



Madison County school districts praise treasurer for accelerated payments

September 18 2018 10:46 AM

EDWARDSVILLE — Local school districts are praising a new tax distribution schedule implemented by Madison County Treasurer Chris Slusser that accelerates real estate tax distributions.

“I came up with the idea after meeting with Dr. Jill Griffin, the Bethalto Schools Superintendent, in August 2017,” Slusser said. “The distribution schedule now delivers funds sooner than expected. With the state withholding funds during the budget crisis, Bethalto schools were not going to be able to make payroll and unable to open their doors to start the school year.”

Slusser said the decision was made to deliver extra distributions to get the property tax funds to the taxing districts sooner than anticipated, which allowed them to make their payroll obligations.

Illinois state law requires the county treasurer to distribute real estate tax funds to the local taxing districts at least once every 30 days while taxes are collected. Traditionally, distributions in the Madison County Treasurer’s Office were made once every 30 days, as the law required.

However, under the new distribution schedule, additional payments will be made to taxing districts twice per month, allowing the funds to hit the districts’ accounts just prior to payroll dates.

“When we put our distribution schedule together for year, I reached out to some of the school superintendents and asked for feedback,” Slusser said. “I wanted to be helpful and accommodating to meet their needs.”

Griffin said Slusser made a concerted effort to reach out to school districts to ensure the local tax dollars were distributed when they were needed most.

“(Slusser) made school districts a priority and worked to determine how he can best serve us,” Griffin said. “Last school year, when state revenue stopped flowing, Chris and his team met with our district business manager and myself to determine how he could help.

“He changed the distribution schedule to allow our funds to arrive sooner and improve our cash flow.”

Griffin said Slusser also contacted her to ask about a distribution schedule that would best serve the districts needs.

“He was willing to make modifications to the existing schedule and again, working alongside school districts to ensure local dollars were flowing,” she said.

Alton Community School District Superintendent Mark Cappel echoed Griffin’s comments.

“Alton school district appreciates the accelerated tax revenue payments received from the Treasurer’s office,” Cappel said. “As an entity dependent on local tax revenue, the school district is grateful to receive funds earlier than anticipated. The receipt of the local revenues assists the district in planning and meeting its financial obligations.”

Granite City Community School District Superintendent Jim Greenwald agreed.

“The additional distributions are working well for us and our district,” Greenwald said. “We have been frugal through the hard times and what the treasurer is doing to help the schools is much appreciated.”

Collinsville Community School District Superintendent Dr. Robert Green said the additional payments improve cash flow, which benefits everyone from teachers to students. “After going years with no new revenue, and with uncertainties in state funding, these additional payments have been tremendously helpful”, Green said.

Slusser said the additional payments do not mean districts are receiving additional revenue or any advances on future tax revenues.

“It simply means they will get their funds sooner rather than later,” Slusser said. “We can only distribute what we’ve collected at the time, so we’re somewhat limited in what we can do in treasurer’s office.”

Slusser said while the law requires a distribution every 30 days; there is nothing that says it cannot be done more than once every 30 days.

“We can’t control what the state will do, but we can control what my office is doing,” Slusser said. “We thought it was the least we could do to help our local schools, who are often at the mercy of poor public policy at the state level.”

While every taxing district in the county will receive funds on the accelerated schedule, the greatest benefactors are the school districts.

“Some politicians reach out to school districts for the photo op,” Dr. Barrett Deist, Bethato’s assistant superintendent of finance and operations, said. “Chris Slusser reached out to our district to truly see how he could support us and continues to reach out and serve schools across Madison County.”