

BREMEN TOWNSHIP
TRUSTEES OF SCHOOLS

ANNUAL INVESTMENT REPORT
FISCAL YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2018

Deborah A. Stearns, President
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Joanne Keilman, Secretary

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Natalie Myers, Trustee
Darlene Washington, Trustee

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“An investment in education always pays the best interest”

- Benjamin Franklin

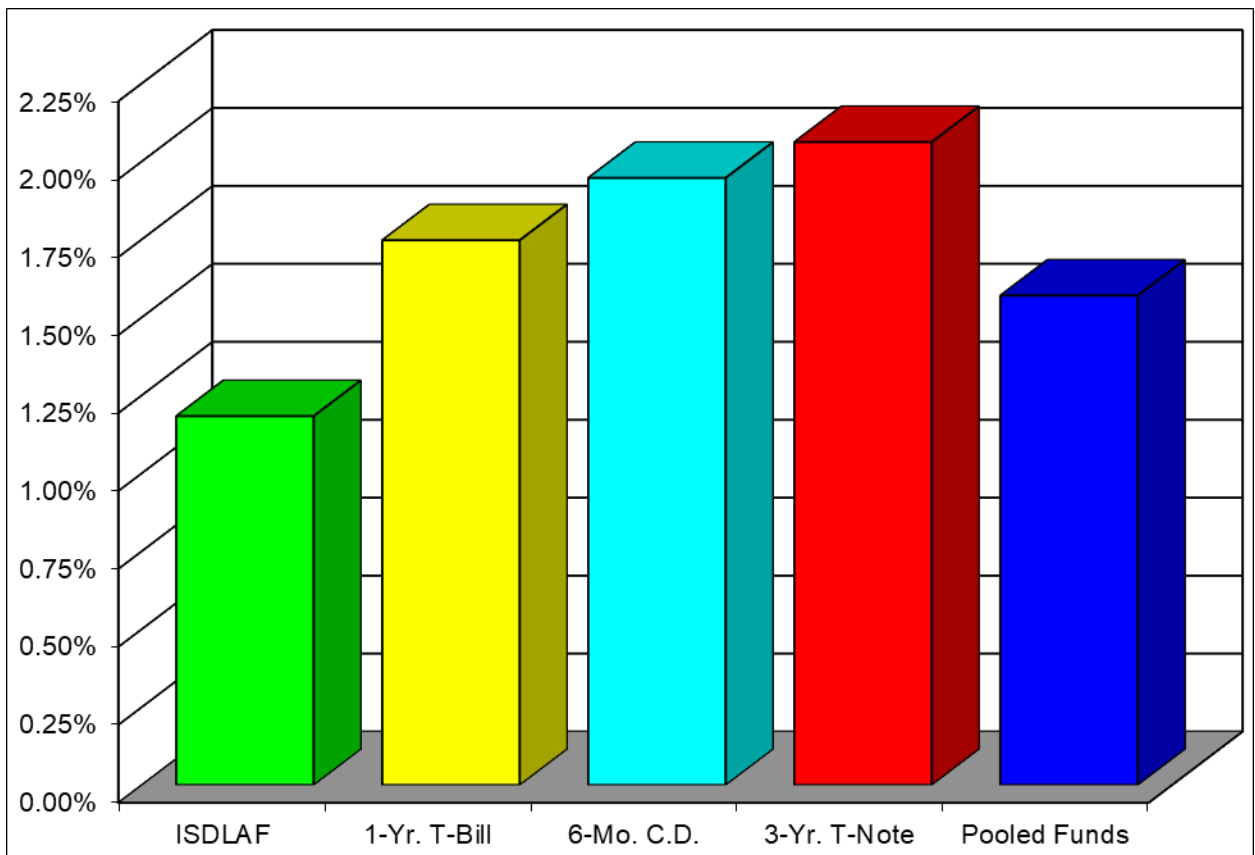
INTRODUCTION

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, 2018. 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 INVESTMENT ACTIVITY

