

BREMEN TOWNSHIP

TRUSTEES OF SCHOOLS

ANNUAL INVESTMENT REPORT

FISCAL YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2015

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J. Kay Giles, Vice President
Joanne Keilman, Secretary

Gregory Jackson, Trustee
Nancy Hullinger, Trustee
Tina M. Moslander, Trustee
Kathy Novak, Trustee

Joseph J. McDonnell, Treasurer

"An investment in education always pays the best interest"

- Benjamin Franklin

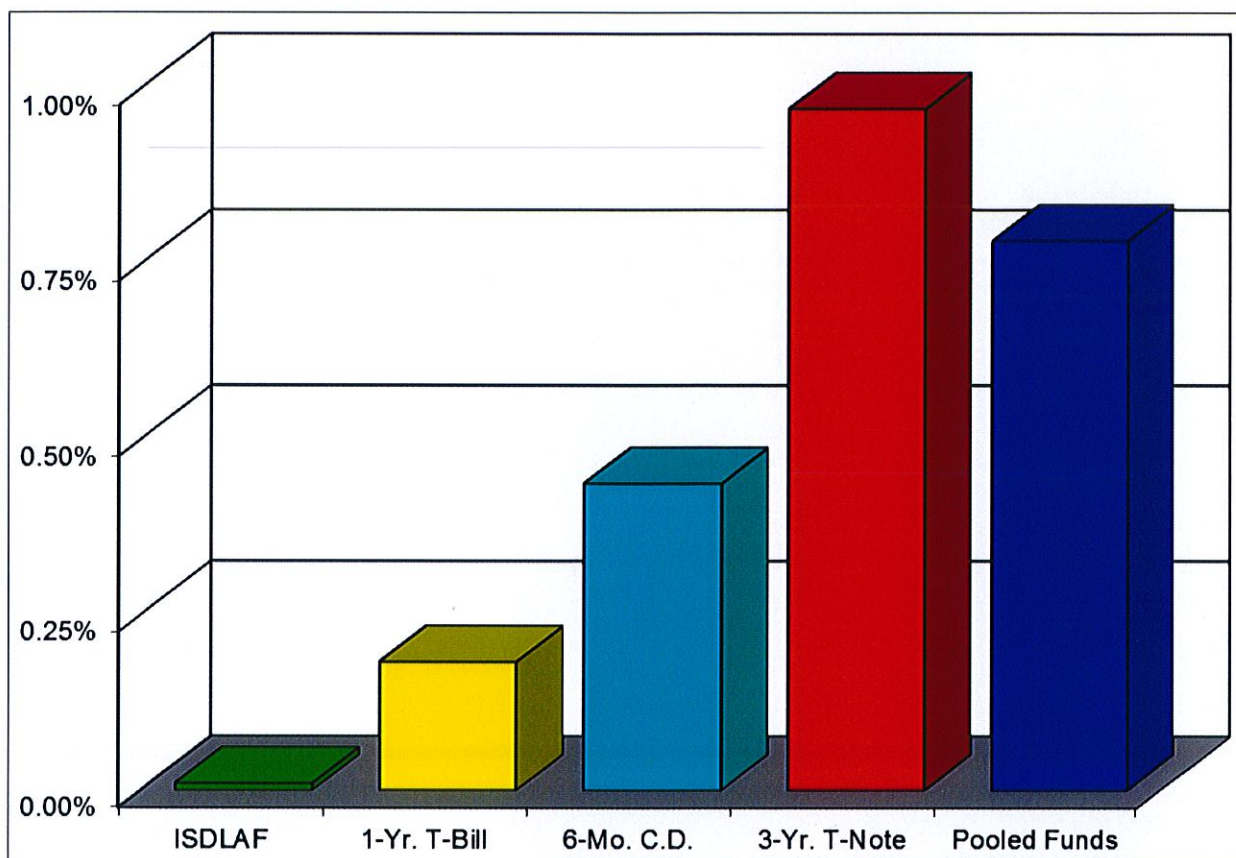
INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to provide information to the administration and board members of the school districts that are serviced by the Bremen Township Trustees of Schools related to their funds for which we serve as custodian. All school districts that receive this report have their general funds invested in a pooled portfolio that consists of the funds of all the districts serviced by this office. Each district owns a portion of the pool based on their level of cash as a percentage of the entire cash being managed in the pool. There are many benefits to this investment structure, such as greater diversification, better liquidity and higher interest rates. Interest from the pooled funds is distributed to the districts based on their percentage of the fund.

