

Technology Enhancement Millage Information

Updated May 6, 2013

1. Q: What would prompt a countywide technology millage?

A: Over the last several months, public school leaders have been discussing ways to create funding for technology. Improved technology will improve student achievement and help prepare students to be college and career ready. In addition, funds will be used to purchase and maintain technology that will secure buildings and promote student safety. By law, the Muskegon Area Intermediate School District (MAISD) must run an enhancement millage if local school district boards of education, representing more than half of the student population in the county, petition the MAISD.

2. Q: How will all public school students benefit from a technology millage?

A: All students would have greater access to technology tools that will prepare them for the world of work and beyond.

3. Q: What legal requirements would be met through a technology millage?

A: By law, schools are required to provide online learning opportunities, online standardized testing beginning in 2015, and many other technology related programs and services. A technology millage would provide the funding needed to meet these legal requirements as well.

4. Q: How can funding for technology impact student safety?

A: Schools can use technology enhancement funds for things like enhancing access for law enforcement into school buildings, interior and exterior security cameras, computerized entry systems, alarm systems, identification cards, and a host of other related security items.

5. Q: What would voters be asked to support?

A: Voters within the MAISD would be asked to support a proposal to raise taxes by one mill for ten years. The owner of an \$82,000 home would pay \$41 more a year for ten years in property taxes, while the public schools would receive \$4.3 million every year to cover expenses related to technology. The average county home value is \$82,000.

6. Q: Can a local district ask for an enhancement millage?

A: Currently ISDs are the only entity that can offer this type of millage.

7. Q: What must be done to put the millage on the ballot?

A: In March and April 2013, local district boards of education representing more than half of the student population in the county, passed resolutions asking the MAISD to run an enhancement millage. By law, the MAISD now must run an enhancement millage by November 2014.

8. Q: When will the millage be placed on the ballot?

A: Initially local school districts considered placing the millage on an August 6, 2013, ballot. Further discussion led to the decision to ask voters for a special election date on September 24, 2013. The special election date is called a "petition election" and requires signatures be collected and submitted to the Muskegon County Clerk's office at least twelve Tuesdays before the special election date.

9. Q: How many signatures must be collected for the special election to occur?

A: 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.

10. Q: What if enough signatures are not collected to prompt the special election?

A: Without enough signatures, the special election cannot occur, however, the MAISD is still required by law to place an enhancement millage on the ballot by November 2014.

11. Q: Why is the district pursuing a special election instead of placing the issue on the November ballot?

A: Local school district superintendents 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. At the same time, they know 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.

12. Q: How much money will one mill raise to fund technology within the local public schools?

A: The mill would raise \$4.3 million dollars annually for ten consecutive years. It would be distributed to each public school district based on the number of students served. Under current law, charter schools and non-public schools are not allowed to receive funding from an enhancement millage.

13. Q: Can an enhancement millage be used for things other than technology?

A: An enhancement millage that is specified for "technology" must be used for that purpose. Unlike a traditional school bond issue, an enhancement millage is interest free and can be used to fund such things as infrastructure, support services, and software.

14. Q: Who will decide how the money raised from an enhancement millage will be spent in local schools?

A: Each individual school district will determine how the funds raised for an enhancement millage will be spent. Each district has a list of funding needs specific to their students' needs.

15. Q: Is there any data to support the request for a technology millage?

A: Denno Reseach, LLC of East Lansing conducted a phone survey between February 18 and 20, 2013. The results showed that 68% of 400 registered voters that plan to vote in the August 2013, election 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."

16. Q: Who would be responsible for informing voters?

A: The MAISD would inform voters on a county-wide level and will create informational tools. However, each local school district would be responsible for informing their own district voters about the millage.

17. Q: Doesn't the MAISD already have a "tech millage" in place?

A: The MAISD has never had a technology millage in place to fund things like computers, smart boards, software, support and infrastructure at each of the local school districts. No enhancement millages exist within the MAISD. Currently the MAISD does have a vocational millage that pays for the career and technical ed programs of the Muskegon Area Career Tech Center attended by over 760 high school juniors and seniors.

18. Q: Where can I get additional information about the technology enhancement millage?

A: Contact your local district superintendent or MAISD Superintendent Dave Sipka at 231-767-7201.