

WPCC asks 12 percent budget hike

By JOHN CALLAHAM
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The Western Piedmont Community College Board of Trustees approved a 2000-2001 fiscal year budget request Monday. It proposes an 12 percent increase in spending.

The budget, approved unanimously, asks the Burke County government to pay \$1,486,625 in the next fiscal year.

That's an increase of \$157,625, or 11.8 percent, from the current budget of \$1,329,000.

Financial subcommittee chairman Charles Henson said the large increase was not what it first seemed to be. He said \$192,200 of the increase is for repairs and maintenance to WPCC facilities.

Among the repairs are \$45,000 for sidewalks, steps and handrail repairs, \$30,000 for heating and air conditioning inline circulation pumps, and \$20,000 for retaining walls to be build at the Phifer Learning Resource Center.

WPCC requested a similar amount last year but only got \$48,926 from Burke County.

Henson said if it were not for the funds for repairs on the campus, the 2000-2001 fiscal year budget would have only increased 0.5 percent from the last fiscal year.

"We feel that this is a very austere budget," Henson told the trustees Monday.

The budget also asked for \$225,000 in capital needs funds, including \$100,000 was requested for the construction of a new 40,000-square-foot maintenance building and \$125,000 was requested to refurbish the current Morganton City Hall for the college's needs.

WPCC President Jim Richardson said the college will ask the county commissioners for renovation money in increments, and they saw no reason not to ask for those funds now, even with the delays projected in the City Hall construction.

The local budget request for WPCC will now be delivered to Burke County Manager Ron George. George is expected to submit his recommendations to tcommissioners later this spring.