

Mason Public Schools

Operating Millage Renewal

Tuesday, February 23, 2010

Mason Public Schools has scheduled a special election on Tuesday, February 23, 2010, to renew the district's operating millage. The answers to frequently asked questions are provided below to enable the electorate to make an informed decision.

Question: **Is this a new tax?**

Answer: No. *This is a renewal and restoration of the same millage (18 mills) levied on business, commercial, industrial, income and non-qualified farm properties since Proposal A passed in 1994.*

Question: **Will this millage have an impact on the amount of property tax I pay for my home?**

Answer: No. *This millage is not levied on primary residences. It is levied on business, commercial, industrial, income and non-qualified farm properties.*

Question: **Why a special election in February?**

Answer: *Historically, all school elections were held in May. In an effort to save money, the Board of Education in 2007 moved school elections to odd years in November. The first year for an election in this new cycle was November 2009. However, the operating millage renewal schedule still called for a spring renewal in 2010. The district recognized this inconsistency in August, but missed the seventy-day deadline for filing the ballot language by two days. Therefore, this special election was called for February 23 to renew the operating millage.*

Question: **What is the significance of the election to the school district?**

Answer: *The levy will continue to provide \$3 million annually and is absolutely critical to maintaining the current level and quality of school district programs and services.*

Question: **What has the district done to contain operating costs?**

Answer: *Space does not permit a complete listing, but here are a few examples: closed a school, reduced staff by thirteen percent, reduced bus fleet and routes, joined utility cooperative, contracted services for teacher substitutes, re-negotiated regional service sharing agreement for special education transportation, reduced staff travel and conference expenditures, reduced district health insurance costs . . .*

Question: **Where does the district stand in regard to administrative costs?**

Answer: *A November 22, 2009, article in the Lansing State Journal reviewed audited financial data from 2008 for thirty-six schools in Ingham, Clinton, Eaton and Ionia counties. Mason Public Schools was in the top twenty-five percent of those spending the **least** on administrative costs in 2008. Since that time, the district has further reduced such costs by eliminating one administrative position and one general office clerk position. In an effort to continue reducing these administrative costs, the district is involved in ongoing discussions with Ingham Intermediate School District and other county schools regarding means of consolidating administrative services among districts.*

Question: **If this millage is approved, will it alleviate the district's budget problems?**

Answer: No. *The district will continue to face significant financial challenges. As a result of an anticipated reduction in state funding of \$268 per pupil for 2010-11 and the loss of \$165 per pupil in 2009-10, the district is projecting a budget deficit of \$1.2 million for 2010-11. The passage of this operating millage will ensure that the budget deficit does not reach \$4.2 million, but it will not prevent already anticipated budget reductions for 2010-11.*