



October 20, 2008

## Group tours middle school, learns needs

By *LESLIE BIXLER*  
Staff writer

FREMONT -- About 40 people attended an open house and tour of the Fremont Middle School Sunday to learn about the school's needs as well as its related levy that will appear on Nov. 4 election ballot.

Fremont Superintendent Traci McCaudy gave a brief presentation on the Ohio Schools Facilities Commission and its programs.

"This is a wonderful opportunity. We realize the state of our economy, but we need a new building now," McCaudy said. "If we don't, we're going to have to invest more and more dollars into an old building."

She said the state will take back its offered share of \$8.8 million and construction costs will only continue to increase.

The bond issue and permanent improvement levy would provide the local share to construct a new middle school with the State of Ohio Exceptional Needs Program. The project is estimated to cost \$27.5 million. The ENP award, valued at \$8.8 million, is earmarked to replace the existing middle school which was built in 1909. The city's middle school was ranked first on a list of buildings most in need. At a June school board meeting, McCaudy said the district has one year to raise local funds, which is estimated to be about \$18.7 million. That breaks down to 32 percent provided by the state toward the total cost and a 68 percent contribution from the community.

The district is renewing, yet reducing the current permanent improvement levy which was passed in March 2004 from 2 mills to 1.35 mills. The permanent improvement levy money will continue to be used for technology upgrades and repairs for the district's current buildings. However, by adding the bond issue, there will be a net increase of 1.45 mills. The bond will be paid with a 5 percent interest rate per year over the next 28 years.

Kay Long, of Fremont, attended the open house and supports the building of a new middle school.

"In the 1970s the cafeteria was in need of repair and now it still seems substandard," she said. "The kids should have the best."

While she doesn't want to see the building completely torn down, she doesn't think it should be a school either. She and her children attended the school and have seen the changes over the years.

After the presentation, members of the levy committee and staff members guided tours throughout the school. Major cracks are visible in most rooms and hallways. The major other problems entail the foundation shifting and water leaks. The entire ceiling in the lobby had once collapsed and has been repaired. The lobby is the main entrance for students, teachers and visitors.

"There are over \$4 million worth of repairs that need to be taken care of right now," McCaudy said.

She said the levy would cost the owner of the \$90,000 home an additional \$56 per year for a brand new school, 15 cents per day.

If the new school is constructed, classes would likely begin there in 2011.

There will be another tour and levy information open house at 4 p.m. Wednesday at the middle school.

E-mail Leslie Bixler at [lbixler@gannett.com](mailto:lbixler@gannett.com)

---



Cheryl Schell, assistant principal of the Fremont Middle School, guides a tour through the school Sunday. (Leslie Bixler/News-Messenger)