



Walled Lake Residents To Vote On School Bond

Parents drive bond to improve safety, security and technology at local schools.

Jackie Headapohl
Managing Editor

Residents of Walled Lake will be voting on a \$67.5 million Walled Lake Schools' Safety, Security and Technology Bond this Nov. 5.

Last year, after the tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn., parents emailed and called the district with ideas for improving safety at area schools, said Judy Evola, director of community relations and marketing at the Walled Lake Consolidated School District. "We met with our administrators and developed a three-phase safety plan," she said.

Phase I of the plan began in December 2012 with the district locking all of the school doors during school hours and hiring door monitors to ensure those entering buildings are identified. Phase II of the plan included installing entrance intercom systems in all schools and was completed this summer.

The 2013 bond projects will enable the district to complete Phase III of the plan.

Phase III includes new video surveillance systems at all schools; entrance and office reconfigurations or modifications in all schools; keyless entry throughout the district; updated security, fire alarm and mass notification systems; and upgrades to emergency backup generators and emergency lighting.

Phase III also includes several technology needs, such as replacing the district phone system and master clock systems as well as technology installation of document cameras and interactive ceiling mounted projectors that allow all teach-

ers to have Internet access for instructional materials.

"Increased safety and security in our schools is paramount. We have pared down this bond significantly so that it only includes issues related to safety, security, technology and other time-sensitive needs. This bond does not represent a wish list; rather, it represents needs that offer a safe, secure environment in which our children may prosper," Walled Lake Schools Superintendent Kenneth Gutman said.

Parents of Walled Lake Schools' students are driving the bond, such as Stephanie Kaplan, who co-chairs the Citizens' Committee for Walled Lake Schools, which is working to get out the vote. Kaplan has three children, two in Walled Lake Schools and one who graduated last year.

"So far, most people seem to support the bond," Kaplan said.

The committee has had events through the Parent Teacher Student Association to educate local homeowners. "A video of what this bond means to our schools is available on the district's website. Residents can also submit questions," she said.

The bond is a 30-year, \$67.5 million dollar, .78 mil bond in the first year, with an estimated .99 mil annually for the remainder of the bond and, if it passes, will cost homeowners approximately \$2 a week.

"It will be a huge hit if it's voted down," Kaplan said. "All of those things will still need to be paid for out of the general fund, which will directly impact classroom spending."

For information on the bond, visit www.wlcsd.org. □

Southfield Public Schools Millage On Ballot Nov. 5

Southfield Public Schools is recognized as one of the best public school districts in Michigan, according to school board trustee Fern Katz. "Almost every week out students bring home trophies," she said. "For example, one of our students won first prize on an anti-bullying video from WDIV, and one student won a Gates Scholarship of \$100,000."

But, Katz said, the district is facing a serious challenge. Southfield residents will be asked to vote for a school millage that amounts to half of the schools'

operating expense. "We've reduced our expenses by \$80 million without reducing the quality of programs and instruction for our students, but those dollars are half of the district's budget."

Katz urges Southfield voters to vote yes on the millage proposal.

"By law, the ballot language must say 'increase' since the mills that were authorized in 2008 will expire in June 2014 and the millage will revert to zero," she said. "The Southfield School Board promises that when the millage is passed, taxes will remain the same." □



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