

Ottawa Hills Schools Seeks Replacement of 1.5 Mill Permanent Improvement Levy

At the August 7, 2008, board meeting, the members of the Ottawa Hills School District Board of Education took action to put the replacement of a 1.5 mill Permanent Improvement (PI) levy on the November ballot. The current PI levy, originally passed in 2003, will expire in 2008.

A PI levy may be used only for capital expenditures that have a useful life of five years or more. It may not be spent on the day-to-day operating expenses of the district. It will be used to maintain and repair buildings and grounds; to purchase technology hardware, furniture, and other equipment; to install security systems; and to fulfill the requirements of Jarod's Law.

The district currently has two PI levies. Each of these existing PI levies runs for five years. At the end of the five-year period, each levy must be either replaced or renewed. The PI levy on the ballot this fall is a replacement. If it passes, collection will begin in January 2009.

Because it is a replacement, not a renewal, the levy will be based on the current property valuation of the community. For the owner of a \$300,000 home, it would mean an increase of approximately \$13 per year in property taxes. This new levy will be in effect for four years, rather than the current five-year time period.

In the recent past, the PI funds have been used for such things as computers, SMARTBoards, and other hardware; technology infrastructure (network and internal wiring); the elementary and junior/senior high school roof replacement projects; security upgrades resulting from the Security and Vulnerability Assessments; and many other major repairs and renovations to the district's facilities.

In the future, funds from this levy will be used for such projects as upgrading technology hardware; replacing flooring in classrooms and hallways; upgrading heating and ventilation systems for energy conservation and cost effectiveness; installing new lighting, ceiling fans, and dropped ceilings in classrooms; remodeling restrooms; replacing lockers; installing new countertops and shelving in classrooms; replacing concrete on porches and sidewalks; replacing the multipurpose room and elementary gym floors; and upgrading electrical service to meet 21st century classroom needs. PI funds may also be contributed toward the installation of an artificial turf field, as well as to the capital maintenance of the natural grass fields within the elementary and junior/senior high school complex. They will be used to repave the parking lots at both buildings next summer.

We hope to continue to have the community's support for this PI levy. As always, school funding is a major concern for our district. We must provide the financial resources necessary to have safe, secure, well-maintained buildings and grounds and to supply the technology needed by our students and teachers. With this continued funding, we can preserve the community's investment in our schools.

Cathleen Heidelberg
Superintendent