



THE HEART OF CUYAHOGA COUNTY

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MEMORANDUM

To: Mayor Gregory P. Kurtz
Members of Council

From: Finance Director Vernon Blaze

Date: Friday, March 22, 2024

Re: Finance Office and Related Topic Updates

Tuesday Primary Election Results – School Levy Issues

In a *Columbus Dispatch* article by Cole Behrens this week, it was reported that Jeff Chambers of the Ohio School Boards Association stated: “*Statewide, only 17% of asks for new money [by Ohio School Districts] were approved by voters on Tuesday.*”

Buckeye Association of School Administrators Government Relations Director Paul Imhoff is correct in stating that “*General elections tend to fare better on average for school district ballot issues compared to primary elections.*”

But the major factor of the low 17% success rate on Tuesday cited by school administrators in the Central Ohio area was “*a record increase in property valuations last year.*”

Through this weekly communications medium and the monthly Post, the Finance Office has been consistent in communicating that Cuyahoga County is currently undergoing its six-year property valuation update – likely the same valuation update process that at least some Central Ohio counties went

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through last year already.

The results of that valuation update process in Cuyahoga County will likely manifest themselves in 2025 after the 2024 valuations are certified by Cuyahoga County and 2025 property tax bills become due and payable.

Will the results caused by the recent property value update process that played out in Central Ohio on Tuesday result in the same dynamic here in Cuyahoga County in 2025 and thereafter? (Six districts in Central Ohio having issues on the ballot to “*renovate and expand existing buildings or construct new ones,*” and all six “*failed badly.*”) That remains to be seen.

But Tuesday’s school money “ask” results in Central Ohio do give local school boards in Cuyahoga County at least some indication of the uphill sled that such issues may face here in the not-too-distant future.

Locally in Cuyahoga County there were “only” five school money issues on Tuesday’s ballot.

Three were straight Operating Levy issues, one was a straight bond issue for renovating (not building new) – Brooklyn – and one was a bond issue to either build and/or renovate combined with an operating levy as a single “ask.”

The Brooklyn bond issue to renovate passed – by a count of 881 For to 875 Against – per current unofficial results. Just six votes carried that issue “*over the finish line.*” That means just three people out of over 1,750 ballots cast changing their vote from “For” to “Against” would have resulted in a tie vote. Just four people switch their vote and the issue fails by two votes!

Cuyahoga Heights passed an operating levy request on its second attempt, but the other three Cuyahoga County school issues were all defeated.

The Richmond Heights combined Bond/Levy issue was the most soundly defeated in Cuyahoga County on Tuesday by almost 70% to 30%.

Tuesday’s results point to the already complicated and polarizing issue of school finance in Ohio becoming even more of both as 2025 approaches.