

All of the written comments FROM INDIVIDUALS attending the meeting February 1, 2007

Question: What are your views regarding an operating levy for the Conneaut School District

1. Need to rein in the scope of the cost curve. Give back on wages or freeze in wages and levy.
2. Tax assessment has increased or decreased – when do they change?
3. What about a sales tax in Conneaut. .5% so it is across the board
4. People feel they no longer have a voice in state and federal government. They seem to use their local school system as a whipping boy to vent their frustrations
5. I support the levy but there needs to be specific information shared on what exactly the money will go for/a breakdown. Show us the mandates and what is funded and not funded. What are the projected costs of the litigation regarding building project? How will each of the schools benefit by the levy.
6. It is crucial to pass the levy to continue the gains we've made. I don't know what else to say, other than it needs to pass. Limiting class size and gaining paraprofessional aides is integral to maintain and increase student performance.
7. It's needed: period
8. Need a positive marketing of our schools to attract business and economic growth
Concern that cuts will have a negative input on
 Student growth
 Willingness of businesses to come here
 Willingness of students to return after graduation.
9. Better informed public about costs and salaries
10. Micro-manage fixed costs- special committee
Have to have tech equipment working ASAP
11. If the schools continue in the current trend our quality of education will be gone. Students are suffering.
12. It is a necessity to ensure continued success of our students.
13. This is a retirement town and low income, how can they give more if what they get now is a fixed income
Try another approach for the levy, when there aren't so many controversies on the ballot.
Do what you say and show the people how it can end if we don't pass this levy.
14. I am in support of the levy, especially to bring back student council and other programs. In today's economy, being comfortable with technology is key, specialization is key, and leadership is key. Without funds for technology in the schools, our kids are less competitive in the market place. Without sports there is less leadership. Without clubs, there is no specialization.
15. Specific breakdown information of where the money is going.
What are the "unfunded mandates" and their actual cost?
Complete "forth coming" from disclosure of dollars – litigation board
16. What is the money going to be used for? Not enough information given to the community.

17. The operating levy should be placed on the ballot. Revenue vs. expenses graph clearly shows the need for additional revenue. The margin for the first levy was close. Of the two options (levy or more cuts) the first is best for our kids/community
18. I think it is vital, critical to the success of our schools and our city's economy. Our children deserve it! I am very concerned about it failing again. Senior Citizens can't afford it. Do these projects reflect replacement of any of the previous cuts – or is this status quo?
19. If it doesn't pass deeper cuts will need to be made and will take years to gain back the progress made (like the losses after the dock won the case on paying back property taxes.) The education system and the kids especially will suffer.
20. Needed
More than 1
Problem from ??????????????
21. Crucial for the best interest/learning for students.
Keep class sizes down
New buildings – need to maintain update
Can't keep making cuts and meet increased demands
Sports programs – impact students' attitudes/learning.
22. I believe the citizens of Conneaut should pay for an operating levy for the district because God has blessed the United States of America and its citizens, and all children should have opportunity to learn from teachers who care about them and citizens who want the best for children and are thankful that live in the USA
23. 82% of wages/benefits ----- freeze
Income vs. property tax
Unfunded mandates
Where money goes
24. What is our district doing to correct the problem of the state funding? It seems that this is the root of the problem.
25. I have no other view than the necessity of the levy – it is important for maintaining current standards and programs.
26. This was NOT a community conversation. I don't doubt that the teachers are dedicated and hard working, but this a poor community. I thought we would be discussing some pro-active measures that could be taken in order to take the huge tax burden off of the working home owners in Conneaut. The schools are not the only group vying for our hard earned income. The school board was entrusted with our money in the past and they have not been good stewards of our money. The decision to build Gateway was a bad one.
27. Make the negative population of the community a minority. Perceptions of community – salaries high.
28. Are we going to have to keep having a levy passed every 2 to 6 years with a cost of living? Can we look for grants? Also we have a level of low income with our without kids.
29. We can't afford anymore cuts/our children will suffer/our community will lose/no one or no business wants to move into a community with bad schools. Our children won't be prepared for life after graduation.

