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District 15 petition heads to Cook County

By: Michelle Stoffel/Triblocal.com staff reporter

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The battle over [\\$27 million in Community Consolidated School District 15 bonds](#) took another step forward during a hearing of the district's electoral board April 26.

The board met to respond to [an April 19 challenge](#) filed against a petition that would force the bond issue to the ballot. The board moved to send [the petition](#), filed April 12, to the Cook County Clerk's Office. There, county officials will assemble several teams to check signatures against voter registration records to ensure their validity.

"This is going to be a productive and objective process," said Gerald Chapman, board of education president and electoral board chairman. "Ultimately, [the issue] will be decided by the record check."

Palatine residents Susan MacDonald and Theodore Grabbe, who were not in attendance at the hearing, challenged 1,800 of the 7,500 total signatures, claiming they were obtained from non-residents of the school district or residents that are not registered voters. The two also claimed that some of the signatures appeared to be duplicates.

Ten percent of District 15's residents-or about 6,300 signatures-were required to force the referendum.

According to a statement issued by attorney James P. Nally, MacDonald and Grabbe's "goal in filing this objection is to make sure that the petition was represented in a fair manner to signers, that the signatures on the petition include only registered voters in our school district, and that the petition meets all requirements of the law."

Mary Vanek, the principal proponent behind the petition, appeared at the hearing carrying a duffel bag full of petition pages and their corresponding objections.

"We think they did a less-than-thorough job," Vanek said of the group who checked the petitions.

Vanek said that there are some faulty signatures, but not nearly numbering the 1,800 identified by the challengers. Cook County will only review those highlighted in the challenge.

During the hearing, Vanek's attorney, Richard Means, filed a motion to strike and dismiss the challenge on the grounds that many of the objections are frivolous or invalid. Nally has seven days to respond, and the board and attorneys agreed to proceed with the clerk's office record checks.

Regardless of the outcome of the record checks or the subsequent electoral board meeting, the \$17 million in [capital improvement projects previously outlined by District 15](#) will not go ahead as planned, District 15 Supt. Daniel W. Lukich said.

In a 6-1 vote at its April 14 meeting, the board authorized additional expenditures to cover the costs of some major repairs.

Lukich said that some carpeting and light fixtures-not just light bulbs-will be replaced in schools.

A previously planned curtain wall project at Lake Louise Elementary School, which will be funded by money set aside in the last fiscal year, will go ahead as planned as well.

Lukich said the fate of the bonds lies with Cook County. Should the petition stand, the bond issue will appear on the November ballot in its original form, meaning that residents can vote on whether or not the district should issue \$27 million in bonds, with \$10 million going to working cash and about \$17 million going to capital improvement projects.

However, should the objection stand, the district's board of education will have the opportunity to review and modify the bond issue, he said. The issuance of bonds would then be voted on by the board again.

"There's a lot of different arguing points," Lukich said. "[The board] could compromise."

-by Michelle Stoffel, triblocal.com reporter

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