

Grandview Heights City School Board Seeks Community Input

At our March 9, 2010 school board meeting, I outlined for the school board the status of our current permanent improvement levy as well as what the future holds in terms of a potential operating levy. For a copy of the report I shared with the board, please go to our Web site homepage (www.grandviewschools.org). You will find a link to this report there.

With the upcoming permanent improvement needs and operating needs, the board will soon be making decisions that will impact the district for years to come. These decisions will also, once again, require a commitment on the part of our local taxpayers. As board members work to decide the options that work best for our community, they are requesting input from our stakeholders. On April 8th, 2010, the board will be holding a community forum to discuss these issues.

In terms of permanent improvement, in 2005, the community invested in the upkeep and maintenance of our buildings when a 1.65 mill permanent improvement levy was passed. This levy is set to expire in December 2010. Without another permanent improvement levy, we will need to rely on the general operating budget for our maintenance and facility improvement efforts. As the majority of our educational space is 40-100 years old, we will always have the need for upkeep and maintenance. In addition, technology continues to move forward at a pace that requires a dedicated stream of dollars to ensure our students have access to current technology that is reliable and dependable. The school district continues to have an on-going need for permanent improvement dollars for facility issues and technology updates.

When you look at our five-year forecast, which is available in the Fiscal section of our Web site, it does not take long to notice that we are less than three years away from a significant deficit. State law prohibits school districts from operating at a deficit.

In 2005, the community also stepped forward and approved a 7.85 mill operating levy to support our schools. At that time, the board promised that the revenue from the new levy would keep the school district solvent for three years and we would not ask voters for additional millage during those three years. We are now in the fifth fiscal year since the passage of the 2005 levy and due to unanticipated state reimbursements and conservative fiscal management, we remain solvent.

As the school board weighs options, major considerations revolve around the timing and millage of the next operating levy. Each option has strengths and weaknesses. For example, here are two potential scenarios:

Scenario A: Place a 4.95-5.95 mill levy on the ballot this November. A levy this size would last for three years. However, this November, the district will be carrying a

sizable cash balance. Many voters may find it difficult to understand the need for additional funding this year.

Scenario B: Wait until May or November of 2011 to place an operating levy on the ballot. The cash balance at that time will clearly illustrate our need. However, the millage would need to be in the range of 9.5-10.5 mills in order to last three years. As we build the budget for next year and the following year, we are reducing spending in many areas. While the next biennial state budget may change our projections, currently we believe we can end up closer to the 9.5 mill range if the board waits until 2011 to ask voters for additional operating dollars.

The potential permanent improvement levy and operating levy are important to our community and our district. With this in mind, I would ask you to consider joining us on April 8, 2010.

The forum will begin at 7:00 PM in the high school auditorium with a brief presentation of the financial standing of the school district. After the presentation, each board member will work with small groups to gather public opinion. We encourage you to attend. If you can participate, please send an e-mail to me at eoreilly@grandviewschools.org. Knowing you are going to attend will help with our planning for the evening. I look forward to seeing you on April 8th.