



Louisville City Schools 18 5 YEAR EMERGENCY OPERATING LEVY

Protect Leopard Tradition!

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Q: What is the District’s current millage and when does it expire?

A: The District currently has the following general fund millage as documented by the Stark County Auditor:

GENERAL FUND			
Date Voted	Millage	2020 Calendar Year	Res/Agr Eff Millage
	5.00	INSIDE	5.000000
12/10/1968	6.00	68-CONT RENEWAL E	1.640574
11/4/1969	12.90	69-CONT RENEWAL E	3.527234
5/5/1970	1.50	71-CONT RENEWAL E	0.410143
5/2/1972	2.00	73-CONT RENEWAL E	0.546858
1/30/1979	4.90	79-CONT ADD'L NEW 79	1.733027
5/5/1987	6.90	87-CONT ADD'L NEW 87	3.162621
11/3/1992	7.90	92-CONT ADD'L NEW 92	3.979569
11/7/2017	4.50	18-22 Emergency (1,835,000)	4.500000
TOTAL	51.60		24.500026

As you can see in the chart above, total general fund millage equals 51.60 voted mills; however, as you can see in the last column, of that 51.60 voted mills, the District is only collecting 24.50. This is due to HB 920 which is a law from the 1970’s that reduces the millage as property values grow to ensure the District is only receiving the same amount the levy generated in the first year it was approved and collected. This is the main reason the District has to come back to voters for additional levies because inflationary revenue increases are not received on the voted levies.

Q: Why did you purchase the skating rink when other properties are in dismay and not being utilized such as Fairhope, Pleasant Grove and the green space?

A: The District had been keeping an eye on the skating rink property for a few years. There are three main reasons the District purchased this property...opportunity, investment and safety. The addition of this property opens the District up to future opportunities. The purchase of the property was a great investment as the District was able to purchase it at a deep discount of its fair market value. Finally, and most importantly, it can provide the District with further safety. The District’s drive to the middle school already went through the property. In addition, one hope for the property is to provide indoor practice facilities to some of our athletic teams who are currently traveling across the county to other facilities.

The Board has recently discussed both the Fairhope and Pleasant Grove properties. In the near future, the District will be moving forward with the potential sale of the Fairhope property. A decision on the future sale of any of the Pleasant Grove property has not yet been made. The green space has not been owned by the Board since 2010. One further note, the District is required to sell properties worth over \$10,000 by public auction, so the potential sales would be subject to those parameters.

Q: Is the rollatorium facility structurally sound?

A: Yes, the District had Louisville resident and founder/president of Coon Restoration, Steve Coon, take a look at the building. He stated, “The building is definitely sustainable and has great opportunity to be an asset for the community.”

Q: Does the budget reflect repairs/renovations costs for the skating rink?

A: No, these costs are not included in the budget at this time. The building and property will remain as is until the current deficit is rectified unless we are able to secure private donations.

Q: How are you addressing organized opposition and “fake news” regarding the levy?

A: This District is not aware of any official organized opposition. There are certainly groups of people who have shared that they are not supportive of the levy. The goal of the District is to ensure everyone has the facts and information they need to make their decision at the ballot on March 17th. “Fake news” is one of our biggest obstacles. There has been and will continue to be a lot of incorrect information circulating by word of mouth, social media, and other types of media. The District is trying to counteract this by putting out the correct information in as many ways as possible with hopes of reaching the community with the facts.

Q: How does the tax increase affect local business?

A: Local businesses pay property taxes just like homeowners. The passage of Issue 18 would be an increased investment for them as well.

Q: Who pays health insurance and how much is it?

A: The District provides employee health insurance through the Stark County Council of Governments. This self-insurance plan serves all of the Stark County school districts as well as many other schools and public entities around the State of Ohio. Administrative employees pay 16% of the premium, certified employees pay 15% of the premium, and classified employees pay 13% of the premium.

