

## SCHOOL BOARD APPROVES ADVERTISING PACT



Several billboards will start to appear on several properties that belong to the Portage Public Schools. Over the span of the next two decades, the school district could end up earning millions of dollars in revenue as well as free advertising. The school board has recently made an agreement with the Adams Outdoor Advertising in which two separate billboards are going to be built alongside of I-94, right by the Portage Northern High School and the Angling Road Elementary School. There will also be a billboard placed by the 12<sup>th</sup> Street Elementary School. Each of the billboards has already been approved by the Portage school board. There have been three separate variations of the contract but the final terms were set on Monday, stating that the district would receive around \$84,000 per year worth of rent payments and every five years, the district will receive an inflation increase. This means that over the next twenty years, the school district could end up earning a total of \$1.95 million from revenue alone. Aside from earning from revenue, the district will be able to earn around \$40,000 per year on the billboard advertisements. The school district has created an estimate and believes that the pact with the Adams Outdoor Advertising Agency will help the school district to earn a total of \$2.75 million over the next twenty years. The Superintendent for the school district, Ric Perry, has said, "We've gotten a straight, forward answer to every question we have asked." Perry also said, "There's not been one instance we disagreed. I am pretty confident about the relationship we have with Adams Outdoor Advertising." The original proposal for the advertising called for one billboard to be placed on Shaver Road, right at the Central Elementary School. However, that original proposal was rejected. The contract was altered several times, affecting the amount of revenue that the school district would be able to earn. A candidate for the Portage School Board, Chelsea Herriman, has said that a number of parents have been asking her questions on the blog she owns. She says they were curious about what was going on after they saw the story about the billboards in the Kalamazoo Gazette. Herriman says that the parents are primarily concerned about what kinds of advertisements are going to be featured on the billboards that their children will see. Of course, they do not want any type of inappropriate advertisements to be featured. Herriman says, "The district benefits from the money...but does the school board or administration have any say on what is on that billboard? Will the board or district have the control to have an ad removed if it is objectionable?"