

Reasons for mill levy outlined

Written by Holyoke Enterprise

Dear Editor,

Holyoke School District Re-1J residents have an opportunity to maintain the standard of schools the community expects and address critical needs in the district.

As members of the Board of Education, it is our responsibility to communicate to you the needs of the district. We believe now is the time to address our needs with additional local funding, so the board passed a resolution to place 3B on the ballot and handed over the campaign to a citizen's committee, PASS, to educate you and carry the message.

In the closing days of the election we wanted you to hear from us again that your YES vote on 3B will address critical repairs to school buildings, improve instructional technology in the classroom, and help to minimize future cuts to positions and supplies.

Our district has been hit hard by a significant number of cuts in recent years. This year the state reduced the funding to the schools by \$438 per student. That is a shortfall of about \$250,000 which is growing larger with the governor's announcement last week of additional cuts.

Voting YES on 3B helps prevent further cuts and allows the district to attract and retain quality teachers.

Holyoke Elementary School was built in 1954 and Holyoke High School was built in 1975. Past boards, administrations and employees have ensured that it was maintained well to make it last this long. The school district studied our facility needs and found a new building is not needed, but there are many critical repairs that must be addressed in both the elementary and high school in order to keep the buildings in good working condition.

These immediate repairs include: roof replacements, updated science labs, boiler upgrades, Americans with Disabilities Act compliant restrooms, adequate electrical and data connections in the classrooms, and other health and safety issues. We need additional funds to address

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these costly improvements.

Improved technology is also needed in our school district to prepare our students for the 21st century. Holyoke graduates must be in a position to compete for college admission, scholarships or entry into the workforce. In today's world, technology plays a vital role in being competitive.

The school board has created a mill levy override that decreases from 7.5 mills to 4.5 mills in five years, and completely goes away in 10 years. As a board, we embrace the accountability of 3B and look forward to sharing with the community how the money is used to improve the district.

We are confident we can meet the community's expectations and the sunset provision gives voters the chance to eliminate funding if the district is not using it well or if the state begins to fund us adequately.

As members of the board of education, we believe this mill levy election is about looking to the future. Voting YES on 3B will enable buildings to be maintained and last longer, puts necessary technology into the hands of students, and allows the district to slow down the cuts in this time when the state is not fully funding schools.

Thank you for seriously considering our proposal this election season. We want the district to maintain the type of quality Holyoke residents expect. We hope you vote YES on 3B.

Jeff Tharp
Kris Camblin