For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2018, I am pleased to report that the investment pool managed by the Bremen Township Treasurer's Office generated \$2,440,180 in interest earnings to the school districts serviced by this office. With an average investment portfolio of \$190,327,820 the cash basis rate of return for all the school districts was 1.28%. The yield on short-term investments continued to be at historical low levels, ranging from 0.82% to 1.76% during the fiscal year. Overall, the average yield on pooled funds managed by this office for the fiscal year was 1.57% and the average yield on funds that were held for liquidity purposes were 1.18%. The current yield on the portfolio as of June 30, 2018 is 1.96%, which represents the annualized current rate of return on June 30th. The following graph compares the average monthly yield on the pooled funds with that of other investments available in the market during this same period:



The average yield from the Illinois School District Liquid Asset Fund (ISDLAF) for the same time period was 1.18%, the one year Treasury Bill was 1.75%, the six month Certificate of Deposit averaged 1.95%, and the three year Treasury Note averaged 2.06%. The weighted average maturity on the pooled funds managed by this office was 0.93 years (339 days) as of June 30, 2018.

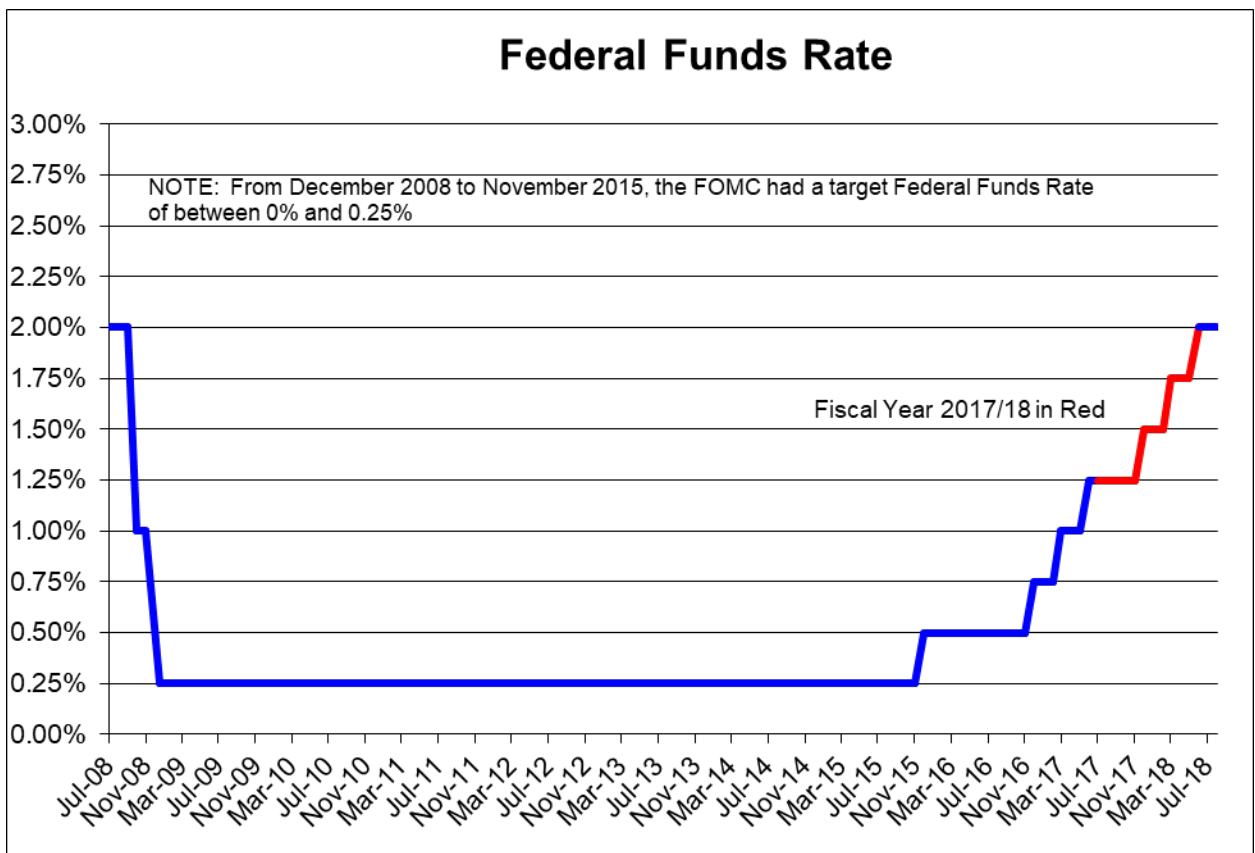
INTEREST RATE MOVEMENT AND ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

On June 14, 2018, the Federal Reserve raised short-term interest rates one-quarter of a percent to 2.00%. This marked the seventh time, since December 2015, that the Fed has hiked its policy rate. Other increases during the fiscal year, which have all been at one-quarter of a percent, occurred at the Fed’s December 2017 meeting and at the March 2018 meeting.

