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January 9, 2023

## **East Troy School District Board of Education Grappling with Referendum Question for April 4 Ballot**

Likely, voters in the East Troy School District will be asked to allow the District to exceed its state set revenue limits by \$3 million each year for three years in a non-recurring operating referendum question on the April 4 spring election ballot. The Board has not yet formally voted on the referendum question; it is expected to do so next week at the January 16 board meeting.

At a December 21 special board meeting, the East Troy School District Board of Education considered the results of a recent community survey as it discussed possible referendum questions for the April 4 ballot.

After much discussion among the board, two major themes came to the forefront: operational is a high priority and controlling the tax impact. The board directed administration to prepare for consideration an operational question that would exceed the revenue limits by \$3 million per year for three years for non-recurring purposes to help maintain existing programming and staffing. If approved by voters, the referendum would begin with the 2023-24 school year and end with the 2025-26 school year. The estimated tax impact of the referendum would be \$1.40 per each \$1,000 of equalized value.

The District has been struggling with budget deficits as revenues continue to not keep pace with costs. In the last five years (2018 - 2023), the total revenue limit and per pupil aid (the major form of revenue from the state) is \$219,590 more in 2022-2023 or 1.3% over the 2018-2019 amount. In addition, the East Troy Community School District has done 10.2 million dollars in budget balancing efforts in the last 16 years. Also, Federal ESSER funds for COVID-19 pandemic helped the District balance its budget but those funds are now ending.

The District has already made budget cuts and reduced costs where possible, according to District Administrator Dr. Chris Hibner. But without additional revenue, the District will be unable to sustain current programs and retain and attract quality staff.

“Education and learning are first and foremost about children. However, having quality services happens by having quality staff. Education is a competitive market as public schools and private sector organizations are all working to attract and retain quality staff. In fact, over the past year, we have had to replace more than 65 staff members including 37 licensed staff.”

Other costs have also been increasing including utilities, transportation, and technology, he added.

The District had been also considering a capital referendum to address high priority facility needs. While residents indicated support for a capital referendum, Board members felt there should only be a single question given the tax impact if both the capital and operational were to be addressed at this time. As a result, the Board of Education is considering an operational referendum question to address ongoing financial challenges to help sustain current programming and retain and attract quality staff.



# EAST TROY

## COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

*Committed to the Growth & Success of Each Student, Each Year*

Dr. Christopher G. Hibner, District Administrator  
Katherine Zwirgzdas, Administrator of Business Services  
Amy Foszpanczyk, Director of Teaching & Continuous  
Improvement of Student Learning  
Amanda Jones, Director of Pupil Services  
Andy Daniels, Director of Buildings, Grounds and Safety

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“Facility needs are very important, but we recognize our operational needs and the impact on the taxpayer. We will need to continue to work together toward addressing these facility needs,” Ted Zess (School Board President) said. “But the District has reached a point where it is impossible to support our students by sustaining our current high level of programming and services without additional operating revenue.”

For more information, visit the [District website](#).