

## **In Session with the “Oriole” Superintendent**

By, Mark D. Rosekrans, Superintendent of Charlotte Public Schools

### **Sinking Fund Election Answers and Future Plans**

There have been many comments since the sinking fund election was voted down on August 4<sup>th</sup>. For the few that I have heard, I will attempt to respond to them in this column with accurate information.

#### **Comment #1**

The Charlotte Public Schools (CPS) and Eaton Regional Educational Services Agency (ERESA) are connected and/or the same organization.

#### **Answer to #1**

CPS and ERESA are not the same organization. We are separate organizations. CPS does receive support services from the ERESA, but so do the other Eaton County schools - Grand Ledge, Eaton Rapids, Maple Valley and Potterville.

#### **Comment #2**

Charlotte Public Schools received the 1.3 million OI settlement revenue from the City of Charlotte court case. What happened to the money?

#### **Answer to #2**

The school district has received the check from the city. We have been awaiting formal, written authorization, from the State of Michigan Treasury department to ensure the settlement revenue received is unrestricted in its use. The CPS Administration, the Board of Education President and the school district attorney had a face to face meeting on July 15, 2015, with the Treasury Department officials, the City Manager and the city’s attorney. We have yet to receive any written notification from the Treasury Department as of August 11, 2015. The revenue sits for now, in a restricted, designated account that cannot be used by the General Fund.

#### **Comment #3**

The district really doesn’t need the sinking fund millage to support facilities.

#### **Answer to #3**

The district does need and would like to pass the sinking fund millage to protect the facility investments the community has so generously supported. Passage of the millage would be a proactive vs. reactive approach to maintaining the buildings and grounds. The needs identified in the facility audit forecasts out maintenance and repair projects for the next 20 years. These projects will not go away and cannot be ignored. Having a plan is good management. It is fully understood it comes with a cost in increased taxes. We would like this cost to be seen as an investment to protect those already in place.

#### **Comment #4**

The district really wants the sinking fund millage to climate control the buildings for the balanced calendar (year round school) concept.

#### **Answer to #4**

Not true. There are no final decisions made on the balanced calendar. It will continue to be studied and investigated during this school year, 2015-16. The costs for adding climate control are identified in the

facility audit for the High School, Parkview and Washington. The Upper Elementary and Middle School are already climate controlled. Having the costs identified to climate control these buildings is good management but does not mean that it will be done. The climate control projects could be considered for use within the sinking fund revenue, but it is not a given. It is part of the ongoing study and evaluation of the balanced calendar and all of the potential impacts that come with the consideration of a calendar change. The passage of the sinking fund is not tied to the balanced calendar and vice-versa. They are separate items. The goal of trying to know all aspects of what our district faces facility wise is exactly why the facility audit was done in the first place. Having known, identified projects with established costs attached, is again good management and what you should expect from the Board and Administration.

### **Board Direction**

On Monday evening, August 10, 2015, at their regular August meeting, the Board of Education had a lengthy and very intentional conversation about how to approach the Charlotte community again with this Sinking Fund Election request. The Board after much participation by all of its members, decided to place the question in front of voters again on the November 3<sup>rd</sup> general election ballot. The immediacy of the decision was based on the deadlines for the November election. All decisions and ballot language for the November election had to be to the County Clerk's office by the next day, August 11, 2015.

The Board understands that those that voted spoke clearly when the August results did not go in the district's favor. However, they also realize they have a responsibility to lead and be good stewards of the public interests as they relate to the Charlotte Public School district. Therefore, it was decided to again place this in front of voters with the hopes it will be supported to generate revenue to maintain and repair school district facilities for the next 10 years.

The Board is showing strong leadership and a commitment to the district as well as the community by going back and seeking approval. We know this comes with a cost, specifically an increase in taxes. We also realize that the Charlotte community has always been generous and do not want to take advantage of that. However, we believe that this increase seems manageable, reasonable and affordable and will keep our facilities in good shape for our students and also may attract new families to our community.

The request is the same in November as it was in August, 1.0 mil for 10 years, generating approximately \$535,000 annually for the district. This will cost an average property owner in Charlotte (\$50,000 SEV) approximately \$4.00 per month or \$48.00 per year.

Go Orioles! Oriole Pride!