The statutory mandate of the Federal Open Market Committee (“FOMC”) is to foster maximum employment and price stability. Specifically, at this point in time, the FOMC is looking for maximum employment and two percent inflation. In determining the timing and size of future interest rate adjustments, the Committee assesses realized and expected economic conditions relative to its objectives. This assessment takes into account a wide range of information, including measures of labor market conditions, indicators of inflation pressures and inflation expectations, and readings on financial and international developments.

At this time, the Committee continues to believe that, with gradual adjustments in its stance of monetary policy, economic activity will expand at a moderate pace, and labor market conditions will strengthen somewhat further. Inflation, on a 12-month basis is expected, according to the FOMC, to remain somewhat below two percent in the near term but to stabilize around the Committee’s two percent objective over the medium term.

The following graph reflects movement in the Federal Funds Target Rate since July 2008:



Statements made and action 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.

Federal Chairman Jerome Powell, in his remarks to the U.S. House of Representatives on July 18, 2018 stated that he strongly supports the goals Congress set for monetary policy of maximum employment and price stability. He stated that, for the past three years, the Fed has been gradually raising rates to more normal levels as the economy strengthens. He stated that the Fed believes this strategy is the best way to set conditions in which Americans who want a job can find one and in which inflation remains low and stable.

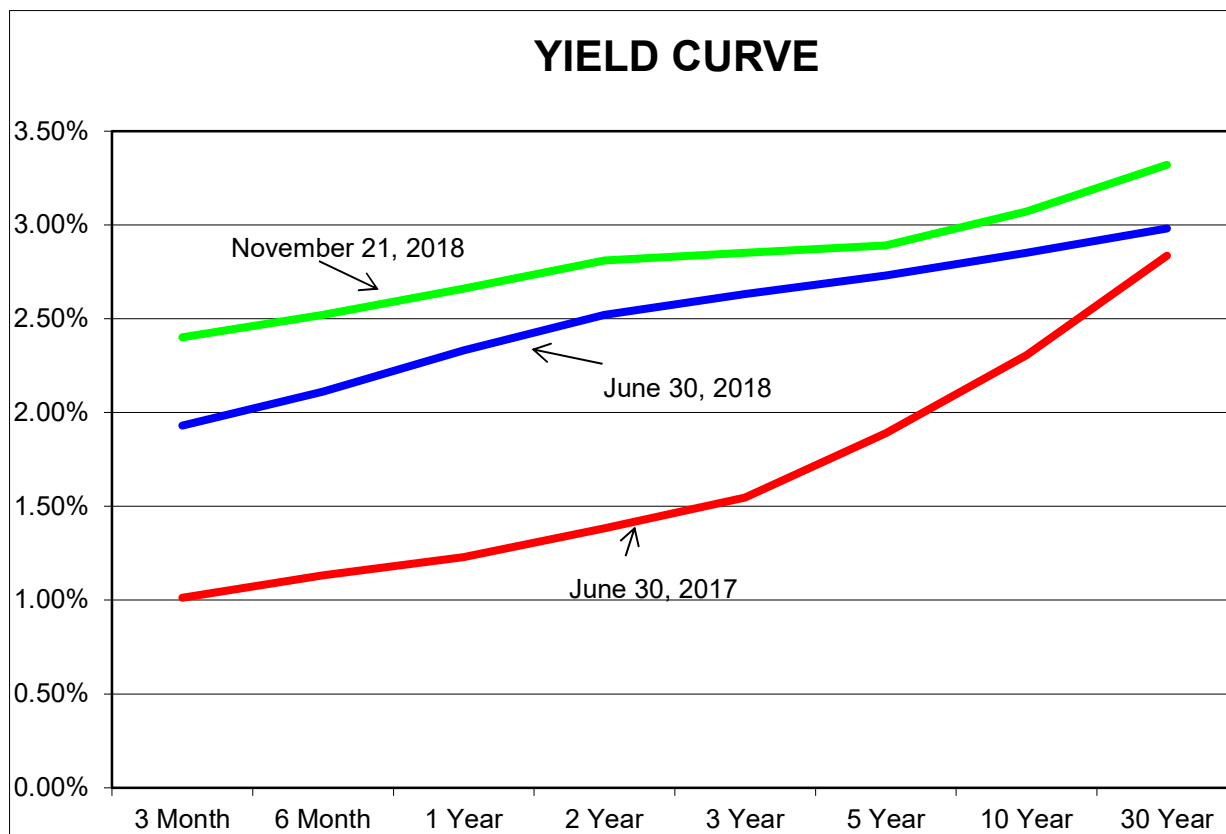
In Chairman Powell's assessment of the current economic situation and outlook, which is closely watched by investors, he stated that the job market continued to strengthen and inflation has moved up slightly above the targeted inflation rate of 2%. He stressed that the labor market was robust, with unemployment rates for virtually all sub groups of Americans at their lowest levels since the Bureau of Labor Statistics began tracking such data in 1972. Alongside the strong job market, he added that the U.S. economy has grown at a solid pace during the year.

