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School officials explain proposed sales tax

By [Ethan May](#) on January 13, 2016 at 2:29 pm

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With the state of Illinois' financial issues, local school districts have not only been forced to cut back, but have also had to find new streams of revenue.

One of the first things the three public school districts in Monroe County cut back on were school facility improvements. On March 15, the county will vote on a proposed sales tax increase that would provide funds for necessary improvements to facilities.

If passed, the County School Facilities Sales Tax would raise the sales tax by 1 percent countywide, from 6.5 to 7.5 percent. Vehicles, mobile homes, unprepared food (groceries), drugs, farm equipment/parts/inputs, and services would be exempted from this tax.

Money collected would be thrown into a pool that would then be redistributed to the county's three school districts. Each school would receive a portion of funds equal to the percentage of the county's students educated in that district.

For example, Valmeyer Community Unit School District No. 3 educates 10 percent of the county's students, so it would receive 10 percent of money received from the sales tax.

A past estimate from the Columbia School District speculated that 30 percent of sales tax revenues collected in Monroe County came from customers who don't live in the county.

Thursday night, the superintendents of all three public school districts in the county discussed this proposed tax during a Monroe County Farm Bureau committee meeting.

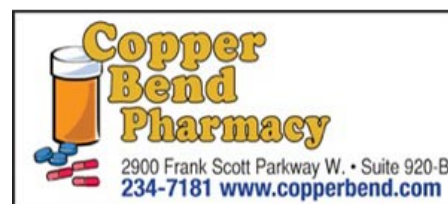
Valmeyer superintendent Eric Frankford spoke first, explaining the origin of the tax. In October 2007, a law came into effect in Illinois giving each county the option to put CSFT to a vote.

The law was modeled after a similar law passed in Iowa. Unlike the law Illinois put in place, Iowa immediately implemented the sales tax in each of the state's counties.

As of April 2015, 33 Illinois counties had passed the sales tax. This tax failed at least one vote in 29 other counties, and 39 counties have not yet voted on the tax. The law specifically excludes Cook County from voting on the tax.

Nearby St. Clair County is voting on the issue in November.

Frankford explained that many counties who saw the tax fail had put the tax on the ballot when the economy was better. That's when property values were higher and, therefore, schools brought in more revenue from property taxes. Counties who have held votes more recently have seen the vote pass more often.



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If the tax passes in Monroe County, its schools would receive the first monthly check in October. This would be timely for Valmeyer, Frankford explained, because the district will undergo a state-mandated inspection this year.

Every 10 years, architects and engineers inspect school district facilities to create a list of any issues that must be fixed.

Once at \$4.9 million, the budget for Valmeyer schools has already been cut by \$1.3 million, with many cuts coming in the maintenance department.

“How many times do you pay to have your washer fixed before purchasing a new one?” Frankford asked.

The superintendent said that’s the position the school districts are in at the moment without money to permanently fix the issues that happen to their facilities.

The facilities of Columbia Unit School District No. 4 will be inspected in 2017, superintendent Gina Segobiano said. Columbia’s school district is paying a higher service rate on its debt due to the drop in property values; furthermore, Segobiano said Columbia pays nearly a dollar on its debts to the average 60 cents.

The superintendent also said she only expects to receive two of the state’s four payments this year — making it all the more difficult to balance a \$20 million budget.

Waterloo superintendent Brian Charron said local schools aren’t suffering from a spending problem. Instead, it’s a revenue problem. Not only is the state providing less money, as Segobiano said, but the schools are also receiving less money from property taxes because of slumping housing prices.

Waterloo is already overspending its building maintenance fund that comes from property tax revenue. Charron said the district still has facility issues to address and the new sales tax would be a way to pay for it without taking on more debt.

Money brought in by the sales tax could be used for anything from a new school building to replacing a water fountain. It can not be used to pay teacher salaries, buy books, or pay utility bills.

Each district in the county already knows of problems they would use these funds for. Frankford said Valmeyer’s facilities need a new HVAC system, roof repairs for the multipurpose room and ag shop, classroom upgrades and new security measures, among other items.

Segobiano said Columbia would use the funds to replace roofs on all buildings, replace HVAC systems at the high school and Parkview, and add more Americans with Disabilities Act provisions, among other items.

Charron said Waterloo would use the funds to replace the HVAC system at Rogers Elementary, replace windows and roofing at the junior high school, and add security measures, among other items.

As the March 15 vote approaches, the superintendents plan on meeting with other organizations who would like more information on the potential tax. Segobiano emphasized her desire to provide as many people as possible with information regarding the tax and the schools’ financial needs.

The districts also plan to hold 60-minute informational meetings in each of their districts.

For more information, citizens can contact their respective school district’s superintendent office or view documents with more details on the tax from each school district below.

- General Illinois County School Facility Occupation Tax information
- Monroe County School Facility Sales Tax informational brochure
- Columbia School District financial information
- Valmeyer School District financial information
- Waterloo School District financial information

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Member Appreciation Night | Monroe Country Farm Bureau

August 9 @ 6:00 pm - 9:00 pm

Waterloo
- THU
10

What Women Want | Great Ladies of Waterloo

August 10 @ 6:30 pm - 8:30 pm

Waterloo
- FRI
11

Night at the Museums | Explore Waterloo

August 11 @ 6:00 pm - 9:00 pm
- FRI
11

‘Super Buddies’ | First Baptist Church of Waterloo

August 11 @ 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm

Waterloo
- SAT
12

Back-to-School Kidfest | First Baptist Church of Dupo

August 12 @ 10:00 am - 2:00 pm

Dupo
- SAT
12

Golf Outing | Waterloo Athletic Boosters

August 12 @ 1:00 pm - 10:00 pm

Waterloo
- SAT
12

Rock ‘n Roll Bingo | Monroe County Relay For Life

August 12 @ 7:00 pm - 10:00 pm

Dupo
- SUN
13

Mathew Roach Grave Marking | Union Hill Cemetery

August 13 @ 2:00 pm - 3:00 pm

Millstadt
- MON
14

AARP Smart Driver Course | Columbia Senior Center

August 14 @ 12:00 pm - August 15 @ 4:00 pm

Columbia
- FRI
18

Fish Fry | St. Mary Catholic Church

August 18 @ 4:00 pm - 8:00 pm

Valmeyer

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