The following report is divided into four sections. The first section will summarize the pooled fund's performance for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2015. The second section will provide a historical review of interest rate trends. The third section will analyze current market conditions and discuss the current portfolio as it relates to these conditions. The final section describes the general investment policy of the Bremen Township Treasurer's Office.

SUMMARY OF FISCAL YEAR 2015 INVESTMENT ACTIVITY

For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2015, I am pleased to report that the investment pool managed by the Bremen Township Treasurer's Office generated \$643,472 in interest earnings to the school districts serviced by this office. With an average investment portfolio of \$138,786,551 the cash basis rate of return for all the school districts was 0.46%. The yield on short-term investments continued to be at historical low levels, ranging from 0.01% to 0.10% during the fiscal year. Overall, the average yield on pooled funds managed by this office for the fiscal year was 0.78% and the average yield on funds that were held for liquidity purposes were 0.10%. The current yield on the portfolio as of June 30, 2015 is 0.87%, which represents the annualized current rate of return on June 30th. The rate of return produced by the pooled funds compared favorably with that of other investments available in the market as shown in the following chart:

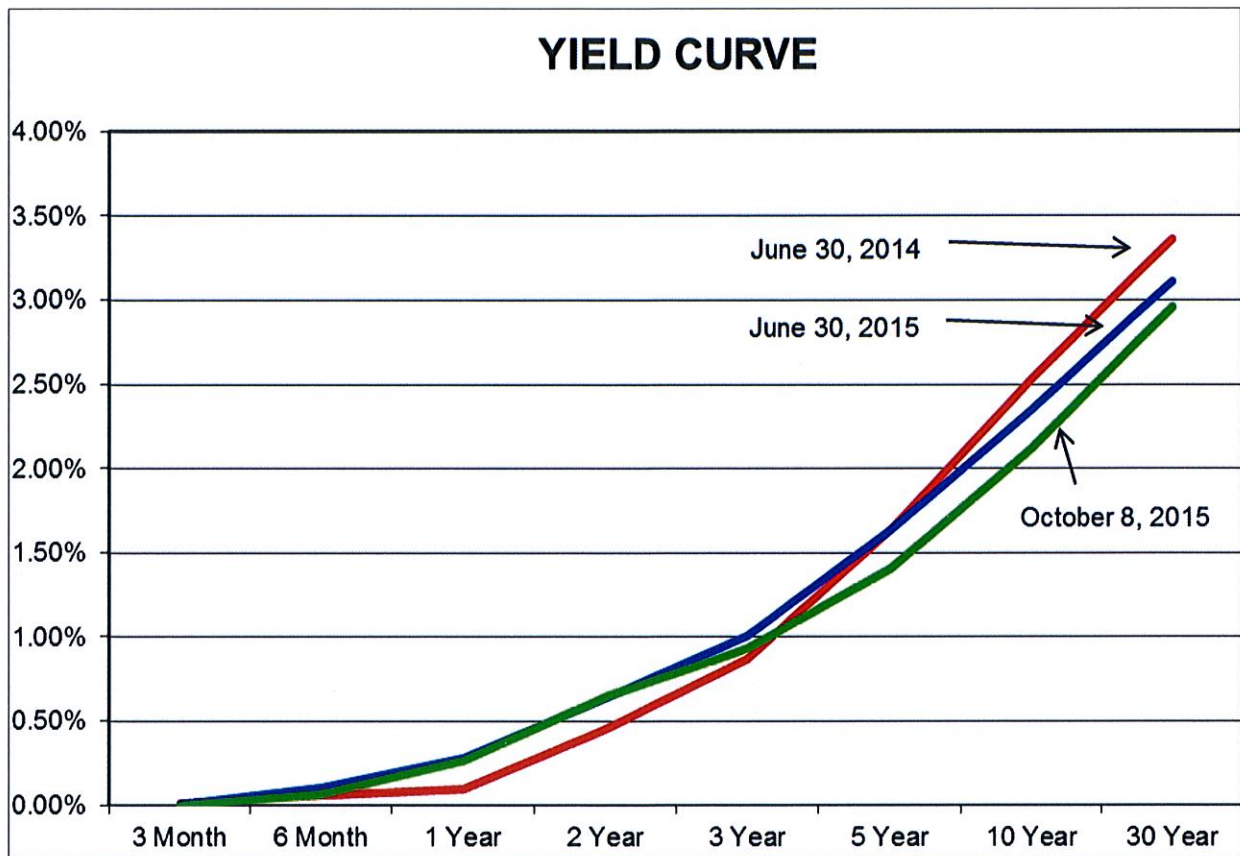


The average yield from the Illinois School District Liquid Asset Fund (ISDLAF) for the same time period was 0.01%, the one year Treasury Bill was 0.18%, the six month Certificate of Deposit averaged 0.44%, and the three year Treasury Note averaged 0.97%.

