

Chippewa Valley Schools District prepares mill proposal for November ballot

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Diane Blain, the Chippewa Valley School District’s director of school and community relations, outlined the 18 mill non-homestead proposal that the district plans to put on the Nov. 4 ballot during a Chippewa Valley Board of Education meeting. (Photo by NICOLE TUTTLE)

The Chippewa Valley Schools District is hoping that voters will allow them to retain \$11.5 million in school funding this November, when a proposal regarding an 18 mill non-homestead millage appears on the ballot.

Chippewa Valley Schools Director of School and Community Relations Diane Blain gave a presentation on the millage proposal during a Chippewa Valley Schools Board of Education meeting on Sept. 8.

“Basically, what it is is a tax levy on business, industry and commercial property, rental properties and second homes in the district,” Blain said. “For us, it represents \$11.5 million dollars, or approximately 8 percent of our budget each year. This is not something that is new in communities. Every Michigan school district levies the same 18 mills in order to collect their full per-pupil funding from the state.”

Blain said that the millage was last renewed in Chippewa Valley in 2006.

“Typically, they are renewed for a nine- or 10-year period. So we are going to have a little bit of a job doing some education for our community, because we are going to have some people in our community that have never voted for this before,” Blain said. “So we will be sending out a lot of information to them so that they know it is not a tax on homeowners. That is going to be a message that will need to be loud and clear.”

Language for the proposal was approved by the Chippewa Valley Board of Education in August, and Blain said that the district anticipated that it would receive official wording back from the Macomb County Clerk’s office the week of Sept. 8.

“Our current 18 mill non-homestead millage, like I said, it’s getting ready to expire at the end of the year, so it is important for us to bring this before voters now,” Blain said.

One important reason that the district selected to put the issue on the November ballot is to avoid the costs associated with holding a special school election, according to Blain.

“One of the reasons why we decided to hold the election in November is because when we looked at different times

that we could hold the election, this would actually save district taxpayers about \$60,000 in costs, because if we went for a special school election at another time, the district would bear the cost of the election. So that was certainly a consideration for us,” Blain said.

To inform residents about the vote, the district has already sent out emails to parents, Blain said. The district plans to utilize SchoolMessenger, Facebook, school or district websites, school or district newsletters, community newsletters, fliers at schools, PTO meetings and other methods of communication to inform residents about the vote, she said.

“We also have reached out to our local townships to talk about ways that they can help disseminate information, whether it be at the library or the senior center, and things like that,” Blain added. “So we’ve got some things in place with them already. We’re also talking about, like we would use our cable access channel to get information out to residents, we are talking about how we could possibly use their cable access channels to get information out to residents, because they have a little bit different viewing audience.”

Blain also said that homeowners and local businesses could benefit from the millage renewal, as property values are higher in areas with good schools and residents are attracted or retained.

Blain said that voting yes on the proposal will cause no additional costs to homeowners, and businesses, industry and second homes will continue to be assessed 18 mills, as they have been since about 1995.

“It maintains the quality educational programs we have, and like I said, it represents about 8 percent of our budget, so if we did not have this money that would mean dramatically different services in our school district,” Blain said.

Voting no on the proposal would create no reduction in homeowner taxes, but would result in a loss of 8 percent of the district’s budget, according to Blain.

“We need these dollars. These are critical dollars to help us maintain the programs and services that we have now,” Blain said. “If the election would not be successful, we would have to go back to voters to ask for their approval again. So not only would we have to go back to voters, but we would be spending those dollars to hold a special school election, which we are hoping we do not have to do.”

In addition to hearing information about the 18 mill non-homestead proposal, the Chippewa Valley Board of Education also voted on a bid award and a contract. In the absence of Chippewa Valley Board of Education President Denise Aquino and Chippewa Valley Board of Education Vice President Andrew Patzert, Treasurer George Sobah presided over the board’s Sept. 8 meeting.

The board approved a bid award for freezer floor replacement of the administration building’s central kitchen freezer. The contract, in the amount of \$83,000, went to Cortis Brothers.

“This project consists of the removal and replacement of the freezer floor concrete and installation of an electric floor heating system in the administration building central kitchen freezer,” Chippewa Valley Assistant Superintendent for Business and Operations Scott Sederlund said.

Sobah said that the replacement was due to extensive freezing that occurred last winter, which caused problems with the floor

The board also approved a contract for snowplow services with United Lawnscape.

“The recommended motion is that the Chippewa Valley Schools Board of Education approve United Lawnscape for a one-year contract with an option to renew on an annual basis for three additional years, in the approximate annual amount of \$46,755, to provide district-wide snow plowing services,” Sederlund said.

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