

Talking Consolidation: Part 2 - East Alton School District Superintendent Virgil Moore

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EAST ALTON - East Alton Superintendent Virgil Moore's interest in the upcoming consolidation measure is limited to its effects on the school's students, staff and the community at large.

Moore is set to retire at the end of this school year, meaning he would have no part in the proposed unit district if the measure is chosen by the voters of the **East Alton Wood River High School District**. If consolidation is chosen, the **Wood River/Hartford, East Alton Wood River High School** and Moore's **East Alton School Districts** would be consolidated into one new unit district. Moore said he has nothing against this measure, but added he was concerned at the lack of cooperation.

"I would like this to be carefully studied and looked at as an effort between the school districts," Moore said.

He said this effort has not been chosen by the districts. Instead, it was chosen by a **Committee of 10** who collected petitions from registered voters within the three districts. Once those petitions were collected, a public hearing was held. Testimony from that hearing was sent by **Madison County Regional Superintendent Robert Daiber** to the **Illinois State Board of Education**. The state board approved the measure, which placed it on the upcoming November ballot.

Two members of the Committee of 10 were known by Moore to be within his district.

"I do believe two of them were in our district, but we were never contacted by the Committee of 10," he said.



The measure for consolidation was most recently voted down in an April 2015 ballot. According to the state's election laws, the measure could not have been brought back for a vote for another two years, unless something had drastically changed or circumstances would have changed to make consolidation a necessary and viable alternative. That drastic change allowing the measure to be fast-tracked was the placement of the East Alton School District onto the **Illinois Financial Watch List**.

"To me, that's a little bit misleading," Moore said. "We're one of the few districts working on a balanced budget."

Bills for expenses from one financial year were not sent until the following year, which Moore said made the district's financial reports appear as if they spent much more than they generated. Those bills were for necessary school repairs, such as a new roof on the middle school, a repaved parking lot and various energy upgrades. Expenses are also Moore's biggest concern for a hypothetical new district.

"The thing that concerns me, when I look at it from a surface level, is the amount of money it would cost to do the conversion and the reduction in revenues the proposed tax rates would bring," he said. "There's a huge deficit there. I want to know what a source of revenue would be in the next few years."

Those tax rates will be the concern of an entirely-new school board if voters choose consolidation this November. All three existing school boards will dissolve and become one unified board. That board would be seated through April 2017 elections. The new district would have to be operational by July 1, 2017. Moore said he was concerned at how little time a new board would have for the new school district.

"Seems to me it would be a really quick turnaround," Moore said. "I know how difficult it is in a normal year to make sure everything goes well for a new school year."

Whatever the public decides in November, Moore said it is not the concern of East Alton School District #13. Consolidation would create an entirely new school district with one superintendent. Moore said he would not be in consideration for that position, because he is planning to retire at the end of this school year.

Despite it not being a primary concern of Moore's currently, he said consolidation is an issue about which voters must keep informed.

"Whatever the details are, get it together, put it together and let the people decide," Moore said. "It's our responsibility to administer whatever the citizens desire."

Regardless of what the public chooses, Moore said his primary concern is ensuring his staff and students continue the positive start of this school year.

"Honestly, we try to go about the business of educating children, whatever is handed to us is handed to us," he said.