30. I will support a levy to keep ahead of increases. Quality education is the foundation for a strong community. Well educated children will grow up to improve community, attitude. With funding cuts the “non special needs” children suffer just as greatly, if not more because appropriate education mandates” have to be funded. Those not requiring special help are taken along receiving an adequate education – not a good one.
31. I believe it is vital that the district and the community pass a levy in May for the future of our children. I believe that we as the community need to help emphasize the importance of passing a levy. Due to the fact that the levy failed by such a small margin in the fall, if we could just educate and convey to the people who didn't vote for the levy to vote yes.
32. It would be nice to make it a forced levy! Put it back on the ballot for the Spring! It is a necessity! Appeal to the older generation who hesitates for change why you do what you do.
33. If numbers are correct the Conneaut Schools need a levy to continue supporting the students in a manner that will insure their education.
What can be done to further decrease costs even if levy passes?
Other than state funding and property taxes what other income could be found to financially Help the schools?
What would it take to insure that a levy passes?
34. Hope the levy passes
35. We are in dire need of the levy to pass so that our children's education will continue to be able to prepare them for their future in the existing competitive job market. We need to stay competitive.
36. Here to support the levy.
37. We are basically here to find out what we can do to help get the levy passes. Pay to play is difficult for most parents. Many times that's all that will get a child through school, sports, band, etc.
38. Expenditures rising sharply compared to income. Why cuts made, have not seen much “negative” effect. What additional cuts would be made and the impact of them. Fees to participate and class fees impact those parents and students who can least afford it.
39. Very needed
Public input is important – need to reach the “right people”
40. District can't handle anymore cuts
Keep up supplying our children with a quality education.
41. We need a levy to a least balance the budget. We are not the government and we can not operate in a deficit. We need to keep the level of education we have accomplished – we can not have any more cuts to support staff or we will see a decrease in education.
42. The district cannot be put into fiscal emergency. The entire community will be adversely affected with loss of employment in inability to attract business. Students will further lose services and be denied the quality of education they deserve. Spread sheet and graph are very good tools to use with the public.
43. We need it
People need to get informed
44. Knowledge of community members and staff. Exactly what will happen if.....

45. We need a levy, students will suffer, and education will decline. Our schools need the levy in order to continue to operate.
46. School needs financial help? Can the Government come up with new ideas on subsidizing help?
47. If the levy does not pass then
 - Pay to play
 - Larger classroom size
 - Existing equipment needs repaired. How much per 100K of property will the levy cost?
48. Has how the Government is going to help schools funding change? Where exactly will the levy money go to?
49. No problem – do it! Need is clear
 - Key focus is quality education, classroom resource/staffing
 - Arts and sports are an important element of education as are the after school club/activities.
50. I see a levy is essential for the continuance of quality education. Without a passed levy additional programs and staff will be cut. Teachers must be paid or we will loose quality staff. The increase in cost is minimal compared to the expected results of a quality education.
51. Continue programs that are vital for student success. Good schools bring in industry.
52. A passing vote is needed for this community – without it we will fall behind. I believe that pay to play is out out-of-pocket expense that most parents can't afford. The levy passing is more about education and I believe that should be the focus.
53. Community and staff morale will go down and will lose good students and staff.
54. Why so many problems with construction of new schools?
 - Needed but need explanation
 - Teachers highest paid in community at 49 K vs \$20/for community Are principals and Vice-.....principals both necessary? What are non-funded mandates? What is breakdown of thelevy? Break down levy money and provide detailed explanation.
55. What can we do to get funding on Ohio changed? If it has not been passed in fifteen years, why is the community so against it? As a resident of another district, feelings really can get out of hand without communications. The state will chop a lot out of the schools. What is the community willing to give up? Will Conneaut be able to attract new business with the schools in the red?
56. Tonight we are speaking to the choir - focus on Monroe
57. Proceed with levy, local economic growth; invest in community to make community more progressive and attractive to others. Allow children to be competitive in college and outside the community.
58. What cuts will be made in the levy doesn't pass? What can happen to reach out to the voters in Monroe? How do we convince Monroe voters to pass the levy?
59. Need to reach out to other groups
60. Contacting people who did not support this levy
 - District must show the cost to run this district and what costs have risen.
61. I think the levy is important. If it doesn't pass, cut sports completely or increase pay for play to more Money. Cut busing in Monroe. Administration to give up stipends. Don't need three administrators at the high school. Engage people in Monroe and get their support.

