

Information Packet

For Public Distribution

**For the
November 18, 2009**

Board of Education Meeting



Ann Arbor Public Schools

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MEMORANDUM

To: Board of Education Trustees
From: Todd Roberts *TR*
Date: November 13, 2009
Subject: Information Update

We have an Executive Session scheduled for 5:30pm on Wednesday prior to the regular Board meeting. The purpose of the executive session is for two reasons; Superintendent Evaluation and Negotiations. Ideally we will cover the Negotiations part of the session first. I will be sending the update on my goals to you on Monday so that you will have it prior to Wednesday.

If you have any questions let me know.

2008-09 Financial Audit Report

Included in your packet is a copy of the FY 2009 audit report from Plante Moran. This report was briefed by the Performance Committee earlier this week. The folks from Plante Moran will be at Wednesday's meeting to present the report.

Curriculum Recommendation for Reproductive Health

The Sexual Health Education Advisory Committee (SHEAC) will be presenting a recommendation for two textbooks supplements related to our Reproductive Health Curriculum. The two additions are "Healthy Relationships and Sexuality" and HIV/AIDS. These materials were briefed by the Planning Committee earlier this week.

Also included in the briefing on the Michigan Model for Health. This program is currently being used by over 90% of Michigan Public Schools along with many private schools. The materials also include the Healthy and Responsible relationships curriculum.

Members from SHEAC will be at the meeting to present the information.

Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP) Funding

On the agenda for Wednesday's meeting for special briefing is the acceptance of the GSRP funding for this school year. AAPS will receive \$204,000 for 2009-10 to help fund our preschool program for eligible students. Michelle Pogliano, assistant principal at the Preschool will be at the meeting to present the information.

Pioneer Renovations Bids

Included on Wednesday's agenda is a first briefing for part of the renovations occurring at Pioneer to the space where Rec and Ed will be housed. This item was briefed by the Planning Committee earlier this week.

State Budget Update

There is not much new to report from the state. At this point we are still waiting to see what action the Senate will take regarding the House's plan regarding this year's funding for education. As you recall, AAPS was looking at a \$525 per pupil loss in funding (approximately 8.7 million dollars) this year. The House then put forward a plan to restore \$117 per pupil and half of the 20j funds (which is about \$116 per pupil for AAPS) that were cut. If the Senate were to approve the House plan we would lose approximately \$292 per pupil (approximately \$4.8 million) this year. The governor has said that she will sign the House plan if approved by the Senate. The Senate, however, seems at this point unlikely to support the House plan. I expect that we will have a better idea of what our funding will be by next Friday when the full proration order is supposed to go into effect.

We have a study session scheduled for December 3rd regarding the budget and budget planning. We will discuss plans to address this year's budget shortfall along with the planning process for developing the 2010-2011 budget and longer range planning based on what will likely be continued funding stresses.

If you have any questions let me know.

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CELEBRATION OF EXCELLENCE AWARD

11/18/2009 Board Meeting

Jan Mackenzie

Counselor

Slauson

INNOVATION

CUSTOMER SERVICE:

Nominated by: Toni Burton, Janae Townsend , co-workers

Nomination:

Announced by: Deb Mexicotte

As employees we all experience challenges and loss in our personal and professional lives. For Jan Mackenzie offering the support and love that her students and colleagues need always comes first. For this reason Jan Mackenzie is being nominated for recognition of the outstanding customer service she offers to her school community.

Her work touches both students and adults in her building. It is not unusual to find Jan's appointment clipboard filled with the names of both students and staff in need of her sympathetic ear. She is never too busy to listen, smile, or cry with anyone who comes to her door.

Jan's wisdom comes through, as she knows exactly when to insert a reflective question, witty observation, or supportive comment. Jan has witnessed many tough situations in her years with the district and has demonstrated her care in a time of crisis.

This past summer a Slauson family was faced with the unthinkable as they cared for their terminally ill daughter. In the early stages of Emma's battle with leukemia there were times when she could not make it to school. Jan organized a lunch group to allow Emma's friends to share lunch with her via Skype. Jan also facilitated other gatherings outside of school with Emma's friends. For the eighth grade trip, Jan made sure Emma was a part of the annual trek to Chicago, using Skype as the medium for communication.

Jan made sure to keep all of Emma's extended school family up to date on her condition as she battled leukemia. Jan served as a strong support for Emma's parents throughout this difficult time. She was by their side as the family said goodbye. With grace and poise beyond her years Jan presided over an overflowing room as many gathered to remember a sweet, smart, student, daughter, and friend.

Even now she continues to extend her support as they cope with their loss. Eighth grade is the busiest time for a counselor as they prepare for one group to leave and another group to enter. Jan maintained her yearly duties while caring for this Slauson family with her ever-present wit and humor.

Emma's passing was a profound loss for the Slauson and Rubenstein family. Despite the toll that caring for a loved one battling cancer can take on the mind, body, and spirit of the caregivers Jan continues to demonstrate an extraordinary level of enthusiasm and care to the sixth grade class. For this and so many more reasons Jan Mackenzie, counselor extraordinaire, epitomizes the word love.



PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Led by Vice President Patalan

ROLL CALL

Present – Trustees Hollier, Mexicotte (President), Nelson (Secretary), Patalan (Vice President)

Absent – Trustees Baskett, Friedman (Treasurer), Gates-Bryant

Administration Attending: Simpson, Trent, Allen, Osinski (Recorder)

Others Attending – Dave Szczygiel, Stephen Schaffer

INTRODUCTION OF NON-VOTING MEMBER AT THE TABLE

President Mexicotte introduced Dr. Todd Roberts, Superintendent of Schools.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Approved by consent.

PUBLIC COMMENTARY

- Kathy Robenault requested the consideration to use sinking fund dollars to update athletic facilities.
- Mark Quigley requested an investigation of Great Lakes Environmental vehicle maintenance practices and also spoke against the WISD millage.
- Ted Annis spoke against the millage.
- Niki Warner spoke against the millage.
- Kathy Griswold spoke against the millage and requested the district work toward a sustainable model for education.

REPORTS

Youth Senate – reported on the WISD millage and the possible impact on high school students.

Black Parent Student Support Group – reported on 10/27 meeting discussion of new graduation requirements and its impact on first year students; African American student achievement with a goal to address success for all students. Meetings are scheduled 4th Tuesday of each month.

Ann Arbor Parent Advisory Committee – reported on Disability Awareness Workshops scheduled at various elementary schools. Workshops are being planned for parents and families, staff and Board Trustees. Encouraged voting in support of the WISD millage on November 3.

Parent Teacher Organization Council – reported on successful launch party where donations were collected for Food Gatherers. Discussed PTO challenges, celebrating diversity and volunteer participation. Next meeting is 11/16 @ 7pm – Balas Main Conference Room. All are welcome.

BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS

Planning – November 3rd meeting to be rescheduled due to election.

Performance – Next meeting is November 9 at 6:00 pm. All are welcome to attend.

INFORMATION

David Szczygiel and Stephen Schaffer presented an informative Powerpoint of the **Science and Environmental Education programs**. Students in all grade levels receive a wide variety of experiences through both of these programs and they have been adapted to enhance the district's curriculum for many years. Also, Randy Trent presented an update of the district's **environmental practices**. Mr. Trent noted that we have saved about \$5million just in the last 5 years.

FIRST BRIEFING

None

SECOND BRIEFING – scheduled for approval at this meeting

09-033 Integrated Pest Management Services – no further discussion.

09-034 Environmental Consulting Services – no further discussion.

09-035 Asbestos and Lead Based Paint Abatement Services – no further discussion.

09-036 Pediatric Therapy Associates – no further discussion.

ACTION – CONSENT AGENDA – scheduled for approval at this meeting

09-033 Integrated Pest Management Services

Vice President Patalan, supported by Trustee Hollier moved to approve Griffin Pest Solution, Inc. to perform various integrated pest management services on an as-needed basis for the Ann Arbor Public Schools from December 1, 2009 through September 30, 2011. On roll call vote, the motion carried 4-0; Trustees Baskett, Friedman and Gates-Bryant absent.

09-034 Environmental Consulting Services

Vice President Patalan, supported by Trustee Hollier, moved to approve EKS Environmental Consultants and TEC t perform various environmental environmental consulting services on an as-needed basis for the Ann Arbor Public Schools from December 1, 2009 through September 30, 2011. On roll call vote, the motion carried 4-0; Trustees Baskett, Friedman and Gates-Bryant absent.

09-035 Asbestos and Lead Based Paint Abatement Services

Vice President Patalan, supported by Trustee Hollier, moved to approve Great Lakes Environmental, Inc. to perform various abatement services on an as-needed basis for the Ann Arbor Public Schools from December 1, 2009 through September 30, 2011. On roll call vote, the motion carried 4-0; Trustees Baskett, Friedman and Gates-Bryant absent.

09-036 Pediatric Therapy Associates

Vice President Patalan, supported by Trustee Hollier, moved to approve contracts to Pediatric Therapy Associates for the 2009-10 school year in the amount of \$621,600. On roll call vote, the motion carried 4-0; Trustees Baskett, Friedman and Gates-Bryant absent.

Approved minutes of the 10/14/09 Regular Meeting

Vice President Patalan, supported by Trustee Hollier, moved to the minutes of the 10/14/09 Regular Meeting. On roll call vote, the motion carried 4-0; Trustees Baskett, Friedman and Gates-Bryant absent.

Gift Offers

Vice President Patalan, supported by Trustee Hollier, moved to accept the gift offers as presented. On roll call vote, the motion carried 4-0; Trustees Baskett, Friedman and Gates-Bryant absent.

ACTION – BOARD ITEMS

Motion to hold an Executive Session on November 18, 2009 for the purpose of an informal evaluation of the Superintendent.

Vice President Patalan, supported by Trustee Nelson moved to hold an Executive Session of the board on November 18, 2009 at 5:30 pm at the District Library for the purpose of superintendent evaluation. On roll call vote, the motion carried 4-0; Trustees Baskett, Friedman and Gates-Bryant absent.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Dr. Roberts gave his report.

ITEMS FOR AGENDA PLANNING

Patalan reminded the community that the superintendent is evaluated 3 times each year. He will provide board with material for review prior to the November 18th meeting.

ITEMS FROM THE BOARD

Trustee Hollier reminded the community that the election to approve a millage to support county-side districts is this Tuesday. He works for a state representative and fields calls from citizens angry about loss of funding to their school districts. Most districts do not have any opportunity to do what we're able to do with a millage. He noted that no Board would be a responsible steward of money and allow their "ship" to sink.

Trustee Nelson noted that in order for our students to be prepared, they need the best education possible. We won't be able to do that if the millage fails. Good schools are good for the community. If these cuts are retained, our per pupil funding will be lower than 2002-03 levels. The Millage is essential. He urges everyone to vote yes on the millage proposal. Thanked the scores of people who are working so hard on this millage.

Trustee Patalan recently talked to someone wanting to move to Ann Arbor, knowing something was special about it. Doing the right thing always costs a little more. Encourages us to vote yes. Get correct information and make an informed vote on Nov. 3

Trustee Mexicotte noted that the district has made cuts since she's been on the board. We have reorganized and consolidated and cut and shifted monies to bring efficiencies, even though we have been required to do more. We have continued work on equity issues, have recovered tax money that was due to us. We have cut \$6 million every single year. She disputed the information about the district that was presented during public commentary. The decision to go out for a county-wide millage was a decision by the 9 districts in the county. They came together to find a way to maintain our excellence. If the community thinks that the current Board are being poor stewards of the money, then bring forward candidates to replace them. Students should not be punished.

ADJOURNMENT

8:39 pm

No vote on schools tax

Continues from A16

tainable educational reform and describes how special interests and the Michigan Education Association have spun this campaign message into one of deception, urgency and emotional fear.

Although per pupil funding from the state has not kept up with inflation, voters in the Ann Arbor district have generously supported additional local taxes, including the \$250 million Bond and the Sinking Fund. These contribute an additional \$1,500 per pupil per year to the district.

On the spending side, our AAPS operating expenses have risen at over twice the rate of inflation since 2002; when including buses, technology, and building renovations. From 2002 to 2008 our operating budget increased by \$37 million. Such increases in these economic times are not sustainable! We are fortunate in Washtenaw County to have so many elected leaders who value public education and consider it one of their top priorities. Thus, regardless of the economic future of Michigan, our elected leaders will ensure

that public education receives a fair amount. In these times of hardship, AAPS needs to initiate a collaborative process with other local leaders and concerned citizens to optimize limited financial resources and advocate for structural changes in Lansing.

Even if voters in the Ann Arbor district can swing this millage, is that the fair thing to do? The out-county areas are harder hit by this recession and by the loss of manufacturing jobs. Last year, our county suffered 1,400 home foreclosures and we have over 900 so far this year. Passing this millage would cause further hardship on those already struggling to keep their homes and provide for their families.

Please use facts, not fear, and vote no on Nov. 3.

Kathy Griswold is a former Ann Arbor school board trustee and a member of Citizens for Responsible School Spending. She was a co-founder of Coalition for Educational Options and Citizens for Better Schools. She has served on many boards and committees that provide services for and advocate on behalf of at-risk students.

Yes vote on schools tax

Continues from A16

are at the mercy of the state's economy, the priorities of its legislators, and laws that dictate such things as retirement costs.

Public schools have few options available to them for increasing revenue. But voters in the Washtenaw County area have the opportunity to help. By passing Proposal 1, the Regional Enhancement Millage, the 2 mills collected over each of the next five years would be divided equally among the number of students in the area.

Each of the 10 public school districts would use the money to help fill budgetary gaps in its general fund.

While this money will not solve the tremendous budget-

ary challenges that all Michigan public schools are facing, it will help. It will help preserve the programs that make each district special. It will help ward off receivership, and allow districts to retain local control. It will help show businesses that education is important to us here — and that is something that both keeps businesses around and attracts new ones.

Most of all, it will help provide the best education possible for all our kids.

Please vote YES to Proposal 1 on Nov. 3.

Amy Doyle is a resident of Ypsilanti and has two children in the Ypsilanti Public Schools. She is a former Ypsilanti Board of Education trustee, and is a longtime advocate of public education.

Superintendents express anger about state cuts

Continues from A1

How much money is enough?

No real measures exist showing how much money is needed to provide a quality education for students, local administrators say.

How much money they currently get varies from district to district based on the state's per-pupil foundation grants.

Washtenaw County superintendents expressed anger last week at cuts made by Gov. Jennifer Granholm that have the potential to cripple their finances.

One is a line item called 201 that was eliminated early last week; it provided extra money to several districts across the state, including Ann Arbor.

On the heels of that, Granholm took \$127 per student away from districts Thursday — on top of a \$165 per pupil cut passed earlier this month.

District officials say the cuts are coming with little

Much more online

At AnnArbor.com

- » See a compilation of data by those supporting millage and those opposing it.
- » See the pay-raise history for school-employee unions by district.
- » Read statements from business leaders, politicians and parents on the millage.

warning and often in the middle of the school year, making it nearly impossible for district to cover the losses.

