

News Release

**School Board Approves Hiring 24 Teachers to
Reduce Class Sizes, Reinstate “Specials” Programming for 2008-09;
Board Adopts Resolution in Support of
County School Facility Occupation Tax**

INGLESIDE, IL – March 19, 2008 – Big Hollow School District’s class sizes will be significantly lower and the art, music and computer programs will be restored effective with the 2008-09 school year under a hiring and facility-usage plan authorized by the School Board on Monday, March 17.

At its regular monthly meeting, the School Board approved the hiring of at least 24 teachers for the 2008-09 school year in order to achieve the dual goals of reducing class sizes and reinstating art, music and computer classes for all grade levels.

The Board’s action fulfills its promise to invest proceeds from a successful referendum in restoring and improving the Big Hollow educational experience. On February 5, voters in the Big Hollow School District supported the District’s request to issue a \$10-million working cash bond. Referendum passage marked the first time since 1984 that District voters approved an increase in operating funds. At its February meeting, the Board announced that the cost of the bond to taxpayers will be 49 cents per \$100 EAV for five years, less than the 54 cents per \$100 EAV originally projected.

Also during its March 17th meeting, the Board reviewed a facility-usage plan for the 2008-09 school year. Because smaller class sizes mean more sections at each grade level, hence the need for more classrooms, the grade levels housed within each building on the Fish Lake Campus require some adjustment. Second grade will move from the Primary School to the adjoining Elementary School, while fifth grade will move from the Elementary School to its own wing at the Middle School, which is also part of the Fish Lake Campus. Fifth-graders will NOT move to a Middle School curriculum, however, and the Board urged continuing parental feedback and involvement to facilitate the transition these students will make.

The Board then presented results of the community survey that prioritized additional operational expenditures beyond class-size reduction and restoration of “specials.” The top five priorities identified were textbook/materials updates, employing teacher’s aides, enrichment/gifted program, employing a nurse, and transportation changes. With potential cost assigned to some items and determination of potential cost for others underway, the Board deferred further discussion of the “wish list” to its April 21 meeting. At that meeting, the independent public finance firm PMA will return to Big Hollow to present updated financial projections.

Also of note, the School Board adopted a resolution in support of the proposed County School Facility Occupation Tax. A new law, which allows a county to raise this tax for schools, was passed by the state legislature late last year. Under the proposal, Lake County’s sales tax would increase by 1%, with all of the proceeds going to Lake County K-12 education facilities. At Big Hollow’s current enrollment of approximately 1,500, the District would gain about \$825,000 per year under this initiative. These funds could not be used for operations but could be used as a tax abatement to District residents, offsetting a portion of the existing construction bonds issued for the new Fish Lake campus. Alternatively, funds raised under this initiative could be saved and invested by the District for facility upgrades or expansion, reducing or even eliminating the need to pursue construction referenda in the future. For this proposal to reach the voters of Lake County on the November 2008 election ballot, school districts representing 51% of Lake County students must adopt a resolution supporting the referendum question.

The Big Hollow School Board meets on Monday, April 7 for a Special Board meeting to continue the process of revising the District Policy Manual. The next Regular Board meeting, which will include the PMA presentation, is at 7:00 p.m. on Monday, April 21 in the Middle School’s multipurpose room. As always, the community is invited to attend and provide feedback.