Q: Why are we eliminating athletics, clubs, and teachers and general things because we have no money yet the football team got new uniforms, the stadium got new turf, and the baseball team got new stadiums, etc.?

A: Athletic uniform purchases have been put on a rotation so that they can be more easily budgeted for. The football team was on the rotation to get uniforms for the 2020-21 school year; however, community members approached the District and donated the majority of the uniform expense which enabled the

District to purchase them a year early. The total cost of the uniforms was \$22,870; private donations totaling \$12,000 were received to offset that cost. The remainder of the funds came out of the District's athletic fund and not the District's general operating fund.

The stadium turf was replaced a few years early. There were some seam issues with the original turf that was going to require a significant amount of warranty work which the District would not have had to pay for. Throughout these discussions, the District was offered a major discount in replacing the turf in lieu of fixing the original. When the details were analyzed, it made sense for the District to take advantage of the discount. One note, the District has a separate fund where a portion of the reserved seats ticket sales gets deposited to. This fund has been in existence since the stadium was built with the idea of it being set aside to assist in funding the replacement turf, so the money accumulated in that fund was used to offset the already reduced cost of the turf.

The baseball/softball field update project completed last year was 100% paid by private donations. District funds were not used.

Q: Why do the District pay so much in postage mailing items home from the middle school?

A: Postage is a cost of doing business expense. Like everything, the District works to send out information in the most efficient and cost-effective manner.

Q: How many staff members are retiring and will that offset the loss of teachers?

A: At this point in time, there are two teachers and a part-time custodian who are retiring this year. These retirements have been factored in with the projected cuts that have been announced.

Q: Are the OEA, LEA, and OAPSE groups backing the levy?

A: Both the LEA (the local chapter of OEA) and OAPSE were asked for a letter of endorsement for Issue 18. The LEA offered the following statement of support, "The LEA remains supportive of generating new revenue to continue providing high quality education for the students of Louisville City Schools." OAPSE has provided an official letter endorsing Issue 18.

Q: What is the strategy to meet with the elderly citizens?

A: The District is trying to use as many venues/outlets as possible to get information out, not only for our older population, but for everyone. That is one reason that we are holding community forum meetings throughout this campaign. In addition to the meetings, the District will be putting out information through social media, print media, mailings, signs, and door hangers. District officials are willing to meet personally with anyone who wants to and are open to further suggestions to help get the facts and information out to the masses.

Q: What cuts are teachers making?

A: Classroom supplies and building supply budgets have been decreased over the last year and will continue to do so as needed.

Q: Why does the school have CNN on the televisions during school?

A: The District eliminated cable service several years ago, so there are no televisions that are on showing CNN in any of the school buildings. The only way CNN would be viewed would be through streaming online, it is certainly a possibility that CNN among other media outlets would be streamed as part of appropriate classroom instruction.

Q: Does the school board realize that many seniors, the disabled, and many minimum wage workers who have to work two jobs to stay afloat? They live in fear everyday of not being able to afford current bills. Does the school board even watch the news? So many live pay check to pay check.

A: The school board is very sensitive to the many needs of this community. In fact, the District provides programs and receives donations to help many students and families that have financial hardships. One example of that is our backpack program. Through generous donations and fundraisers, the District is able to send meals home with many students at the elementary and middle school buildings on a weekly basis to ensure they have food for the weekend. The board members were elected to serve this community on the board of education. As such, the students of Louisville City School District are their top priority and maintaining our current programs is what is best for kids.

Q: Most people in the township will have to move if all these pass. Is this a need, want or greed? You have two properties that need to be sold...Fairhope and Pleasant Grove. How can senior citizens afford these taxes?

A: This first statement is simply conjecture. The District knows of no one who will be forced to move if the levy passes. In fact, the property tax bills within Louisville City Schools fall well below many other District's in Stark County and other surrounding areas, so there is a high likelihood that one could see a higher tax bill by moving.