INTEREST RATE MOVEMENT AND ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

Volatility in interest rates throughout 2015 has been rooted in a phantom rate hike from the Federal Reserve, which throughout the year has been giving indications that they were on the verge of raising rates for the first time since 2006. The rapidly changing belief, back and forth, on whether, when and at what magnitude this rate increase would occur, has caused ripple effects throughout global financial markets. Examples of this volatility on interest rates can be seen with the movement in five-year Treasury Notes. Growing skepticism on the belief that the Fed would take action to raise rates at the end of 2014 or early 2015, resulted in the yield on the five-year Treasury decreasing from 1.66% in July 2014 to 1.18% in January 2015. As expectations then changed towards a likely rate hike, the five-year Treasury yield rose to 1.80% in June 2015. Since that time, consensus of a near term rate hike diminished and, as of the date of this report, the five-year Treasury is yielding 1.36%.

Despite great volatility during the fiscal year, the Treasury yield curve ended the year at similar levels as they began the fiscal year. The following graph illustrates the yield curve on June 30, 2015, as compared to June 30, 2014, and as of the date of this report on October 8, 2015.



During the fiscal year, the yield on U.S. Treasury securities maturing in less than one year, remained at near zero percent levels. Investors would have had to invest out beyond three years to get a yield of over 1%, and approximately seven years to obtain a yield in excess of 2%. For the fiscal year, the three-year Treasury note increased 14 basis points from 0.87% to 1.01%, yields on the ten-year Treasury note decreased 18 basis points, from 2.53% to 2.35%, and yields on the thirty-year Treasury bond decreased 25 basis points, from 3.36% to 3.11%. Included in the graph above is the yield curve on October 8, 2015, which reflects that interest rate levels out beyond three years decreased rather significantly during this short period of time, primarily due to increased pessimism

of a near-term rate hike by the Federal Reserve.

Statements made and actions taken by the Federal Reserve primarily impact short and intermediate term rates, and subsequently the yield on our pooled investments. It is therefore relevant to monitor and assess both action and inaction taken by the Fed. The major objectives of the Federal Reserve, when making policy, are to maximize employment while keeping a lid on inflation. The Fed's objective is an unemployment rate of between 5% and 5.2%, with inflation levels in the range of 2%. Although, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the unemployment rate has reached desired levels (5.1%), inflation continues to be significantly below targeted levels, reducing the urgency to raise rates. In fact, current inflation is tracking at 0.2%, which is one tenth of the Fed's targeted rate. With the lack of urgency generated from little inflation, the Fed has determined its desired course of action to be cautious on taking any action that can adversely impact what it perceives to be an improving but vulnerable economy.

Another major reason for the Fed's decision to maintain rate levels, is the fact that net exports, according to the FOMC "have been soft". It is reasonable to assume that the strength of the U.S. dollar is the major reason for this softness. A stronger dollar increases the cost of American exports abroad. The value of the dollar has increased dramatically during the fiscal year. The dollar index, which compares the U.S. dollar to other major currencies was 79.8 on July 1, 2014 and currently stands at 94.3. One must recognize that the value of the dollar plays a central role in both employment and inflation and is therefore a major consideration in Fed policy decisions. Fear that raising rates now, will further increase the value of the dollar, and further create headwinds into a slow growing economy. The Fed has stated, "even after employment and inflation are near mandate-consistent levels, economic conditions, may for some time, warrant the targeted Federal Funds rate below levels the Committee views as normal in the longer run".

Concerning economic growth in the United States, the U.S. economy is poised to grow at a rate of 2.6%, which, while still below targeted levels, would be the highest rate of growth since 2006. The unemployment level, while still in double digits when factoring in those workers who have given up pursuing employment or are underemployed, has decreased during the year. Additionally, consumer confidence continues to beat expectations, as low oil prices and the stronger dollar stimulate consumer spending.

But the good news about U.S. consumers and the economy comes at a time when the rest of the global economy is not doing so great. Risks to the economic outlook continue to come from outside the United States. Sluggish performance in the Eurozone and moderating growth in China are two primary concerns. Current focus within the Eurozone center around the potential for economically damaging deflation throughout Europe. Economic reports from China continue to be disappointing, and there is concern about China's ability to navigate through economic rebalancing without adversely affecting its growth trajectory and employment conditions. Heightened geopolitical risks will also weigh on economic growth and interest rate direction. Tensions from Ukraine to Syria to Iraq to Russia have added to a flight-to-quality trade, furthering demand for U.S. Treasuries.

