

In Session with the “Oriole” Superintendent

By, Mark D. Rosekrans, Superintendent of Charlotte Public Schools

Fact vs. Rumors

Over the course of this year, I have had many people share with me “rumors” that are “out there” in the community. In this article I would like to take the opportunity to put a few to rest.

Rumor # 1

The Owens-Brockway settlement - The school district has received its portion of the settlement from the City of Charlotte. The school district’s relationship with the City is strong, professional and cooperative. As a matter of fact, we recently had a meeting with the City manager, their attorney and the school district’s attorney so that we can all be on the same page and have a clear understanding of the entire case. Together it was decided to coordinate a face to face meeting with the State Treasury Department and the Attorney General’s office to seek final direction on how the district can use the settlement revenue. The meeting has yet to take place. As of now, the district has used a portion of the revenue, per the advice of the district’s attorney, to make payment on capital project debt. As previously shared, we want to make sure we do the right thing and have no mistakes with this revenue. Once we get clear documentation from the state departments, the Board of Education and administration will set a course on the use of the remaining revenue. Until then, it is in a separate, designated account.

Rumor # 2

The sinking fund millage election - For the past two plus years, the Board of Education has been assessing options for the continued and ongoing maintenance of school district facilities. This is outstanding leadership with a vision for the future. The district commissioned a complete audit of the district’s facilities to fully understand where we are now and what the maintenance needs will be going forward. The audit not only identifies project considerations but also attaches associated costs. The State of Michigan allows two main election avenues for schools to address large facility infrastructure components: 1. Bond proposals and 2. Sinking funds. Our Board of Education has identified the sinking fund approach as being the right election option to put forth to the community in an effort to maintain our district facilities. The Board and administration realize this comes with a cost for community residents to consider and as such is put to a vote. The projects in the audit are real and the district must have plans in place to address them. Thus, the sinking fund election will be placed in front of the community for a vote on August 4, 2015. More detailed, pertinent information will follow on our website and I will also present the information at community meetings.

Rumor # 3

Our athletic league - Charlotte Public Schools is a member of the I-8 athletic conference. The 2014-2015 school year has been our first year in the conference and it appears it has been successful for our student athletes. The 2015-2016 school year will be the second year. We have heard concerns that the league affiliation disconnects our school district from the Lansing area, to the Lansing media coverage and regarding the travel distance to events, to name a few. The Board and administration are aware of these concerns and as such has been meeting to study all aspects. A survey of the pros and cons of the existing league will be conducted. We will study the process associated *IF* it is considered to reapply to

the Lansing area CAAC conference. The CAAC conference and the schools within it have specific by-laws which govern their league. Our district and all others are subject to their by-laws and processes if application is made to them. As such, our district will assess and evaluate all aspects of league affiliation (present and potential) and act within the timelines and commitments of our present league now and moving forward into the future. This process of evaluation and aligning to established by-laws will more than likely be at minimum, a **two** year process. Thus, any league changes will not happen in the immediate future.

Rumor # 4

Services provided to St. Mary School - Restructuring teams have met this school year to review what we do during the school day and its effectiveness. I have written past releases as to the team's progress, implementation plans and how our Board of Education has been involved. In simplistic terms, the changes to St. Mary School are as follows: 1. At the K-3 level, our district is no longer able to provide staff to support special or encore classes at their school (this is a change and will happen in the 2015-16 school year). 2. Their 4th – 8th grade children may access our Upper Elementary and Middle School building for special or encore classes, this has not changed.

In summary, having factual information on any topic helps control rumors, inaccurate information that needs clarification, and avoids negativity. Over my 20 plus years in Charlotte as an administrator, I sometimes think I have heard it all, but clearly, there is always more to talk about. These are a few of the current items that need clarification. If needed, I will do this again at some point.

Our district is here to serve the students and families of our community. We are an organization that is open and communicates more than ever before. When "rumors" are "out there" please seek accurate information that will represent what actually is happening. Contact myself, your Board of Education President, or other Board members - we are willing answer your questions.

- Go Orioles! Oriole Pride!