This levy is a need. To be able to offer the current programs, the District must have additional revenue.

Regarding the Fairhope and Pleasant Grove properties, the Board has had discussions related to potential sale. The Fairhope property is land-locked, and the Board is interested in pursuing the potential sale of those parcels. A decision regarding the Pleasant Grove property has not yet been made.

District senior citizens are respected and understood to have many different financial dynamics. The District continues to run as efficiently as possible to maximize the community's investment in our students. Looking strictly at a financial perspective, from 2015 to 2019, Social Security Cost of Living Adjustments have increased 6.7% in total. District revenue has increased only by 3.8% in the District's general fund. In that time total district salaries have increased by only 3.4%. The District is simply at a point where it is necessary to secure additional revenue to be able to maintain current programming.

Q: If the levy fails, will union contracts be renegotiated?

A: The current teacher contract runs through June 30, 2022, and the current classified contract runs through June 30, 2023. There are no plans at this time to reopen either of the contracts early.

Q: Will non-union employees take pay cuts?

A: The District is looking at reducing positions if the levy attempt is unsuccessful; there are no plans for salary reductions at this time.

Q: I know just from running a household how much more I spend on food, cleaning products, and toiletries than in years past. How much inflation costs are budgeted into the cost of operation and reflected in the totals shown at the meeting? Also we just passed a renewal levy three or so years ago, why is this renewal not sufficient before it expires that we need an emergency levy now? And will it be on the ballot for renewal in a year or so as well or will this emergency levy be sufficient on its own?

A: Inflationary increases are included in the forecasted expenditures and vary depending on the expense. For example, insurance premiums are projected with an estimated 10% increase each year. Utilities and supplies inflationary cost projections are projected mostly in the 2-3% increase range.

The District passed its first five year emergency levy in 2013 to generate \$1,835,000 annually. This levy was renewed for another 5 years in November 2017. Due to State law, school districts do not receive inflationary increases on voted levies with a few minor exceptions including new construction within the district. HB 920 was a law put into place in the 1970's to ensure that voted levies continue to generate the same amount of money they did the first year they were approved by voters. So year after year, a voted levy will generate the same amount and does not grow based on property value increases. For example, we have a levy that was first approved in 1968 at 6.00 mills that collected around \$800,000. Today, we still receive around \$800,000 and thus only collect 1.60 of the voted 6.00 mills based on the current property values within the District. All of the District's levies are continuous except for the 2013 emergency levy. Emergency levies must be renewed to continue the District's revenue stream. Issue 18 is also an emergency levy which will need to be renewed towards the end of its 5 year term.

Q: Is the District wanting this money to purchase a new \$700,000 scoreboard for the stadium?

A: Issue 18 is a levy request to go into the District's general operating fund to maintain current programming, retain staff, preserve busing and protect extracurricular athletics and clubs. It is absolutely not being requested to fund a new scoreboard for the stadium. Please know that there is a community committee currently looking at replacing the scoreboard, but if it is replaced, it will come from private donations and not from district resources.

Q: Is it true that we pay for teachers' cell phones?

A: No, this is not true. No teachers receive a District-paid cell phone. There are a handful of staff, including administrators, maintenance, and a school nurse, who are considered "on-call" who receive a monthly reimbursement to offset a portion of their personal cell phone expenses.

Q: How many teachers do we have that are double dipping (retired and are still working at a high pay rate)?

A: Currently, we have no teachers who have retired and been re-hired. We do employ one tutor who retired from a different school district, but as a tutor, he is paid at the bottom of the salary schedule.

