

District may try referendum again in November

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Burr Ridge Suburban Life
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Burr Ridge, IL -

Community Consolidated School District 180 failed to pass a referendum measure Tuesday, but Superintendent Thomas Schneider already is looking toward November.

Schneider said he had been optimistic up until the last votes were counted that the Burr Ridge district had reached enough people with the need for the “tax swap” referendum, which would have raised about \$1 million for the district without raising taxes.

“We really think it’s more a question of making the community aware of what we have happening in the district and how it’s to our children’s advantage and to our homeowners’ advantage to have a yes vote,” he said.

The general election in November will be the next time the district will be able to go to referendum.

School Board President Paula DuPont said part of the reason school officials placed the item on the ballot in February was so there would be a second chance in 2008 if it was voted down. During the coming months, DuPont said the district will work to get more people registered to vote and review votes by precinct to see if officials need to fine-tune their message for different groups.

The proposed referendum measure would have shifted tax money that would be used to pay off building bonds to fund existing programs, raising about \$1 million for District 180. The building bonds are expected to be fully paid off by 2009.

The district is running about a \$2 million deficit for the current fiscal year but had a surplus last year after receiving \$1 million in federal impact aid.

Argonne National Laboratory sits on district land and because the district will never reap property taxes from the government building, it receives compensation. Payments have been unpredictable in years

The next step

The District 180 School Board will discuss program cuts at its meeting at 7 p.m. Monday at the District Office, 15W451 91st St., Burr Ridge.

past and the most recent payoff included overdue funds.

The district lost its referendum bid by a vote of 722 to 540.

“Just because they calculate that we are owed a certain amount does not mean we receive it,” DuPont said. “They send us how much they want to send, when they want to send it.”

To make up for the deficit, District 180 is expected to dig into cash reserves, reducing them from the \$3.7 million it had last summer to \$1.9 million by June, according to board documents.

“We weren’t going after this to have a cushion,” DuPont said. “We were going after this to make the payroll.”

Referendum funds would maintain remedial and gifted programs, low class sizes and after-school programs, DuPont said. Even if the measure had passed, the district would still need to tighten some of its expenses. Without it, Schneider said schools will begin to see changes starting with the new school year in September.

Officials already have cut some costs by deciding not to replace staff that recently left the district. Other possible changes include fewer classroom aides and an end to band, music and fine arts programs.

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