MARCH 2023

The Malad Valley SCRUTINEER™ & IRREG'LAR TIMES

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MILLIONS WASTED-REFERENDUM

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23-Second Summary of Content

- **Old Malad High School & Gymnasium buildings *laid to waste.***
- **Millions on hand to *upgrade* elementary school & auditorium.**
- ***No need* for new school, *or* new bond.**
- **Vote *"AGAINST"* issuing bonds.**
- ***Please vote.***

A R T I C L E S

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69 How to Spell "MAGIC"

Do *you* believe?

Do you believe in *perpetual motion?*

Or is it chicanery? Flim-flam?

The text of the school Bond Election is most curious.

The **incredible numbers,** and the "final installment" due in $3\frac{1}{2}$ years, establish that the district is expecting to reap **enormous income** over that span... not unlike the huge pile they are already holding. I'm sure the **song-and-dance** leading up to this vote has explained away *why* the district is being paid so well to operate the online learning program... but I missed it. And if they expect to reap similar *even increasing* rewards over the next few years... **what will they do** with this government-sponsored cash machine *after* that?

It is peculiar that some justification for "estimates" depends on the **state bond levy equalization...** which is a government scheme to siphon tax payer funds from wealthy counties to the poor, financially disabled, counties. With tens of millions of dollars *already* stockpiled for this boondoggle, how is **Oneida County** possibly... *poor?*

With all this cash sloshing around, if the district just waits a few years, it will apparently have all the money (and, more!) it needs *without* any pesky approval by the voters for a **new bond debt.**

It *appears* the primary purpose of this bond is to take advantage of the state bond levy equalization... to get *more* taxpayer funds from outside this county, so they have *more* to spend, without oversight.

The clever tax-impact section leads a sufficiently gullible voter to believe the "actual tax impact" ... "will be $0.00"

Why shouldn't it be *negative?* Why shouldn't the property tax payers in the county *also* reap the benefits of the district's cash machine? The taxpayers have long funded the school district, being a larger drain on the property tax base than any other funded government entity, like the city or the county. Shouldn't the district **share the wealth?** *(Instead of destroying venerable buildings!?)*

The local property owners can bask in the sun of a rejuvenated county... all with outside money... like we suddenly had oil revenues (instead of desert farms), or... a *casino!* We could mint or own Oneida Coin. What a realm! *Pave the streets with **gold!***

We let the **Chinese balloon** float high into our country, but this *lead* balloon has the potential to drag us into the abyss... once the **state auditors** look into the **excessively generous income** from the apparently too-successful online service.

Take the money and run! If the sleight of district hands *works*, and funds are available per *online* student just like a brick-and-mortar *classroom* student... obviously **the state is paying too much,** hence the surplus... *who cares?*

I do. It's faith of the worst kind. Other people's money. Greed. *"What's in it for **me?**"*

I pointed out this incredible mechanism, unlikely to be sustained, a few years ago, chatting with the prior superintendent. (It's in an old issue of *The Scrutineer.)* I don't think even *he* imagined that by now there would be such a huge windfall. **A good time to retire!**

I am sure I am just not financially *sophisticated* enough to appreciate this **money-for-nothing** scheme.

W E L C O M E

to the **fifth issue** of *The Malad Valley Scrutineer & Irreg'lar Times.* Presented are **alternative facts** and views on topics of interest to **voters, residents** and **property owners** of Oneida County.

70 Malad Millions Wasted

The decision to demolish the old **Malad High School and Gymnasium** buildings is insulting to the ancestral tax payers that funded them. There was nothing *wrong* with the structures, except in the wasteful **American Way** they were... *old.* The improbable dream of a new elementary school has to land *some*where!

A better and *more efficient* site for a new building is near the *other* school properties. (Land was already purchased a few years ago from a former school board member. ***Such a deal!)***

Buildings in **Ukraine** are **destroyed from above** for uncertain reasons; buildings in **Turkey** are **destroyed from below** by shrugs of the planet; buildings in **Malad...** the school district ***paid* to destroy them.**

71 Referendum Solution

Like the repeating background of a **cheap cartoon,** it's been deemed time to stir up support for a new elementary school. New superintendent, specially chosen because he has managed to get a new school bond passed in some other state. But the **same claim,** how *other* people's tax money will reduce the cost of the bond by paying interest on the loan. **(It's still tax money, and still a waste.)** *(State-sponsored lender's scam!)*

Rumor has it the **school district has accumulated millions of dollars,** a combination of pandemic relief funds, and the home learning income. But, they need *millions more* to build the school...

Has the school district improved the ventilation for better virus suppression? I don't know. **But a huge surplus of pandemic funds is suspicious.**

Is the state getting a good value for online education of students all over the state? It's not *like* a government entity to willfully overpay for services. Why *has* the school district been overpaid, and not used the funds as intended? The school district is *not supposed* to be a for-profit operation! **I do not expect the government largess was *intended* to build a new school.**

I was resigned to letting the school board have their way when I heard of the huge surplus. I thought the *only* constraint was the school bond issue, which requires a super majority for approval. If they had *many* millions of dollars, they *would not* require a bond, and *no one* besides the school board would have a say. So I thought.

