

Dunlap ready for next step after referendum

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Chillicothe, Ill. — Dunlap District 323 officials felt relieved after the passing of the elementary school referendum Nov. 2, according to Superintendent Dr. Jay Marino.

The referendum passed with 59 percent in favor of the referendum.

“Going into this, we believed that this would pass, but it would be a much narrower margin given the November election in a gubernatorial race,” Marino said.

“Usually, you do referendums in the spring in a special election and there’s usually not much on the ballot. So, the people that come to the polls are familiar about the issue and are ready to vote for or against.”

Marino said although the percentage was close, the referendum passed because the public has confidence in the Dunlap school district.

“We believe it’s a win-win. It’s a win for the kids in Dunlap, and it’s a win for the community in the sense that people move to Dunlap for the schools, and that’s one of the largest attractors for people to come here,” Marino said.

“So, this helps us continue that tradition of excellence that we have had.

“I think it was evident by it passing that people see the need and that we’ve been responsible with money, and we’ve kept a reasonable tax rate.”

After the several referendum meetings the school board held, the same questions popped up — how much this will cost the taxpayers and how they will redistrict the area.

Marino said district officials will begin looking at how they could redistrict the students for the new kindergarten through fifth-grade school, but no final decision will be made until the spring of 2012.

“Our population changes so much. By the time you open the school, things can happen from now and a year and a half from now,” Marino said.

“We’ll do preliminaries and run it, but we’ll wait until the January, February and March prior to when that school opens.”

The referendum was passed for \$11.5 million of the \$21.1 million needed to build the elementary school.

The \$21.1 million includes the construction of the building and school supplies needed to open the building.

Once the construction is complete, a group of stakeholders consisting of teachers, parents and administrators will have a say in the design of the inside of the school.

Things such as where the white boards should go, where extra storage is needed, where the office should be located, among other details, will be decided by this group.

The construction team will mobilize and get shovels in the dirt at Allen and Hickory Grove roads as soon as the weather breaks in the spring.

“They work as fast as they can to get the building buttoned up before winter so they can now work through the winter months inside,” Marino said.

The Dunlap school district has plans for expansion of the middle school and high school, as well as the central office, once the elementary school is complete.

No contracts have been signed, but the district is ready to deal with the soon-to-be at capacity Dunlap Valley Middle School.

“Our next pinch point will be the middle school situation,” Marino said. “We just opened phase one of the high school, where we added 10 classrooms. There’s a phase two to the high school with a two-story, 16 classroom renovation that is ready to be started.”

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