need administrative personnel.

"But people need to under-

stand, with federal programs, special education and supervision of non-teaching personnel, it all comes directly to me," Franke said. "The poverty-based programs bring in around \$400,000 a year. These are jobs that someone is going to have to do now."

Franke's current contract called for him to work 195 days a year.

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"And that was a straight 195 days, no vacation days, and I paid my own insurance," he said. "I worked at least 8 1/2 to 9 hours a day. As long as there were buses taking children home, I stayed at the office. If anything happened, I was the one they called."

In response to claims by members of the community that Franke was paid \$150,000 a year, Meade said, "I don't think anyone makes that kind of money in the county. I certainly don't."

Franke said he was paid \$68,000 this year.

"Of course, I get my retirement pay, but that has nothing to do with it," he said.

Franke said he had retired, but returned to work.

"There are not a lot of people out there who are certified as superintendents," he said.

Meade said he had a meeting with teaching and administrative liaisons and felt sure they will recover from financial problems.

"Our high school and our elementary schools are ranked 'excellent,' and our middle school is 'effective', and we were one of the few school systems in the state to pass state AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress), and we have an excellent faculty working hard to make the middle

school 'excellent' as well," he said. "Amy Odell and Kevin Lloyd attended a seminar presented by the Ohio Appalachian Educational Leadership Institute because they are working hard to bring about success."

Franke and Meade agree the decline in enrollment is a major factor in the reduction of school funding.

"We don't have a monopoly on the decline in student enrollment. We are down by 10 percent, but it's that way statewide," Franke said. "The legislation has done a lot to create alternative education for kids. They are now being home-schooled, some have come directly out of our district to attend the (Sciotoville) community school, and then there are those who are attending virtual schools on the computer so enrollment is down all over the state."

Franke said he had no plans for the future.

"But I do have a new grandson I look forward to spending a lot of time with, and I certainly don't see myself not working," he said.

Franke said he was extremely proud of the accomplishments of Minford schools in recent years.

"I have loved this system since 1973, and I believe it will come out of this situation."