Looking ahead, the FOMC expects that, with appropriate monetary policy, the job market will remain strong and inflation will stay near 2% over the next several years. He cited four reasons for this belief: (1) Interest rates and financial conditions more broadly remain favorable to growth; (2) the U.S. financial system is much stronger than before the crisis and in good position to meet the needs of households and businesses; (3) the federal tax and spending policies likely will continue to support the expansion and (4) the outlook for economic outlook abroad remains solid despite greater uncertainties in several parts of the world.

Finally, in terms of future direction from the FOMC, Chairman Powell stated that with a strong job market and inflation close to their objectives, the best way forward is to keep gradually raising the Fed Funds rate. He stated that FOMC's awareness that it closely balances raising rates too slowly, which could lead to rising inflation and financial market excesses, to raising rates too rapidly, which could lead to a weakening in the economy.

The action taken by the Federal Reserve has caused the yield curve to flatten fairly significantly during the fiscal year, with short-term rates increasing more rapidly than long-term rates. The yield curve reflects the interest rate investors could receive on a given date for U.S. Government investments with various maturity dates.

The following graph illustrates the yield curve on June 30, 2018, as compared to June 30, 2017 and a more recent date of November 21, 2018.



During the fiscal year, the yield on U.S. Treasury securities maturing in three months increased from 1.01% to 1.93%. This increase of approximately 1.0% in yield was realized through the first five years of the curve. The yield on the 10-year treasury increased only 0.55% (2.30% to 2.85%). The yield on the 30-year treasury only increased 0.14% (2.84% to 2.98%). Consequently, the gap between the three-month treasury rate and the 30-year treasury rate decreased from 1.82% to 1.05%.

On September 26, 2018, the Fed again raised the fed funds rate from 2.00% to 2.25%. The impact of this action and the anticipated increase of 0.25% again in December 2018 are reflected on the current yield curve. Since June 30, 2018, the 3-month treasury rate has increased 0.47%, from 1.93% to 2.40%. The 30-year treasury increased 0.34%, from 2.98% to 3.32%. The gap between the interest rates on the 10-year treasury versus the 2-year treasury has lowered to 21 basis points, as of the date of this report.

It is not so difficult to understand what is occurring at the short end of the yield curve, as this is the part over which the Fed exercises more direct control. What's going on at the long end of the curve gets complicated. This is the part of the yield curve that is more influenced by investor's expectations, including market sentiment and inflation expectations.

There are many theories and no shortage of factors regarding the flattening yield curve. On one hand, the Fed is steadily increasing short-term rates in response to the economy growing at a moderately strong pace. And unlike in previous years, there is no indication that market turbulence will cause central bankers to deviate from their path. At the same time, America's trade spats and concerns about growth outside the U.S. is helping to keep a lid on long-term yields, which have retreated from multi-year highs. Two other possible reasons: Pension funds and insurers have

developed an insatiable demand for long-term, high-quality bonds, and the European Central Bank and Bank of Japan continue to have loose monetary policies. Both of those developments drive down those yields.

