

The Cost of Saying No

When a school district places a levy on the ballot, one of the first questions asked is: What will it cost? Most want to know the monetary cost and how it will impact their personal budget, but there are other costs that are sometimes ignored.

The cost of the levy is easy to determine if the community supports the issue and it passes. The “cost of yes” is calculated by applying the millage to the assessed value of your property, less any homestead exemption. This figure is a yearly increase in taxes billed and collected through the Tuscarawas County auditor’s office.

There is another cost to a school levy that we many times forget or dismiss. This is the “cost of saying no.” This cost is not as easy to determine and may have a greater impact, depending on your life circumstances. This cost may be immediate, if you have children or grandchildren in school. For others, the cost may not become apparent until property values decline or the community begins to change.

Many ask why districts begin by eliminating busing and extracurricular activities, raising class sizes, or instituting “pay to participate.” The answer is simple; districts are required to provide certain curricular offerings and services to students. Districts begin by reducing or eliminating those things that are not required. While these are sometimes items that are valued by the community, if they are not required, they may be among the first to be impacted.

Saying no to a school levy also stifles innovation and progress. We no longer provide the education that we did decades ago. Keeping current with technology and other online resources is vital to our students’ success. Schools are also faced with challenges that did not exist in the not too distant past. For example, school safety is a challenge that requires time, attention, and financial resources to maintain a safe environment for all.

It is important to live within your means, even for a school district. However, operating a school district with limited revenue growth over 10 years is a challenge. It is possible to do this, but the cuts begin to be significant. It is the responsibility of the Board of Education and school administrators to bring the financial request before the community to allow all to cast an informed vote on the plan.

Informing the public of the reductions needed to live within the district’s current revenue is not a threat. It is a reality that will need to happen. Before you vote on November 6, it is important that you take the time to know the cost of saying yes and the cost of saying no.