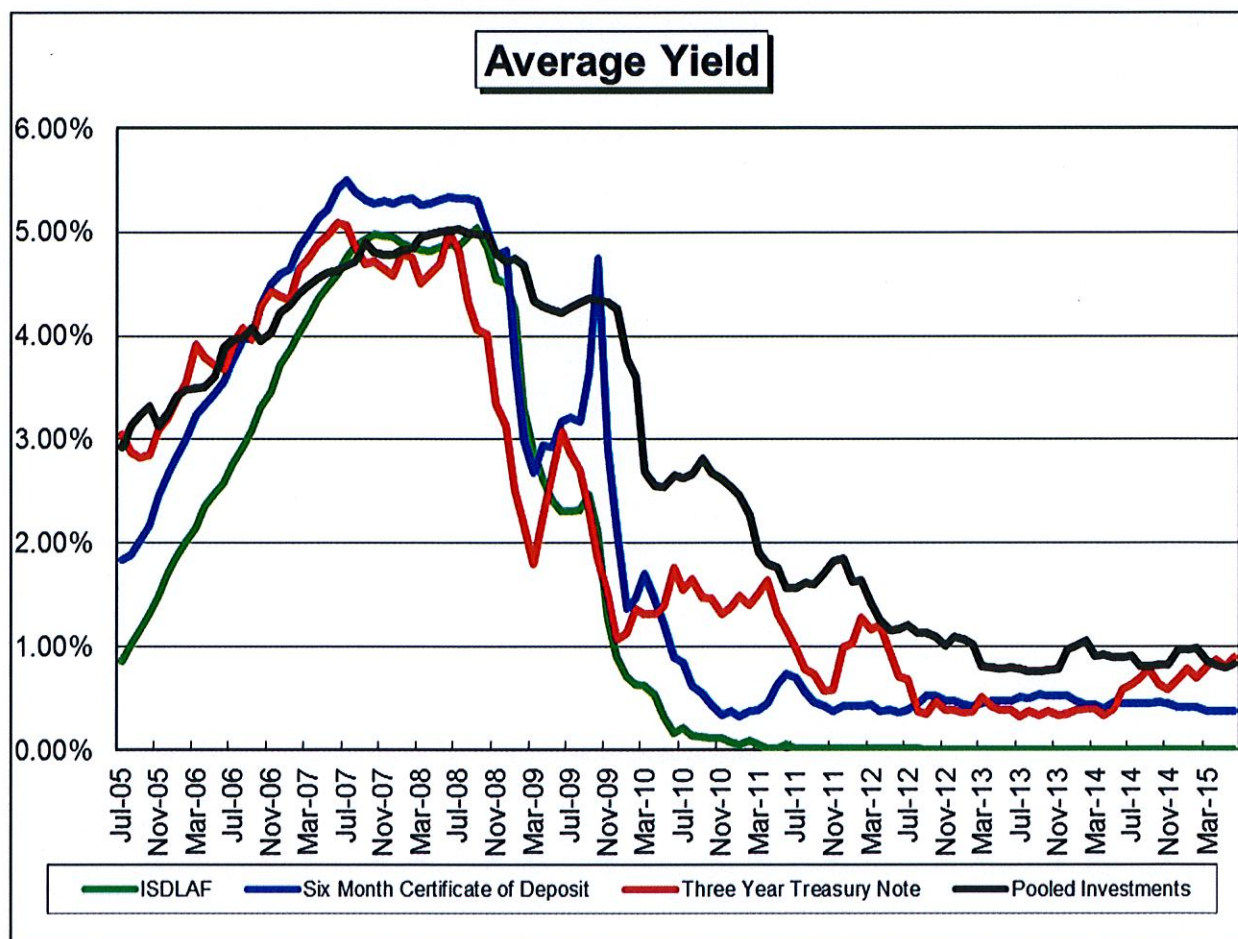
Within this framework, most experts expect short-term interest rates to remain very low for at least the near future, with the first increase in the Fed Funds rate occurring in late 2015 or early 2016. Long-term interest rates are more uncertain, as the key risks stated above can dramatically change the direction of these rates, at least in the short run. The traditional factors that would lead to an extended period of rising interest rates, which include economic growth and rising inflation, do not

seem to be of major concern at this present time. As for now, investors betting on higher interest rates will simply have to be patient.

