

## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **Petitions to prompt county tech millage September 24**

Later this month petitions will begin being circulated to registered voters in preparation for a proposed county-wide technology millage for public schools. Organizers must present at least 3,000 signatures to the Muskegon County Clerk's office no later than July 2 to place what is legally termed an "enhancement millage" on the September 24, 2013, ballot. If the deadline is met, voters who reside within the Muskegon Area Intermediate School District (MAISD) would then be asked to consider a proposal to raise property taxes by one mill for ten years.

Public school officials have been discussing ways to generate funding for the technology needed by the 29,000 children who attend schools in Muskegon County. Officials say that improved technology will improve student achievement and help prepare students to be college and career ready. Schools plan to use funds for technology that will better secure school buildings as well. By law, the MAISD must run an enhancement millage now that local school district boards of education, representing at least half of the student population in the county, have petitioned the MAISD to do so. Currently ISDs are the only entity that can offer this type of millage.

In the past few weeks, a discussion of when to pursue the vote led to the decision to ask voters for a special election date. "We did not want this important issue to end up at the bottom of a crowded November ballot chocked full of political races and other state, county, and local ballot initiatives," said Dave Sipka, MAISD Superintendent. "At the same time we knew an election in early August would not get the attention it deserves with so many enjoying the summer weather and activities. September seems to be the perfect time to get voters to the polls to decide on this important issue," added Sipka.

If the proposed millage were to pass, public schools would receive \$4.3 million every year to cover expenses related to technology. The cost to the owner of an \$82,000 home would be \$41 more a year for ten years in property taxes. (The average county home value is \$82,000.) Unlike a traditional school bond issue, an enhancement millage is interest free and can be used to fund infrastructure, support services, and software. The money would be collected and distributed to each public school district based on the number of students served. By law the MAISD would not receive any funding from an enhancement millage.

In February of this year, Denno Research, LLC of East Lansing conducted a phone survey that showed 68% of 400 registered voters were either very likely or likely to support the initiative. Based on this data, the research firm noted that the "MAISD is in a very strong position to pass a one-mill increase in support of technology issues within its schools."

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