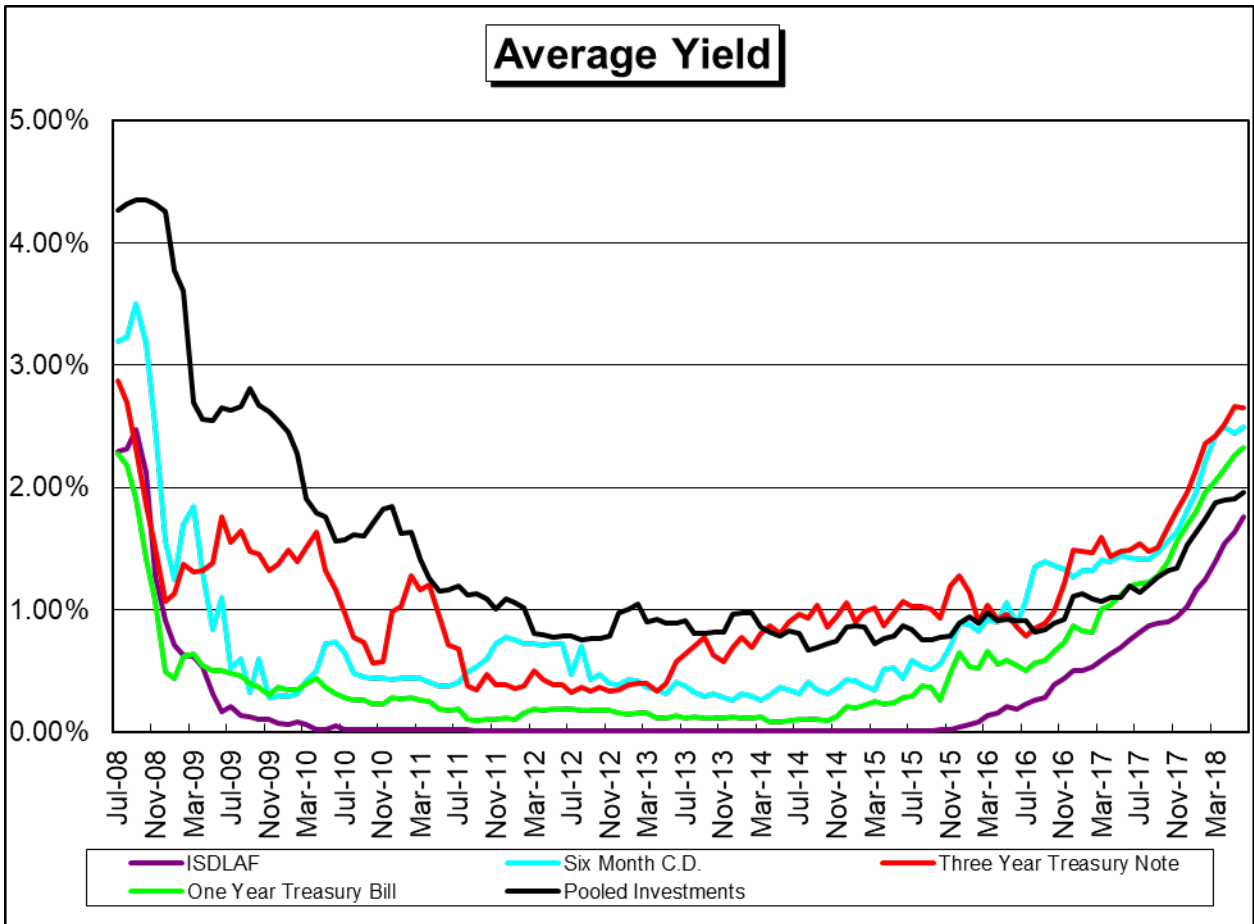
A growing chorus of fixed-income strategists on Wall Street expects yield spreads to keep shrinking in the years ahead. A handful expects the curve to flatten to zero or even invert sometime in 2018, while others see that as more likely to occur in 2019. Fed officials have expressed concerns about that scenario, but so far are doing little to prevent it from happening. Therefore, as long as the central bank is raising short-term rates, predictions of a steeper curve will remain in the minority.

