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# Franklin anticipates another budget deficit - School budget to be presented at Tuesday meeting

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*By Scott Calzolaio Daily News Staff January 21, 2019 Publication: Milford Daily News, The (MA) Page: A3 Word Count: 326*

FRANKLIN - Monetary concerns are looming in town as it enters the fiscal 2020 budget season. Officials expect another deficit, but are working to make sure the trend doesn't continue.

There are no numbers out for the fiscal 2020 budget, but town and school districts offices are discussing proposed figures that will be available in the next month.

The approved town budget for 2019 is \$124.2 million, with the school budget accounting for approximately \$63 million. Officials used close to \$1.5 million from a stabilization account to balance the 2019 budget last cycle.

Schools Superintendent Sara Ahern plans to present her recommended fiscal 2020 budget to the School Committee meeting on Tuesday. The budget is expected to be discussed until a final decision is made at the committee's March 12 meeting, when the members will vote. There will be a public hearing on the budget on Feb. 27.

The system is comprised of 11 schools and about 5,200 students. The school budget is approximately \$10,163 per student for 2019.

"It's early in the process right now," Ahern said. "Right now, we're determining what our major budget drivers are going to be."

Ahern said the budget is very tight. She said it's too early to judge if there will be any shortfalls for fiscal 2020, but she anticipates having to get creative with how she spends the district's money.

"There will be more to come over the coming weeks as the superintendent's budget and the School Committee's budget comes out," she said.

With annually increasing costs for transportation, salaries, health insurance and special education student tuition, Ahern is concerned, but confident they'll make it work despite the impending shortfalls.

"We do know those costs are rising," she said. "But our in-district programs are thriving. We're making sure that students are receiving appropriate services in the least restrictive environment. It's always something that we're striving for."

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