



October 14, 2008

Levy provides opportunity

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Just imagine, a new building with all the modern elements of the 21st century: Safety and security, technology, windows, air conditioning, heat, ADA compatibility, hall space, lighting, and sound systems in every room.

This is the opportunity being presented to residents of the Fremont City School District at the November elections -- the possibility of having a new middle school built for the children of the district. This would be the first major building project of the district since the 1980s.

The project is made possible by the Ohio School Facilities Commission, a state agency created in May 1997 to oversee the rebuilding of Ohio's public schools. The OSFC awarded the Fremont City School District funding based upon an Exceptional Needs Program application. This funding award will be almost \$8.8 million when the building project is complete and is nearly 32 percent of the total cost of the building.

Reading this another way, the state of Ohio will give the school district 32 percent of the dollars needed to build a new middle school. This is tremendous! This money is not from state income tax, but from the settlement between the state of Ohio and tobacco companies. It has been earmarked by the state to help build new buildings.

There is a flip side to this 32 percent gift. The state will only fund this amount if the Fremont City School District passes a Permanent Improvement/Bond Levy to pay for the remaining 68 percent of the building. Also, the OSFC demands a continuous permanent improvement levy to maintain the new building. In prior years, the OSFC did not require a permanent improvement levy and new buildings were not being used because districts could not afford the repair and maintenance costs.

The PI/Bond Levy total is 3.45 mills. One mil is one dollar per \$1,000 of assessed value. Your county auditor can tell you the assessed value on your property, but it is basically 35 percent of your market or actual value. The county then reduces this gross tax by a 10 percent rollback and possibly a 2.5 percent rollback allowance for owner-occupied residential property.

It will cost the average taxpayer of the district \$55.40 per year. This is based upon the average taxpayer owning and occupying a \$90,000 home and property. The county offers a homestead exemption to people 65 years of age or older, which would reduce the cost. And the Board of Education has stated in a resolution they will not collect on the current permanent improvement levy if the PI/Bond Levy passes in November. The reduction is figured in the average taxpayer cost.

The Nov. 4 election provides the opportunity for a new middle school. With your help, the Fremont City School District can turn what once could only be imagined into reality.

Dave Chambers is treasurer of Fremont City Schools
