

# Chippewa Valley Board approves bond election date

By Nicole Tuttle For Digital First Media

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The Chippewa Valley Schools Board of Education approved a resolution on Aug. 13 establishing Nov. 6 for a bond election. The district is interested in improving security aspects, such as replacing security cameras, at Dakota High School and other district buildings.

Nicole Tuttle--**For The Macomb Daily**

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Ron Roberts

Photo courtesy of CHIPPEWA VALLEY SCHOOLS

Voters will find a bond issue from Chippewa Valley Schools on the November ballot.

On Monday, Aug. 13, the Chippewa Valley Schools Board of Education approved a resolution that set Nov. 6 as the date for a bond election they have dubbed the Safe Schools, Strong Schools proposal.

Chippewa Valley Schools Director of School/Community Relations Diane Blain confirmed that the proposed bond will be for \$97 million. District officials say it will not increase the existing tax homeowners pay.

“There will be no tax increase under the Safe Schools, Strong Schools proposal, which would extend the existing bond for eight years. There will be no tax increase because the first four years of the extension will maintain the current bond rate, and in the last four years the rate will drop dramatically and taxpayers will actually see a decrease in their taxes,” Ron Roberts, Superintendent of Chippewa Valley Schools, told The Macomb Daily.

If passed, it would:

- Fund security enhancements at existing buildings
- Replace older busses, repair or replace roofs, plumbing and mechanical systems
- Provide instructional technology and increased access to career and tech education

Blain also said the district wants to replace door locks and redo entrances at two high schools to increase security.

“Some of the other buildings, we are looking at different improvements that would actually have barriers in the corridors,” Blain said.

In July, the district acquired its third Macomb County Sheriff’s Office liaison officer. Blain said although the district hopes to add a fourth officer, bond funds cannot be used to pay for the expense.

“One security thing that we do are just all of our cameras. And they don’t last forever. And these things are very expensive,” Roberts said after Monday’s meeting. “The way funding works – and I always stress this with our parent groups – we are the largest school district in the state of Michigan with the lowest possible funding.”

In 2017, voters defeated Chippewa Valley’s \$89.9 million, 25-year bond proposal.

On July 16, the board approved the preliminary School Loan Revolving Fund application resolution. The resolution was necessary to allow the district to meet principal and interest payments on outstanding bonds and levy 8.64 mills of debt retirement, according to Chippewa Valley Assistant Superintendent for Business and Operations Scott Sederlund. Blain said the motion was an annual one. Sederlund also said that without access to the School Loan Revolving Fund, the district would need to levy additional millage for debt retirement.

The district has been at 8.64 mills since 2014-15. The district's outstanding balance in the School Bond Loan Revolving Fund is at about \$63.64 million, according to Sederlund.

Sederlund said Monday without the bond issue, the district would continue to be in the School Bond Loan revolving fund until about 2033. Although he did not cite a dollar figure, Sederlund said that with the bond, this would extend by roughly a little less than five years.

"With the bond approved, we would be in it until the 2038-39 school year," Sederlund said.

The School Bond Loan Fund program was created as a revolving fund to provide schools with a chance to borrow money without using other financial institutions. Districts received money from the fund for projects and repaid the loans into the fund over time. Districts could also borrow more by extending their obligations, which eliminated the need to increase the debt retirement millage rates for taxpayers.

A 2012 state law changed the terms of how schools repay loans they secured through the state-financed School Bond Loan Fund. Districts that participate in the program must recalculate their millage rates annually to ensure that schools generate enough money to meet the new financial obligations in a timely way. State officials indicated that schools should repay loans within a 30-year time frame, even if millage rates increased. In 2012, School Bond Qualification and Loan Program information showed that Chippewa Valley owed a debt of \$143.18 million.