

Fitzgerald: No deal on budget, caucus still wants to eliminate personal property tax

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Senate leadership emerged from caucus cautious about the gov's budget proposal, saying GOP senators are still wedded to the idea of eliminating the personal property tax.

Senate Majority Leader Scott Fitzgerald said yesterday there's still "no deal" yet on the budget in his caucus even though Assembly GOP leaders back Gov. Scott Walker's offer to redirect \$203.5 million in income tax cuts he had proposed and instead pump new cash toward road projects over the next two years.

That's in part due to Senate Republicans' commitment to addressing the personal property tax. In their budget proposal this week, senators proposed wiping out the tax in the second year and creating a new appropriation to reimburse local governments for lost revenue. Doing so would cost \$239 million in the second year of the budget under the Senate GOP plan.

Putting the money Walker set aside for income tax cuts toward roads instead also would mean there wouldn't be enough money to address the personal property tax, Joint Finance Committee Co-chair Alberta Darling, R-River Hills, said

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"They are very reluctant to give that up at this point," she said of her caucus.

Meanwhile, both Fitzgerald and Darling say it's unlikely that JFC will be able to meet as early as next week.

JFC Co-chair John Nygren, R-Marinette, proposed that in a letter to Darling

yesterday.

Fitzgerald, though, is eyeing the first week of August, adding the caucuses have “got enough items to hash out.”

Assuming there are two or three days left of work on the budget, Fitzgerald said, he’s hopeful it could all be accomplished in the same week, “and that could put us in the position that hopefully we’ll get a budget done soon.”

Darling was optimistic committee leaders could get together to work out areas the two GOP caucuses agree on and set the foundation for a meeting.

“We need to do that before we go to the table,” Darling said.