



## BELLBROOK-SUGARCREEK SCHOOLS

*"Soaring Toward Excellence"*

### ***Voters Reject Bellbrook-Sugarcreek Levy; District Faces the Elimination of Programs and Services, Personnel Reductions***

Voters in the Bellbrook-Sugarcreek School District rejected the latest request for additional day-to-day operating funds. The request for 5.7-mills would have provided additional funding for the district's operating budget. The rejection means that the district will now face nearly \$2.5 million in Phase IV cuts and reductions over the next two years.

"This is an incredibly disappointing outcome that will not only hurt our families and students, but also have a negative impact in multiple ways for the community as a whole," said David Carpenter, board president.

The Phase IV cuts are in addition to the more than \$2.3 million in budget reductions between summer 2018 and Phase I and II reductions in 2019, and the Phase III reductions starting in the 2020-21 school year.

"We appreciate the work done by so many to help inform voters," stated Doug Cozad, PhD, superintendent. "While this is not the outcome that we believe best serves students and the needs facing our schools, we will do our part to honor the vote. The fiscal reality; however, is that we simply cannot continue to make reductions without seriously impacting the quality of our students' educational experience, and unfortunately, that is where we are right now."

Bellbrook's last operating levy was passed in 2015. The district placed an operating levy on the May 2019 ballot but it also did not pass, as a result the district was forced to implement Phase I and II reductions. The district's five-year forecast in November 2019 projected an almost \$1.9 million deficit in the 2021-22 school year.

Additionally, due to the recent financial cutbacks at the state level, the district's state funding was reduced by \$659,000 - about 11% of the district's funding from the state - for the 2019-20 school year. It is very likely that a similar reduction will be made by the state the next school year. If this does occur, this amounts to an almost cumulative \$1.3 million in reductions in funding from the state in the years 2019-2021. For perspective, revenue for Bellbrook-Sugarcreek Schools is around \$30 million, of which around \$6 million is funded by the state.

"Ultimately, it is up to our community to determine the type of schools it wants and, with what we are facing financially, that is directly affected by the outcome at the ballot box," continued Cozad. "Our district budget is already so lean that cuts are already hitting the classroom and the student experience. There is no easy way to say it - without the additional funds the district

would have received through the passage of this levy, the reductions we now have to implement will be devastating.”

According to official Board of Election results, the vote was 52% (3,338) no, and 48% (3,030) yes.

As for next steps, Cozad noted that the first order of business is to begin processing the implementation of Phase IV cuts and reductions. He noted that the board will have to make determinations on how to proceed with obtaining additional revenue in the future.

“When a levy fails, the needs do not go away with that failure,” continued Cozad. “Rather, they worsen. The single most important issue facing our schools is our budget, and although I wish to assure our families that we will continue to make every decision with the best interest of our students in mind, these reductions will have a tremendous impact on the experience we are able to provide in our school district. We simply cannot have what we cannot afford. The high-quality educational experience that our children deserve is now compromised.”

For the complete list of board-approved cuts, visit the Bellbrook-Sugarcreek School District website: <http://www.sugarcreek.k12.oh.us/PressReleases.aspx>.