Putting the change in interest rates over the past few years in perspective, the following summarizes the approximate short-term rates available in the marketplace for investing second installment real estate tax collections:

	<u>Investment Rates</u>
Fall of 2009	0.10% - 0.80%
Fall of 2010	0.02% - 0.40%
Fall of 2011	0.02% - 0.20%
Fall of 2012	0.01% - 0.15%
Fall of 2013	0.01% - 0.10%
Fall of 2014	0.01% - 0.10%
Fall of 2015	0.01% - 0.10%

While interest rates have fluctuated dramatically over the past several years, the yield on the pooled funds investment portfolio has remained relatively stable. The following graph reflects interest rate patterns on the pooled funds and other investment vehicles over the past ten years and illustrates the relative stability of our pooled funds both in times of decreasing and increasing interest rate environments:



In analyzing the relative stability in the weighted average yield of the pooled investments, it is important to note that this is not a stagnant portfolio where rising interest rates have no benefit to

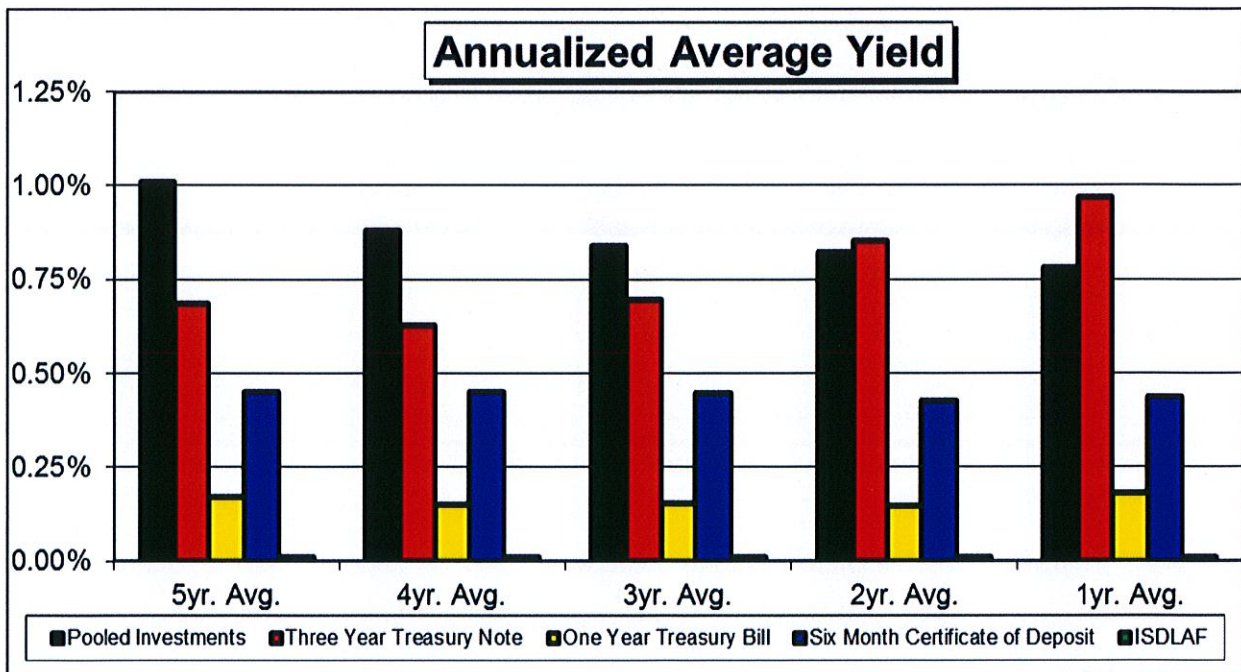
our pooled fund holders. We receive in excess of \$245 million in revenues annually into the pooled funds. While our core portfolio is affected adversely by rising interest rates, this same rise in rates provides us the opportunity to invest new funds at higher rates of interest. The reverse is true in times of declining rates. While the value of our portfolio rises, new revenues are invested at lower rate levels, driving down the yields. As a result, our returns are less volatile during both rising and decreasing rate environments.

CURRENT INVESTMENT STRATEGY

Since a significant percentage of the funds received by this office must be invested to meet short-term cash flow needs, interest rate direction is not the primary factor in investment decisions. It is important, however, to consider current interest rate conditions, yield curves and future interest rate trends in determining the overall desired duration of the portfolio.

Cognizant of the fact that we are in the midst of an extraordinary time of economic crisis and credit turbulence, we continue our strategy of maintaining liquidity and preserving capital with very low tolerance for risk. Since the Spring of 2008, nearly all revenues have been invested at the shorter end of the yield curve and our emphasis has been predominantly on safety and taking advantage of new government guarantees and assurances in making investment decisions. We anticipate that we will continue to keep the portfolio in the shorter end of the yield curve in the near future as we monitor how the bond markets react to the many challenges facing our economy.

