

School bond, millage details nearly finalized

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By Thomas Franz 

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CLINTON TOWNSHIP — Residents in Clinton and Macomb townships may soon be asked if they will support a tax increase to fund school upgrades for Chippewa Valley Schools.

School administrators are in the process of finalizing a bond proposal worth just less than \$90 million. To fund the bond, residents in the district would decide in May whether or not to support a 0.5 mill increase, which equates to \$50 more annually in taxes for a home valued at \$200,000.

“People take great pride in their schools in Chippewa Valley, and this protects that investment while moving a step forward in technology, which kids need and parents want for them,” said Superintendent Ron Roberts.

The main ticket item as part of the upgrades would be computers, roughly 9,000 of them. The computers would be used by students in a variety of fashions, but during a Nov. 14 Board of Education meeting, curriculum leaders highlighted how technology would be integrated into new curriculum plans.

The district plans to purchase 158 new laptop carts, which each hold 30 laptops. The carts will be assigned to language arts classrooms for middle schools and high schools, new elective courses in middle school, and for a new elementary STEM class in each building.

“There are lots of ways ELA classrooms could use computers on a daily basis to teach middle school and high school standards,” said Pam Jones, the district’s director of curriculum and assessment.

The district also plans to replace approximately 1,500 staff computers and 89 existing laptop carts with new computer technology.

Craig McBain, the district’s director of technology, said the initiative accomplishes goals set out by the district’s strategic and accreditation plans.

“The one thing I really like about these carts for curriculum is three things, they’re driven by curriculum; it addresses one of the priorities of the AdvancEd process, which is the need for more digital learning; and it was brought up when we went through the strategic plan initiative,” McBain said.

Roberts promoted the plan because of its all-encompassing nature. Currently, the district provides a computer for every four students, and this plan would bring that ratio to two students per computer.

“What we like about this approach is it touches every single kid in the district, which we thought is a real strength,” Roberts said. “The technology here is a tool, it is not curriculum, and as we revise our curriculum, it’s only natural that our curriculum plays a bigger role in it.”

In addition to technology, several building improvements would also be made under the new bond program.

Throughout the district, 16 of 24 school buildings would see some sort of roof work completed. About \$6 million would also be budgeted for carpeting and flooring, and \$2 million would be allotted for interior and exterior doors.

Six buildings would receive total parking lot renovations, while 13 others would see some improvements.

To gauge public opinion on the millage increase, Roberts said during the Nov. 14 meeting that he plans to use a polling service to receive feedback on the plan.

“We’re very respectful of their financial situations and we’re not asking them to approve something that we don’t believe they would want,” Roberts said. “We believe the community will want this. It’s a modest increase to get as much bang for the buck.”

Roberts said the district’s message to voters could be influenced by the polling feedback it receives, going so far as to say that it would pull the bond program if it receives highly negative feedback.

Roberts hopes to have the board sign off on the plan in early December so that it can be reviewed and approved by the state treasury department in January in order for it to appear on a ballot this May.

“We’re in a little different place now. We’ve evolved to a different point. I think people are very excited about Chippewa Valley Schools. Our community involvement may look a little different, but I think the support will be there,” Roberts said.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Staff Writer Thomas Franz covers Macomb Township, Chippewa Valley Schools and the Macomb County Board of Commissioners for the Macomb Township Chronicle. He also covers sports primarily for the Shelby-Utica News. He has worked for C & G Newspapers since 2013 and attended Michigan State University.