- Q: Are the “no school days” shown on the school calendar considered as work days (because they are paid days off out of the 184 days that teachers must work)?**
- A: No, the "no school days" are not contract days for the teachers, so they are not included in the 184 days that they must work.
- Q: How many vacation and personal days do teachers get each year?**
- A: Teachers do not receive any vacation days. They do get 3 personal days each year which is required by State law.
- Q: What is the per pupil cost of education in Louisville including all funds?**
- A: Louisville's per pupil revenues and expenditures are both in the lowest 5% of the State when compared to the other 606 public school districts. For FY2019 (the latest information available), the total cost per pupil was \$9,468.44 while the State average was \$12,076.07.
- Q: What is the District’s percentage of students who are on free or reduced lunch?**
- A: The District's current free/reduced lunch percentage is at 34%.
- Q: How does accepting open enrollment students affect the District’s finances?**
- A: We are very cognizant of the open enrollment students we accept. We will take an open enrollment student if a slot is available at a particular grade level which means our numbers must be below the recommended number in order for a student to be accepted. The District currently receives more money in open enrollment than is taken away.
- Q: With a levy coming up, why are we paying cell phone stipends when we could save thousands a year by cutting those? Is this a contractual issue?**
- A: There are only a handful of staff, including administrators, maintenance, and a school nurse, who are considered "on-call" for evening and weekends who receive a monthly reimbursement to offset a portion of their personal cell phone expenses. This is in accordance with Board policy.
- Q: Does the transportation supervisor get a salary plus a cell phone stipend?**
- The transportation director’s salary is calculated in accordance to the Board-approved administrative compensation guidelines. The transportation director is also considered an “on-call” employee required to be available during evenings and weekends, so he does receive the cell phone reimbursement to offset a portion of his personal cell phone expense.
- Q: If we had not voted in January to purchase the 6 buses, would we have lost the grant? If not, why not wait until after the vote? Is this the only grant available to help buy buses? Could we have gotten the same grant next year instead? Did we have to buy all six buses or could we have elected to use some of the grant money and just bought 4 buses?**

A: The grant was applied for by a group of Stark County schools last year and was not awarded the grant. They applied again this year and were fortunate to be selected. The buses must be purchased during this school year to receive the grant reimbursement which amounts to \$256,536 for Louisville. The District purchases 4 buses on a 2 year cycle, so there were four buses budgeted for the current year. By securing this grant, we were able to purchase 6 buses while decreasing our planned spend by 25% (approximately \$90,000).

Q: Why are we spending all this money in January before we even receive the tax dollars?

A: The District has a history of running a lean budget and has continued to do that in the current fiscal year.

Q: Why is cutting Middle School sports going to save us more money than other cuts?

A: The District looked at all staffing and programs when determining the potential cuts. None of them are good for students, and we want to maintain our current operations, but in order to do that, we either need additional revenue with the levy or we need to make significant cuts. The District is not required to have middle school sports, so that is one item that made the list for year one.

Q: Why did we cut some clubs but not others? People want justification of why for each club. Students need these as well. For instance, why keep bowling which is a club sport, but cut Academic Challenge which is a competitive team? What if the team did not use buses but relied on parent transportation?

A: Bowling is not a club sport. The District had to make a difficult decision, and these are the clubs that made the year one cut list.

Q: We used to have a Curriculum Director instead of an Assistant Superintendent, can we change it back and would this save us some money? Is it a contractual issue?

A: The assistant superintendent is responsible for many other duties than just curriculum. The current position is under contract with the Board.

Q: Why are there no cuts in Central Office staff year one of cuts?

A: There are only seven discretionary employees to handle the necessary District operations. If the levy is not passed by the 2021-22 school year, one of those will be cut as well.

Q: Band directors are certified to direct choir but choir directors are not necessarily certified to direct band (I'm being told). Could we have a combined choir/band director position?

A: All positions are based on teacher certifications. At this point, we are not cutting choir or band programming at the middle school or high school.

Q: Could the Admin team set up office hours for a set day every week where people can stop in and talk without an appointment? If someone is unable to make office hours, could they can make an appointment?

A: The administration is willing to meet with any community member. At this time, there are no open hours set, but appointments can be made to accommodate schedules by calling 330-875-1666.

Q: How much has Louisville lost in state education funding?

