

Chippewa Valley Schools voters to act on non-homestead millage renewal

The renewal doesn't cost homeowners any money



Nine days of early voting led up to today's in-person voting. Above, the early voting station in Warren. (AP Photo/Carlos Osorio)

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Chippewa Valley Schools officials say they are taking no chances when it comes to the non-homestead operating millage renewal on the Aug. 6 primary election ballot.

What's at stake in the 18-mill proposal is about \$16 million annually that helps pay for for school safety officers, career-technical instructors, counselors, social workers, health services staff and food

service workers that officials say are essential to student health and achievement.

It's what school leaders call "important money."

"The impact of losing these funds would be devastating to our district," said Superintendent Ron Roberts.



Ron Roberts (PHOTO: CHIPPEWA VALLEY SCHOOLS)

Roberts stressed the 10-year renewal will not cost homeowners any money in property taxes. The millage is only paid by rental property owners, owners of second homes, commercial properties and businesses in order for Chippewa Valley to continue receiving full state funding for school operations.

School officials have scheduled the question for the primary ballot. If voters in the 14,500-student district, which covers northern Clinton Township and some of Macomb Township, turn it down, it will be placed on the November ballot for another try.



Chippewa Valley Schools Administration building in Clinton Township. (MACOMB DAILY FILE PHOTO)

That's because the district could be forced to cut student programs and staff.

Back in the days when Chippewa Valley was forced to slice 2% of its budget due to various funding issues, the cutbacks caused enormous problems for the district. This renewal represents 8% of the budget.

“We would be talking substantial cuts if it fails,” Roberts said. “I don’t think that is what our community wants. If people understand this millage, if they look at the facts, I feel they will support it.”

The Clinton Township-based school community is asking for more than the standard 18 mills to levy on non-homestead property to counter what's known as the Headlee "roll back."

Michigan's Headlee tax limitation amendment limits state spending and "rolls back" millage rates when annual growth on existing property is greater than the rate of inflation

While legally schools cannot levy more than 18 mills, they can ask for a higher rate so when the rollback begins, they can collect more via the additional mills

That's why the ballot language in Chippewa's proposal makes reference to 19 mills.

"This is becoming increasingly more commonplace," Craig Thiel, research director at the Citizens Research Council of Michigan, told Detroit News earlier this year. "Over the last couple decades, schools have not wanted to have their hands tied to generating revenues they can control. They control so few of the dollars that schools get anyway."

The proposal essentially asks voters to approve a constant 18 mills that won't be reduced through property tax growth.

"The Headlee language causes a problem in some school renewals," Roberts said. "We currently have this tax in place since 1994 with Proposal A. Our residents have approved its renewal every 10 years since then."

The last time the question was before voters in 2014, over 68% of residents voted to maintain the operating millage versus 31.7% who voted against it.

For more information on the millage renewal proposal, call 586-723-2000.

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