Take Chelsea, a district scheduled to end the year nearly \$1.3 million in the red. The \$292 in combined cuts will add

another \$800,000 in budget shortfalls to the district's \$25 million annual budget, Superintendent Dave Killips said.

Killips said the state per-pupil losses can't be made up with fund equity or the savings account fund, which has about \$5 million in it. The district must have 18 percent of its budget in savings to help with cash flow during the months when state checks don't come.

Washtenaw County school officials argue they can't keep cutting money out of their budgets. They say they're facing a structural deficit, and the only way to solve it is to cut and increase revenues at the same time.

Already got enough money?

Parent Katie McMillan doesn't think the schools need more money, especially Ann Arbor, where her children attend.

She thinks teachers, who

have an average salary of more than \$70,000 a year, make too much money. She doesn't believe the district does a good job of spending the money it has in the right places, especially in the classroom.

According to the state, Washtenaw County's 10 traditional school districts spent, on average, just over \$5,000 of the nearly \$11,000 they got for each student on instruction.

That's less than half of a district's money — but Miller called it a misleading figure.

He points out the state doesn't count several people in that figure, including the principal, secretary and some additional support teachers.

Add those numbers in, and spending on instruction climbs to just over \$7,000 per student on instruction.

The remaining money goes toward administration, operations, transportation and capital needs.

"You can't tell me there's not waste in those budgets," said McMillan, who will vote no on the millage request. "They need to really look at everything they are spending money on, determine if it helps kids learn, and if not, cut it out."

A murky future

If the millage request passes Nov. 2, school district officials across Washtenaw County will breathe a huge sigh of relief.

The districts would start to get money from the tax in late winter or early spring, and the current revenue shortfalls would be covered in all districts.

But even if it passes, district officials say their finances could remain rocky.

That's because some are forecasting another \$400- to \$600-per-pupil cut in state funding next school year. Local school districts such as Ypsilanti and Willow Run, al-

ready running budget deficits, could find themselves unable to absorb that blow.

And if the millage fails, there's no doubt cuts will need to be made.

Killips said Chelsea could close an elementary school, cut high school athletics, lay off 15 teachers and several administrators, and still not likely cover the entire \$2.1 million shortfall.

"It's not going to be a superintendent decision, or even a school board decision," he said.

"We're going to have to go to the community and have some rough discussions about what exactly they want to keep. We just added all-day kindergarten, but kindergarten is the only grade not mandated by the state. Do we keep kindergarten? Everything would have to be on the table."

David Jisse covers K-12 education for AnnArbor.com. He can be reached at davidjisse@annarbor.com or at 734-623-2534.

Two views on school enhancement tax

Yes vote needed to ensure a quality education

I want the best education possible for my kids, for your kids, for everyone's kids.

To me, that education includes being taught by a combination of highly-educated veteran and newer teachers, all of whom are well-trained in the latest educational methods.

It includes attending school in a setting that hosts a diverse population, whether the diversity is based on racial, socioeconomic, or special needs factors.

It includes providing enrichment opportunities that inspire students and engage the community, such as music, art, drama and sports.

It includes offering extracurricular activities that prepare students to become better citizens, whether in



VoteYes
Amy Doyle

student government, journalism or service groups.

It includes providing academic challenges appropriate to each student's ability, such as advanced placement classes in high school or multi-age classrooms in elementary school.

Are these elements essential to the public schools? That point will always be debated. The fact is, these elements have become practically synonymous with the public school experience.

Yet, bit by bit, many of

these components are being watered-down, eliminated or priced out of the reach of many students.

What will remain? One-size-fits-all, bare-bones education, which is likely to contribute to even more children being "left behind."

Is public school supposed to be like this?

I want our children learning in a positive environment, experiencing the joy of learning about the world around them, challenging themselves and being challenged.

The State of Michigan has locked schools into increased academic requirements without providing adequate funding for its implementation. Public school budgets

See **YES**, Page A17

Approval would hurt Michigan farmers, families

We take our children to the Farmers Market and teach them the value of eating local produce. Yet some people in the Ann Arbor school district are advocating for a 2-mill WISD Educational Enhancement Millage that will force many farmers to abandon their local farms.

These farmers are already paying 18 mills in non-homestead property taxes, 6 mills in state school tax, WISD taxes and other local school taxes.

In addition to unfairly burdening our local farmers, we will be adding to the financial woes of other school communities not endowed with the more stable employment afforded by the university and three large medical complexes.

I have spoken to many



VoteNo
Kathy Griswold

people who have always supported public education yet are still undecided about this millage. Others are confused but afraid of the potential harm if they vote no.

I was surprised that some very intelligent, politically savvy people are supporting this millage. However, upon reflection it is understandable, given the lack of transparency in school financial reporting and the limited, misleading information being advanced by special interests and school officials.

The Citizens for Responsible School Spending Web at www.A2CRSS.org lists amount each of the county 10 public school districts would receive and speculate on why the charter school, the lowest funded school in the county, would not receive any funds. It describes how the teacher salary freeze in Ann Arbor only applies to the contractual amount many AAEA members will get a step increase of about 10 percent this year. It describes how the threatened cuts of \$15 million are from growth expenses, including increases in pension and health care costs, and step increases. Most importantly, it recommends a process for sus-

See **NO**, Page

10-18-09

AA.Com



STUDY TIME — Skyline High School student Libby Barber takes notes on one of the glass frames during a tour of historical markers in downtown Ann Arbor Thursday. Mark Bialek | for AnnArbor.com

Students take to streets to learn history

BY IANET MILLER
For AnnArbor.com

Skyline High School students saw history come off the page and into the streets this past week with the launch of a project that introduces them to Ann Arbor's past.

The students, numbering about 200 and divided into small groups, participated in one of 10 different walking tours Thursday morning that stopped at the three-dimensional transparent glass frames and wall panels installed on buildings around the city.

The students learned about Ann Arbor founders Elisha Rumsey and John Allen, who each used ill-gotten gains to buy land to establish the city.

And about Mary Foster, who in 1876 became the city's first female lawyer and only the 14th in the nation. And about the Luick brothers, who donated land next to what is now Kerrytown and is used as a farmer's market.

While the Downtown Ann Arbor Historical Street

decided it was time to make sure they are seen.

"We didn't want to just put history on the street," said Ray Deter, one of the organizers. "We wanted to activate the exhibit, to get people involved. One of the best ways to do that was to integrate it into the school system."

Skyline was a natural place to start, he said, because it was new and open to making the tour part of its curriculum.

Skyline teachers developed teaching plans around the tour, Deter said, that spanned all of this week.

"As a new school, we're trying to establish relationships with businesses and organizations," said Sean McBrady, Skyline history teacher. "And this fits in well because we are teaching about technological, political, education and social changes."

The tours gave a local look at several broad themes:

» **Immigration:** While transplanted New Yorkers and New Englanders first settled here, immigrants followed. Germans were first, followed

of town, providing lumber, marble, farm implements and more.

» **Industrialization:** Power came from the Argo dam. But Ann Arbor has never been an industrial powerhouse. That was left to Ypsilanti.

Susan Nenadic, volunteer tour guide and retired Saline School District teacher, led a group of students around the old Fourth Ward, covering a geographic area that spanned the area from the Washtenaw County Courthouse to Zingerman's Delicatessen.

Her students learned:

» The building that now houses the Ann Arbor Observer is the second-oldest commercial building in the city and has hosted businesses ranging from farm implement seller to underwear maker.

» The Fourth Avenue Birkenstock store is in a building that was home to the city's first Dunbar Community Center, a string of community centers around the nation that offered lodging and services to the African-American community and were named after

is patched.

» Ann Arbor wanted to be named the state's capital. As a consolation prize, it got the University of Michigan.

The Downtown Ann Arbor Historical Street Exhibit Program has overseen installation of 20 transparent glass frames and almost 50 wall plaques that detail, through words and pictures, Ann Arbor's history.

While the city owns the exhibits, private money has paid for most of the project, Deter said. He hopes the project will eventually expand to all of the city's high schools. The street exhibit program has won many awards.

One more frame will be installed at the University of Michigan Student Union to mark where President John Kennedy announced plans for the Peace Corps. About 10 more wall images are also planned, Deter said.

Skyline sophomore Christian Lewis said he learned things he didn't know about the city, including the fact that the Kerrytown neighborhood escaped the wrecking ball in

Heritage Newspapers (heritage.com)

Life

Sharman Spieser helping improve lives

Monday, October 26, 2009

By Sara Waisanen, Special Writer

Every day in Ann Arbor people from at least 10 different countries learn how to speak English as a second language. In classrooms at Stone Alternative High School and in classrooms at the Malletts Creek branch of the Ann Arbor Public Library, students learn how to do fractions and study five subjects in preparation for the General Educational Development diplomas. Inmates at Washtenaw County Jail also have the opportunity to earn their GED.

Sharman Spieser, director of adult education for Ann Arbor Public Schools and district liaison with Washtenaw Intermediate School District Education Project for Homeless Youth, works to make these programs available.

As the director, Spieser works on writing grants to keep the adult education programs funded. She designs, implements and maintains these programs so students can receive their GED and learn English as a second language.

As a liaison for the homeless, Spieser spends her days assessing needs, being an advocate and providing services for those who face challenges while they try to get their education. Spieser works to provide school supplies, clothing, transportation and school related expenses for students and families who need it.

"Everybody's child's education is the most important thing to them," Spieser said. "They want their child to be cared for."

Spieser works to ensure students are taken care of and to get the education they need. She insists that she doesn't work any harder than any other administrator who takes their job seriously.

"I like to work and serve for people who've been abandoned by our society. That's what I'm passionate about," she said.

An important aspect of Spieser's life is being an anti-racist educator.

She created the Ann Arbor Public Schools Adult Education Collaborating Council last year. The council meets once a month to discuss how to be more effective serving black young adults.

"It's a whole aspect of my life," she said.

Spieser graduated from Michigan State University in 1974 with a degree in communications with a teaching certificate.

After graduating, she worked for Upward Bound, a program that serves high school students from low-income families and high school students in which neither parent has a bachelor's degree, according to Upward Bound's Web site.

"It was a totally exciting way for me to start my career," she said.

Around that time, Spieser was facing some challenges in her family life. Both of her parents had handicaps -- her father suffered from alcoholism and her mother had mental illness. Her dad died and Spieser got custody of her two brothers, John and David, who were 10 and 11 years younger than her.

"I had a Murphy bed and all of a sudden I had two younger boys," she said.

During that time, Spieser's boss at Upward Bound encouraged her.

"We recreated our family," she said.

Spieser left Upward Bound and started working at the University of Michigan in affirmative action. She handled complaints and worked with women's groups. Spieser did that for five years. She said that job was difficult for her because she dealt with sexual harassment.

"People feel that you're listening and you're taking them seriously," she said. "That's giving them something."

Spieser worked at Tappan Middle School as a community education coordinator for six years. She became the adult education coordinator for Romulus school system, running the GED program for 11 years.

"Every job I've had, I've loved," she said.

In 2007 Spieser became the principal at Stone Alternative High School. During the time she was interviewing for the position she was going through a personal transition. She was in the process of leaving her marriage of 23 years.

"It was a really wild year," she said. "I think I'm a very brave person. I follow my heart."

Spieser has a 22-year-old son named Nate, who is a graduate student studying orchestral performance at Carnegie Mellon in Pittsburg.

Spieser was the principal at Stone for one year. She said the job wasn't what she thought it would be. Since then, she's been the director of adult education for Ann Arbor Public Schools and recently has been the liaison for homeless youth.

"You just do the best you can," Spieser said about the work she does. "You can never do enough."

URL: <http://www.heritage.com/articles/2009/10/26/life/doc4ae33899b367a764006436.prt>

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Photo by Sara Waisanen

Sharman Spieser, director of adult education for Ann Arbor Public Schools and district liaison with Washtenaw Intermediate School District Education Project for Homeless Youth, makes it possible for adults to get their GED and learn English as a second language.

Liz Nowland-Margolis, Ann Arbor Schools Communications Director

Bio

Age: Really? OK, 48.
Position, for how long: Ann Arbor schools communication director, 6 1/2 years.
Live in what neighborhood and how long: Georgetown for 15 years, but grew up in the Bromley subdivision on the north side of AA.
Family, ages: Husband Marc; children, Taylor, 16; Nick, 15; and Jack, 11.

How would you like to be remembered:
 A good mom who nurtured her sons to be good men.

Most significant accomplishment:
 Raising three boys with my husband while always working in full-time, demanding positions and hopefully not neglecting them too much!

Biggest disappointment: Not going to law school. Maybe there is still time?

Ten Questions

1. **What do you do on a home football Saturday?**
 Tailgate at U of M Golf Course or Ann Arbor Golf and Outing. Usually skip the game to go home and return to tailgate afterward, unless MSU is playing U of M!
2. **You're a tour guide in Ann Arbor, where would you take a tourist?**
 Downtown Ann Arbor, the Michigan Theater, Kerrytown, farmers' market and the



Arb. **3. What's your favorite season in Ann Arbor and what makes it special?**
 Fall! Love the changing of the leaves, the

cooler air, going to cider mills, wearing sweat-ers.

4. What are the pros and cons of living in Ann Arbor?

University of Michigan is both a pro and a con. Ann Arbor would not be as enriched without it, but again the more they take property off the tax base the more it negatively impacts Ann Arbor.

5. Ann Arbor restaurant makes your favorite dish, drink or dessert and what is it?

We eat a lot at Old Towne. Love their tuna sandwiches. For special occasions I like Eve.

6. What building or landmark in Ann Arbor makes it unique?

The Michigan Theater, and if you get up real high and view the valley we live in, it is incredible.

7. If you could wave a magic wand and change one thing about Ann Arbor, what would it be?

No more parking tickets.

8. What's your favorite saying or quote?
 "Oh bologna" — from my dad.

9. If you could give a newcomer to Ann Arbor one piece of advice, what would it be?

Get involved. There are so many wonderful nonprofit organizations, cultural and sporting events to participate in.

10. Ann Arbor is known as tree city, what's your favorite and why?

Any kind of flowering tree such as a crab apple.

A2Journal: ON THE

10 SPOT

The A2 Journal asks 10 questions of people who help shape and move Ann Arbor.

A2 Journal

10-29-2009

State looks at new ways to fund public education

11/1/09

BY KATHY BARKS HOFFMAN
The Associated Press

LANSING — Fifteen years ago, Michigan changed the way it pays for public education, switching from local property taxes to a mix of sales and property taxes, lottery revenue and other money.

Now, with cuts of nearly \$300 per student looming and some districts looking at losing as much as \$600 per student, think tanks, business groups and education advocates are calling for looking again at the way Michigan pays for public schools.

