



**Dear Parents,**

On December 10<sup>th</sup>, the Board of Education approved a Sinking Fund Proposal to help fund much needed building repairs. This proposal is a **renewal** of the current Sinking Fund and is not a tax increase.

Listed below is information about this very important election. Please look for more information after the holiday break:

## **Frequently Asked Questions About The Romeo Community Schools' January 15<sup>th</sup> Ballot Proposal**

**Q. What is a Building and Site Sinking Fund proposal?**

The law allows Michigan school districts to ask voters for Sinking Fund dollars for the purpose of remodeling and/or repairing facilities. Essentially, it allows districts to keep education dollars in the classroom and provides a separate, local revenue source for building upkeep.

**Q. What is the *ROMEO* Building and Site Sinking Fund proposal?**

Voters are asked to **renew** the district's Building and Site Sinking Fund tax rate of 1.25 mills (\$1.25 per each \$1,000 of the taxable value of homes) for another four years. If approved, the Sinking Fund would provide approximately \$8 million in revenue over a four-year period without a tax increase.

The proposal was previously approved in 2000 and 2004. The current Sinking Fund millage expires June 30, 2008.

**Q. Is this a tax increase?**

No. This is simply a **renewal** of the current tax rate. If approved, residents' school tax rate will remain the same.

**Q. How does holding the election on January 15<sup>th</sup> save tax dollars?**

By placing the proposal on the state-wide ballot, there will be no direct election costs to the school district.

Please note that the January 15<sup>th</sup> date was selected by the state and was originally scheduled for February 26<sup>th</sup>.

**Q. How will the renewal of the Building and Site Sinking Fund affect the school district?**

With the Sinking Fund, much needed repairs and maintenance can be done without sacrificing instructional funds.

Romeo has been facing reductions in programs and services due to state-wide funding cuts. This problem is compounded when you factor in the average age of most of our buildings being over 50 years old. Similar to your home, repairs such as roofing, heating and cooling, ventilation and window replacements become necessary and can be a major drain on your home budget.

If approved, a Sinking Fund will protect our community assets and help to provide a top-notch learning environment for our students.

**Q. How many specific projects are planned in the next four years?**

A volunteer citizen group helped to identify and prioritize over 150 needed Sinking Fund projects. Projects to be completed are in the areas of health and security value, energy management and classroom improvements.

For example, health and security improvements under consideration include emergency school and site lighting, making school entrances more secure, improving air quality in schools and playground fencing.

Learning environment suggestions include restroom renovations, replacing worn roofs, flooring and carpeting. Plumbing upgrades are also recommended at several schools.

**Q. How are the current school conditions?**

Our school conditions vary by the age of the building. For example, 195 parents from Powell Middle School recently signed a petition seeking upgrades and remodeling of the 34-year-old building.

Their petition cited aging water and septic systems, worn out original carpeting, air circulation issues (including classroom temperatures of over 90 degrees in the windowless building), and restroom upgrades. Classes at Powell have already been cancelled twice this school year due to water system breakdowns.

**Q. Are there any limits on the uses of Sinking Fund revenues?**

Yes. Sinking Funds can only be used to repair and remodel facilities, or to buy, develop and construct buildings and sites. These funds cannot finance salaries, school buses, technology equipment or classroom supplies.

**Q. What is the advantage of a Sinking Fund proposal compared to a district Bond proposal?**

A Sinking Fund tax is a pay-as-you-go revenue source. It does not require the interest payments of a Bond Issue loan.

**Q. Why do our schools seem to need so much work to keep them up-to-date?**

Our buildings and sites receive a total of at least 1.1 million individual visits by students and community members each year. Six of our 13 facilities are 50 years of age (or older), including the 80-year-old Romeo Middle School.

**Q. What are the tax implications of renewal of the 2004 Sinking Fund tax rate?**

If approved, the local Sinking Fund tax rate of 1.25 mills (that was approved in 2004) would continue. For local homeowners this tax is about \$10.25 monthly before normal federal and state deductions. This is not a tax increase.

**Q. Will my tax rate go up if this renewal is passed?**

No. It is a renewal of a current millage.

**Q. What are some of the recent Sinking Fund projects?**

This past summer, 35 projects were accomplished using Sinking Fund dollars. They included work on classrooms, band and choir rooms, roofing, restrooms, flooring, damaged sidewalks, parking lots and drainage at school sites. Our high school practice field and Barnabo Athletic Field also received extensive repairs and upgrades.

Since 2004, nearly 100 projects have been accomplished. These projects include: sidewalk replacements at 7 schools, heating and air systems at 4 schools, outside lighting improvements at 3 schools, fire safety upgrades and remodeling at our high school community auditorium, and high school music and science classrooms.

We completed roofing replacements (or repairs) at 7 schools and 2 other facilities; installed new entrance doors and window replacements at 7 schools; water and sewer piping upgrades in 3 schools, and bathroom and floor repairs in nearly all schools. Other projects include parking lot upgrades, playground and school site improvements in 8 buildings, and an extensive updating of our district auditorium and pool.

**Q. Is the fact that we participate in Schools of Choice creating the need for a Sinking Fund election?**

No. This election is simply to provide much needed funds for health, safety, security and classroom upgrades without using money earmarked for instruction. We currently have 32 students district-wide participating in Schools of Choice. Our district receives over \$7,000 in state aid for every enrolled Schools of Choice student. Please note, these students provide their own transportation and join existing classes, so this option is actually a positive revenue source for the district.

**Q. Who can I contact if I want more information regarding the January 15<sup>th</sup> election?**

School district website  
[www.romeo.k12.mi.us](http://www.romeo.k12.mi.us)  
The Superintendent's Office  
Joseph Beck, 586-752-0225