

PONTIAC DISTRICT 429

Money still an issue, but not so much of a concern

By **Erich Murphy**

Managing Editor

Quick and easy was the method used by the Pontiac District 429 school board at its meeting Thursday evening. Even the discussion by Adam Dontz lasted just a few moments.

Nonetheless, the board for the Pontiac public grade schools approved a number of items and hired some assistant coaches for the upcoming diamond season for the Warriors' softball and baseball teams.

Supt. Brian Dukes used a good portion of the 24 minutes the meeting lasted with his report covering a number of topics.

Beginning with transportation concerns, Dukes pointed out that there was a decrease in mileage because of the combining of rural routes with Pontiac Township High School District 90 while also reworking the in-town routes.

"We went from 126,000 miles down to 100,000 miles — a pretty good difference," Dukes said. "Unfortunately, we will get less funding for transportation but I think in the long run it was a smart move."

He added that the Transportation Committee will need to meet because the current contract is coming to an end.

Dukes stated he will be attending a national superintendents' conference in Chicago and will be able to learn what other districts across the country are doing.

The superintendent also discussed the upcoming baseball and softball seasons for the Warriors. He pointed out that the teams will be limited to 18 players each. However, in an effort to get more involved, there have been some games set up that will include a junior varsity contest of three innings.

Dukes then discussed the key factor for all public school districts — money.

"The budget passed, that's a good thing," Dukes told the board. "The unfortunate part

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was there's a little thing in there that says the only way we can get money was it would have to be that space model, which there is none that exist."

Adding to his comments, Dukes said that he met with State Sen. Jason Barickman, who was in Pontiac on Tuesday, and was told that negotiations will be taking place in the next few weeks.

"The negative to that is we will miss our first payment in August," Dukes said. "There's some rumors that we may get some categoricals from last year, we're still owed \$800,000 from last year. The hope is that we'll get some of those payments to kind of offset us in August. Then we will be playing the game of chicken with Rauner and Madigan.

"Our doors are open, they will stay open. That's something we need to continue to remind parents."

On a good note, Dukes told the board that federal money will continue to come in, which is about 10 percent of the revenue.

Also, in reporting on STEAM, Dukes said that Diane Wolf of the Regional Office of Education will be sending \$10,000. It will be used toward the STEAM lab, as well as other projects.

"That's \$10,000 I wasn't anticipating, so that's a good problem to have," he said.

And in regard to projects, Dukes pointed out that the parking lot and camera projects are completed, while awning, scoreboard and sign projects should be finished in August.

The board approved four action items, including the Anthony Liftgates tax abatement issue. Adam Dontz of GLCEDC spoke to the board briefly about it.

The board, after a closed session to discuss personnel, approved the hiring of two assistant baseball coaches — Dan Barnett and Tim Ackerman — and two assistant softball coaches — Nicole Ropp and Sara Solberg. A decision on a third baseball was tabled.