A: In fiscal year 2009, the District received approximately \$15.2 million in State funding. In fiscal year 2019, the District received only \$14.4. That is a loss of approximately \$800,000 comparing those 2 years. The District is heavily reliant on State funds as they are the District's largest revenue source.

Q: Why not eliminate all sports and extracurricular activities to save money?

A: The District looked at all staffing and programs when determining the potential cuts. None of them are good for students, and we want to maintain our current operations, but in order to do that, we either need additional revenue with the levy or we need to make significant cuts. The District had to make a difficult decision, and decided to not affect high school athletics in year one.

Q: How was the new elementary school funded?

A: The elementary school construction was funded partially through a bond issue that was approved by the voters in 2008. The District participated in the State program, so a significant portion of the total construction cost was funded with State funds through the Ohio School Facilities Commission.

Q: Why is there a shift in where my tax dollars are going?

A: There has been no recent shift in the breakout of where tax dollars are going.

Q: I thought the legislature fixed education funding. Schools are getting more money from the state. Aren't schools fully funded now?

A: No fix has come from the State yet. In March 1997, the Supreme Court of Ohio ruled in a decision that Ohio's state funding system "fails to provide for a thorough and efficient system of common schools," as required by the Ohio Constitution, and directed the state in 1997 to find a remedy.

Q: If I don't have children attending school, how will I benefit from this levy?

A: As stated at our first community meeting which was held on January 21, Louisville City Manager Larry Collins spoke about if the levy would fail, the impact this would have on the efforts to revitalize the community. Real Estate agent Deb Gulling stated that the first question potential buyers ask about is the quality of schools and that failed levies, can make real estate values plummet. Business leader Bill Jeffries spoke about great schools having an impact on bringing business to the local area. Businesses want to be part of a community that supports their schools and having businesses come to a community lowers the tax burden on homeowners.

Q: If busing is cut, will the District still transport students to R.G. Drage Career Center?

A: Yes, transportation to R.G. Drage will continue.

Q: What funds purchased the slushy machine for the high school?

A: The slushy machine was purchased out of the District's food service fund which is completely separate from the District's general operating fund. This addition is one of several changes in the building cafeterias that have and will continue to take place in an effort to continuously improve the food service department.

Q: What is the difference between millage and millions?

A: Issue 18 is a request for \$2,815,000 which equates to 6.7 mills. Property tax rates in Ohio are expressed as millage rates. One mill is equal to \$1 of tax for every \$1,000 in assessed value.

Q: Can we have an incremental levy?

A: Ohio law has provisions for several types of levies; each of them are used for different purposes. An incremental levy is one option available to schools and was discussed by the Board of Education, but in the end, an emergency operating levy was chosen instead.

Q: Why don't we sell the skating rink for what it is valued?

A: The District had been keeping an eye on the skating rink property for a few years. There are three main reasons the District purchased this property...opportunity, investment and safety. The addition of this property opens the District up to future opportunities. The purchase of the property was a great investment as the District was able to purchase it at a deep discount of its fair market value. Finally, and most importantly, it can provide the District with further safety. The District's drive to the middle school already went through the property. In addition, one hope for the property is to provide indoor practice facilities to some of our athletic teams who are currently traveling across the county to other facilities.

Q: Is the district bluffing on the cuts that have been reported to take place if the levy fails?

A: Absolutely not, the proposed cuts that have been discussed for the 2020-21 school year will take effect if the levy request is not successful in March. As disclosed on the cut list, the amounts are based on estimates, so there could be some minor adjustments.

Q: Why are more classified staff at risk of being cut versus the number certified staff at risk?

A: The District looked at all staffing and programs when determining the potential cuts. None of them are good for students, and we want to maintain our current operations, but in order to do that, we either need additional revenue with the levy or we need to make significant cuts.

Q: What funds does the District have?

