

Opinion

21898 Farmington Road/Farmington, MI 48024

Bob Sklar editor/477-5450

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Clarenceville Vote to waive school rollback

ON MONDAY, June 11, residents in the Clarenceville School District will go to the polls to elect two trustees and to vote on a Headlee Tax Limitation Amendment waiver request.

Today, the Observer speaks to the ballot proposal and urges a yes vote on the waiver request. Thus far, the district, which includes southeast Farmington Hills, has taken two actions that relate to the June 11 waiver request.

First, the school board has voted to reduce its debt retirement levy by 1.5 mills, from 2.25 to 0.75 mills.

Second, the district held a Truth in Taxation public hearing, which sets the stage for it to capture added revenue from increased assessments up to the cost-of-living.

Assessments in Clarenceville have gone up by about 7.8 percent.

The Headlee Amendment to the Michigan Constitution provides the district cannot collect added income, as a result of increased assessments, higher than the cost of living, without a vote of the people. With 4.8 percent of the Headlee Truth in Taxation hearing allows the district to collect 3 percent of the added income from the increased assessments.

The June 11 vote allows the district to collect increased taxes from the all of the assessment increase.

TO SIMPLIFY what's happening, for the time being, let's set aside the debt retirement levy decrease.

What we have left is a total school property tax levy of 44.15 mills. Of this total, the operational levy is 41.4 mills (\$41.40 per \$1,000 of state equalized value).

Based on current assessment information from Livonia, Redford Township and Farmington Hills, the district must roll back its millage by 0.141 mills (14 cents per \$1,000 SEV). For the owner of an \$80,000 house, that of the Headlee waiver would result in increased taxes of \$5.60 per year. The increase is so small, that it's hardly worth the energy to vote "no."

As required by law, the school board has reduced the debt levy by 1.5 mills.

For the owner of an \$80,000 house, that amounts to a savings of about \$60 a year. The \$60 savings will be realized regardless of how residents vote on the Headlee waiver June 11. But the savings is a real one.

For the school district, though, approval of the waiver will add enough income (about \$30,000) to provide a small cushion for its first year out of the chute as an out-of-formula school district.

IN ADDITION, Clarenceville is facing a possible major added expense if the Michigan Legislature requires it to pay F.I.C.A. payroll deductions for its employees, a cost now borne by the state.

The above information convinces the Observer that a "yes" vote is in order June 11 for Clarenceville residents.

For voters desiring more specific information, the following comparison of last year and this year is revealing as it relates to the Headlee Amendment:

• Last year, total SEV in Clarenceville increased 10.8 percent. There was a total of \$4.8 million losses in the assessment roll and gains of \$7 million in new growth. Inflation was 4.1 percent. The Headlee formula, if applied last year, would have allowed the district to collect only 94.79 percent of its 41.4 operational levy. The millage would have been rolled back to 39.243 and the district would have not collected additional income of \$44,000. Last June, voters approved the Headlee waiver request.

• This year, total SEV in Clarenceville has increased by about 7.8 percent. Losses are at \$4.5 million, new growth at \$10 million and inflation at 4.8 percent. The Headlee formula, if applied this year, will allow the district to collect 99.652 of its total operational levy of 41.4 mills or 41.259 mills. If Headlee is waived, the district will collect an additional \$30,000.

Some residents may want to vote against the Headlee waiver because they are tired of paying property taxes, because they are on fixed incomes or because they are disappointed in the schools. We believe, however, that a "yes" vote is in order and urge our readers to approve the waiver on Monday, June 11.

Should 'young fives' be held back a year?

Q: My husband and I just went to kindergarten round-up. Now, I'm not sure whether my son should start kindergarten this year because he is a very young 5-year-old. He has a September birthday and will be 5 when he enters school. Some children in his class were born in December and will be almost 6 when they start school. I think we should hold him back a year. This is our first child to enter school and I don't want to make a mistake. My husband disagrees. He says I am interfering before he has entered school. What do you think?

A: I can't tell you how many parents I've talked to over the years who now wish they had held their young 5-year-old back a year — especially if the child is a boy.

All children do not walk or talk at the same time. And all are not necessarily ready for kindergarten at a certain magical age, be it 5 or otherwise. This is the maturation factor in education and tons of research support the fact that children differ in their readiness for school, regardless of age.

On the other hand, much depends on the type of kindergarten curriculum your son will be exposed to in your school district. If the curriculum is a highly structured, academic oriented "sit at the desk and do ditto-format," and assuming your son is not ready, you could be severely multiplying his present and future school problems.

If, on the other hand, the kindergarten curriculum uses the developmental approach, he could experience school success as a young 5-year-old. The developmental approach, which the Japanese use in kindergarten, helps children learn how to learn. Children move at their own pace.

The developmental curriculum is designed to develop the children's self-esteem. It is a process that ensures success in small tasks that results in generating positive feelings toward learning.

The developmental curriculum is alive, fluent and not boring to children. Learning occurs primarily through hands-on projects, through



Doc Doyle

exploring, by sorting, using blocks, holding, touching, feeling, through creative learning centers, by using all of the child's emerging senses.

There is still the necessary seat work but not where everyone must be on page 50 of a workbook on a certain day. The child is considered unique and allowed to move at his/her own pace as opposed to being part of a herd of cattle driven to pasture every morning. Please keep in mind that workbooks and dittos to play a role but not to the point that this format dominates a child's entire day.

You indicate the kindergarten program is your district uses the developmental, hands-on, exploratory process. However, you also indicate you have been advised by your building principal and the kindergarten teacher, who has 22 years of kindergarten experience, to hold your son back a year.

My suggestion is to take the advice of the professional educators, the same as you would take the advice of your own physician.

Your husband's concern is typical. Men, from my experience, have a much more difficult time with being told their son is not ready for school. He'll adjust because you say he wants the best for his son. Tell him the course of western civilization will not change if his son graduates from high school at 18 instead of 17. Also gently remind him that he should have gone to kindergarten round-up to get the facts. Encourage him to talk to the kindergarten teachers, they love their work and make decisions based on what is in the best interest of the child.

Although I wouldn't admit this at a younger age, I am now convinced that, all factors being equal, no one knows the young child better than you, the mother. Your instincts and the advice you received from the professional educators says to hold the boy back a year. So do it.

Dr. James Doyle is a former assistant superintendent in the Troy School District. Questions in this column should be sent to Doc Doyle, c/o Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150.

from our readers

Scrutinize candidates

To the editor:

After reading the school board candidates article May 14, I felt compelled to write. I have participated in school parent groups, school board meetings and several school community study committees.

I have consistently found that the board, administration and staff of Farmington schools have repeatedly demonstrated their professionalism and unwavering dedication to the education of our children.

With the many changes and challenges facing our district, it is imperative that those elected to the school board have a proven track record of working constructively with the board, administration, staff and parents.

We must elect experienced participants in the district — not "watchers" passively taking divisive potshots of antagonistic criticism and misinformed accusations.

The district faces a demanding future that will require cooperative decision making. Each one of us must vote and support experienced positive contributors to the board.

David L. York
Farmington Hills

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