



THE WATCHDOG

Keeping a watchful eye on taxation

A Publication of the Dickinson County Taxpayers Association

A 501 (C) (3) non-profit organization

AUGUST, 2015 VOLUME 13 ISSUE 2

Mark Your Calander

Annual Meeting

June 10, 2016

Monthly Meetings

Second Thursdays

8 AM

April through

December

At Arnolds Park

City Hall

Public Invited!

Officers

President

Phil Petersen

Vice-President

Darrell Mergen

Treasurer

Jack Holzhauer

Executive Director

Lissa Potter

Board of Directors

Dan Block

Bill Carmichael

Jim Cravens

Jack Holzhauer

Owen Primavera

Bill Sackett

John Shanafelt

Robert Zylstra

P.O. Box 598

Spirit Lake, IA 51360

www.dctaxpayers.org

Okoboji School District Tries Again

First PPEL Vote History – *On April 7, 2015 the Okoboji Community School District requested an election to authorize a Physical Plant Equipment Levy (PPEL) for Phase 1 to build a new Middle School building in Milford. The results of the April PPEL election was that 1,485 votes were cast by 4,952 registered voters in the Okoboji School District - representing a 30% turnout. There were 703 votes approving the expenditure for a 47 percent voter approval. A PPEL election requires a 50% voter approval, so the measure was defeated. This new Middle School building proposal only effects taxpayers in the Okoboji Community School District. More information can be found in the March 2015 edition of the Watchdog.*

Now the Okoboji School Board has decided to place the same issue before the voters on Tuesday, September 8, 2015. If there is a more than 50% voter approval at this election the school district would have \$14.7M to build a new Middle School next to the High School in Milford. The impact of this approval would be a property tax increase \$1.34 per thousand dollars of assessed valuation for a period of ten years.

Unfortunately, Phase 1 for \$14.7M does not include the athletic portion of the new Middle School building. Current plans are to have a second PPEL election on February 16, 2016 for an additional \$4.4M for the Phase 2 athletic addition. The Phase 2 property tax impact would be to extend the \$1.34 per thousand dollars of assessed valuation for an additional period of up to five years. The total construction cost according to the architect is \$19.1M – provided the project is brought in within the estimates.

The simplest and least expensive way to gain voter approval would be to have one general obligation bond election - that would require a 60% voter approval. The Okoboji School Board has chosen to split the project into two phases by removing the athletic area (gym) from the original project and use two Physical Plant and Equipment Levy (PPEL) - pronounced “pebble” - elections. The motivation for the PPEL approach appears to be is it only requires a 50% voter approval.

To calculate the amount of residential property tax increase for each \$100,000 of assessed value – multiply the assessed value in thousands times the 56% residential rollback factor times the \$1.34 tax levy rate. So for each \$100K of assessed residential value there would be an increase of \$75.04 of annual property taxes. (Commercial and agricultural properties each have a different rollback factor.)

If the September and February PPEL elections are approved by the voters the construction plans would be finalized next spring with bids to be received by mid-2016. Construction would take place in the fall of 2016 and most of 2017. Occupancy of the new Middle School could occur in December of 2017. A critical question is who will oversee the new building construction to be sure it is completed on time and under budget?

Just to make things interesting three of the five school board members are not standing for reelection on this same election. Not standing for reelection are Brad Droegmiller (current President), Joe Conover, and Brad Hale. There are six candidates who have filed for the three openings are: Shannon Anderson, Scott Dodge, Bob Hanson, Thomas Struthers, Jay Weaver, and Daniel Winkowitsch. The newly elected school board members will take office at the next school board meeting after the election. It is unknown how they will approach the actions taken by the previous school board.

Do we need it?

Many taxpayers would like to know if the Okoboji School District really needs a new \$19 M Middle School? Can the additional students be accommodated without saddling the taxpayers with a fifteen year PPEL tax levy? It would be nice if Okoboji school enrollment would follow a consistent growth curve of increasing or decreasing enrollment. Unfortunately, the class sizes at Okoboji have followed an unpredictable pattern over a period of many years.

Those pressing for a new school cite the increased employment at Polaris in Milford. Others point to the lack of affordable housing in the central part of Dickinson County as a reason parents will choose to live outside the Okoboji School District.

Existing Arnolds Park Middle School

Will it be sold for the "highest and best use" for the greatest value? – Condominiums

Will it be sold to a religious group that will be tax exempt?

Will it be abandoned to become an eyesore to the community?