A major benefit of pooling funds for investment purposes is the ability to invest in longer term maturities that enhance the yield on the portfolio. Although most of our investments have been in the shorter end of the yield curve, the flexibility to invest in longer term maturities has proven beneficial to the investment pool. This strategy has consistently allowed the pooled funds to compare favorably to other investment alternatives. As seen in the following graph, the five-year average interest rate yield on the pooled investments of 1.01% has outperformed all other investment vehicles presented below. The five-year average yield on the three-year Treasury Note was 0.69%, the one-year Treasury Bill was 0.17%, the six-month CD was 0.45%, and the ISDLAF was 0.01%. The higher five-year average interest rate yield on the pooled funds of 1.00% above the ISDLAF average rate has generated over \$3.6 million of additional interest earnings over the five-year period. This higher interest rate yield is primarily due to our strategy in managing the pooled investments.

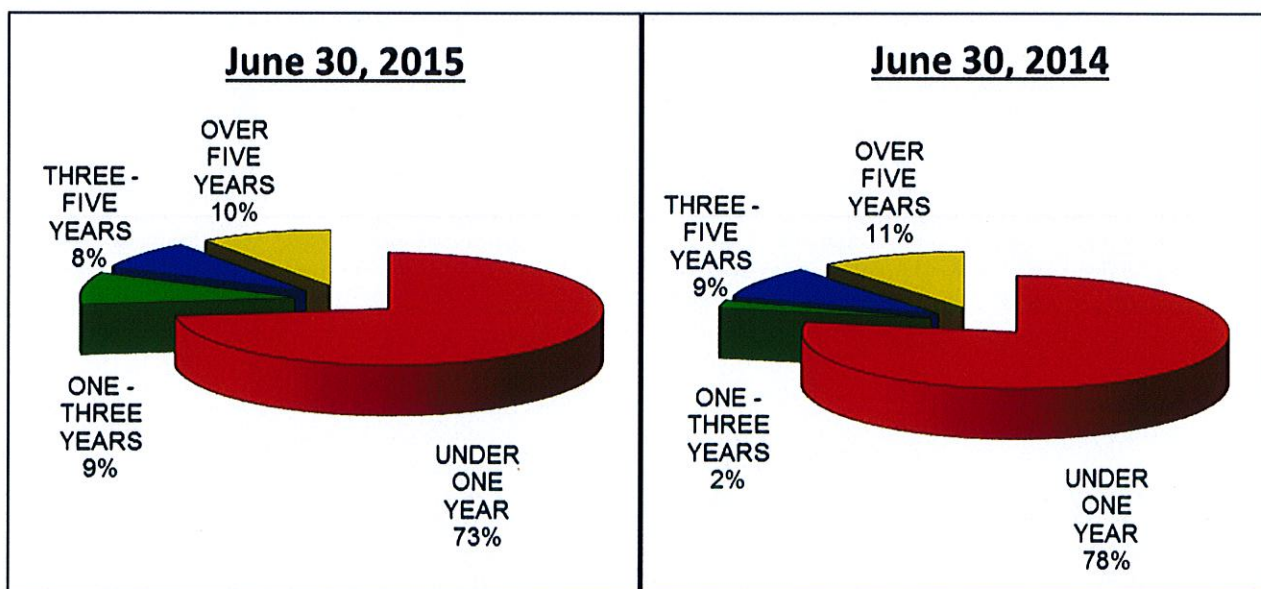


While risk in the credit markets seems to have diminished, we still respect the uncertainty that exists in the near future, and are concerned about the possible effects of unforeseen events on our economy and our fixed income markets. We will continue to strongly weigh all investment decisions towards maximum safety and liquidity until we are confident in the overall direction of our Federal, State and local economies.

CURRENT PORTFOLIO

Over the past fiscal year, we have continued to maintain a significant position in the shorter end of the yield curve, due to the uncertainty in market risk and revenue collections, from the State, to the districts. As can be seen in the graph below, we continue to maintain a significant percentage of the portfolio maturing in under one year at 73% of the portfolio. This is mainly due to cash flow needs, resulting primarily from delays in State funding and the timing of real estate tax revenues in Cook County. From a cash flow perspective, we need to ensure that sufficient funds are available to meet district cash flow needs, with the understanding that there exist many cash flow uncertainties to school districts. In fact, the revenue stream from State and local sources is as uncertain as ever.