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 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%
Fall of 2016	0.10% - 0.30%
Fall of 2017	0.75% - 1.25%
Fall of 2018	1.80% - 2.10%

Concerning the future direction of interest rate levels, there are several major issues that must be closely monitored including (1) future federal tax reform, (2) the impact of recent natural disasters, (3) geopolitical tensions, primarily with China and (4) the volatility and direction of the U.S. stock markets. Each of these events can change the fixed income market and subsequently change the overall performance of the pooled portfolio. It is important to recognize, however, that while events like these and changes in economic activity and inflation have caused interest rates to fluctuate 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 \$300 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.

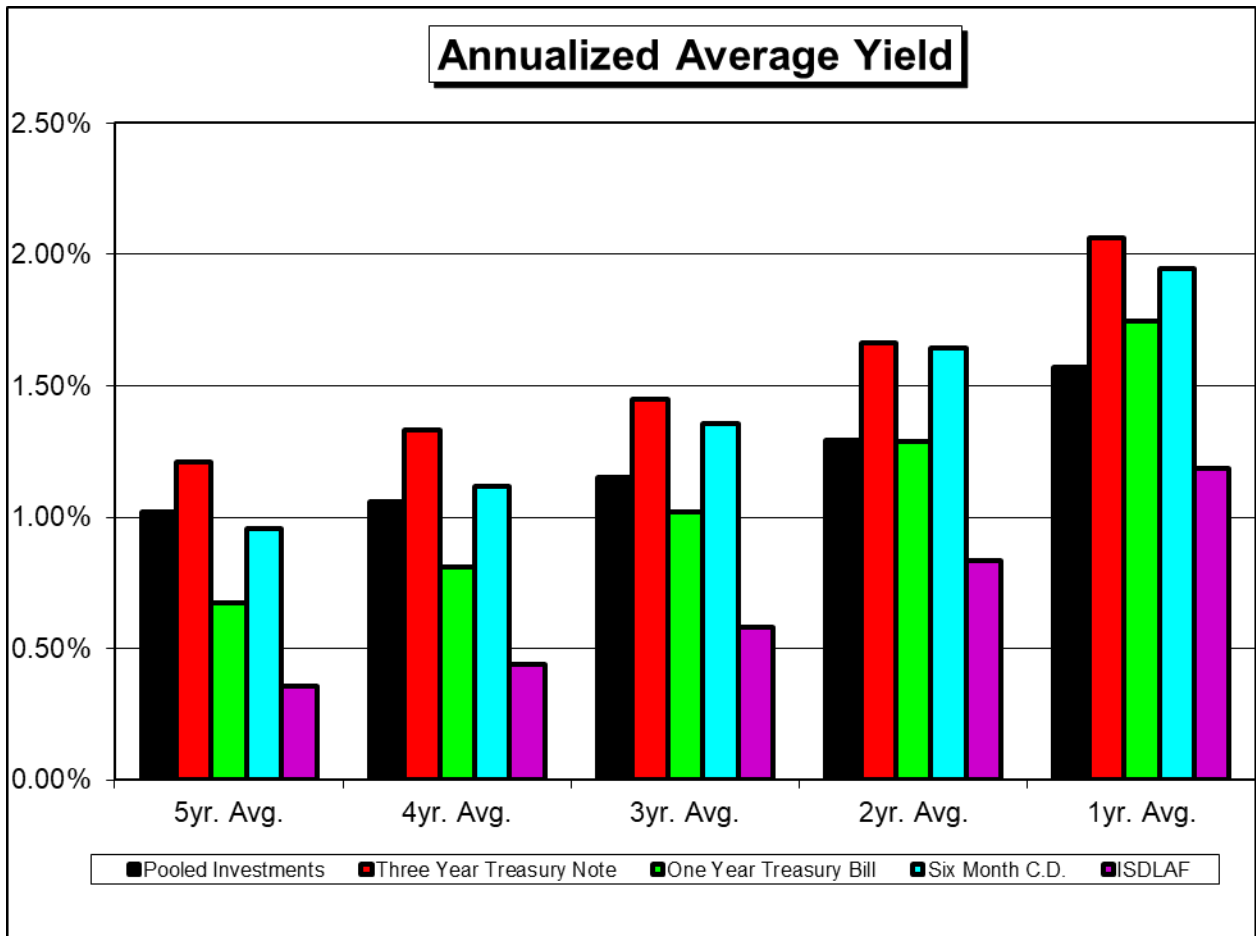
CURRENT INVESTMENT STRATEGY

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.

