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Marble School Expanding North, and Red Cedar Programming Being Explored ^[1]

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By:

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Above: ELPS Superintendent Dori Leyko (right) reports as School Board Chair Erin Graham looks on. Photo by Raymond Holt.

In its first meeting of the school year, the East Lansing Board of Education voted last night to purchase two lots to expand the land of Marble Elementary School to the north. The Board also discussed a survey about what will happen with Red Cedar Elementary School after it is no longer needed as a "swing" school during construction of the new elementary schools.

The land of Marble Elementary School is expected to be expanded through the purchase of 825 and 831 Hagadorn Road, properties on which small houses now sit. (The houses would be

demolished if the sale goes through.)

Superintendent Dori Leyko said the purchase these two lots would allow for separated bus and car-drop-off loops when the new school is constructed in 2020.

The additional 98 feet of Hagadorn Road frontage would also allow for the alignment of the borders of Marble with the western exit drive of MacDonald Middle School, raising the possibility of putting in a traffic signal to assist pedestrians.

“This will allow for a future signal that will help with pedestrian crossing straight from the middle school to the west side of Hagadorn, or vice versa,” Leyko said.

The properties will cost the district \$210,000. The money will come out of the District’s sinking fund, Leyko said. The District plans to close on the properties no later than Oct. 31.

The vote in favor of the purchase plan was unanimous.

Leyko also reported last night that a new survey on the Red Cedar Elementary School ^[2] programming went out to the public last week and had received 535 responses by noon on Friday.

The survey was produced by the Red Cedar Programming Committee, which has been meeting since the spring, Leyko said. The survey puts forth six different options for future programming at Red Cedar.

Leyko explained to the Board that she insisted that all of the suggested options in the survey conform with the promises the District made when the bond proposal passed in 2017: Red Cedar will be open as the District’s sixth elementary school, housing early (pre-K) childhood education and up to 7 elementary classrooms.

“Nothing has been decided and none of the suggestions were pre-identified,” she said. “We have an obligation to the community to make sure we stick to what we said we are going to do. There is nothing wider or larger in scope.”

Leyko noted the survey does allow for suggestions other than those put forth by the committee. The question of what to do with Red Cedar School has long been a source of tension in the community, and in a recent *Public Response* post ^[3], MSU schools economist and Glencairn resident Mike Conlin raised ongoing concerns about the economics of the plans that have been floated.

The survey (accessible through this link ^[2]) will remain open until Sept. 22. Those who would like help translating the survey to another language or accessing a computer to fill out their survey should contact their area’s school principal or the Superintendent’s office ^[4].

Leyko hopes to have a programming proposal for Red Cedar Elementary to bring to the board in November.

In other news from the meeting, the District is adding an additional bus run to address concerns of overcrowding. Leyko did not specify which school would receive the additional bus.

The Board also approved a resolution calling on the Michigan legislature to "adequately fund Michigan schools" in accordance with the School Finance Research Collaborative to "reflect the true cost of providing an education that meets the individual needs of each child with a weighted formula for students in poverty, special education and English language learners."

Student advocates have been hired for both East Lansing High School and MacDonald Middle School, Leyko advised the Board. The high school advocate is Jerry Jones, former security guard, who is already in place. Meanwhile, the middle school advocate, Devyn Salmon, was hired for that job on Friday but must wait until Salmon's current position is filled at Donley Elementary School before Salmon moves over to the middle school.

And new afterschool programs will be held at both the high school and middle schools this year, offering students additional homework help and a safe place to wait for practices that might not start right after school. Snacks will be provided.

Alice Dreger contributed reporting on the Public Response post about the Red Cedar survey.

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[1] <https://eastlansinginfo.org/content/marble-school-expanding-north-and-red-cedar-programming-being-explored>

[2] <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/3XFP8PR>

[3] <https://publicresponse.com/2019/09/06/red-cedar-elementary-school-programming/>

[4] <https://elps.us/our-district/departments/>

[5] <https://eastlansinginfo.org/boe>

[6] <https://eastlansinginfo.org/elschools>

[7] <https://eastlansinginfo.org/finance>