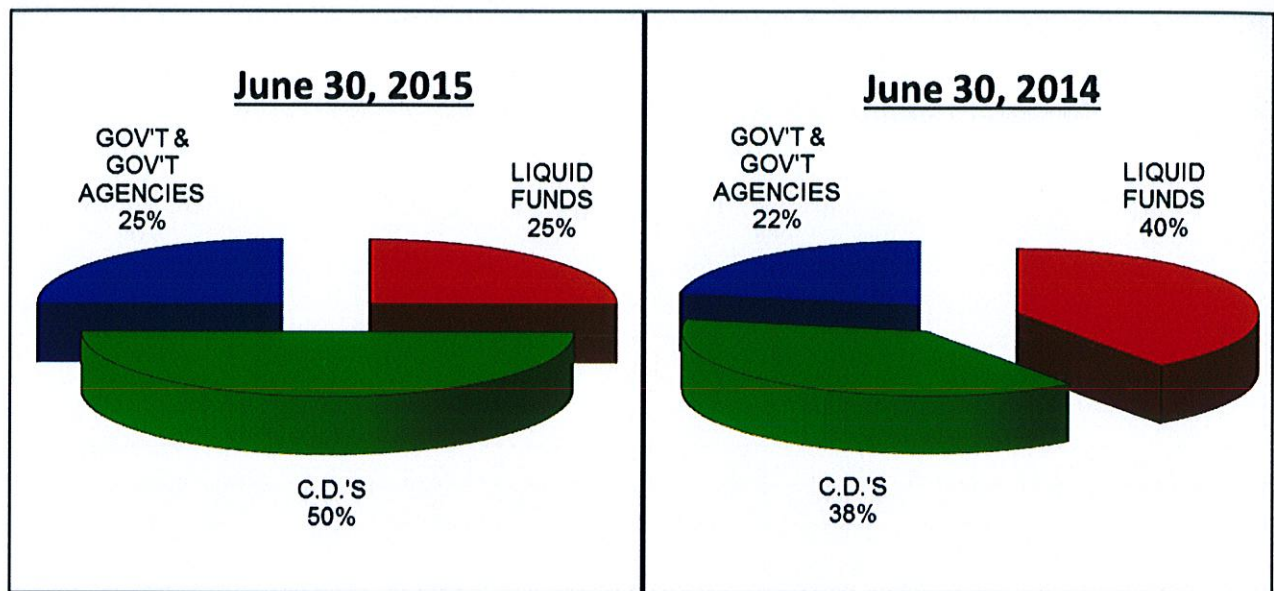
The following graph reflects the allocation of the portfolio by expected maturity date on June 30, 2015 as compared to June 30, 2014:



As mentioned previously, although funds received by this office must be invested to meet short-term cash flow needs, we have a portfolio that gives us the opportunity to consider current interest rate conditions, yield curves and interest rate trends in determining the overall desired duration of the portfolio. As of June 30, 2015, these indicators implied the use of a more liquid portfolio, which would afford us more flexibility in implementing our investment strategy. As such, we have slightly increased investments within the one-three year duration range, in order to capture rising interest rate levels in these maturity ranges. The slight decrease in the duration ranges above three years reflected several bonds being called and principal payments on investments. The weighted average maturity of the portfolio was 0.89 years on June 30, 2015, compared to 0.83 years on June 30, 2014.

Not only is diversification of maturities essential to the performance of the portfolio, but diversification of investment types is equally important. Diversification not only minimizes the risk in the portfolio, but also allows us the ability to consider the entire investment arena in determining which investments will maximize yields while emphasizing safety. As of June 30, 2015, the pooled funds of Bremen Township consisted of approximately 100 different investments that are monitored daily. The following pie chart reflects the investment composite of the pooled funds as of June 30,

2015 as compared to June 30, 2014:



As can be seen from the pie chart above, 25% of the pooled funds were invested in government/government agency obligations, 50% in C.D.'s and 25% in liquid funds. The higher than normal balance in liquid funds was primarily due to anticipated delays in State revenues and local property taxes. Our percentage of C.D.'s has increased, due to the shifting of liquid funds into longer maturity investments, in order to capture higher interest rate levels. We continue to remain active in the government agency securities market, which gives the pooled funds the credit strength of U.S. Government backed securities, with higher rates of return.