62. Community at large does not understand how schools function today. Households without children/older/retired citizens think schools operate as they did when "I went to school. Try to reach these people by focusing on positive outcomes of levy passage such as increased property values, business development, etc
63. What is the contingency plan if a levy is not passed? Why is the levy 1.4 mill? Is there a small levy that could benefit the district – ie a two year while structuring a long term? Not a Band-Aid but a status quo type
64. Levy and cuts must be balanced
Look for equipment, etc. to be paid by grants
65. Very necessary to continue progress of school. Given that it is necessary
Address questions about how we can build new schools and not have the money to operate – same across Ohio
Need passionate and articulate spokesperson to engage the community
Address education as the base for community and economic development, social welfare and provides good jobs.
66. Primary and elementary buildings have technology items because of RF Grant. We need to maintain as all staff is trained. Class sizes vary depending on subject and make-up of class. To meet student needs, size needs to remain below 25. Support staff and interventionists are crucial for meeting needs of students and maintaining a safe, efficient environment.
67. Much needed to prevent the loss of additional staff. Current cuts have severely damaged programs that were in place to aid struggling learners. I still believe that more dialogue needs to happen with the community to discover the issues preventing them supporting a levy. Materials need to be purchased.
68. The reasons for the operating budget short-comings must be articulated. Linda did a nice job of putting it in layman's terms. Stress that the bond issue only covers loans and the time since the last operating levy. Must combat the idea that the shortcoming is because of the new schools.
69. How can you get the community more involved?
70. Special needs students % of current study body?
Special needs students – today vs. 3 years ago?
Special needs students – today vs. projects with and without levy?
71. I believe it is imperative to put the levy on again. Why? Not only does it help to provide quality education to our youth, it also gives back to our community – increased the value our homes (to have an effective school system) and makes Conneaut a more attractive place to live. I believe a "community is known by the schools it keeps." (borrowed from a school mission statement)
72. We need a levy to maintain a quality education to prepare students for college. I am concerned that class sizes are going to become too large to meet the individual needs of students. We will loose ground quickly since there is not money to replace and upgrade textbooks and technology.
73. It is necessary and critical to continue being a quality school district. We need to make sure the public is informed about the need and cost to households. We need to try hard to avoid cuts.
74. Not only needed- but necessary – our schools are our common foundation.
75. Necessary because of lack of funds. States method of distributing funds is unequal.
76. It needs to be on the ballot in the spring – a necessity

77. Pay to play is not too bad. Berkshire is over \$350.00 per sport. Jackson Township is \$350 for 7th grade volleyball. Can't take many more cuts in staff. Already at max in special ed.
78. Are the principals and vice-principals necessary at each school? If so, tell us why and the cost of this. Need to know what teachers are being paid per contract. What are the breakdowns of certified and non-certified staff and their wages?
79. Success for a student is the teacher
80. Spend the money the way it's supposed to be spent and show it to the community as it's spent
81. Need to bring parents and grandparents back into schools for programs and activities for all grades. We need to get REAL pride back in this district. But also for the community (from seniors on down) we need to get control of the drug problems in this town and county. Need to bring levy and school programs down to elementary level. Discussions. Get seniors to correlate the increase in school costs (utilities, supplies, etc) to their increasing expenses and the decline in revenue to their limited income.
82. Pride starting at the community level. Drug and alcohol problem. Joint community working together
83. If levy passes – will some cuts be reinstated? Positions? Even if this passes, we will still be in trouble.
84. I think income tax for schools is a good idea
85. What is causing that 45 degree angle increase in expenditures on the chart? We should know what these huge expenses are. Why would Student Council be cut? A teacher won't volunteer to advise?
86. How to put the information out to others who don't have children. Publish more everywhere (report cards) Communicate, communicate to community.
87. Should we as a community look at where cuts could be made?
88. What gives between the federal mandates or not? What cuts will have to be made without a levy? Explain to town people that the building of the schools was determined by the federal funding (was not a waste as we have state of art facilities)
89. Realize and validate the loss of history in the old buildings while accenting the positives of moving forward (equal education regardless of where you live, etc.)
90. What are all school districts in Ohio doing to correct the amount of money spent on tests that do not determine the intelligence of our children?
91. Most people are apathetic and unconcerned.
92. Change school funding
93. Engaging Monroe Township
94. What cuts will happen to school if the levy doesn't pass? How can we get more people from Monroe involved?
95. I am concerned about the loss of resources and programs for our highest and lowest achievers. These children have special needs which, if not met, could result in losing them.