"The reduction in school revenues is really a product of the economy tanking," says former state Rep. Lynn Jondahl, who was the Democratic House Taxation Committee chairman when Proposal A passed. He's now working with the group, A Better Michigan Future, to get the state's finances on a more stable footing.

"We're in deep trouble a year from now without the stimulus money," he says.

Schools are scrambling to absorb cuts being imposed on them this month. Total cuts in the public education budget total \$292 per student.

That's not even counting the \$52 million Democratic Gov. Jennifer Granholm vetoed for wealthier school districts that get as much as \$4,000 more per pupil than schools getting the lowest per-pupil grants.

Those school districts are looking at decreases of as much as \$600 per student.

Lawmakers could erase some of the cuts school districts face. They have until Nov. 21 to come up with more revenue that would erase the \$127-per-student cut Granholm imposed last week because she says the school aid budget isn't balanced — a statement Senate Republicans dispute.

Lawmakers also could override Granholm's veto of the \$52 million for the wealthier districts by then, although that's a tougher task since it takes a two-thirds vote in both

What to expect

Cuts school districts have been told to expect in their Nov. 20 state payments:

» Cuts equivalent to \$165 per student, included in the school aid budget that began Oct. 1. These cuts will stand.

» Cuts of \$127 per student from a cut imposed by Gov. Jennifer Granholm because she says school aid revenues

are dropping below expectations and won't be enough to cover spending. Lawmakers could act by Nov. 21 to increase revenue and erase the cut, although Republicans say no increase is needed.

» Cuts of varying amounts — some as much as \$300 — for 39 wealthier districts that get more per-pupil aid than most districts.

the House and Senate.

The cuts would have been even worse if the state didn't have \$450 million in federal stimulus money to draw on for schools. The federal dollars saved schools from another \$280-per-student decrease this school year.

The size of the hole will be worse next year, when the state will have far less federal stimulus money to fill it. That has a variety of interests looking at ways to change how schools are funded.

More than a third of the almost \$13 billion school aid budget now comes from the state's 6 percent sales tax. Roughly another third comes from a state education tax assessed on property and income tax revenue. Business taxes account for 6 percent, bringing in slightly more than the lottery revenue — \$677 million last school year — that goes to the school aid budget.

A smattering of minor taxes — from the real estate transfer tax to tobacco, liquor and casino wagering taxes — make up the rest of the money raised by the state to support schools. Last school year \$600 million in federal stimulus funds and \$1 billion in other federal spending rounded out the school aid budget.

Jondahl, who thought in 1994 that income tax revenue would be a more stable source of money for schools than sales tax, now says the decision

really didn't matter. School revenues have dropped during Michigan's lengthy economic downturn, so any tax structure would have ultimately cracked.

So what's the solution? It depends on whom you ask.

The Legislative Commission on Government Efficiency recently suggested giving the state superintendent the power to consolidate school districts or intermediate school districts if at least 5 percent savings can be shown.

A variety of think tanks have suggested making school employees pay more for health care, or lowering health-care benefits, possibly by including them in a pool covering all university, public education and state and government workers, as Democratic House Speaker Andy Dillon has suggested.

There's also been talk of giving new teachers less pay, or switching them to a defined contribution system that includes 401(k)s rather than a monthly pension in retirement.

There's also the revenue side to be addressed, as the state's structural deficit means the funding will continue to shrink if no action is taken.

One suggestion is to place a sales tax on at least some services, possibly after lowering the overall sales tax rate from 6 percent to 5 percent. The state also could move from a fixed income tax to a graduated one, although that would have to be approved by voters.

Heritage Newspapers (heritage.com)

Life

Logan Elementary School students hold coin drive to benefit Food Gatherers

Wednesday, November 4, 2009

By Lisa Allmendinger, Heritage Newspapers

Let the face-off begin as Logan's lower elementary and upper elementary school students begin a two-week coin drive for Food Gatherers.

"Logan has a tradition of contributing to United Way," says Hyeuo Park, a fifth-grade teacher at Logan Elementary School.

He said Food Gatherers is a good source to invest in, especially with winter coming and hunger becoming more prevalent.

Simultaneously, Logan is working to become a "green" school and the coin canisters are decorated recycled hand-wipe containers. Once they have been reused, they will be recycled again.

Park and second-grade teacher Kristi Krile got together and decided to issue a challenge to students, dividing them into upper elementary and lower elementary groups.

If a lower elementary class -- students and staff in kindergarten through second grades -- collects more money, then Park will have to serve the class during a pizza party.

If students in the upper elementary grades, those in third through fifth grades raise more money, then Krile will have to serve that class during a pizza party.

"It all goes to a good cause, Food Gatherers," says Logan Principal Terra Webster.

Logan students were called to a schoolwide assembly Oct. 28 to kick off the two-week event, which started Nov. 2 and concludes Nov. 13.

Fifth-graders Cassie Ritter, who depicted the United Way, and Alec Durbin, who played hunger, "ducked it out," as Park explained that 50,000 in Washtenaw County go hungry every year.

"Let's put our coins together and give hunger a knock-out blow," Parks told the children.

Second-graders Griffin Parton and Hanna Paszkiewicz wasted no time putting together some strategies for their class.

"We can give coins from our allowance," Hanna said.

"My mom finds coins in the parking lot all the time. Maybe she'll help us," Griffin said.

Back in Krile's classroom after the assembly, students suggested looking under cushions in couches at home, bringing rolls of pennies they had saved and looking for coins on the ground.

"But don't steal from your parents," one student warned.

On Nov. 6, the first tally will be taken and updates will be provided to students throughout the two-week campaign.

Students were sent home with fliers explaining the fund drive.

"It's Upper EI vs. Lower EI in a duel of numismatic prowess for a chance at a pizza party for the top classes," the flier reads.

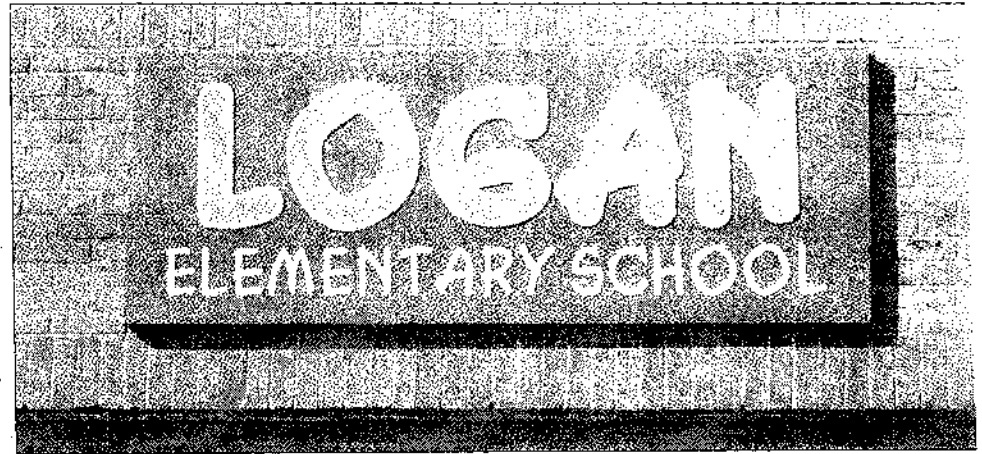
Lisa Allmendinger can be reached at 1-877-995-NEWS (6397) or at lallmendinger@heritage.com.

URL: <http://www.heritage.com/articles/2009/11/04/life/doc4af1ceb6d8811066640014.prt>

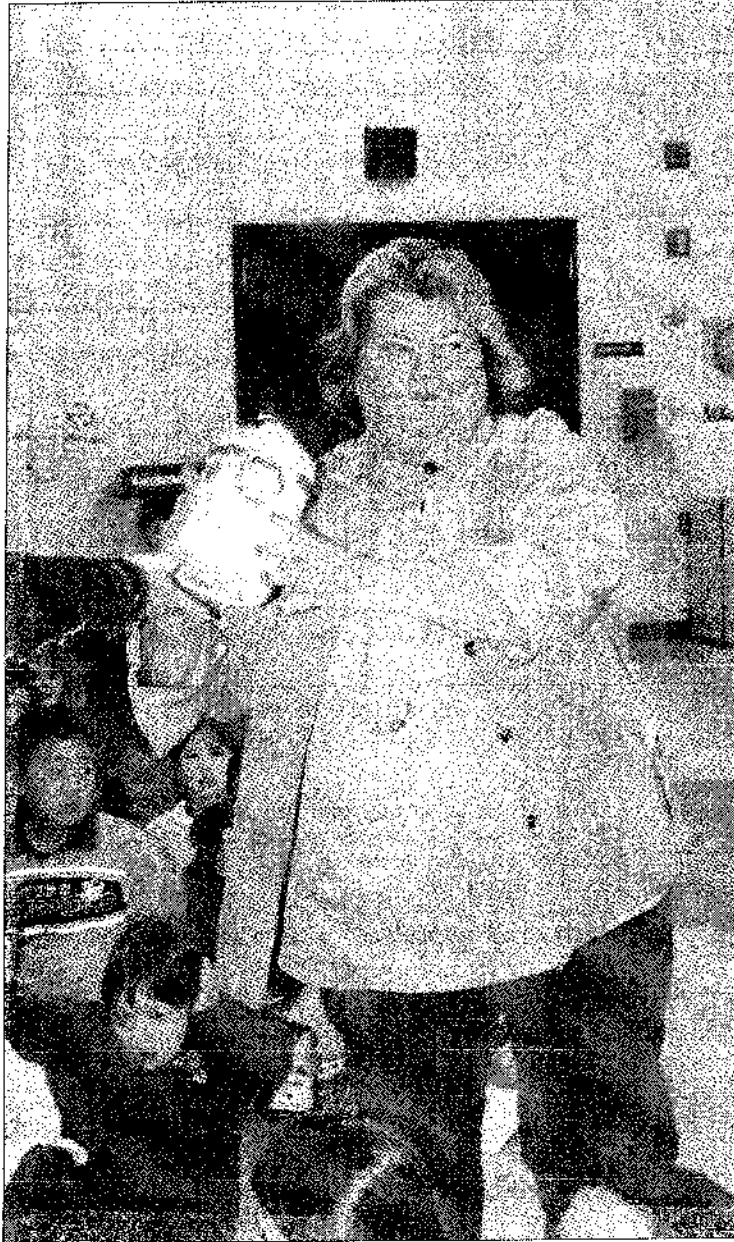
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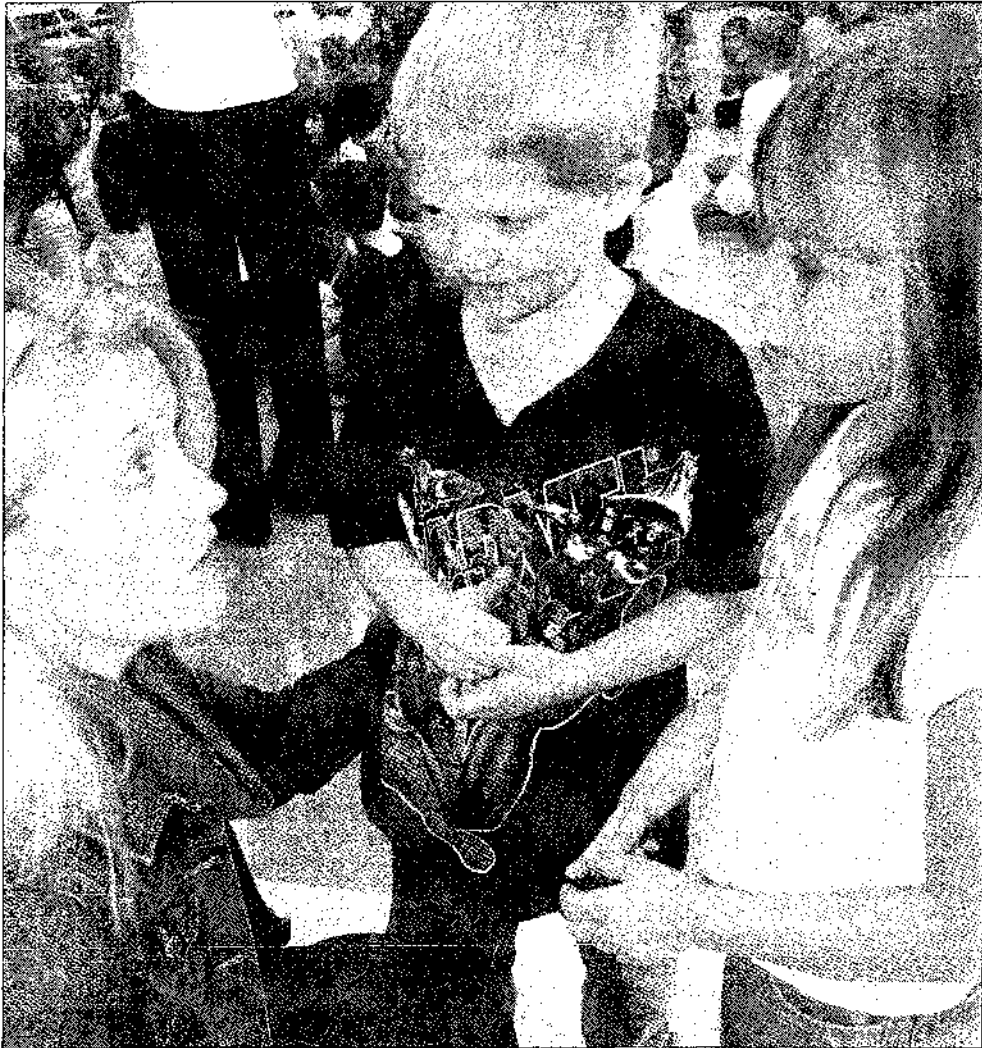
Lending a helping Hand



School launches coin drive to aid Food Gatherers



Fourth-grade teacher Lynne Gulick accepts her coin container during the school assembly that kicks off a two-week challenge to raise money to combat hunger.



Photos by Lisa Allmendinger

Second-grade teacher Kristi Krile and students Griffin Parton, 7, and Hanna Paszkiewicz, 7, discuss strategies to win a lower elementary school vs. upper elementary school class challenge to raise the most money for Food Gatherers.

Heritage Newspapers (heritage.com)

Ann Arbor Journal > News

School board hears about Skyline's 'green' efforts

Wednesday, November 4, 2009

By Lisa Allmendinger, A2 Journal

Skyline High School's silver certification and the Ann Arbor Public School District's focus on the environment and conservation were two key points in a presentation to the Board of Education Oct. 28.

"Skyline is the largest silver certified high school in the county and there is no larger school with a higher certification," said Randy Trent, executive director of physical properties.

The certification Trent refers to is a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, or LEED, certification, which measures the "green" components of building and operational practices.

In addition, Dave Szczygiel and Steve Schaffer, two teachers in the district, told the board that every child in the school district is exposed to environmental issues throughout their education.

"I was really looking forward to this presentation," said Board Vice President Irene Patalan.

