



Next step is to present facts, let voters decide

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— The decision to have the entire Buckeye Local Schools District electorate vote on Pierpont Township's request to withdraw from the district did not come as a surprise to either party. Ashtabula County Prosecutor Thomas Sartini provided the Board of Elections with an opinion that the whole district will have a say on the matter.

"That is what we expected," said Nancy Williams, superintendent of Buckeye Local Schools. "That's what the (Ashtabula County Educational Service Center) legal counsel indicated, as well."

"There was no surprise in what they decided," said Duane Marcy, one of the Pierpont residents who has been working on the effort. "That's kind of the way we understood it."

Williams said the district has requested the state's Department of Education do a simulation of the district's finances if Pierpont Township's valuation and students were removed. That information should be available in early March.

Buckeye is also in the process of working with the Pymatuning Valley Board of Education and administration to work out a mutual agreement in the event voters approve the transfer.

Williams said the district will use its April newsletter to communicate the impact to residents.

"We definitely want to put the information out there," she said. "But I don't think the board will take a yes or no position."

Casey O'Brien, legal counsel for the Pierpont group, could not be reached for comment Wednesday. Marcy said he doubted whether the group would fight the Board of Election's decision.

"We're going to have to have a meeting to discuss this," Marcy said. "We need to get a feel for what the community says."

In a prior survey of the Pierpont community, residents showed strong support for withdrawing from Buckeye and joining the Pymatuning Valley Local School District, even though it would mean an increase in the tax rate for property owners. Now, the question is how the rest of the Buckeye School District feels about the transfer.

"I'm not so sure all the voters in the northern part of the district are against it," Marcy said.

The PV Board of Education will have the final say in the matter. If voters approve the transfer May 4, the PV Board has 30 days in which to accept the township. The transfer would become effective July 1.

Pierpont became part of the Buckeye Local District in 1960. High school students from the community went to Kingsville, then Edgewood. The Buckeye School District kept open an elementary school in the community until last year, when it closed the building at the end of the school year.

About a third of the students in the district are already attending Pymatuning Valley and other districts under the open-enrollment provision.

In pitching their proposal last week, Marcy and other Pierpont citizens said the township is geographically closer to Andover than Ashtabula Township and the PV district is a better fit culturally for Pierpont students.

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