

www.SNPonline.com

In Other News...

In Other News...

In Other News...

SNP HOME



SNPonline.com
Suburban News Publications

January 17 - 24, 2007

Columbus, Ohio

Get the latest News

click Refresh

Main Menu

- Home
- Community News
- Sports
- Photos
- Classifieds
- Special Sections
- Contact Info
- Archive

HOW TO ADVERTISE

WORSHIP DIRECTORY

Find a Copy
SNP NEWSPAPER LOCATOR

Photos of the Week

YEAR '07
PREVIEW

SPECIAL SECTION
ADVERTISING

SNP Winner of 8
National Awards
SNP

Community News

January 3 - 10, 2007

Voters may face pricey bond issue in the new year

School district to consider growth, funding in 2007

By [QUINN BOWMAN](#)

If there is one hurdle for New Albany-Plain Local schools to face in 2007, it's growth.

The district's school buildings are no longer big enough to suit the influx new students experts predict. And leaders are scrambling for solutions.

About 300 new students come to New Albany every year, and whether or not that trend holds in the future will have a big impact on how the district operates.

Superintendent Steve Castle said that while a slowing housing market may stymie population growth in the short-term, the district desperately needs to add space to its campus.

"Even if we didn't get any new kids, we still wouldn't have enough space," he said.

New Albany High School is the only district building that is not filled to capacity.

Overflowing middle school students use extra space in the high school for classrooms, Castle said.

Education board President Diane Goedeking echoed Castle's sentiments regarding enrollment.

"Because of the housing market slump we anticipate not as much growth as initially forecast. But that doesn't mean this slump won't pass and our enrollment will meet long-term expectations. At some point the 5,500 student mark will be met," she said.

A September 2006 district prediction estimates that 237 new students will enter the district next year. New enrollment figures will be presented to the local board of education on Jan. 26. Regardless of those findings, however, the school district needs more space, officials say.

Both Goedeking and Castle agree that some sort of temporary classroom space will be needed next year, but it will depend on enrollment.

This need for space means that New Albany voters likely will see a 3.5 mill, \$50 million bond issue on the ballot in May. School officials stress that they understand the burden this places on taxpayers, but that the money is

Our Top Story



M.L. King Jr.'s legacy recalled in local events



crucial to providing an education for students in a blossoming district.

The district plans to use the money, aside from upgrading technology and other school facilities, to build a new elementary school building, add to the K-1 building, and add 50,000 square feet to the high school.

"We fully understand that anytime we go back to the community for further taxes it's challenging," Castle said. "We are where we are today because of the level of support we've received from the community."

The district plans to work hard on a bond issue campaign, starting in January, that aims to show voters that the district absolutely needs the tax money in order to maintain quality education for its students.

"Our perspective would be that for next year we will be working very hard towards the passage of the bond issue. We are very aware of the work that's going to have to be put into a levy campaign in order to educate the community as to the real need (we have)," Goedeking said.

There are three basic ways to fund schools -- operating levies, permanent improvement levies, and bond issues. While the first two types of tax levies pay for day-to-day expenditures and improvements, bond issues are used to structurally expand the school district.

Voters passed the district's most recent bond issue in 2001.

Since then, Castle said, the district has added 1,700 students. The 2007 issue accommodate up to 5,200 students, or as Castle calls it, "the last big piece of campus before we grow out."

One funding boost could come from increased commercial development in New Albany Goedeking and Castle said. A boon in development could relieve the tax burden on residents, they said. Castle said the district works closely with local business leaders in order to find ways to foster commercial growth in the area.

"The greatest role the district plays is that we meet often with key partners in the community and work closely with issues like rezoning agreements," Castle said. During the past several months, some large areas zoned for residential use have been rezoned for commercial use.

Castle said that this effort should help slow enrollment and offset the tax imbalance placed on homeowners.

To that end, the district is involved in the Alliance for Adequate School Funding, Castle said. The organization hopes to pass a constitutional amendment to state law during the November 2007 general election that could shift more of the tax burden for school funding away from local property taxes.

New Albany taxpayers currently finance approximately 85 percent of the district's expenditures. Castle said that that is too much for taxpayers to pay.

Although school funding and student housing challenges loom, local residents will soon be able to enjoy a more of the arts.

The area's new performing arts center, due open in 2007, will provide the community with a 750-person auditorium and will also provide space for the school to expand its arts programs.

Academic space will include classrooms, rehearsal rooms, and a dance studio. Castle said the addition of the building will be a benefit to both the school district and the entire community.

In other facilities news, the Jewish Day School, which leases the 1925

building on the district's campus, wants to renew its two-year lease of when it expires in June. Castle said that the board is considering the school's request for an extension.

[E-mail Story](#)

All Information Contained Copyright © Suburban News Publications, 2006