"It's important for our students to be outside and breathe and appreciate the Earth," she added.

Szczygiel and Schaffer walked the board through the district's environmental and conservation program, which begins in kindergarten when students learn how animals survive the winter.

In each grade thereafter, a new element of the environment, including time in the district's planetarium and field trips, is introduced.

Students visit a gravel pit, take field trips to the city's water treatment plant, and learn how to build a fire and cook a meal on it throughout their studies.

Trent told the board that his energy budget has not increased since 1984 because his department continues to institute new energy savings programs each year.

In 1984, when he began with the district, Trent said his utility budget was \$5.4 million and it has remained flat as more and more savings are realized through environmental innovations.

Green cleaning has been implemented that has reduced student and staff exposure to chemicals, as well.

He said that in the 2007-08 year, 440,000 pounds of paper were recycled in the schools and seven buildings in the district have

green certificates.

"There is a commitment from the elementary schools," he said.

In addition, the district is using beet juice to break up ice.

"I'm proud we are getting our students ready to be engaged in this, in these environmental issues," said board member Glenn Nelson.

His sentiments were echoed by Patalan who said, "I'm glad we are using the classroom outside of our buildings and using them wisely."

She said that by the time these students leave the district's schools, recycling with be "second nature. The earth needs their help and it's normal and it's what we do."

Board President Deb Mexicotte recognized Trent's efforts.

"We've saved millions of dollars and Randy (Trent) continues to find ways to save," she said.

Lisa Allmendinger can be reached at 1-877-995-NEWS (6397) or at lallmendinger@heritage.com.

URL: http://www.heritage.com/articles/2009/11/04/ann_arbor_journal/news/doc4af1cd6dcc82b196696992.prt

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Analysis Voters reject countywide enhancement millage request

School chiefs: Changes to happen by midyear

Layoffs, elimination of programs, other possibilities under consideration

BY DAVID JESSE
davidjesse@annarbor.com

By late Wednesday afternoon, Washtenaw County school officials had begun to get over what they felt was the shock of voters handily turning down a 2-mill countywide enhancement millage request and were beginning

to ponder the next steps.

The short answer of what's coming? Everything the schools do, except that which is mandated by state law, is on the chopping block.

And while that's the cliché answer expected from school leaders in tough times, school officials were insistent changes would be coming to

their districts by the middle of this school year.

When pressed, administrators in several districts said those changes could include teacher layoffs. However, they had no list of cuts that would be made and made no guarantees of layoffs or any

See **SOME**, Page A4

More election news
inside, online

» Ypsilanti Twp. police millage, results from around the region on **Page A5** and at www.AnnArbor.com

Some administrators say they plan to hold community meetings

Continues from A1

other cuts.

"We're going to sit down and provide a price tag to everything we do," said Ann Arbor school board President Deb Mexicotte. "There's a money price tag, and there's also an effect price tag.

"There are times when you can cut \$100,000, and it doesn't feel like \$100,000. Then there's times when you cut \$100,000, and it feels like you just cut \$500,000."

Layoffs, elimination of programs and lots of other possibilities are being considered, said Chelsea Superintendent Dave Killips.

"Everything is on the table," he said. "However, our intent is not to disrupt classes this year, but make cuts where we can. Next year, cuts will certainly be to a greater degree.

"We will be taking a two-prong approach. First, we will have to work through reductions in expenditures for

this year. Initially, we thought we would be a little over \$1 million in the red for this year. With the reductions in funding from the state, we now find ourselves over \$2 million in the red for the 2009-2010 school year.

"The second step will be to prepare for next year with more adjustments to the budget. We cannot carry another multimillion-dollar deficit into next school year. Everything we do will come under scrutiny and may be discussed for reductions as we prepare for future funding reductions from the state."

School administrators stopped short of identifying specific programs they'd be recommending to their school boards for cuts. Instead, they have already begun working on recommendations.

"Prior to the millage vote, Ypsilanti Public Schools' leadership team has been meeting to grapple with the district's budget deficit," spokeswoman

Emma Jackson wrote in an e-mail. "If the millage had been successful, it would have relieved some of our budgetary stress, but it would not have erased the deficit.

"The failure of the millage makes a grim situation more severe. Our district has a proud educational history, and we will do everything possible to maintain a viable learning environment while taking action to resolve our budget shortfalls."

Many administrators and school board members from several different districts said they plan to hold meetings to hear from their communities about where cuts should be made.

There are plenty of ideas out there. In coffee shops, diners and in online forums, community members were already identifying areas they felt needed to be looked at.

Those ideas included getting rid of busing, except for special education students as man-

dated by law; making athletes pay the entire cost of playing high school sports; trimming the number of administrators at high schools and even shrinking the number of school districts in the county.

"If they want to get back to fiscal responsibility, they have to look at everything from how much they pay their teachers to how many buses they are running," said Rick English, 45, of Ann Arbor. "They have to live within their means."

Ann Arbor Superintendent Todd Roberts said that's what his district is doing.

"We have to make sure our costs are in line with the revenue we have or project we will have in the coming years."

Here is the problem districts are facing: In recent weeks, the state has made several cuts to

the amount of per-pupil funding it gives to each district.

In Ann Arbor, the shortfall for this school year is \$8 million.

Mexicotte said she doesn't expect the district will be able to avoid dipping into its reserve funds to cover the shortfalls.

She expects to spend the next couple of months in budget-cut discussions for this year. They will also look for ways to increase revenue, she said.

Then, next year looms. Most districts are projecting a \$400- to \$600-per-student additional cut. That could put Ann Arbor short another \$15 million or more.

One idea not gaining much traction among local school officials is consolidating districts.

The districts had hoped to use the countywide enhancement millage to cover many of those cuts they are faced with making. In Ann Arbor, for example, the millage would have given them \$11 million a year for the next five years.

But county voters decided on Tuesday they didn't like that plan. Many voters cited an economy that has forced them to tighten their personal budgets as the reason they voted against the millage.

The 10 traditional school districts in the county all passed resolutions earlier this year asking the Washtenaw Intermediate School District to put the issue on the ballot.

WISD Superintendent Bill Miller was unavailable for comment Wednesday, but his staff said he would be able to speak to AnnArbor.com today.

Brad Mellor, AAPS director of transportation

Bio

Age: 54

Position, for how long: Director of transportation, Ann Arbor Public Schools, 5 years. Before that, principal of Ann Arbor Public Schools, various schools.

Live in what neighborhood and how long: Carpenter school area, 13 years.

Family, ages: My wife, Eva, four grown sons and their wives, five grandchildren (so far) from ages 10 to 2.

How would you like to be remembered: By all the kids I've worked with as someone who was fair, cared a lot and had a memorable sense of humor.

Most significant accomplishment: My wife and I raised a terrific family.

Biggest disappointment: With the lack of courageous solutions coming from our legislators and leaders regarding the discipline and resources we will need to run the country and educate our children.

Ten Questions

1. What do you do on a home football Saturday?

I stay home and putter or read, or we leave town to visit the kids.

2. You're a tour guide in Ann Arbor, where would you take a tourist?

To hear any of the concerts all over town.

3. What's your favorite season in Ann Arbor and what makes it special?

Autumn. I love the view from Huron High School, looking at the forested hills across the Huron River.

iversity town has depth you cannot easily find other places, and I love that.

I have no trouble finding a conversation about neo-classical literature, or singing the "Trumpet Aria" from the "Messiah." But it is a tough town in which to chat about deer hunting, or cuttin' hogs. I'm eclectic, and sometimes I miss the heartland.

5. Which Ann Arbor restaurant makes your favorite dish, drink or dessert and what is it? Well, the tuna melt at Sinbad's Koney on Ellsworth is pretty great.

6. What building or landmark in Ann Arbor makes it unique? I think the Law Quad is awesome.

7. If you could wave a magic wand and change one thing about Ann Arbor, what would it be? I'd shift our community focus from process to product. I'm all for dialogue, but results also matter.

8. What's your favorite saying or quote? "Lord, keep your arm around my shoulder, and your hand over my mouth."

9. If you could give a new-comer to Ann Arbor one piece of advice, what would it be? Don't take yourself too seriously.

10. Ann Arbor is known as Tree Town, what's your favorite and why? I like the maple Eva and I planted on our front lawn. It is growing straight and true. It will outlive us and that is an unselfish and admirable thing.



4. What are the pros and cons of living in Ann Arbor? There is incredible diversity in every possible context. A big uni-

A2Journal: ON THE SPOT

The A2 Journal asks 10 questions of people who help shape and move Ann Arbor.

A2 Journal
11/5/09

School board hears update on 'green' efforts

By Lisa Allmendinger
A2 Journal

11/5/09 A2 Journal

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Quick Hit

Possible budget hit

Ann Arbor Superintendent of Schools Todd Roberts recently sent a letter to parents of students in the district that outlined a possible loss of \$3.7 million in funding from the state this school year.

First was the reduction of \$165 per student, which previously had been announced by the state. In addition, Gov. Jennifer Granholm vetoed another line item in the school aid bill, which reduced the per pupil amount for the schools in the district by another \$233 per pupil. Those two reductions amount to \$398 per pupil.

Last week, the state determined that based on treasury projections, there was not enough money to fund the State School Aid Fund and another \$127 per student would be lost in 30 days, a \$2.1 million hit to the district.

11/5/09, Thursday

Voters nix school millage

By Jeremy Allen
Heritage Newspapers

Residents of Washtenaw County voted a collective "no" to stop the passing of a two-mill tax increase over the next five years as proposed by the Washtenaw Intermediate School District in a school enhancement millage.

The tax proposal, if passed, would have raised \$30 million in each of the next five years to be split between school districts in Washtenaw County.

Nearly 57 percent of the county's 60,000 voters who made it to the polls Tuesday voted against the millage. The turnout represented 23 percent

ON THE WEB

For a more detailed story, log onto www.Heritage.com

of the eligible 266,997 registered voters.

If it had passed, the millage would have cost a homeowner with a house whose taxable value is \$100,000, about \$200 annually.

Educators across the county were devastated at the lack of support received by the millage. Bryan Girbach, superintendent of Milan's Area Schools, said the passing of the proposal was "vital to our school's survival,"

Millage breakdown

| AREA | YES | NO |
|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Chelsea | 700 | 727 |
| Saline | 790 | 1,254 |
| Milan | 281 | 715 |
| Manchester | 279 | 759 |
| Ypsilanti | 900 | 989 |
| Webster | 522 | 1,161 |
| Superior | 472 | 1,142 |
| Scio Twp. | 1,925 | 2,297 |
| Dexter Twp. | 502 | 935 |
| COUNTY | 24,114 | 32,402 |

and said that its failure puts his district in a very poor situation.

"We were looking to gain

about \$1.7 million a year from this enhancement," Girbach said. "With the millage not passing, the Milan area school board will have to begin considering across-the-board cuts in late-November and early-December and we'll have to make a decision as to whether those cuts need to begin this year or next year. But cuts don't exclude anything from teachers to benefit cuts across the board."

The Lincoln and Ypsilanti school superintendents both agreed. "This is definitely a sad night for the people of Washtenaw County," said Dedrick Martin, superin-

tendent of Ypsilanti Public Schools. "With the proposed cuts that the state is continually making to our budgets, and 85 to 90 percent of our funds currently going toward human resources, including teachers and their salaries, it's hard to find areas to cut and the kids will definitely suffer from this."

"We would have not come together and asked the voters for this millage, especially in these tough economic times, had we not been backed into a corner and needed these funds to help keep our schools running," said Lincoln Consolidated Schools Superintendent Lynn Cleary.



4 Votes

VOTE

Washtenaw County schools begin thinking about mid-year budget cuts following millage failure

Posted: 0:05 pm November 6, 2006

134 Comments. Comment Now

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The short answer of what's coming? Everything the schools do, except that which is mandated by state law, is on the chopping block.

And while that's the cliché answer expected from school leaders in tough times, school officials were insistent changes would be coming to their districts by the middle of this school year.

When pressed, administrators in several districts, said those changes could include teacher layoffs. However, they made no guarantees of layoffs or any other cuts.

"We're going to sit down and provide a price tag to everything we do," said Ann Arbor school board President Deb Mexicotte. "There's a money price tag, and there's also an effect price tag.

"There are times when you can cut \$100,000, and it doesn't feel like \$100,000. Then there's times when you cut \$100,000, and it feels like you just cut \$500,000."

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"We will be taking a two-prong approach. First, we will have to work through reductions in expenditures for this year. Initially, we thought we would be a little over \$1 million in the red for this year. With the reductions in funding from the state, we now find ourselves over \$2 million in the red for the 2009-2010 school year.

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Then, next year looms. That's because most districts are projecting a \$400 to \$600 per student additional cut.

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The districts had hoped to use the countywide enhancement millage to cover much of those cuts they are faced with making. In Ann Arbor, for example, the millage would have given them \$11 million a year for the next five years.

But county voters decided on Tuesday they didn't like that plan. Many voters cited an economy that has forced them to tighten their personal budgets as the reason they voted against the millage.

The 10 traditional school districts in the county all passed resolutions earlier this year asking the Washtenaw Intermediate School District to put the issue on the ballot.

WISD Superintendent Bill Miller was unavailable for comment on Wednesday, but his staff said he would be able to speak to AnnArbor.com on Thursday.

David Jesse covers K-12 education for AnnArbor.com. He can be reached at davidjesse@AnnArbor.com or at 734-623-2534.

11/5/2009

Ann Arbor Public Schools Education Foundation

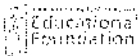
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2009-10-10 10:00 AM

2555 S. State Street
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48104
734-994-1969
wcof@aaepsef.org
<http://www.aepsef.org/contactus/contactus.html>
Get directions (view map)

The Ann Arbor Public Schools Educational Foundation is a non-profit organization separate from the Ann Arbor Public Schools that serves as the one true vehicle for private giving to public schools in Ann Arbor. The Ann Arbor Public Schools Educational Foundation raises private funds through events and contributions from the community in order to enrich public school education through large program support and grants to teachers. We contribute to the quality of life in Ann Arbor and change lives by affecting our quality of public education. We encourage you to browse our site and learn how you can be part of the solution.

11/5/2009 11:51:00 AM



The Millage did not pass. But you can still be part of the solution.

4 days ago - expires 2 days from now - Learn More & Donate



12 Votes



The **Ann Arbor Public Schools Educational Foundation** is asking for your help on behalf of our community. Our kids. And our collective future. We're asking citizens to donate the amount you were willing to pay through a Millage "Yes" vote, resulting in immediate and direct help to our schools with 100% of your money staying right here in Ann Arbor. Thank you for being part of the solution.

It is projected that the failure to pass the Washtenaw Schools Millage, combined with cuts in state funding per student, is leaving Ann Arbor schools with a \$12-\$15 million overall deficit - just in 2010.

Approximately 54% of voters in the Ann Arbor Public Schools district voted yes. If each of these were to donate an average of \$250 annually (based on an average home value of \$250,000 and a taxable value of 50%), we would instantly raise \$3,242,750 annually to support public education in the Ann Arbor School District.

