

THE VISION

AVOCA REFERENDUM APRIL 7, 2009

On Tuesday, April 7, the Avoca school community will vote on a tax rate referendum to support the schools. This edition of *The Vision* is devoted solely to the referendum issues. It is critical that all residents make an informed decision; therefore, three main topics will be reviewed in this newsletter:

1. What is the specific referendum request?
2. What was the reasoning behind this request?
3. What cuts will be made if the referendum does not pass?

1. What is the specific referendum request?

- The April 7 referendum request is for a 16.7 cent increase in the current property tax rate.
- The purpose for the increase is to maintain the current educational program, balance the budget, and secure an adequate level of reserves.
- The impact of this increase in the property tax rate is as follows. For every \$5,000 currently paid in total property taxes, your bill would increase:

GLENVIEW	\$174
NORTHFIELD	\$179
WILMETTE	\$165
WINNETKA	\$170

2. What was the reasoning behind this request?

Five major points emerged during the lengthy and thorough decision-making process exercised by the Avoca Board of Education.

- **The referendum is necessary because of the cumulative effect of 13 years under the Illinois tax cap.**
 - 95% of Avoca's revenues come from property taxes and local revenue.
 - The tax cap has limited Avoca to yearly property tax revenue increases of 3.6% over the past five years. Costs for health insurance, salaries, energy and building upkeep have risen at a much higher rate.
 - Despite significant budget cutting, the rate of deficit spending that has been necessary to balance the budget has accelerated, leaving district reserves at alarmingly low levels.
- **Avoca has a long history of fiscal responsibility.**
 - Avoca has not conducted a tax rate referendum in over 32 years (Oct. 1976).
 - Avoca currently has the lowest tax rate of the six sender districts to New Trier High School.
 - Even if the April 7 referendum passes, Avoca would still have the lowest tax rate in all of New Trier Township.

- **Significant budget reduction has been in place for the past five years.**
 - As soon as deficit spending began in 2003, Avoca embarked on three major rounds of budget cuts.
 - Over \$800,000 of yearly expenses were cut during this period. \$160,000 was reinvested to improve the educational program, for a net savings of \$640,000 per year.
 - The budget reduction efforts delayed the need for a tax rate referendum by three to four years.
- **The time has arrived for further action.**
 - Without additional revenues, over \$1 million will need to be cut in the budget for the 2009-2010 school year and beyond.
 - There are no more “easy” cuts to be made. The next round of cuts will affect the core educational program.
 - If the referendum does not pass, the Board will reduce the Avoca teaching staff by 15%, resulting in larger class sizes, reduced support for children with special needs, fewer fine arts opportunities, and a significant loss in extra-curricular activities.
- **Students must have an experience comparable to that of other New Trier sender districts.**
 - Every New Trier sender district has passed at least one tax rate referendum since the tax cap was instituted in 1995; some have passed as many as two referenda.
 - If Avoca must cut \$1 million from its educational program, it will create a lower quality educational experience for Avoca students as compared with their peers in New Trier sender districts.
 - Avoca’s reputation within the New Trier community is key to maintaining the district’s high property values.

3. What cuts will be made if the referendum does not pass?

If the referendum does not pass, the Avoca Board of Education has scheduled a meeting on April 8 to approve the following cuts beginning in the 2009-2010 school year.

- ▶ Release 15% of the Avoca teaching staff.
 - 6 elementary classroom teachers (This will make class size at Avoca West [K-5] the highest in the township.)
 - 1 kindergarten fine arts instructor
 - 1 elementary orchestra instructor
 - 1 elementary special education instructor
 - 1 elementary school part-time P.E. instructor
 - 1 middle school reading specialist
 - 1 middle school creative technology instructor
 - 1 middle school part-time math instructor (This will raise class size in 7-8 grade math classes.)
- ▶ Eliminate 10 or more extra-curricular activities offered to students at both schools.
- ▶ Charge parent fees for most remaining extra-curricular activities.
- ▶ Reduce the yearly educational technology equipment and supply budget by 50%.
- ▶ Eliminate 3 support positions.
 - Day custodian
 - District maintenance person
 - Library clerk
- ▶ Reduce office staff hours.

These are the facts that the Avoca Board of Education utilized in making this difficult decision regarding the tax increase referendum. If you have questions or need clarification on any issue, please do not hesitate to contact Dr. Joseph Porto, Superintendent, 847-251-3587, or portoj@avoca37.org.