96. School district report card has been good – keep it that way
97. School income tax?
98. **** stars for a well-managed meeting
99. Our district report card will take a serious hit if we cannot financially support our learning goals. People should know the consequences!
100. Levy is necessary for our district to remain effective and competitive.
101. Misperception on K-3 technology, really it is paid for with reading 1st monies. If levy does not pass, more cuts will affect students a greater level. What will they be? Community is not educated on finances of the district. Need to reach all groups (seniors, people that have not voted in past, Monroe, historically Monroe has not supported levies. What is the increase of expenditures based on? We were given no explanation. Confused on types of levies. Disappointed people were cut off. Let them talk!!!
102. This was not a community conversation meeting, very disappointing.
103. How do you educate the community as to the real story behind the money situation and let them know what cuts have already been made and what cuts will be made if the levy doesn't pass? Does the community realize that we all have already had a wage freeze even though cost of living continues to increase? Communication is the key and listen to the community people not just the school staff point of view. These are the people we have to reach. We need to listen and work them to understand.
104. I understand and value our district. We need to fund our schools to attract more people to our area. Successful schools attract more residents and raise property values. Would like to have an opportunity for public to address concerns and questions to further understand school needs. Open forum.
105. Sense of ownership
106. Outline of issues submitted by participant at the end of meeting
- Schools important to community growth
 - Observations from others
 - Unfunded mandates
 - Identify them
 - What are the cost incurred with regard to each item
 - Alternative
 - Average teacher compensation versus Conneaut per capita income of \$14,703.00 Median family income \$38,000.00 – 37% of the population over 62
 - Perceptions – lack of support when discrepancy is too great
 - A. Waiver days
 - B. Snow day
 - C. In-service days
 - D. 180 instructional days
 - E. Statistics show average US worker working more today than previously compared to perception of instructional staff working less than previously.
 - Significant decline in population reported in 2000 as 12,485 with less today which is represented by 5,038 households of which 1,500 or thirty percent are rentals.
 - A. Competing fees- rental inspection \$75.00
 - B. Stagnant rental income results in 30% of costs being passed to disproportionate share of population
 - C. Rental vacancy rate 10%

- Choices that have led to credibility issues
 - A. School location and busing costs
 - B. Windows, heat or air conditioning only
 - C. Attitude issues for example sporting incidents
 - D. Assistant Superintendent issue – problems with building results in question of who was watching the farm
 - E. Levy effective rate of taxation, reappraisals resulting in increased costs with the same tax rate. Need for candor with the public on this issue.
 - F. Example principal/assistant principal duties.
- Community is poor and declining
- Growth of the budget as compared to rate of inflation

107. White paper submitted by an individual at end of meeting

- a. Schools important to community growth
- b. Observations from others
 - unfunded mandates
 - a. identify them
 - b. what are the costs incurred with regard to each item
 - c. Alternatives

108. Letter given to superintendent from a community member attending the meeting

I am writing this letter as a concern citizen. I have read in the newspaper that the Conneaut School Board is considering hiring a consultant to assist in successful passage of the up and coming School Levy in May or November.

I feel that the money would be better spent and receive greater public approval if the Board were to hire a consultant who would cut expenses and increase the efficiency of our educational system.

For example:

- a. School buses – possibly some small – more fuel efficient buses for those routes that have fewer pickups
- b. Combined fuel purchase agreement with the city, fire, police, street, and water and sewer departments.
- c. Possibly drill a gas well to lower heating costs
- d. Reorganization of Administrative and Support Staff

Now, I understand that cuts have been made – the \$1.2 million – but, your already coming back and asking the taxpayers for additional money to cover cost of hiring a “professional consultant” to tell the board “How to ask for more Money.” What’s wrong with this picture? Don’t you understand the meaning of “NO?”

Instead, why don’t you try putting the classrooms, personnel and equipment to their highest and best use, utilizing potential to receive results on your bottom line.

I feel that the voters of Conneaut would be more support of a levy, if they were assured that the fat and waste were cut from the budget and the system were operating at peak efficiency. I have worked and owned my own business in the community for over 70 and understand that the cost to operate a business, or home, for that matter, has increased. And I also know that when expenses start to exceed the income, you first look at cutting expenses, and then look at ways to increase income.

As a voter and property owner, I ask the board to consider cuts, but not cuts to the education of our children. Show us the sacrifice from within the system. The, I feel the voters would made the steps needed to pass the levy.