There are six major categories of investments available to the pool as of June 30, 2015:

- 1) **Liquid Funds** - These comprise funds readily available for withdrawal at any given notice and include regular checking, deposit, and money market fund accounts.
- 2) **Certificates of Deposit** - These are direct obligations of a United States bank which are fully insured by the FDIC up to \$250,000 per entity or \$2,250,000 of this pool per banking institution.
- 3) **Bank and Corporate Notes** – Bank notes are direct obligations of United States banks which are members of the FDIC. The banks must achieve size and profitability requirements in order to be eligible for investment. Corporate Notes are direct obligations of large U.S. Corporations that meet the stringent criteria established in the Illinois Public Funds Investment Act.
- 4) **Commercial Paper** - Commercial paper is a direct obligation of United States corporations having more than \$500 million in assets. The maturity of such obligations must be less than 180 days. The corporations must also be rated in one of the three highest categories by the major rating agencies.

- 5) **Government and Government Agency Guaranteed and Collateralized Obligations -** These are investments that are guaranteed by the U. S. Government or its agencies. This also includes investments in which government/agency collateral has been pledged, as well as municipal bonds that are either insured or at the highest of rating categories.
- 6) **Municipal Bonds -** These are bonds issued by a city or other local government, or their agencies. Municipal bonds may be general obligations of the issuer or secured by specified revenues.

INVESTMENT POLICY

The following is a list of various policies that are followed by the Bremen Township Treasurer's Office when implementing its investment decisions:

MAXIMIZING INTEREST REVENUES

- I. In order to maximize interest revenues on the funds received by this office, it is essential that all revenues earn interest as soon as this office receives them. We have streamlined our communications with the county, the state and the brokers we deal with to ensure that funds due to the districts are received promptly by our banks. We have increased the use of wiring funds wherever possible, rather than dealing with checks that greatly reduce interest earnings. At the same time, we have established agreements with the banks that service our office to allow us to earn interest on the funds on the same day that the wire is received.
- II. Through the pooling of revenues of eight school districts serviced by this office, we have the ability to invest in \$1,000,000+ blocks. This allows the districts' funds to be invested in instruments that would not otherwise be available in smaller lot sizes. Also, investing in \$1,000,000 lots often gives us the ability to earn higher yields than if investing in smaller lot sizes.
- III. The Treasurer's Office works with several different brokers who have access to investments throughout the country. This allows for more thorough investment decisions to be made.
- IV. Although local banks may offer rates that are slightly lower than rates offered by other institutions, consideration is given to those local institutions which provide needed assistance to our school districts.
- V. The Treasurer's Office consistently updates cash flow projections to allow pooled funds to be invested at higher yields for the longest duration possible. The balance in the liquid funds is targeted to be around 5% of the total pool.
- VI. The Treasurer constantly monitors the investment and economic arena working with both fundamental and technical analysts in order to determine when investments should be purchased and sold, as well as to determine the desired weighted average maturity of the portfolio.

MINIMIZING RISK

- I. All funds invested by the Treasurer's Office are invested pursuant to the Public Funds Act of the Illinois Revised Statutes and all legislation that has affected such act.
- II. When Certificates of Deposits are purchased by this office, the CD's are designated as "multiple taxpayer ID deposits" to ensure that the purchase is within the aggregated FDIC insurance limits of this office, which is \$2,250,000. If this is not sufficient to fully insure the investments, the CD's will be collateralized by the banking institution.

SUMMARY

There were two major objectives I had when preparing this report. The first objective was to provide an update to the administration and board members on the investment performance of the school districts' funds during the fiscal year ending June 30, 2015. The second objective was to assure the districts that all revenues, which are received by this office, are closely managed and to provide a partial list of the strategies, procedures and policies used by this office in order to ensure maximum investment performance of these funds.

We have been annually reporting our fund performance to the school districts we service for the past 20 years. In each of these years, we have performed well compared to all major financial indices we track. During that time, we have returned almost \$62.3 million in interest earnings to the school districts we service. We take the responsibility of managing your district's funds seriously and know that the partnership we have developed over the years, combined with the inherent value of a pooled funds system and the consolidation of fiscal services, has provided substantial benefits to the taxpayers we all service.

In projecting interest earnings for the upcoming fiscal year, I expect returns on a cash basis to continue to decline for three primary reasons: (1) interest rates are at historic low levels; (2) several of the callable bonds with higher yields have been or should be called during the upcoming fiscal year, and reinvestment of these funds will most likely be at lower rates; and (3) the State of Illinois' budget uncertainty and its threat on school funding requires us to place a heightened focus on liquidity and shorter term, lower yielding investments.

Our plans are to continue to produce this report on an annual basis. I would appreciate any suggestions or comments you may have. As always, if at any time during the year, information pertaining to the investment portfolio is desired, it will gladly be provided.

I thank you for letting us serve your district.

Joseph J. McDonnell
Bremen Township School Treasurer