With interest rates expected to continue rising, we will continue to ladder the portfolio with investments that have maturities of under three years. This should allow us to reinvest the proceeds from maturing investments into higher yielding securities. In addition, we continue to look at value amongst the investment vehicle options available to us. We currently are focusing on purchasing bank CD's and short-term taxable municipal bonds. We are also an active investor in the direct purchase of municipal bonds from other school districts in Illinois. These strategies have allowed the portfolio to maintain some yield above the levels that exist in money market accounts and traditional short-term investments, without compromising the objectives of the fund. We are also focused on issues that will provide above average yields that are in the three to five year maturity range.

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.

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 has performed well, compared to all other investment vehicles presented below.

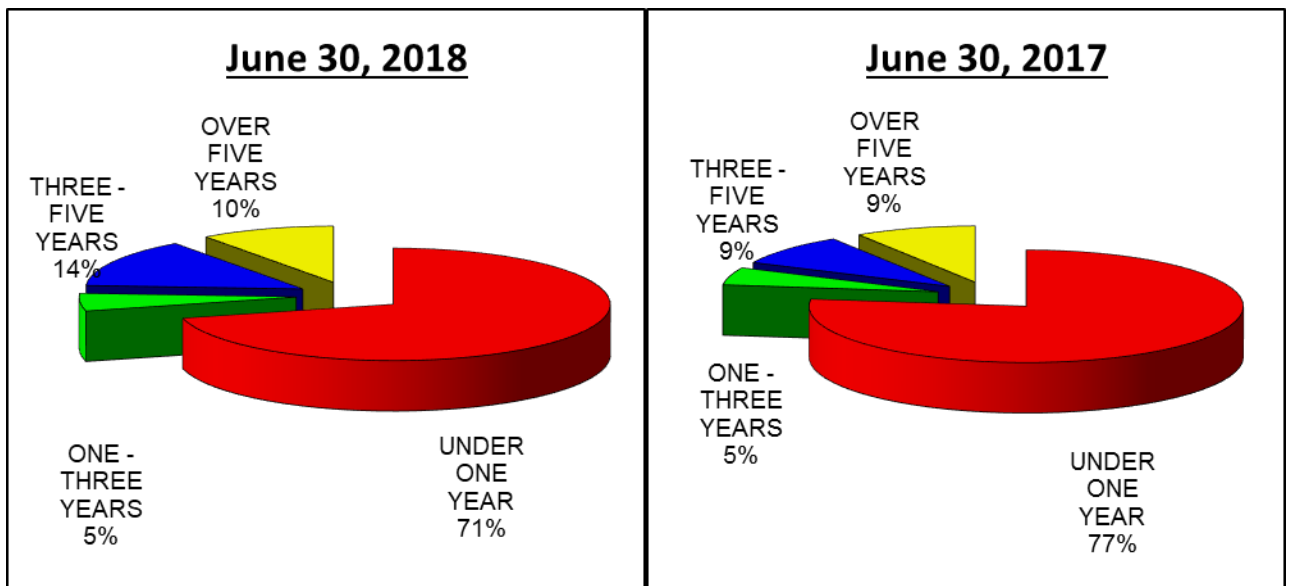


The five-year average yield on the pooled investments was 1.02%, the three-year Treasury Note was 1.21%, the one-year Treasury Bill was 0.67%, the six-month CD was 0.43%, and the ISDLAF was 0.35%. The higher five-year average interest rate yield on the pooled funds of 0.67% above the ISDLAF average rate has generated close to \$3.0 million of additional interest earnings over the prior five-year period. This higher interest rate yield is primarily due to our strategy in managing the pooled investments.

