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Auditor Delivers $4.7 Million Check to Lakota School District

Lakota now current in TIF funding

HAMILTON, Ohio – There's little to cheer about these days in most school finance departments, but Lakota Schools' assistant treasurer John Wilkinson had plenty to smile about recently when Butler County Auditor Roger Reynolds presented Lakota with a check for $4.7 million.

The check was for property tax revenue collected from new businesses located in special tax increment financing districts, also known as TIFs. The TIF districts were created to self-fund the cost of capital infrastructure to attract new business development. The schools benefit by receiving a negotiated portion of tax revenue from the TIF districts.

The four TIFs in the Lakota Local School District were created in the late 1990's to mid 2000's by Tim Williams, former Butler County finance director, and Alan Hutchinson, former Lakota treasurer. With the departure of the two men who were responsible for performing the complicated TIF calculations, the tax revenue sat undistributed with the County Commissioners.

Late last year, the Auditor's Office Finance Department determined that undistributed money was available to the Lakota Local School District. After making inquiries, Auditor Reynolds' staff convened a meeting with several parties in March, including the County Treasurer, the Bond Council, and the Commissioners Office finance staff.

From there, the Auditor's Office agreed to take the lead in researching the terms and conditions of each TIF district and calculate the actual amount that Lakota was owed in TIF payments.

"Even though this goes beyond the usual role of our office, I am glad that our staff was able to provide their expertise to resolve the payment delays, and very happy that Lakota is now able to apply $4.7 million to their budget shortfall," Reynolds said.