

In Kettering, The 6.9 Mill School Property Tax Proposal Might Help Inspire Activation Of New Grassroots' Group

On this May 4 ballot is a proposal to increase Kettering school property tax by 6.9 mills, a 16.4 % increase in current school property tax. This letter suggests creating a grassroots citizens' group to study and discuss issues concerning public education in Kettering and to find new candidates for the Kettering Board of Education.

In the space of two and one half years, voters in this district have been asked to approve three levies with a total of **17.7 mills** in taxation for the school district:

- ◊ November, 2007, we passed a 4.9 mill **new** levy (promised to last four years),
- ◊ May, 2008 we passed a 6.9 mill **renewal** levy,
- ◊ May, 2009 we have a 6.9 mill **new** levy on the ballot.

The need for 6.9 mills of new revenue for Kettering Schools is based on a five year projected budget. The biggest item in the budget forecast -- personnel expense -- is predicted to increase by **4.82% each year**. Since money budgeted for personnel comprises **86% of the budget**, the compounded percentage increases require millions of dollars of new revenue each year.

The five year budget projection shows that benefits paid to personnel are 36% of salary, so, on average, for every \$1000 is salary, the school district pays \$360 in health and retirement benefits. The "average" teacher's salary in Kettering is in excess of \$68,000 per year. And the last fifteen administrator contracts averaged \$103,000 per year. The district should be rightfully proud that it pays its teachers and administrators well.

Even without the approval of new school taxes, there was a **2.34% increase** in the effective rate of school property tax from last year to this year (41.14 mills to 42.11 mills). Effective rates fluctuate according to how the total value of property in Kettering fluctuates. As long as the value of the total tax base in Kettering continues to decline, even without approving new taxes, individual property owners will be required to pay at an increased effective rate in order to generate the revenue guaranteed by levies that are currently approved.

Regardless of the outcome of this 6.9 mill levy, it seems clear that as a community we need to exert "local control" over our local system of public education. In Kettering, we need a nonpartisan citizens' group to study and make a proposal for long term system change. We need to develop a viable grassroots group who will work to elect new members to the Board of Education.

Sincerely,

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This is an excerpt of a more detailed letter. Read the full letter and comment here: <http://daytonos.com/?p=8712>

If you would like to encourage this effort, please e-mail me:
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