CURRENT PORTFOLIO

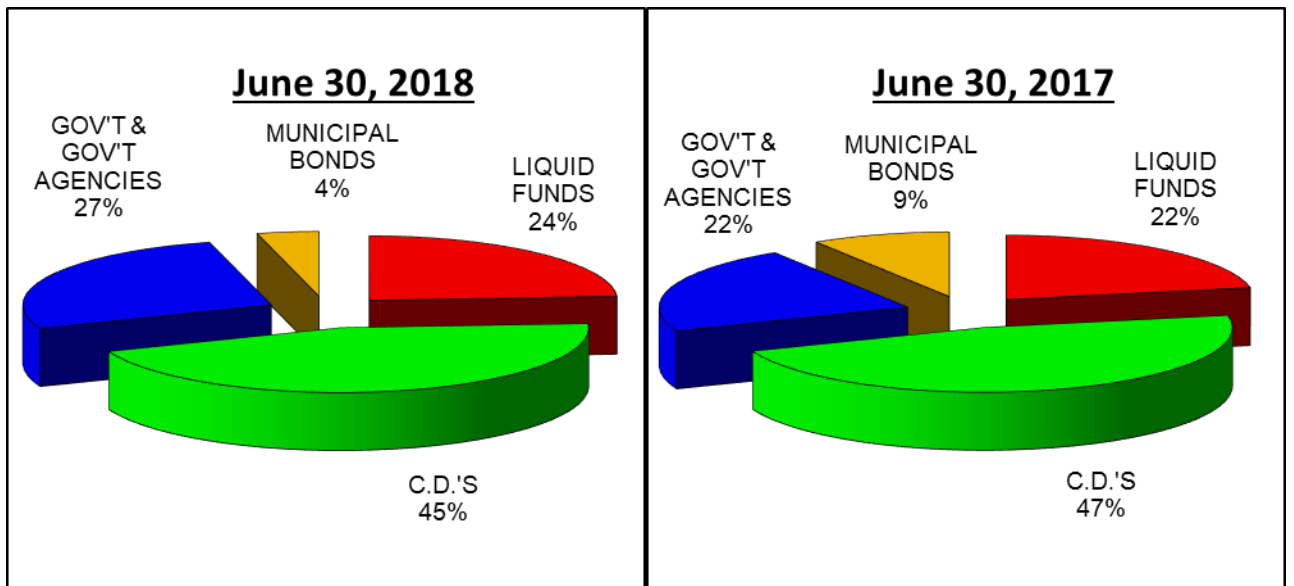
Over the past fiscal year, we have been investing in an interest rate environment that was defined by two primary characteristics: (1) rising short-term rates and (2) little value in extending the duration of the portfolio due to the flat yield curve. Consequently, with the exception of several value purchases, new money into the portfolio was placed in shorter maturities to both take advantage of rising rates and to meet cash flow needs. On June 30, 2018, 76% of the current pooled funds portfolio is expected to mature within three years. The percentage of the portfolio maturing in less than one year decreased from 77% on June 30, 2017 to 71% on June 30, 2018. The percentage of investments maturing in the one-three year range remained unchanged at 5%. Investments maturing in the three-five year range increased from 9% to 14% of the portfolio. Investments maturing in excess of five years increased slightly from 9% to 10% of the portfolio.

The following graph reflects the allocation of the portfolio by expected maturity date on June 30, 2018 as compared to June 30, 2017:



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 an overall desired duration of the portfolio. As of June 30, 2018, these indicators implied the use of a more liquid portfolio, which would afford us more flexibility in implementing our investment strategy. The weighted average maturity of the portfolio was 0.93 years (339 days) on June 30, 2018, compared to 0.60 years (219 days) on June 30, 2017.

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, 2018, the pooled funds consisted of over 100 different investments that are regularly monitored. The following pie chart reflects the investment composite of the pooled funds as of June 30, 2018 as compared to June 30, 2017:



As can be seen from the pie chart above, 24% of the pooled funds were invested in liquid funds, 45% in C.D.'s, 27% in government/government agency obligations and 4% in municipal bonds. The composition of the portfolio in terms of investment type remained relatively stable. Our percentage of C.D.'s and municipal bonds decreased, due to the shifting of funds into government agency securities investments and the need for more liquid funds. 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. As mentioned previously, we also continue our focus on purchasing short-term municipal bonds from taxing bodies in Illinois.

There are six major categories of investments available to the pool as of June 30, 2018:

- 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, 2018. 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 23 years. In each of these years, we have performed well compared to all major financial indices we track. During that time, we have returned \$67.0 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 increase slightly, due to continued rising of short-term interest rates. However, I anticipate that a lower pooled fund balance, due to payments on completed construction projects, will offset some of the impact of rising short-term interest rates.

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