

Louisville School officials: Levy loss will bring cuts

By Malcolm Hall

CantonRep.com staff writer

Posted at 5:46 AM

Updated Mar 2, 2020 at 9:27 AM

If approved, the property tax would yield \$2.81 million annually for the school system.

LOUISVILLE Without support from a majority of voters, the numbers suggest Louisville City Schools will face a challenging future.

Staff, including teachers, stands to be reduced. Busing will be cut or, for some students, eliminated. And academic clubs would disappear. All as soon as the 2020-21 academic year.

What would stave off the gloomy scenario is voter approval March 17 of a 6.7-mill, five-year emergency levy known as Issue 18. If approved, the property tax would yield \$2.81 million annually for the school system.

“This is not adding to our school district,” Superintendent Michele Shaffer said. “What we are asking for is not new programs. It is just to maintain what we currently do for our kids.”

The levy would cost the owner of a home valued at \$100,000 an additional \$240 a year.

Cutting positions

Shaffer and school system administration have put together the numbers of staff members who would be released if voters do not approve the ballot issue.

The breakdown: 13.5 certified positions, 28 classified staff members and one building administrator or principal.

Certified personnel are teachers and tutors. Classified staff comprise employees such as bus drivers, cafeteria workers and custodians. That comes out to be 42.5 positions that will be eliminated for the next academic year.

“At the end of the day, we have to run a fiscally sound district,” Treasurer Derek Nottingham said. “The community has to make a decision.”

The school system operates a high school, a middle school and two elementary schools.

If the staff reductions are implemented, it would result in seven less certified personnel and four less classified workers at Louisville High.

The Middle School would lose two certified staff members and three classified workers.

Louisville Elementary School will have three and a half less certified positions and eight less classified staff. And North Nimishillen Elementary School would have one less certified staff position and three less classified workers.

At the moment, Shaffer said she has not identified which staff members stand to lose their jobs. For staff and students, the results would mean larger classroom enrollment.

“When you put 30 in a classroom, it is just not the same as having 20 to 25 kids,” Shaffer said. “The bottom line is it is just not good for kids. My greatest concern is you want to be able to provide that one-on-one instruction when a student struggles with something.”

Busing cuts

Busing for high school students would be eliminated, a hardship because some of the school district extends into rural areas of Nimishillen Township.

Also, there would be no bus rides for middle school and elementary school students who live within two miles of their school.

Overall, the reductions in staff and programs stand to save \$1.97 million for the school district next academic year.

The numbers are more foreboding for future years. During the current fiscal year, which began July 1, 2019, the school has expenses of \$27.62 million and revenue of \$27.39 million. That’s a negative balance of \$229,112.

To make up for the shortfall, the school system uses its cash balance which stands to be \$5.49 million when this fiscal year ends.

Forecast shows the end-of-the-year cash balance would be \$3.49 million at the close of the following fiscal year. And that year-end cash balance would shrink to \$366,896 the following fiscal year.

And four fiscal years down the line, the school system would have a negative end-of-the-year cash balance.

“When the state sees that, then you have to have a plan on how to fix that,” Shaffer said. “Anytime you go in the red, you have to come up with a plan.”

About 55% of the school system’s revenue comes from the state. And that appears to be a prime factor in the situation as state revenue has dwindled over the past decade.

In 2009, the district got \$15.2 million from the state. In 2019, state revenue was about \$14.6 million.

“For Louisville, our major funding source is state funding,” Nottingham said. “We run a lean budget. And we do well.”

Local property taxes amount to 33% of the school system income.

Voters in the Louisville City School District have demonstrated support within the past two decades. In 2001, a \$26.27 million bond issue was approved that provided money for a new middle school and renovation of North Nimishillen Elementary School.

Voters also approved an \$8.5 million bond issue in 2008. It generated funds to help finance construction of a new Louisville Elementary School.

But that voter support was not there during the Nov. 5 election when a request to approve an additional 6.9-mill, five-year emergency levy was soundly rejected. That levy request was similar to what will be on the March 17 ballot.

Reach Malcolm at 330-580-8305 or malcolm.hall@cantonrep.com

On Twitter: *mhallREP*