

A number of years ago I was on a commercial airline flight preparing to land in Milwaukee. Almost on the ground, the plane suddenly accelerated and I felt the engines at full force as they were attempting to quickly counteract the momentum of descent. Seasoned flyers, like myself, knew something was wrong while others seemed unconcerned. The engines finally overcame the momentum of descent and we began to climb as the runway was left behind. About ten minutes later, the pilot finally made an announcement that started out with, "Folks, sorry for the delay, but as you can imagine, we've been a little busy up here. We have missed approach to the runway and will have to circle back in order to land safely."

I must confess, I'm sorry for the delay in my monthly article but we've been a little busy up here. As you may have heard, the Logan County Assessor lowered the property tax assessment ratio for the county from 12% to 11%. If you are a property owner in Logan County, this may sound like good news. Since the announcement on December 31st, the district staff has been working hard to fully understand the impact this action will have on our school district. According to state law, any tax proceeds assessed above 11% in any county stay with the school districts in that county and are not subject to the equalization of funds by the school funding formula. Consequently, the action of the Assessor removes funds directly from the school district budget without any option of state assistance. A team of experts in school finance have estimated those losses in both building and general fund revenue to be in excess of \$400,000 for GPS. Our Assessor spoke of estimated losses in revenue to the school district ranging between \$100,000 and \$300,000. In a meeting recently with school officials from across the county and our assessor, the estimate was listed at \$340,000. It has never been made clear how the estimates from the county were derived. Regardless, the effects of this cut will be felt in the 2014-15 school year.

It is no secret over the last year the school district has been working on a long range facility plan which the entire community could support. All options considered have been with the belief that there would be a bonding capacity of \$13 million. The actions of the Assessor lower the capacity to issue bonds to \$11.8 million. The difference of \$1.2 million takes our capacity below the architects estimated cost of an elementary school building. When developing a long range plan, you make several assumptions including the cost of inflation for construction in the event that all parts of the plan are not affordable in the beginning. That current figure is 8.5% annually. As we all know, most of what we would like to do today will cost more tomorrow. This means less will have to be proposed and inflation could greatly limit what can be done in future projects. When asked, the Assessor said bonding capacity was not a consideration in any decisions made by her office regarding the county assessment ratio.

The great people who have served on the Long Range Planning Committee for the school district have given much of their time and effort to help the children of Guthrie. My hope is that like the flying experience I described above, the patrons of the Guthrie Public School district are seasoned flyers that know what is going on, not the others who were unconcerned. While we may have missed approach, we will circle and land safely.