

CLINTON TOWNSHIP, MACOMB TOWNSHIP

February 5, 2014

School board approves new bus purchase

Tax collection method to change this summer

By Jeremy Selweski
C & G Staff Writer

» click to enlarge «



Photo by Deb Jacques

Chippewa Valley Schools is purchasing four new school buses for its fleet this year: one with a wheelchair lift and three without.

CLINTON TOWNSHIP/MACOMB TOWNSHIP — The Chippewa Valley Schools Board of Education had a full agenda on Jan. 27 and made several key decisions, including the purchase of four new school buses.

According to Scott Sederlund, the district's assistant superintendent of business and operations, this transaction is for one bus with a wheelchair lift and three without, at a total cost of \$365,335. However, that sum does not include the extra cost for surveillance cameras and other after-market features that the district adds to each vehicle.

Director of Transportation Brendan Wagner compared the specifications of the offerings from three different manufacturers, Sederlund said. He then determined that the recommended bus model would best serve the district based on the performance of its most recent bus purchases and other comparative factors.

Funding for this purchase will come from the \$89 million capital improvement bond program that Chippewa Valley Schools voters approved in February 2010.

"The 2010 bond issue allows us to replace somewhere between 30 and 40 buses altogether," Sederlund told the board. "So we're spreading them out as our buses get older, buying a few of them every year, and trying to stretch out these purchases as long as we possibly can."

Board Vice President Andrew Patzert asked what the district typically does with its old school buses once they have exceeded their useful life.

"We sell the old buses at auction," Sederlund replied. "How much we get all depends on the wear and tear on each vehicle, as well as the mileage. The last auction that we had back in May, I believe that we made between \$13,000 and \$15,000 per bus."

Sederlund added that by the time they are sold, these school buses are usually around 12 or 13 years old and have at least 100,000 miles on them.

In another decision, the board approved an intergovernmental agreement between Chippewa Valley Schools and Clinton and Macomb townships to collect the district's 2014 summer taxes from homes across the district.

As Sederlund explained, each year, the district must go through the legally prescribed process for collecting its local property taxes. This year, Clinton Township increased its collection fee from \$1.70 per parcel to \$1.73 per parcel, while Macomb Township raised its fee from \$1.50 per parcel to \$1.75 per parcel. The district will pay those fees and receive reimbursement payments of \$0.17 per parcel from the Macomb Intermediate School District (MISD) and \$0.15 per parcel from Macomb Community College (MCC) for collecting their respective summer taxes.

Board Trustee Frank Bednard expressed disappointment that the collection rates appeared to have increased considerably over the previous year.

"Has this changed from the past?" he asked Sederlund. "This is a substantially higher rate per parcel than what we were paying before. ... We were paying the ISD to collect these taxes prior to this, and I remember them having much, much cheaper rates when we used them, so what happened?"

Sederlund pointed out that when Chippewa Valley Schools collected its summer taxes through the MISD, the district was paying only \$1 per parcel. While district taxpayers' bills will remain the same under this new agreement with the townships, Sederlund estimated that it will cost the district \$52,000 in additional expenditures.

"The ISD has gotten out of this business," he said. "The real reason that these rates are going up is because ... in the past, the ISD would get all the interest from collecting this money, which would keep their costs down. Now that there is very little interest, we're starting to see those costs creep up because the ISD is not getting (as much interest anymore). ... The other reason is that the townships were allocated \$2.50 per parcel when they started collecting the state education tax. ... I see us potentially getting to that level at some point — I just don't know how quickly it's going to be."

Board Trustee George Sobah inquired about other tax collection options at the district's disposal, but Sederlund said that the only possible alternative would not be logistically or economically feasible.

"Our only other option is to do it ourselves," he stated. "But if we did it ourselves, we would have to issue the bills, and people would have to come here to pay them, so we would have to have employees on staff to serve them. We would essentially have to form our own tax department. ... And the cost for printing, stamps and all the other little things that we would need would add up very quickly."

At the meeting, the board also accomplished the following:

- Approved two communication service contracts with Verizon and USA Mobility in the amount of \$25,527 to purchase new cellphones, pagers and data plans for district employees including head custodians, office staff, administrators, grounds crew, maintenance staff and others.
- Granted one-year skilled trades contracts in undisclosed amounts with Contrast Mechanical and Shoreview Electric to perform jobs that Sederlund said are beyond the district's level of expertise.
- Supported a budget amendment for Chippewa Valley's general fund, food service fund, and International Academy of Macomb fund, which will result in total revenues exceeding expenditures by about \$800,000 rather than the \$1.2 million that was included in the budget that the board approved last June.
- Adopted a series of new policies to get the board in line with current state and federal laws by prohibiting employment discrimination in the areas of disability and sexual orientation.

You can reach C & G Staff Writer Jeremy Selweski at jSelweski@candgnews.com or at (586)218-5004.