Has the cost of demolishing the old building been included in the new building costs? The Okoboji School District feels they have three years after both successful PPEL elections to decide what happens to the existing Arnolds Park Middle School Building.

Making Your Voice Heard

If you live in the Okoboji School District - and are a registered voter in Dickinson County - you can vote any weekday from now to September 4th by going to the Auditor's office in the DC Courthouse. The single September 8th polling place for the Okoboji School election will be the Milford Community Center. The polls will be open from 7 AM to 8 PM.

Absentee Ballot Request & Submission

You can request the Iowa Absentee Ballot Request Form be mailed to you by telephone by calling 712/ 336-3356. A second option is to print the request the Ballot Request Form electronically from <http://sos.iowa.gov/elections/pdf/absenteeballotapp.pdf>. The completed ballot request form can be mailed or FAX'd to 712/ 336-2677. The last day to request a ballot package by mail is September 4, 2015. It is very risky to wait until that week.

.....continued on page 3

The ballot request form, with an original signature, must be delivered or mailed in a separate envelope to the Dickinson County Auditor, 1802 Hill Avenue, Suite 1400, Spirit Lake, IA 51360. The Auditor's office will mail you the Absentee Ballot package.

The completed absentee ballot - in its special envelope - must be postmarked no later than September 5th and received in the Auditor's office before the canvass process is completed – the Thursday following the election. **Be very careful about obtaining a valid postmark because September 5 – 6 is a weekend and September 7th is the Labor Day holiday.**

To probe further: check out the Okoboji Schools website about "Building for Our Future"

<http://okobojischools.wix.com/buildingforokoboji>

Local Government Meeting Schedules

Most government meetings are open to the public. By attending them a person can be a better informed citizen and support their representatives in government.

County

Dickinson County Board of Supervisors

9:30 a.m., Tuesdays,
Courthouse Community Room
www.co.dickinson.ia.us

Schools

Harris - Lake Park School Board

7:30 p.m., 3rd Monday of the
month, MS/HS Library
Dennis Peters - Superintendent
www.harris-lp.k12.ia.us

Okoboji School Board

5:30 p.m., 2nd Monday of the month
Okoboji CSD Central Office
Gary Jannsen - Superintendent
Brad Droegmiller - Board President
www.okoboji.k12.ia.us

Spirit Lake School Board

5:30 p.m., 2nd Monday of the month
District Office Board Room
Dr. David Smith - Superintendent
Todd Hummel - Board President
www.spirit-lake.k12.ia.us

Graettinger-Terril School Board

5 p.m., 4th Tuesday of the month
Graettinger Building
Andrew Woiwood - Superintendent
Kyle Norris - Board President
www.gtschools.k12.ia.us

Cities

Arnolds Park City Council

6:00 p.m.
2nd Wednesday of the month
City Hall
Jim Hussong – Mayor
www.arnoldsparkcity.com

Lake Park City Council

7:00 p.m.
2nd Monday of the month
Lake Park City Hall
John Engel - Mayor
www.lakeparkia.com

Milford City Council

6:30 p.m.
2nd and 4th Monday
City Hall Council Chambers
Bill Reinsbach - Mayor
www.milford.ia.us

Okoboji City Council

6:00 p.m.
2nd Tuesday of the month
Okoboji City Hall
Mary Vanderwoude – Mayor
www.okobojicity.com

Orleans City Council

7:00 p.m.
2nd Monday of the month
Orleans City Hall
Bill Maas – Mayor
www.orleans.govoffice.com

Local Government Meeting Schedules.....continued

West Okoboji City Council
 6:30 p.m.
 2nd Monday of the month
 West Okoboji City Hall
 Larry Traugbber - Mayor
www.cityofwestokoboji.org

Wahpeton City Council
 5 p.m.
 2nd Monday of the month
 Wahpeton City Hall
 Frank Joenks - Mayor
www.wahpetonia.gov/office.com

Spirit Lake City Council
 5:30 p.m.
 2nd & 4th Tuesday of the month
 City Hall Council Room
 Blain Andera - Mayor
www.cityofspiritlake.org

Superior City Council
 7:00 p.m.
 1st Monday of the month
 Superior City Hall
 Terry Buchman - Mayor

Terril City Council
 6 p.m.
 1st Monday of the month
 Terril City Hall
 Darrell Woods Jr. - Mayor
www.terri-la.us

PRESORT STANDARD
 U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
 PERMIT #8
 SPIRIT LAKE, IA
 51360

The Watchdog
 Dickinson County Taxpayers Association
 P.O. Box 598
 Spirit Lake, IA 51360
ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