Please visit our website to [Learn More](#) and [Donate](#).



Ann Arbor Superintendent Todd Roberts sends finance letter to parents

Posted: 12:45 p.m. November 5, 2009

11 Comments. [Comment now](#)

Ann Arbor Superintendent Todd Roberts sent the following letter to parents, addressing the district's response to the failed countywide schools enhancement millage.

In it, he pledges to have an open process as the district moved forward with "some difficult, but not insurmountable challenges and decisions."

The entire letter is copied below.

November 5, 2009

Dear Parent/Guardian:

I want to thank you and our many staff, student and community volunteers who worked extremely hard to educate our community about the financial state of public education in our district and the county. I am extremely disappointed with the outcome of the county schools' millage vote. While voters in Ann Arbor did support the millage with approximately 55% of voters voting yes, this result locally was not enough to help carry the county.

I am proud of our community and its support for public education. The commitment of parents, staff and the community to the care and success of our students is why this school district is one of the best in the state and nation. I know that we will continue working together collaboratively to ensure our students receive an outstanding education despite the challenges we face. Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

Todd Roberts

Heritage Newspapers (heritage.com)

Ann Arbor Journal > News

In the 10 Spot: Susan Beech, Pattengill teacher

Sunday, November 8, 2009

Age: 51 years

Position, for how long: Elementary school teacher in Ann Arbor at Pattengill for nine years and in Los Angeles for six years.

Live in what neighborhood and how long: Forestbrook over by Arborland for nine years.

Family, ages: Robert, my husband, is 53; Brian is 23 and now lives in Chicago, while Mike is 19 and attends Washtenaw Community College.

How would you like to be remembered: I would like to be remembered as a person who can get things done, and as a resource for others to come to.

Most significant accomplishment: Raising my two sons to be wonderful young men, who are willing to help others. Boy Scouting was a big part of our lives for many years. All of our family was involved in Scouting. The most important thing that we learned from Scouting is "doing for others," whether it is as simple as raking a neighbor's leaves, or complex as helping to build a wooden platform for a nature center.

Biggest disappointment: I have had lots of little disappointments, but nothing huge. All in all, life is good.

Ten Questions

1. What do you do on a home football Saturday?

I stay at home and knit or quilt. I don't like the crowds and traffic.

2. You're a tour guide in Ann Arbor, where would you take a tourist?

I would take visitors on a canoe trip. My personal preference would be with Skip's Canoe Rentals. They drop you off up river, and then you canoe for an hour or so before you stop at Dexter Cider Mill for some cider and doughnuts, and then you end up back at Skip's. If you wanted to canoe within the city, you could go to Argo or Gallup Parks. Ann Arbor has such wonderful natural areas within the city limits. While these give you a beautiful day on the river, there's no cider and doughnuts.

3. What's your favorite season in Ann Arbor and what makes it special?

Fall is the best season because that is when my husband is preparing for Halloween. He sets up a graveyard haunt in our yard

and we have lots of fun pretending to be zombies and scaring the trick-or-treaters.

4. What are the pros and cons of living in Ann Arbor?

I think the school system is great! I have seen school systems in other cities and the opportunities our children have here in Ann Arbor are far beyond what others have.

Having the University of Michigan right in the middle of the city is a double-edged sword. It's great having the museums and the theater shows that come, but the added traffic on the streets is hard to deal with.

5. Which Ann Arbor restaurant makes your favorite dish, drink or dessert and what is it?

Noodles & Co in the Arborland shopping center makes a tasty pesto Cavatapi. It's a nice, comfortable place to eat a simple meal.

6. What building or landmark in Ann Arbor makes it unique?

I think that the many parks that are all over the city make Ann Arbor unique. The city has set aside dozens of park areas for people to play in, or just to go and sit and observe nature.

7. If you could wave a magic wand and change one thing about Ann Arbor, what would it be?

I would like Ann Arbor to encourage people to use re-useable shopping bags.

8. What's your favorite saying or quote?

"If you can't say anything nice, don't say anything at all" -- from the movie "Bambi."

9. If you could give a newcomer to Ann Arbor one piece of advice, what would it be?

Shop at the ReUse Center at 2420 Industrial. My husband and I go there almost once a week to find "treasures." It's a super thrift shop that has household items, building materials, books, furniture and lots of "stuff." Always a great bargain.

10. Ann Arbor is known as tree city, what's your favorite and why?

The maple tree is my favorite species with its glorious gold, orange and red colors in the fall. Crestland Street is lined with maples, which turn a golden yellow that glows in the morning and afternoon sun. It always gives me a lift when I drive to work in the glow.

URL: http://www.heritage.com/articles/2009/11/08/ann_arbor_journal/news/doc4af6f4151973c775614942.prt

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Must keep momentum going on schools

Editor's note: The following letter was submitted by Albert Berriz, the treasurer of Citizens for a Responsible Washtenaw, which opposed the countywide school enhancement millage on last Tuesday's ballot.

First of all, thank you! (Tuesday) night was the first step in ensuring the future of our public schools in Washtenaw County.

You have done great work, and made a meaningful difference in our schools, our community and with our kids. But we need to stay passionate, committed and focused! I want you to know that you have my word that I will stay as focused and passionate as you have seen me on this most important issue. Nothing will change! Please join me in the solution, holding hands across the county and together let's:

- Keep the "focus" on the five points for Transformational Change in all 10 school districts.

- Require that our school board members and school executives deliver transparency! That's something they can do "right away" to show the voters they understand what happened Tuesday. Make it simple, offer it up and let's get started. No excuses.

- Hold our elected officials accountable and continue to shine a light. Don't let them off the hook now, let's do more collectively than we have ever before as a community!

- Not let them cut alternative programs and teachers, and have them deliver more efficient food services, transportation services and custodial and maintenance services; less costly health insurance programs, and without question reduced central office overhead in all 10 districts via creative efficiencies and consolidation. This is something we can do today. Let's start now!

- Have the business community offer its business acumen to the equation and have the business community support the solution in important and meaningful ways! We need to hold our school board members and executives in all 10 districts accountable, and they must now act with the "mandate" given to them by the voters of Washtenaw County.

Let's come together and let's not lose momentum! I very much appreciate the broad coalition of folks that came together to do the right thing. But now more than ever, we need to stay together. It's our responsibility, we must do this! We must! The work begins...

— Albert Berriz, Ann Arbor

School opponents should use money to enhance classrooms

If the opponents of the failed WISD millage are as committed to our kids' education as they have stated, I have a proposal for them: To prove your commitment, figure out how many tens of thousands of dollars you spent trying to defeat the proposal, raise an equivalent amount, and distribute it to teachers throughout the county for them to use to enhance their classrooms as they see fit.

— Michael J. Imperiale, Ann Arbor

Send us your Letters to the Editor

AnnArbor.com accepts traditional letters to the editor for our Sunday print edition, but because of limited space we will only be able to publish a few each week. More are available online at AnnArbor.com/news/opinion. Letters can be emailed to letters@annarbor.com or mailed to Letter to the editor, AnnArbor.com, 301 E. Liberty St., Suite 700, Ann Arbor, MI 48104.

with appropriate contributions by all school employees?

- Why do we even consider offering MESSA coverage when the MESSA agent—the MEA—merely sub-contracts from Blue Cross Blue Shield at a premium of approximately \$1,500 per insured, raising millions that are used to fund their local, state and national union offices?

- Why has this stranglehold been allowed to continue for so long?

- Why are we continuing wasteful practices with a structure of local school districts all over the state, and certainly in Washtenaw County, that is inefficient and ineffective?

- Why can school employees retire at the age of 55 with full benefits? Why has the retirement age not been raised similar to changes in Social Security?

- Why are school retirees with as few as 10 years of service able to receive luxury health insurance coverage for minimal costs to them at the age of 55 until they receive Medicare coverage 10 years later?

- Why do school districts not adopt a zero-based budgeting process, reviewing every single line item expenditure to review and justify its worth?

- What interest groups, parties and agendas are really being served by "our" elected public officials? There are many more questions to be asked, and they will be asked.

— Beverly B. Gelmer, Ann Arbor

Coach controversy signals deeper community problems

Former Ypsilanti High School Coach Dave Poole's use of the n-word signals deeper problems within our community.

Exactly "who" is it that is calling the Ypsi kids derogatory names? Is it the Willow Run School district or the Ann Arbor, Chelsea, and Saline School districts? I think it's the latter. As unconscious as it was, Coach Poole, to his credit, was only telling the truth as it was told to him. Don't kill the messenger, kill the message! Coach Poole's comfort level... in using the word is troubling considering that most white men his age view it as taboo. This is normally the case unless you've become anesthetized to it. Players used the n-word freely during Coach Poole's time as a coach.

Many people, including myself, have long advocated a stronger organic connection between the staff and its players. Having qualified coaches who are humble and not-

WARM THE CHILDREN

Warm the Children launches fundraising campaign

Posted: 5:22 a.m. November 3, 2009

0 Comment. Comment Now!

Want to donate to Warm the Children or volunteer as a shopper? Download a [signup form](#).

Every time a volunteer helps a needy family buy new winter clothing under the Warm the Children program, there is a memory.

When Violeta Kellersohn was helping a family with three children shop for their clothing one year shortly before Christmas, the 6-year-old girl asked her older brother why they couldn't have a Christmas tree. The innocent question touched Kellersohn so much that she organized her co-workers to donate a tree complete with lights, ornaments and presents.

Another year, Kellersohn witnessed tears in a mother's eyes as her 12-year-old son adroitly translated and negotiated the shopping trip. The mother didn't speak English and the boy had to interpret while also helping his younger brother select clothing.

"The only thing the mother could say was 'He's a very good boy,'" Kellersohn said. "She was so proud of her son, she was crying."

Volunteer shopper Lizzie Burt remembered the positive spirit of a single mother who was visually impaired and juggling her family with going back to school.

"She didn't let her handicap interfere with being a great mom. She impressed me so much," Burt said. "She was so upbeat. I thought it was the least I can do to help them pick out clothes."



Warm the Children has been giving youngsters of needy families warm coats, mittens, hats and other clothing for 13 years. It's time to reach out to readers for monetary donations to support the program.

The torch for running Warm the Children was handed over by the Ann Arbor News, which closed its doors last summer, to AnnArbor.com.

The program hopes to help up to 2,500 children this year, said Kori Isaac, promotions and events manager for AnnArbor.com.

School social workers furnish the names of the children in need and AnnArbor.com coordinates the army of volunteer shoppers. A coupon to make a donation appears in today's paper. Every dollar raised is used to buy clothing, with the Ann Arbor News and now AnnArbor.com covering overhead costs and administration.

This year's fundraising goal is \$250,000. About 250 volunteer shoppers will go with the families to a local store to buy the clothing, helping them find the deals and guiding the selections. Each child is allowed \$90 for clothing, which usually includes underwear and socks, hats and gloves and often pants, shirts and coats..

Burt said she began as a volunteer shopper and financial supporter of the program at least 10 years ago because all funds go directly to families.

"I would see a lot of young children at bus stops without enough warm clothing on in these harsh winters. Every child should stay warm," Burt said.

Tammy Mayrend, who blogs about parenting for AnnArbor.com, knows about hard times. A year ago, both she and her husband were without jobs and scraping by on the generosity of family.

"We were blessed with family and friends to help us out, to keep us floating," she said. "Not everyone has that."


As one of this year's volunteer shoppers, Mayrend said it's her turn to help others. While it feels good to help others, she said, she also wants to be a role model to her two sons, age 3 and 5.

When Kellersohn started nine years ago as a volunteer shopper, she didn't have the financial means to make a donation so she gave her time. Now that she is more financially set, she still wants to help out, recruiting 10 to 15 friends and family members as shoppers.

"It's a very rewarding experience to meet the families: To see the joy in the children and the pride the parents have that their children can have new clothes. It's heart warming, to see children get excited about new underwear and pajamas. It shows me that this is filling a need for them, that it's a true gift for them," she said.

Kellersohn always brings her two boys, now 12 and 8 years old, with her on the shopping trips.

"I've explained the program, that because of tough economic times, people need help and this is our way to help," Kellersohn said. "They've never complained about coming."

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the ann arbor chronicle

it's like being there

ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 2009

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Ann Arbor NAACP Honors Academic Success

Sheriff Jerry Clayton urges students to embrace leadership

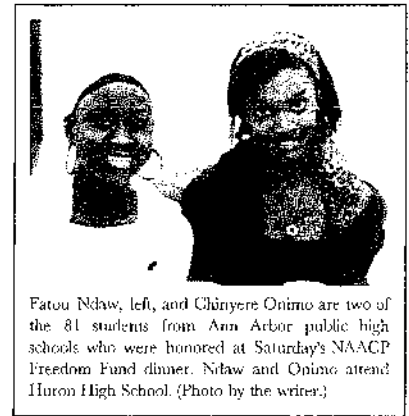
BY MARY MORGAN

NOVEMBER 9, 2009

William Hampton came up to the podium and smiled, looking out at the crowd of several hundred people gathered at the Four Points Sheraton ballroom. "Isn't this great?" he said.

Hampton, president of the Ann Arbor branch of the NAACP, had just finished handing out certificates of achievement to several dozen high school students at Saturday night's Freedom Fund dinner. They were honored for maintaining at least a 3.20 grade point average in the spring term of 2009.

In his keynote speech, Washtenaw County sheriff Jerry Clayton told students they had a responsibility to be leaders in their schools and community, and to push their peers to excel. "There should be double the number of students in this room next year," he said.



Fatou Ndaw, left, and Clinyere Onimo are two of the 81 students from Ann Arbor public high schools who were honored at Saturday's NAACP Freedom Fund dinner. Ndaw and Onimo attend Huron High School. (Photo by the writer.)

Freedom Fund Scholars

The Ann Arbor branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People is celebrating its 60th anniversary this year, as well as the 100th anniversary of the founding of the national organization. In his welcoming remarks on Saturday, Ronald Woods, a professor in Eastern Michigan University's African American Studies Department, noted that "more than anything else, we associate the work of the NAACP with the great struggle for educational equality."



Todd Roberts, superintendent of the Ann Arbor Public Schools, talks with students who were being honored at the Oct. 7 Freedom Fund dinner. (Photo by the writer.)

The local branch has made education its priority. Woods put that mission into a broader context, saying that the students being honored for their academic achievement on Saturday are beneficiaries of the spirit of *Brown v. Board of Education*, the landmark 1954 U.S. Supreme Court decision that set the stage for school desegregation. [Link to [PDF list of Freedom Fund scholars.](#)]

In recognizing the student scholars, Todd Roberts – superintendent of the Ann Arbor Public Schools – said that education was crucial for society's future, and that despite the school system's challenges, Ann Arbor would continue to provide a quality education.