Instead, they have decided they need *twice* as many millions as three or so years ago. Yeah, inflation is inconvenient.

But *now,* with all those millions in hand, we can make **real progress** with the *existing* elementary school building: add an elevator, and remodel/renovate/upgrade however you might want to label it. **They *could* pay teachers more.** The possibilities... *without* a bond for *millions more* to build a new building! (And the endemic **badthink** of the board that will lead to the destruction of the old elementary school building, once they can deem it unneeded for school district purposes...)

The **tragic loss** of the gymnasium, which had great utility with no alternatives, *and* the old high school building, which had latent potential, is quite a **blight on the school board.** I would concede that paying for the removal of hazardous materials was a condition precedent for development, but even *that* might have been made the responsibility of a private developer. Since the **former superintendent** made it a priority, it was bid and it was *handled.* **Demolition,** on the other hand, seemed rushed to make a site for the improbable new elementary building, shoehorned into the old school block rather than more properly situated near the other schools. The bond may not pass, *in spite* of the school board's yearnings; and the impractical designs on that property, now uselessly vacant, **no longer a community resource,** is the **negative legacy of the board.**

It's not like remodeling a chicken coop into a palace—the old high school building is (was!) built *much better* than many other buildings in town. Institutional class instead of commercial, and not like the **Evans Co-op Building** being gleefully turned into a new city hall. (Yeah, I know, they are rewriting history to ignore the contributions of the Evans family owning and operating it for longer than anyone alive can remember...) (The governor's monument on the corner may not survive the next **"downtown beautification"** cycle!)

The bond vote is unusual because a super-majority of the votes cast must be in favor to pass... so **each "Nay" vote cancels *two* "Aye" votes.** This very peculiar time o'year scheduled for the vote is chosen to favor passing the bond, since the typical turnout for these measures is *much* smaller than *real* elections in November. The boosters for the bond of course *will* turn out, and **they are counting on apathy** from the others. However, it is in *every*one's interest for the final tally to reflect *all* the residents of the county... and *if* a super-majority want to buy in to the new school bond, *so be it.* ***All* the people have chosen!** But if you are registered and *don't* bother to vote, or even if you have not taken the time to register, you are **missing an important opportunity** to control *your* future.

Most of the boosters probably lack the capacity to read this far, so if you are still curious, please VOTE! If you are not registered, it's easy, and can be done the day you vote. You can even make a short trip to the courthouse for an early vote (and, registration if necessary) from now through the Friday before the final chance on Tuesday ***way... down... at the fairgrounds.***

Please vote even if you want the bond to pass, there *is* room for all points of view in a **fair vote with high turnout.**

A ***referendum*** is the process by which ordinary voters can **modify the powers** of elected officials. It would be possible to have a local, county-wide, referendum to decide whether the school board (of elected positions) **should not have the power to demolish surplus property,** or build new facilities (without regard to where the money comes from), **without the consent of the voters.**

The **county clerk,** the **sheriff,** the **tax collector** and some others have **real jobs** they are elected to do (and are hopefully *qualified* to do!). The **county commissioners,** the **city council,** and the **school board trustees** are primarily administrative, part-time, advisory roles. The school board members are not even paid, even if they win their seats in periodic popularity contests. (Do you remember high school elections for class president!?) ***(Unless** the excessive millions in the district's coffers are leaking out somehow...)* They are justly empowered to hire and fire teachers, revise the student handbook, approve winning coaches, and all the other routine school issues that crop up throughout the year.

But occasionally **exceptional situations** come up that will affect the county *for years.* The decisions to **build new buildings** and **destroy others** seems *too important* to leave to volunteers. They are not elected based on their views or platform on such extraordinary issues as bonding for new buildings, or destroying other resources, **paid for by the community.** The school district seems unable to fathom community needs outside the very narrow focus of the school district. These are *community* resources, which should be decided by the *community.* Seems easy enough.

Instead, the pivotal power of the school board, concentrated in the single persona of the chairperson, has unnatural influence over these matters.

Replacement cost of gymnasium and old high school buildings... Headstart too!

How many millions have been squandered?

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I was unable to get a **Letter to the Editor** published in the local weekly last summer, about the old high school and gymnasium (before they were demolished). At least I *presume* it did not appear... I don't read it anymore *(who does?!)*, the parts of interest are few and far between... doubling the subscription was the final insult. I was *not even* able to place an ad with the prior publisher before the Supplemental Levy a few years ago, she refused. **The local weekly *is not* a viable place for local discourse.**

Thanks to all the financial supporters of past *Scrutineer* issues, both real and intended. This issue is quick and short and I have managed to pay for it without donations. Seems important enough to get alternative views out!

All issues of *The Scrutineer* are available online `https://scrutineer.scruta.com/issues` and additional content may also appear. (Like the back page of this issue!)

Observations/complaints may be emailed to `scrutineer@scruta.com`. Feedback is welcome, negative and/or positive.

EARLY VOTE at COURTHOUSE begins MONDAY 27th FEBRUARY 9a-5p — A VOTE *"AGAINST"* IS WORTH TWO *"IN FAVOR"*