

Levy Decrease - Savings for East Troy School District's Referendum Debt Even Better than Expected

Great news for East Troy taxpayers and parents of children in the East Troy School District: even with the passage of the \$22.5 million referendum question and the \$2.2 million referendum question for new district facilities, this year's tax levy for the district will decrease by an average of 2.03 percent.

While revenue limit freezes bring no additional monies to the school, this decrease in taxpayer burden comes primarily because of an increase in aid from the state. The regular portion of the school budget, which makes up approximately 85 percent of the levy, received a big boost from that aid, which in turn allowed a reduction in property taxes. This offsets the increase in property taxes from the referendum and added additional savings towards property taxes on top of that.

Originally, the referendum portion of the tax levy was projected to cost taxpayers 16 cents for every \$1,000 of home value. That rate dropped to five cents per \$1,000 after locking in a majority of the bonds.

Meanwhile, the first phase of bidding on the district's referendum projects wrapped up in October, with the results bringing even more savings. Pending a final review, the bids were approximately \$600,000 under the allocated \$7.5 million, which allows the board to approve some additional alternatives within the scope of the high school project and save some money for contingency purposes for upcoming elementary school work.

"We're pleased with the decrease in tax burden, and we've also managed to keep to a conservative budget to help keep costs down without compromising quality," said Katherine Zwirgzdas, Business Manager for the district. "Our financial advisors are locking in historically low interest rates and making sure we have the best possible structures for our debt. So far, everything has gone quite well from a financial standpoint for the referendum projects."

Essentially, the district is still getting the same high-quality new facilities, but with a lower price tag for taxpayers. The projects included in the referendum include:

- Construction of a new Pre-K through 2nd Grade facility at the Prairie View site
- Minor renovations for district administration and alternative education to be relocated to Leona Doubek
- Transportation and site improvements at Prairie View
- Upgrades to help make the Middle School more energy efficient
- 21st Century improvements for the High School to the robotics and tech ed labs, music rooms, and fitness center, as well as enlarged classrooms
- District-wide furniture, fixture and equipment upgrades

"It's definitely a welcome relief for taxpayers in East Troy," said Zwirgzdas. "The benefits will be felt both at home in people's personal pocketbooks, and the passage of the referendum will of course greatly improve the facilities in which the children will be educated. We still however, struggle with no additional monies year after year from the state for regular operational costs."