The reference to "challenges" was likely an allusion to funding difficulties faced by AAPS and other public schools in Washtenaw County. A countywide school millage, which would have raised \$30 million annually for Washtenaw County schools – including \$11 million for the Ann Arbor system – was defeated by voters on Nov. 3. School officials had hoped to raise the additional funds to offset state-level cuts. [Previous Chronicle coverage: "[Does It Take a Millage?](#)" and "[New State Cuts Add to School Crisis](#)"]

The millage defeat and the plight of local schools was a topic of discussion among many of the people who attended Saturday's dinner, including more than a dozen elected officials from local school boards, the county commission and the Ann Arbor city council.

During the evening, leaders of the Ann Arbor NAACP also gave lifetime achievement awards to Harry J. Williams, who served as president of the local branch from 1992 to 2004, and to Norma and Frederick McCuiston, who were instrumental in reviving the group in 1983, after it had lost its charter

in 1978 due to a lack of members.

Keynote Speech: Jerry Clayton

The main speaker for the evening was Jerry Clayton, Washtenaw County's first African American sheriff and the first African American elected to a countywide position in Washtenaw. Clayton took office in early 2009 after defeating incumbent Dan Minzey in the 2008 Democratic primary, and winning the general election last November.

In introducing him, Rebekah Sharpe – a University of Michigan senior and assistant secretary of the NAACP's UM branch – noted that

Clayton has had to make dramatic budget cuts but has not laid off any officers. In fact, she said, he's been able to send deputies to write tickets in Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti – a comment that drew laughs from the crowd.

Clayton began by joking that the deputies were sent to help improve public safety in the cities, "and if tickets come as a byproduct of that, I apologize."

Clayton introduced his wife of 22 years, Sybil, and said that they've always told their three sons that everyone makes mistakes – it's the choices you make following those mistakes that matter. How you respond reflects your depth of character, he said.

The themes of character, hard work and leadership were woven throughout Clayton's remarks. He said that in his 25 years working in the criminal justice system, he's learned two things: 1) success is not guaranteed, and 2) nothing you achieve is a result of luck. The students being honored by the NAACP are all smart and have achieved success so far, he said, but that current status doesn't guarantee future success.

Achieving success requires several things, he said. You need a vision of what you want to achieve. "Without a path and a plan, you can walk aimlessly," he said. It's also important to enlist the support of everyone around you – parents, teachers, mentors. "I know there are times when you think no one understands," he said, "but we do."

Clayton urged the students to take a no-holds-barred approach to reaching their goals, and not to be deterred by people's envy or jealousy. Never walk away from a challenge, he said, and don't get discouraged – you never know what's just around the corner.

Clayton also recommended following the advice from Sean Covey's "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens." Above all, he said to the students, you have a responsibility to be leaders and to lift up your classmates. Leading by example, they can encourage others to achieve the same kind of success they already have. "You can be a part of that," he said.



Jerry Clayton, Washenaw County sheriff, gives the keynote speech at the Oct. 7 Freedom Fund dinner, hosted by the Ann Arbor branch of the NAACP. To the right are EMU professor Ronald Woods and William Hampton, president of the Ann Arbor NAACP branch. (Photo by the writer.)



Aaron Wilson, a student at Pioneer High School, performed "Amazing Grace" on saxophone. In the background, Rebekah Sharpe, a UM student and officer in the UM branch of the NAACP. (Photo by the writer.)



2009 Freedom Fund Scholars

Community High School

Max Bowen
Evalyn Carter
Dayna Gooden
Emily Milligan
Tamara Parks
Samantha Thomas

Huron High School

Camyle Allen
Christiana Allen-Pipkin
Sariya Bryanch
Allante' Burnell
Brittany Cole
Blair Crockett
Tyler Davis
Gamuchirayi Dingwiza
Awah Ditah
Yonica Dupree
Sharzay Fields
Whitney Foster
JeJuan French
Ralph Green
Marysa Hill
LaMicah Hughbanks
Jeremy Jackson
Noelle Kahunguba
Kamaria Lee
Maya Long
Devon Micou
Fatou Ndaw
Cynthia Ofili
Chinyere Onimo
Bre'Anna Simpson

Imani Watkins
Lindsey Whitlock
Dallas Williams

Pioneer High School

William Anderson
Triesha Arnold
Malachi Bowerbank
Tiffany Cole
Bradie Connor
Jazmine Cooper
Chloe Corley
DeLaynna Corley
Dominique Corley
Sabrina Gay
Alyssa Goss
Gregory Goss II
Megan Graham
Mani Herring
Tobias Kpadenou
Kirby Lee
Victoria Lloyd
Ashli Marable
Kailen McKay
Kaitlyn Mills
Jessica Obidike
Justin Pendleton
Davonte Powell
Jordan Robertson
Daniesha Scott
Angelica Shipman
Crystal Smith
Willie Smith Jr.
Kyle Snedecor
Ugochukwu Uche
Ayona Vanhorn-Lee
Ana Vereen

Christina Wade
Devin Webster
Joshua Weiland
Aaron Wilson

Skyline High School

Senait Dafa
Hafsa Farah
Jeremy Jagers
Kelsy Lee
Jasper Lindsay
Noah Miller
Jonathan Muriu
Chaune' Rael-Whitsitt
Ibrahim Saed
Paige Wint

Stone School

Brittany Hayes

the ann arbor chronicle

it's like being there

ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 2009

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Does It Take a Millage?

Washtenaw school districts say yes – voters to decide on Nov. 3

BY MARY MORGAN

OCTOBER 19, 2009

Among Michigan's public educators, the 2010-11 fiscal year is being called "The Cliff." Based on a grim downward trajectory of funding from the state, decreasing revenues from local property taxes and expenses like health care continuing to climb, that's the year many districts are expected to plummet over the edge into the red.

Robert Allen, deputy superintendent of the Ann Arbor Public Schools, described this scenario at a sparsely attended forum last Thursday at Huron High School, where he and superintendent Todd Roberts made a pitch for voters to support a proposed countywide millage on the Nov. 3 ballot. They didn't claim that AAPS would be among those districts falling off the cliff, but they did say their district faces a \$15 million deficit that year. Without new revenue from the millage, they contend that the district would need to make dramatic cuts, and that those cuts would almost certainly affect students in the classroom. Michigan's financial crisis is hitting hard, they say.

"As the state goes, so goes our funding," Allen told the group on Thursday.

The state isn't going so well.

But opponents argue that school districts haven't done enough to cut costs, and that taxpayers can't absorb the added burden of another millage. Beyond that, people on both sides say there's an urgent need to reform the way schools are funded in Michigan, regardless of the success or failure of the Nov. 3 millage vote.

This Chronicle report looks at how Michigan funds K-12 public schools, why local school districts say they need a special enhancement millage and why critics say they don't, and what that proposed millage would entail. Ann Arbor Public Schools is the largest of Washtenaw County's 10 school districts, and would receive over a third of the \$30 million collected from the millage annually – we'll focus our coverage on that district.

Background: How Michigan Funds Public Schools

The state controls revenues for local school districts in two ways. First, it collects taxes directly from residential and non-residential property owners – 6 mills each, annually – and pools that money into the state's School Aid Fund (SAF), which also includes revenues from sales and income taxes, state lottery revenue and other sources. Out of this fund, the state pays local school districts a per-pupil allotment – a variable amount set by the state legislature that can increase or decrease each year.

In addition, state law controls the amount of taxes that school districts can levy directly – those that are not pooled into the SAF. Beyond the 6 mills that go into the SAF, for example, there's an additional tax on non-residential property owners, but the state caps that tax at 18 mills.

Both the funding from non-SAF local property taxes and from the total School Aid Fund are factored into an amount called the per-pupil "foundation allowance." This amount varies by district. Ann Arbor's per-pupil funding was originally expected to be \$9,723 for the current fiscal year, which began July 1. With about 16,500 students in the Ann Arbor district, its per-pupil foundation allowance would be roughly \$160.5 million (the bulk of the district's projected \$192 million budget for this fiscal year. (Other revenues come from the district's share of a countywide special education millage and from federal grants.)

The current system stems from the 1994 passage of Proposal A. The goal of that ballot initiative was to create more equitable funding across all districts and to keep property taxes from escalating dramatically. Proposal A took away, to a significant degree, local control over school funding, though districts can still request voter approval to levy local millages for building construction, repairs, and maintenance. Ann Arbor has done that, most notably to fund the construction of Skyline High School.

Proposal A also created "hold-harmless" districts. Ann Arbor is one of only 44 districts statewide that are classified in this way. When Prop A took effect, these districts were receiving revenues higher than a \$6,500 per-pupil base level set by the state at that time. Rather than have their funding lowered, the "hold harmless" districts were allowed to levy an additional millage to make up the gap. For Ann Arbor, that amount is \$1,234 per pupil, or 4.42 mills. (The millage rate varies depending on property values, in order to generate a fixed amount of \$1,234 per pupil.)

Another issue is this: As revenues from property taxes, sales taxes and other funding sources have decreased because of the state's economy, the School Aid Fund has been shrinking. This year, the state is projecting a \$1 billion deficit in the fund – that's one reason why the legislature cut state funding for schools by \$165 per pupil earlier this month. (The legislation authorizing that cut hasn't yet been signed by Gov. Jennifer Granholm, however.) And depending on the amount of revenues coming into the School Aid Fund over the next few months, the state might make additional per-pupil cuts early next year.

| Category | Amount |
|--------------|---------|
| STATE ED TAX | 6.00000 |
| AAPS OPER | 0.08470 |
| AAPS SUPP | 2.21010 |
| AAPS DEBT | 1.01630 |
| AAPS SINKING | 0.49310 |
| NA LIBRARY | 1.55000 |
| CITY OPER | 6.16820 |
| CITY BENEFIT | 2.05600 |
| CITY REPOSE | 7.48700 |
| CITY DEBT | 0.19060 |
| TREES | 1.99440 |
| | 1.00000 |
| | 0.37700 |

An Ann Arbor summer tax bill, showing some of the assessments for Ann Arbor schools. For Ann Arbor Public Schools (AAPS), the millage rates reflect half the amount collected annually.

The upshot? Districts can't be sure exactly how much money they'll receive from the state for their current fiscal year, which began July 1. For AAPS, the \$165-per-pupil cut means a loss of about \$2.7 million, bringing its per-pupil foundation allowance down to \$9,558. The school board passed a balanced budget in June, which included tapping their fund balance (the district's equivalent of a savings account) for nearly \$2 million, to help resolve a \$7.1 million deficit. But they'll likely have to make additional cuts in light of the state's decision to decrease per-pupil funding.

In the past, shortfalls in the School Aid Fund have been plugged by transferring revenues from the state's general fund. But because the general fund has also faced staggering deficits, lawmakers have been using federal stimulus money in the past two years to shore up the School Aid Fund. Last year, AAPS got about \$6 million in stimulus funds to cover what would have otherwise been a \$365 per-pupil cut. The district has received another \$3 million in stimulus dollars earmarked for special education, and about \$1 million for Title I programs, which provide reduced and free lunches to low-income children.

Stimulus funds aren't expected to be available beyond 2010-11, and the state still hasn't determined how they'll use those funds for schools in the current fiscal year.

What Ann Arbor Taxpayers Pay for Schools

In addition to the state school tax of 6 mills from residential property owners and 6 mills from owners of commercial and rental property, or of property that isn't a taxpayer's primary residence, there are four other school-related millages for the Ann Arbor district:

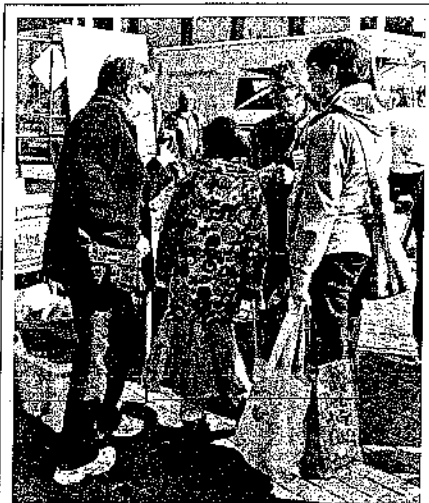
- 17.97 mills for operating funds – a “non-homestead” tax paid by owners of non-residential property.
- 4.4201 mills for the supplemental “hold harmless” tax.
- 2.0325 mills for debt repayment on school bonds.
- 0.9861 mill for a “sinking” fund, which can be used for school construction, renovations or repairs. The fund was initially approved, in part, to build the new Skyline High School.

Voters renewed the AAPS sinking fund, supplemental and non-homestead operating millages last year.

The Washtenaw Intermediate School District also collects two taxes countywide: 1) an operating millage of 0.0984 mill, and 2) a special education millage of 3.8761 mill.

In total, Ann Arbor homeowners pay just over 17 mills in school taxes. A mill equals \$1 for every \$1,000 in a property's taxable value, which usually is considered roughly half of the market value. So owners of a home with a market value of \$200,000 are paying about \$1,700 annually in school taxes now, and would add another \$200 to that if the millage on November's ballot is passed.

In their public forum on the millage, AAPS school officials noted that since Proposal A passed in 1994, local taxpayers have seen their school millage rates fall. [Link to chart of school millages paid by Ann Arbor residents from 1994 to 2009.]



Brit Satchwell, second from the right, is president of the 1,700-member Ann Arbor Education Association, the teachers' union for the Ann Arbor Public Schools. He set up a booth at the Oct. 17 Ann Arbor Farmers Market, handing out yard signs and pins in support of the proposed countywide schools millage, and talking with residents about it. (Photo by the writer.)

How the Proposed Millage Would Work

Individual school districts are prohibited by state law from levying additional millages for operations. However, under the umbrella of the Washtenaw Intermediate School District an entity set up in the early 1960s to provide services to all 10 public school districts in the county – an operating millage can be levied and distributed equally, with each district receiving the same per-pupil amount.

The Nov. 3 ballot proposal calls for collecting 2 mill countywide each year for five years, starting in 2010. The millage is projected to raise \$50 million annually, to be divided among the 10 districts. The WISD would not receive funding from this millage, nor would any percentage of the millage go to the state.

Here's what voters will see on the ballot:

PROPOSAL 1

REGIONAL ENHANCEMENT MILLAGE PROPOSAL

Pursuant to state law, the revenue raised by the proposed millage will be collected by the intermediate school district and

distributed to local public school districts based on pupil membership count.

Shall the limitation on the amount of taxes which may be assessed against all property in Washtenaw Intermediate School District, Michigan, be increased by 2 mills (\$2.00 on each \$1,000 of taxable valuation) for a period of 5 years, 2009 to 2013, inclusive, to provide operating funds to enhance other state and local funding for local school district operating purposes; the estimate of the revenue the intermediate school district will collect if the millage is approved and levied in 2009 is approximately \$30,000,000?

