

# WEST SHORE SUN

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## Bond issue idea still up in the air

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**WESTLAKE** — With an Aug. 20 filing deadline looming, the school board is still undecided about whether to place a bond issue on the November ballot.

School officials have been grappling for more than a year about how best to address the overcrowding that has impacted the district's facilities.

"The district is still waiting to hear

from the Ohio Schools Facility Commission on a \$2 million to \$20 million zero percent loan (bond request)," Superintendent Daniel Keenan told the board on Monday.

Keenan said the district applied for a secondary based project for the high school and middle school.

"We are also aware there are over 30 districts with similar projects. They (the commission) have about a \$100 million pool from which they

grant these bonds," Keenan said, adding that the commission has "close to \$800 million in requests from the districts."

Keenan said how the money will be doled out and what criteria will be used has not been clearly defined.

"As soon as we get a determination, the sooner (we can) decide what kind of savings it will mean to the taxpayer if the board decides to place an issue on the November ballot," he said.

Keenan said Westlake is a high evaluation district, ranking 602 out of 612 districts. Because of that, with the state money that has been distributed for about the past decade for facilities, "We find ourselves waiting in line patiently for what little money we may get," he said.

Keenan acknowledged the commission recognizes the district's needs, even though the district may not be el-

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igible for other state projects.

Both Keenan, and district Treasurer Mark Pepera said the district may still seek a levy request between \$60 million and \$65 million. Keenan said if there's an opportunity to save money, the board can move forward.

"We'll know a lot more on Aug. 3," he said.

That's when the commission will decide which dis-

tricts are getting how much from the state, he added.

Keenan said the most likely scenario would be an issue that would renovate the high school, a partial rebuild that would affect everything except the performing arts center and the TV studios.

Further impacting the district's financial picture is the effect of House Bill 1, the recently enacted state budget bill. Pepera said it will mean less money for the district over the next two years.

"The first year will mean a cut of \$25,000 to \$35,000," Pe-

pera said. "Double that amount in the second year."

He said it may not sound like a lot of money, but "we're talking about potentially a support staff member, or a good portion of a teacher's salary," he added.

Keenan said a November ballot issue hinges on the amount the district receives.

"If it's not a substantial savings, then we'll look to the spring 2010 ballot."

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