

April 9, 2014 Northville Record Sinking Fund Endorsement

Support Northville Schools

Those who live in Northville Public Schools district, whether their children attend these schools or not, know how important the education system here is and how vital it is to the success of not only those students but the community as a whole.

Four years ago, voters here were asked to approve funding for desperately-needed repairs in all 10 of the district's schools and other facilities.

Without that money, it's hard to believe this district would've remained one of the best in the state. Without that money, the district would've needed to tap into its General Fund – taking money from classrooms – to replace the gym floors at Silver Springs and Winchester elementaries; to replace the roof at Thornton Creek Elementary; to replace air conditioning chillers on the roof at Northville High School.

Voters will be asked again to renew 0.9978 mils for the Building Site and Sinking Fund – and this newspaper strongly supports a **yes** vote on May 5.

A sinking fund is one of the only ways a school district can collect money from residents and have it stay in district without going through Lansing.

This funding source offers a lower cost approach to paying for needed building repairs/improvements. The district receives only the funds allocated for specific projects in a given year, eliminating the interest expense typically incurred with a bond issuance.

One could base support on the sole fact that this will NOT result in a tax increase for homeowners in the district – it's a renewal.

Your taxes will not change by voting in favor of this millage.

But, what your 'yes' vote will do is continue the nearly \$2.5 million the millage provides annually through 2020. A 'no' vote means that funding ends on Dec. 31.

It's a topic that's worthy of an editorial on its own, but it's no secret that state funding for public schools has been drastically cut for years. Northville has seen its major source of operations funding – the state's per pupil allocation – slashed from \$8,538 in the 2008-09 school year to \$8,099 this current school year.

That equates to a loss of \$3 million in revenues EVERY YEAR. Who knows what the future brings, but by now school administrators throughout the state have been forced to resign to the reality that red is the new black.

So just what will, and won't, the money from this millage renewal be used for?

It will allow the district to keep its General Fund dollars for operating expenses like salaries, benefits, textbooks, software, new buses – all expenses that the Sinking Fund can NOT be used on.

The Sinking Fund millage renewal WILL be used for a variety of much-needed projects

- **Safety and security:** Due to revisions in the building code, necessary improvements in classroom and building safety include replacement of school building hardware for lockdown ability; upgrades in emergency lighting, fire alarm systems and exit signs; and updated plumbing with mixing valves at sinks.
- **Improving classroom learning environment:** Anticipated projects include adding walls/doors to enclose selected classrooms, updating media centers to create collaboration areas; and upgrading lighting in windowless classrooms.
- **Improving energy efficiency and reducing costs:** Anticipated projects include upgrading HVAC systems; replacing chiller and cooling towers; replacing windows and window systems; and upgrading lighting.
- **Keeping buildings operational:** Due to age or excessive use, anticipated projects include tuckpoint exterior masonry/soffit repairs; improvements to roofing systems; improvements to paving; and replacing floor finishes and door/frame system.

The projects that the Sinking Fund millage will be used for are not a wish list of frills or unnecessary upgrades. Last December, the district hired TMP Architecture's team of engineering and architectural pros to perform a Facility Condition Assessment. They visited every one of Northville Public Schools sites, evaluating the current conditions and assessed needs for the next five years.

The revenue generated from the Sinking Fund millage renewal, however, still won't cover the entire scope of what's needed. What it will do is allow the district to prioritize that list and start working on projects. Here's one way to look at why this millage renewal is so crucial: Pretend the district is your house. Nearly all the district's buildings are at least 40 years old. Think of the repairs and upgrades needed to maintain a house of this age, to protect one's investment and keep one's family safe.

School facilities are the same, and this district needs your support May 5 to protect what is actually YOUR investment. Maintaining exemplary schools does two things: It helps provide a top-notch education for our current and future students, and it keeps local property values strong.

Still not convinced and have questions? Learn more about the Sinking Fund millage renewal at www.northvilleschools.org or email questions to nps@northvilleschools.org.

And remember to vote on May 5.