Each district in the county is projected to receive the following amount annually, based on the number of students in their districts:

- Ann Arbor: \$11,209,169
- Chelsea: \$1,805,447
- Dexter: \$2,477,564
- Lincoln: \$3,261,427
- Manchester: \$853,953
- Milan: \$1,778,896
- Saline: \$3,748,612
- Whitmore Lake: \$841,030
- Willow Run: \$1,358,160
- Ypsilanti: \$2,663,743

In lobbying for the millage, Glenn Nelson — an AAPS school board member — notes that many taxpayers will be eligible for a state property tax credit and a federal property tax deduction, offsetting a portion of the increase in taxes. Countywide, he calculates that the millage will only cost taxpayers \$21.2 million annually, because of the available credit and deduction, while generating \$30 million for schools. That calculation assumes that all taxpayers eligible for the credit and deduction actually file for it.

Why Districts Say They Need This Millage

In making the case for an additional millage, school officials acknowledge that it's a difficult economic climate for residents, and a tough time to be asking for a new tax. They also say they have no alternative.

All districts contend that they've already been cutting expenses and consolidating services, as revenues from the state have fallen. Ann Arbor Public Schools has cut \$16 million from its budget over the past four years, according to administrators. Those moves included eliminating 66 jobs, restructuring the district's middle school program to save \$2.3 million annually, increasing class sizes, and cutting back on custodial services, among other things.

Officials also point to countywide efforts, including those coordinated by the Washtenaw Intermediate School District. [PDF link to list of consolidated school services in Washtenaw County]

But costs continue to escalate while revenues fall, they say — even with the millage, AAPS expects to face a \$4 million deficit in 2010-11.

Personnel costs

The biggest portion of any district's operating budget is personnel. At the AAPS millage forum on Thursday, Robert Allen, AAPS deputy superintendent, noted that 83% of the district's operating budget goes toward personnel costs — salaries and benefits — and that a \$15 million budget shortfall equated to about 220 jobs.

The Ann Arbor Education Association — the teachers union, and the largest of the district's nine bargaining units — has already made some concessions, earlier this fall agreeing to a salary freeze for the first time in its history for the 2009-10 school year. The new contract contained changes in health care benefits too, including an increase in prescription co-pays for teachers, but also a 15% increase in the amount that the district pays for a teacher's health insurance, to \$12,582. And so-called step increases — automatic pay raises that teachers receive each year for their first 12 years of service — remain in place.

At Thursday's forum, one of the people attending asked superintendent Todd Roberts how he'd respond to those who think teacher salaries are too high. Roberts defended the salaries that AAPS pays, saying that "our teachers are not anywhere near the top" compared to other districts statewide. What's more, he said, the district needs to pay a decent wage in order to attract and retain high-quality teachers.

Pay is linked to education and time of service. The average AAPS teacher's salary is about \$72,000. First-year teachers with a bachelor's degree earn \$39,340 — the top of the



Todd Roberts, superintendent of Ann Arbor Public Schools, at an Oct. 15 forum on the proposed countywide general millage. Photo by the writer.

pay scale for teachers with a bachelor's degree is \$66,975. Teachers with master's degrees start at \$44,539 and top out at \$79,899. Beginning teachers with a Ph.D. earn \$49,919 — the top of the scale for them is \$87,774.

Maintaining a quality education

The need to keep the quality of Ann Arbor's public education high — and the role of the proposed millage in doing that — is an argument made by school officials and others who support the millage.

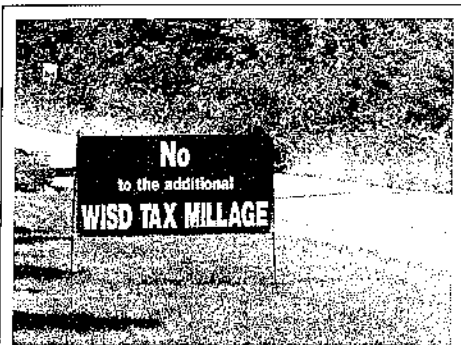
Steve Norton, a leader of the Ann Arbor Citizens Millage Committee, which supports the millage, told The Chronicle that there are two choices: Bring in additional revenues through the millage, or dismantle the school system as we know it. An additional investment now, he said, will buy time for public school advocates to lobby for substantive changes at the state level. It's a millage they might not need long-term, Norton said, but if they don't get the funding now, the district will suffer.

School officials give a range of actions that would be necessary if they're forced to slice \$15 million from next year's budget. Layoffs would be necessary, meaning that with fewer teachers, class sizes would increase. High schools would likely cut their 7th hour of classes, and "enhancement" programs like art, music and sports could be at risk.

In stating that the quality of Ann Arbor's public schools is threatened, Norton, Roberts and others make an economic development argument as well. Education is a pillar of the local economy. Roberts said, pointing to its inclusion in the Ann Arbor Region Success initiative, a countywide strategic planning effort of business and community leaders. From that group's report:

High quality education systems (from early childhood through post-secondary) are needed to develop skilled workers and attract companies and talent (thinking of moving to our region). Companies thinking of expanding or relocating to our region need to know that their children can get the best education possible whether they live in our villages or urban core. This is one of the key factors that site selectors assess when recommending sites for expansion and relocation. High school graduation rates are good in most areas of the county but we need to consistently achieve high attainment levels in all school districts. [PDF file of entire report.]

Karen Cross, a current former AAPS school board member, told The Chronicle that when people hear what's at stake, they're generally receptive to the millage. But that's not always the case.



An anti-millage sign on East Huron River Drive earlier this year near the home of Ted Annis, a member of the Citizens for Responsible School Spending, which opposes the millage. (Photo by the writer.)

What Opponents Say

Critics of the millage proposal make two main arguments: 1) Districts haven't made sufficient structural changes to lower their expenses, and 2) residents are in no position to absorb additional taxes in the current economic climate. The 17 mills that residents of Ann Arbor already pay should be sufficient, they say.

In Ann Arbor, some opponents also criticize the "redistribution of wealth" aspect of the millage. Because of how the money is collected and redistributed, Ann Arbor taxpayers will be paying more than will be returned to the Ann Arbor school district. That's true: AAPS will only receive an estimated \$11 million from the enhancement millage, though taxes from the district will generate about \$16 million. The \$5 million that's not returned to AAPS will go to other districts in Washtenaw County. (AAPS is already a "donor" district for the School Aid Fund, with local taxpayers paying more than the district receives back in state aid.)

Several groups have organized to defeat the millage, but taking the lead is the Citizens for Responsible School Spending, spearheaded by former AAPS board member

Kathy Griswold and Ted Annis, a technology entrepreneur who's on the board of the Ann Arbor Transportation Authority.

"Fear-mongering"

Speaking to The Chronicle just before a meeting of CRSS on Sunday afternoon, Griswold characterizes the rhetoric of millage advocates as misleading and fear-mongering, likening it to the tactics that former president George W. Bush used to drum up support for the war in Iraq. She says the per-pupil amounts are misleading, too, and that per-pupil funding for AAPS is much higher — over \$12,000 per pupil, not the \$9,723 figure that's quoted by the district. She calculates that amount by taking the district's most recent audited financials (from the 2007-08 fiscal year), with general fund revenues of \$192 million, dividing that by the number of students in the district, and adding another \$1,500 per pupil from revenues of the sinking fund and bond millages. [Link to AAPS financial reports]



Griswold says that though the district has cut costs, the overall operating budget isn't decreasing — the cuts merely mean that the budget is staying flat or increasing less than it otherwise would, she says.

Griswold also takes issue with the approach that public school officials take in pitching the millage to the public. There's been a strong effort to get the vote out in Ann Arbor, she said, with the implication being that if Ann Arbor voters weigh in heavily in favor of the millage, then it won't matter if it's defeated by voters in the rest of the county. If a majority of the total votes approve the millage, every taxpayer will be assessed — even if it was defeated in their district. "That seems like taxation without representation," she said.



Kally Griswold, foreground, attended an Oct. 15 millage forum at Huron High School's Little Theater. She is a former AAPS school board member and a leader of the Citizens for Responsible School Spending, which opposes the millage. (Photo by the writer.)

The Washtenaw County Republican Executive Committee also is opposing the millage, and announced the decision on its website: "While the Committee was unanimously supportive of education, they felt the struggling homeowners and businesses in our difficult economy do not need an additional burden. Following a presentation and a question and answer period with the Superintendents from the Ann Arbor, Chelsea and Saline school districts, the Committee felt that cost cutting measures that the districts had not implemented and were still available were the better approach."

Getting the Word Out

Citizens for Responsible Spending is planning a community forum sometime this week. They're also providing the research they've done to several other anti-millage groups, including the Citizens for a Responsible Washtenaw, backed by McKinley CEO Albert Berriz. That group is expected to send a mailing to all Ann Arbor residents who've

requested absentee ballots.

AAPS has already mailed informational brochures to 57,000 residents in the district, outlining details of the millage. The Ann Arbor Citizens Millage Committee sent a mailing, too, funded by private donors and explicitly advocating for the millage. Todd Roberts and Robert Allen held a forum last Thursday, and are holding another one tonight at Pioneer High School's Little Theater, starting at 7 p.m. And representatives from the Ann Arbor Citizens Millage Committee have been speaking at PTO meetings and other gatherings in the district for the past several weeks.

Citing advocacy for the millage in schools, Citizens for Responsible Spending has raised the issue of possible Michigan Campaign Finance Act violations on the part of the Ann Arbor schools, a charge that Todd Roberts dismisses. In an email to Roberts and Norm Herbert, co-chair of the Ann Arbor Citizens Millage Committee, Annis and Griswold cite concerns over the use of school property for advocacy of the millage, and of advocacy in the AAPS brochure mailed to residents. Roberts told *The Chronicle* that the AAPS mailing was informational only, and that while other school officials are prohibited from using school resources to advocate for the millage, it is within his right as superintendent to do so. Griswold said that her group is still looking into the issue.

Advocates on both sides are meeting with the editorial board of *AnnArbor.com*, which plans to take a position on the millage. The editorial board—anchored by *AnnArbor.com* CEO Matt Krancer, executive vice president Laurel Champion and Tony Dearing, chief content officer—has been expanded to include some community members. McKinley's Albert Berriz is a member of the board, but has recused himself from this issue, according to Dearing.

What's Next?

Many districts are grappling with a financial crisis, even before the year of "The Cliff." In Washtenaw County, Willow Run and Ypsilanti school districts are operating under a deficit—by law, those districts are required to file deficit elimination plans with the state, outlining how they plan to resolve the situation. Willow Run has been running a deficit for years; Ypsilanti had a \$3.7 million deficit in its current budget, and the district has until Dec. 15 to submit a deficit elimination plan. [PDF link to list of all Michigan school districts that filed a deficit elimination plan for fiscal 2009]

The numbers aren't yet in on how many districts statewide are currently running a deficit, but there will be more, said David Martell, executive director of the Michigan School Business Officials, a Lansing-based group.

Tackling the problem is difficult, Martell said, because school administrators don't have authority to make unilateral decisions about spending. If superintendents could make across-the-board cuts on the expense side, "then we wouldn't be having these discussions," he said. Multiple factors prevent that from happening, he added, including the authority of community-elected boards that are ultimately responsible for making tough budget decisions, but whose members might not be willing to take the political heat.

Many school officials and others point to the state as the primary cause of the current financial crisis in public education, and the main target for reform. Steve Norton of the Ann Arbor Citizens Millage Committee suggested that implementing a graduated income tax or expanding the sales tax to include the service sector would bring in new revenues to support public schools and, more broadly, to help address Michigan's own structural deficit.

Roberts cited retirement costs—managed by the Michigan Public School Employers' Retirement System—as being a critical personnel issue that needs to be addressed, and one that local districts don't control. The state sets the rate that districts must pay to cover retirement costs for its employees, and it's not a sustainable system, he said. [Link to an April 2009 Education Report article about the impact of retirement costs on Michigan's public school districts.]

Term limits for legislators are another huge obstacle to addressing reform at the state level, advocates of public education say, but they believe the current crisis will prompt change—if only because there's no other choice.

"This really is a tipping point," Norton said.


Links to Millage-Related Information

Some of the groups against the proposed millage

- Citizens for Responsible School Spending

THIS WEEK IN LOCAL EDUCATION: **Washtenaw County school officials headed to Lansing for school funding rally**

Posted: 9:25 a.m. November 9, 2009

 7 Comments. [Comment Now](#)

A week after area voters defeated a countywide schools enhancement millage, Washtenaw County school districts are busy trying to figure out what comes next in their funding and spending.

On the funding front, several Ann Arbor area districts are planning to send representatives to Lansing Tuesday morning for a rally sponsored by a statewide education group, Save Our Schools.

Local districts will talk to their lawmakers on the steps and lawn of the Capitol. The event runs from 10 a.m. to noon.

I plan to attend and will file updates from Lansing.

A little closer to home, several school board are meeting this week - and finances dominate the agendas.

Today:

-
- Ypsilanti schools will meet at 7 p.m. in the high school. The board will review the audit of last year's spending, which will give a clear picture of just where the district is this year.
 - Lincoln will also meet at 7 p.m. at Brick Elementary. They also will review the audit of last year's books. Also on the agenda is a resolution looking at funding for education and a discussion of budget cuts.
 - Whitmore Lake will gather at 7 p.m. at the middle school for a board/administration retreat. The topic? "The future of the district."

On Tuesday:


- The Saline school board will get together at 6:30 p.m. at Union School. On its agenda is a report on the enhancement millage and a report from Superintendent Scot Graden on the future of Union School.

On Thursday:

- The Ann Arbor school board's performance committee will gather. An agenda is not yet available for that meeting.

As always, if there are things going on I should be writing about, feel free to e-mail me.


David Jesse covers K-12 education for AnnArbor.com. He can be reached at davidjesse@annarbor.com or at 734-623-2534.

 Share this post ▾

Tags: Ann Arbor Schools, Lincoln Consolidated Schools, Saline schools, school enhancement millage, Ypsilanti School District

Swine flu clinic to offer vaccine to more priority groups at Ann Arbor's Pioneer High School

Posted: 11:22 p.m. November 8, 2009

 4 Comments. [Comment Now](#)


A swine flu vaccination clinic for Washtenaw County residents will be held at Pioneer High School on Saturday, Nov. 14 and will offer the vaccine to more priority groups, it was announced today.

The clinic, to be held from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the high school, will be the county's third. Those eligible to receive the vaccine will now include all young people ages 6 months through 24 years of age.

It will also include individuals who are between the ages of 25 years and 64 years who have underlying health conditions that put them at greater risk of having complications from the flu. Examples of those underlying health conditions include chronic lung disease, a weakened immune system, cancer, diabetes, kidney or liver disorders, cardiovascular disease and other conditions.

Priority groups for the vaccine clinic still include pregnant women, caregivers of children younger than 6 months old and health care workers. Those who are 65 and older are not in the Centers for Disease Control guidelines to receive priority in receiving the vaccine.

Tina Reed covers health and the environment for AnnArbor.com. You can reach her at tinareed@annarbor.com, call her at 734-623-2535 or find her on Twitter @TreedinAA.