A: All schools in Ohio have to use a State-approved fund structure. The school district's general fund is the major operating fund and is shown on the 5 year forecast (which can be found on the district website). However, there are many other funds the District accounts for. For example, our food service department has a separate fund and all federal grants have separate funds. We also have funds that are separate to be used for permanent improvements, local grants, athletics, extracurricular fundraisers, etc.

Q: How does the tax rate in Louisville compare to other Stark County school districts?

A: Tax rates for all school districts in the county are posted on the Stark County Auditor's website and can be accessed at the following link: <https://starkcountyohio.gov/auditor/resources/tax-rate-tables>

Q: Does the treasurer hide money?

A: No, the District undergoes an annual financial audit by the Auditor of State's office.

Q: What does it mean when it is stated that the treasurer has to certify the budget/forecast?

A: By law, the Treasurer cannot enter into contracts, salary schedules, and other obligations without certifying them to the District's budget. Line 12.010 on the Five-Year Forecast must be used for this purpose.

Q: How long will the District's cash reserves last? How much reserves do we need?

A: As of the end of fiscal year 2019, the District's general fund balance was \$5.7 million. As a percentage of operating expenses, the District came in at 21.9% ranking 16th lowest out of the 17 Stark County school districts. Only Canton City Schools were lower. At that level, the District could cover general operating expenses for 80 days. Based on the Stark County average ratio of 42.3%, our cash balance would need to have been \$11.1 million and would cover 154 days' worth of operation expenses.

Q: How many employees are currently employed by Louisville City Schools?

A: The District currently employs 351 employees, including both full and part-time.

Q: Is the District top heavy with administrators? How does Louisville compare to other districts in this regard?

A: No. In fact, Louisville consistently has one of the lowest administrative expenditures in Ohio. For fiscal year 2019, Louisville had the 27th lowest administrative expense per student out of the 607 Ohio school districts. That means 95% of all other Ohio schools spent more per pupil for administration than Louisville.

Q: Do schools get money through income taxes?

A: No, schools are primarily funded through state funding and local property taxes. Ohio allows for districts to request an income tax, but that would be a ballot issue which would need voter approval.

Q: Is the school asking for the levy to raise the necessary funds to turn the skating rink into a wrestling facility?

A: No, these costs are not included in the budget at this time. The building and property will remain as is until the current deficit is rectified unless we are able to secure private donations.

Q: Why would the District put up an ice skating rink?

A: The ice skating rink is neither owned by nor affiliated with the school district.

Q: What are the District's utility costs?

A: For fiscal year 2019, the District had the following total expenses for utilities, etc.:

Electricity	\$461,990 (or \$38,500/month)
Water	\$28,772 (or \$2,398/month)
Natural Gas	\$86,704 (or \$7,225/ month)
Fuel for Vehicles	\$155,784 (or \$12,982/month)

Q: What has Louisville cut already?

A: Although Louisville already ranks in the lowest 5% of all Ohio Districts in terms of per pupil spending, the District is constantly working to reduce spending and increase efficiency. Whenever a staff member resigns or retires, the position is looked at specifically to see if needs replaced. Throughout the last five years, several positions have not been replaced through attrition. The District also participates in local and national cooperative purchasing programs including the Stark County Council of Governments. By participating in these large group contracts, the District is able to get very competitive pricing on many items. For example, we use these coops for a lot of item including, but not limited to, electricity, insurance, fuel, school supplies, custodial supplies, food supplies, garbage removal, copiers, buses, and even porta potties.

The District has also made a concerted effort to reduce energy costs. In 2018, the District led an LED lighting initiative at North Nimishillen Elementary (interior and exterior), Louisville Middle School (interior and exterior), Louisville High School (exterior only), and the bus garage (interior and exterior). Electricity savings were guaranteed to save the District over \$50,000 annually. In the current school year, the District is moving to LED lighting in a large portion of the District's other buildings since we are able to get the lighting at a steep discount through an AEP rebate program which will further reduce our electricity consumption and cost.