

DISTRICT 202 COMMUNITY COLUMN

By Dr. Lane Abrell
Superintendent of Schools
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The holiday season is in full swing and Christmas is just two weeks away.

With that in mind it's important to remember that gifts come in many different packages. In fact, sometimes the packages are so different that it's hard to recognize (and sometimes harder to appreciate) the gift inside.

I offer this metaphor to explain why District 202 has recently supported several commercial developments that may cause some short-term inconvenience for some of our residents, but will also, we believe, bring long-term benefit to our students and families.

As the latest example, the Board of Education in October approved a 10-year agreement with the Village of Plainfield to support the planned Diageo warehouse and distribution center project being built at Steiner Road and 143rd Street.

This development, known as "Project Jupiter," will be built on what is now farmland, which currently generates about \$3,400 a year in property taxes for District 202.

We expect that our share of property taxes from the new facility could increase by as much as \$482,000 a year in the near term thanks to our new agreement.

Equally important, since this is a commercial development it won't add any students or student-related costs. If everything goes the way we expect, our share of property taxes could eventually rise to as much as \$970,000 per year or more.

The Board and district administration understand that there are several major "Ifs" involved in this project. However, even if we get only half of the new money we project, that would be significantly more than what we get now.

And those increased revenues can be used to help improve the already-excellent academic, artistic, athletic and social programming we provide to our students today and for years down the road.

Some residents have expressed valid concerns about how this development (and others) will impact local roads, traffic, and community resources like police and fire services. The Board and district administration acknowledge, understand and, to some degree even agree with those concerns.

Yet, important as those issues are, they fall outside of our prime responsibility – providing the best possible public educational system we can.

To that end we are always aggressively and proactively looking for ways to generate new revenue, reduce and control costs and operate as efficiently as possible, to the benefit of our students, staff, families and schools.

This task is often very challenging. It can require real courage to look beyond the immediate circumstances. That's one of many reasons we are so grateful to the Board of Education for its "gift" of vision and leadership.

We have tremendous goals for District 202. Those goals require money. We promise to thoughtfully consider every opportunity to secure new revenues as we work to be good stewards of our community's resources.

In the end, that's the best gift we can give our taxpayers and students.

Together, we will continue to prepare learners for the future

Dr. Lane Abrell
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Plainfield Community Consolidated School District 202