 Share this post ▼

Tags: flu, H1N1 flu virus, Health, Swine flu, Tina Reed, vaccine, Washtenaw County

Future of Ann Arbor's Mack Pool topic of Thursday meeting

Posted: 4:32 p.m., November 11, 2009

8 Comments. [Comment Now](#)

The future of Ann Arbor's Mack Pool will be the topic of discussion Thursday as supporters of the city-owned pool meet to evaluate options for saving it from closing.

The public is encouraged to attend a meeting hosted by the Mack Pool Task Force, a group of Ann Arbor citizens and community leaders looking for ways to cut costs and increase revenues at the indoor pool.

"We still think the community should have a year-round pool," said Ed Sketch, coordinator of the task force and a member of Friends of Mack Pool. "Our goal is to try to get the pool to be self-sustaining. It's not an easy problem, but that's our approach."

Mack Pool operations currently require a nearly \$100,000 annual subsidy from the city's general fund, which has city officials considering closing it.

Thursday's meeting is set from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. in the media center at Ann Arbor Open School at Mack, 715 Brooks St., near Seventh and Miller.

Ann Arbor swimmers, neighborhood residents, and other members of the public are encouraged to attend and participate in evaluating options for keeping the pool open. The task force is working to find sustainable ways to retain the pool as a city-owned fitness resource after the current budget year ends in June 2010.

Organizers said Thursday's meeting will bring attendees up to date with a city staff presentation summarizing the pool's current situation and the timeline for making a decision. The group then will split up to share ideas and brainstorm on topics suggested by the task force.

Before the meeting ends, participants will reconvene to report and share ideas to the whole group.

Sketch, a retired Ford Motor Co. employee who swims at Mack Pool four times a week, said the task force has had positive discussions with city leaders. He said the group has put together a working business plan that needs some tweaking.

"We've got a lot of great ideas but we haven't yet found a way to integrate them," Sketch said, suggesting the group also needs to calculate exact figures for how much an hour it currently costs to run the pool.

Sketch said USA Swimming of Colorado Springs has provided the group with a lot of technical advice.

One of the cost-reduction strategies the group has identified so far is getting a thermal blanket to cover the pool when it's not in use to help reduce temperature loss and evaporation of chemicals.

On the revenue enhancing side, Sketch said one of the ideas discussed includes getting the school system, which has more hours blocked off than it uses, to free up more hours for programs that bring in new users and revenue.

"We've got a boatload of ideas, and it's just a question of knowing what hours would be available," Sketch said.

"Our model has always been to try to get us to cover costs," he added. "At the end of the day, it may take a year or two to fully break even, but we're not looking for the taxpayer to bail the pool out if we can avoid that."

The Mack Pool Task Force is chaired by City Council Member Carsten Hohnke, D-5th Ward. The group's findings are expected to be presented to the City Council in February for possible inclusion in the fiscal year 2010-11 budget.

Ryan J. Stanton covers government for AnnArbor.com. Reach him at ryanstanton@annarbor.com or 734-623-2529.



Share this post

Tags: Ann Arbor City Council, Mack Pool

11/11/09

Washtenaw County residents join Lansing rally for school funding

5 Comments | 21 | 11/11/09



Former Ann Arbor school board member Kathy Griswold, a leader of the opposition to a countywide school enhancement millage, chats with Ann Arbor teachers union President Brit Satonwell during a school funding rally in Lansing this morning. David Jeeze | AnnArbor.com

LANSING - As Michigan Gov. Jennifer Granholm made her way through a crowd gathered on the Capitol steps this morning rallying for school funding, Holly Bielewa found herself face-to-face with the governor.

Bielewa pulled out a letter her daughter, a Wines Elementary School fifth-grader, wrote after Washtenaw County voters voted down a countywide school enhancement millage.

The letter, Bielewa said, wonders about funding for schools and whether her daughter's teachers are going to get laid off because of a lack of money.

Granholm listened to Bielewa, then told her to deliver it to state Legislators.

"I'm on your side," Granholm told Bielewa.

Bielewa was one of several Ann Arbor area residents, school board members and school district employees who drove to Lansing for the rally, sponsored by a new group called Save Our Schools. The group is advocating for more funding for local schools.

The state has cut - by legislator vote and Granholm order - several hundred dollars per student from state aid given to school districts. State aid is districts' main source of revenue.

That has many local districts - along with many across the state - saying they're in dire straits and will have to make cuts soon.

Several Washtenaw County officials and residents in attendance said the state needs to restore the cuts made, but also needs to work to stabilize funding.

"Not only do we need to stabilize funding, but we need to have a budget from the state before we have to pass our budget, so that we can plan," said former Ann Arbor school board member Kathy Griswold, who was one of the leaders of the campaign against the local millage.

The millage would have raised taxes by 2 mills and generated about \$30 million in revenue a year for five years. Voters turned down that tax last Tuesday.

Now Washtenaw County officials are scrambling to cut budgets without harming classroom instruction.

"It's public education, and the public has spoken," said Brit Satchwell, the president of the Ann Arbor teachers' union. "We're interested in hearing from the public about what they decide is important in public education."

Several residents said during the run-up to last week's vote that one cut they wanted to see was less pay for teachers.

Satchwell said teachers have already taking cuts, including changes in the last couple of years in less planning time and more contact time with students. In addition, he pointed out, teachers in Ann Arbor have been paying more out their own pocket for insurance and took a wage freeze this year.

David Jesse covers K-12 education for AnnArbor.com. He can be reached at davidjesse@annarbor.com or at 734-623-2534.



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Tags: Ann Arbor schools, school enhancement millage

Heritage Newspapers (heritage.com)

Ann Arbor Journal > News

Retired teachers enjoy second careers as 'fotogypsies'

Wednesday, November 11, 2009

By Sheila Pursglove, Special Writer

One of the major delights of travel is meeting people, says Ann Arbor photographer Jim George.

He and his wife, Angie, have spent a good part of the past few years traveling around the United States, Mexico and Canada photographing personalities, cultures, landscapes and regions.

An exhibition of their work, "Faces of Mexico and Guatemala: Color Photography by Fotogypsies Angela and Jim George," captures the cultural variety and strong character of the people of Latin America, and is on display through Dec. 14 at the Malletts Creek Branch of the Ann Arbor District Library, 3090 East Eisenhower Parkway, Ann Arbor.

The pair also has exhibited locally at the Ann Arbor Art Center, Café Zola and the Kerrytown Concert House in Ann Arbor, as well as at Art on the Farm in Dexter and Harvest Art Market in Chelsea.

Elsewhere in Michigan, their work has been featured at galleries in Spring Lake, Sutton's Bay and Elk Rapids, as well as outside of Michigan in North Carolina, California and Oaxaca, Mexico.

Photography is a second career for them after many years in education.

Jim first came to Ann Arbor in 1956 to study at the University of Michigan, and later taught English at Ann Arbor High School, now Pioneer High School, and Huron High School. Angie moved to the area in the 1970s to teach in Ann Arbor Public Schools.

"We met in 1982 at Mr. Flood's Party in Ann Arbor -- at that time a favorite hangout for townies of all stripes, professionals, carpenters, artists, wait people, you name it," Jim says.

Three years later, the pair lived on their 30-foot sailboat, "Escapade," for a year, sailing from the Great Lakes to the Atlantic and cruising the East Coast and the Bahamas for a year.

"That fed our passion for traveling and photography," Jim says.

After retiring from the Ann Arbor school district in 1991, Jim began studying photography seriously, taking various workshops at Washtenaw Community College.

When Angie retired in 1997, the two were free to devote even more time to travel.

"Angie had always been interested in photography, so we were very well matched in that way," Jim says.

For a while, the pair operated a portrait studio and Jim taught photography at Washtenaw Community College.

In 1997, they decided to concentrate on art photography related to their travels -- cultural and "peoplescape" photography

"We've both always been wanderers at heart," Jim says. "Around the turn of the century, we hit the highway in a 1990 Ford cargo van, with two notable excursions being a six-month tour of Mexico, and another four-month tour that took us to Guatemala. Shorter trips have taken us to British Columbia, the Canadian Maritimes, France, Italy, Costa Rica, and Morocco, and of course the inner journeys have been limitless."

Mexico became a favorite destination and the pair attended language school for foreigners at the University of Guadalajara after learning about the school from Michelle Roman, owner of the Fiesta Mexicana restaurant in Ypsilanti.

"We lived with a family in Guadalajara while attending the school, and this immersion stood our preconception about Mexico and the Mexican people on its head," Jim says.

"We fell in love with the Mexican people, who turned out to be warm and hospitable, and developed a deep appreciation for the many layered culture, which reflects centuries of the mingling of European and indigenous customs."

Later the couple spent time in Oaxaca, a city in southern Mexico interesting for its arts and crafts and influence of 16 indigenous groups. The pair made many friends -- partly through their involvement with Oaxaca Streetchildren Grassroots -- including many among the Triquis, one of the poorest groups in Mexico.

On some of their trips to Mexico, the couple toured and camped out of their cargo van. In 2006, they extended their trip to Guatemala, where they finally met Itamar, a Mayan girl they sponsored for a decade through Children International.

"Through her, we got an introduction to the Mayan culture, which predominates in southern Mexico and Guatemala," Jim says. "It was a great thrill to meet this poised young lady set to graduate from high school whom we had known only through her school-girlish letters."

One of the great benefits of travel is meeting wonderful people and discovering what a small world it is, Jim says.

"One night in Oaxaca, we walked into a small jazz club, and the singer and piano player, noticing that we were gringos, struck up a conversation. We soon became fast friends," he says.

The piano player mentioned a musician friend the pair should listen to if they passed through Mexico City. Later in Ann Arbor, Jim took piano lessons from teacher and musician Tad Weed, who has worked internationally.

"When Tad learned I had spent time in Mexico City, he said, 'I have a friend there.' It turned out to be the same person," Jim says.

At a campsite in Texas, Angie struck up a conversation with a family. The father was from New York City, and Angie mentioned the one person she knew in New York -- Ernie Harburg, co-owner of the Del Rio bar in Ann Arbor, and son of Yip Harburg, lyricist for "The Wizard of Oz." It turned out that Harburg and the camping dad were great friends.

As much as the pair loves to travel, they love coming home to Ann Arbor, Jim says.

"Although the Del Rio and Mr. Flood's Party are gone, there are still plenty of funky little places we love and a wonderful

diversity of people and cultural activities that can't be matched, at least in any city we could afford to live in." Jim says.

"We've moved in our heads many times, and even bought property in other places with the idea of moving, but we're afraid we're Ann Arborites until we die."

Sheila Pursglove is a freelance writer. She can be reached at bingley51@yahoo.com.

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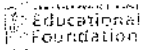
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The Ann Arbor Public Schools Educational Foundation is a non-profit organization separate from the Ann Arbor Public Schools that serves as the one true vehicle for private giving to public schools in Ann Arbor. The Ann Arbor Public Schools Educational Foundation raises private funds through events and contributions from the community in order to enrich public school education through large program support and grants to teachers. We contribute to the quality of life in Ann Arbor and change lives by affecting our quality of public education. We encourage you to browse our site and learn how you can be part of the solution.



The Millage did not pass. But you can still be part of the solution.

1 days ago, expires 2 days from now [Learn More & Donate](#)



12 Votes



The **Ann Arbor Public Schools Educational Foundation** is asking for your help on behalf of our community. Our kids. And our collective future. We're asking citizens to donate the amount you were willing to pay through a Millage "Yes" vote, resulting in immediate and direct help to our schools with 100% of your money staying right here in Ann Arbor. Thank you for being part of the solution.

It is projected that the failure to pass the Washtenaw Schools Millage, combined with cuts in state funding per student, is leaving Ann Arbor schools with a \$12-\$15 million overall deficit - just in 2010.

Approximately 54% of voters in the Ann Arbor Public Schools district voted yes. If each of these were to donate an average of \$250 annually (based on an average home value of \$250,000 and a taxable value of 50%), we would instantly raise \$3,242,750 annually to support public education in the Ann Arbor School District.

Please visit our website to [Learn More](#) and [Donate](#).

Haisley Halloween Parade

Thursday, November 12, 2009



Photos courtesy of Haisley Elementary School

ABOVE: Lochlan Mahan, Suri Doepfer, Macaih Humphries, Kira Miller and Hana Nash march in the annual Haisley Elementary Halloween parade Oct. 30.

BELOW: Phileas Smith, Radhika Patel and Kian Bukowski take part in the annual Haisley Elementary Halloween parade dressed as ghosts, fairytale characters and witches.





1 Vote

VOTE

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Are local school leaders listening to what voters really said?

Submitted by [Frank G. Dalimonte](#)

3 Comments, [Comment Here](#)

The majority of the voters have voiced their desire for more fiscal responsibility and accountability in our public school systems. It took courage for most of these "no" voters, I'm sure. I don't think anyone wants to see our school system fall down on the job of educating our future leaders and citizens.

I'm wondering, however, if public school leaders are really listening to what the voters have made clear. For instance, in every comment I hear Todd Roberts making, he mentions teacher layoffs, pay, and cutting various educational program, which may very well be necessary. This management strategy is "business as usual" and what the voters said at the polls is "we don't want business as usual anymore".

The core mission of our public schools in this crisis should be focused on the classroom so what I would prefer to hear Mr. Roberts, and other school leaders saying is, "We're going to look at everything except cutting teachers and programs first."

This should be done by utilizing outside and independent consulting expertise selected through a competitive bid process for an objective budget strategy. These administrative cuts, consolidations, and responsibility realignments should then be made transparent for all to see and discuss. This first tier fiscal realignment will reveal how additional cuts will affect the classroom priorities.

I would also suggest that school leadership not make the budget cuts completely unmanageable and unproductive by catering to parental lobbying. While transparency and communications are important and necessary, the business of establishing a functional operating budget has got to be based upon economic principles by folks with the proper expertise, not time wasting, emotional debate striving for unattainable parental consensus. The goal is to keep our schools operating within their means and concentrating on needs, not wants.

Frank G. Dalimonte

Ann Arbor



MEETINGS @ BALAS

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2009

8:00 A.M. - DATA ENTRY
5:00 P.M. (JULIE W/BILL H)
ITD LAB

8:30 A.M. - APPLE PD MEDIA SPECIALISTS
3:30 P.M. (MONIQUE)
MAIN CONFERENCE ROOM

10:30 A.M. - E2020
3:30 P.M. (MONIQUE)
INSTRUCTION CONFERENCE ROOM

1:30 P.M. - HS SPEC ED
3:30 P.M. (PAT MORROW)
SISS CONFERENCE ROOM

2:00 P.M. - VOLUNTEER ORIENTATION
4:00 P.M. (MCCUISTON)
INSTRUCTION CONFERENCE ROOM

4:00 P.M. - TIC GRADE LEVEL MEETING
6:00 P.M. (MONIQUE)
INSTRUCTION CONFERENCE ROOM

