



NEWS RELEASE

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Citizen Panel Recommends Mill Levy Override

After several months of consideration and study, the Citizens' Blue Ribbon Panel on Monday, June 8, recommended the District 6 Board of Education pursue its first-ever mill levy override by placing a ballot item before the voters of Greeley and Evans in the upcoming November election.

The recommendation was delivered to the board by longtime Greeley business owner Ken Whitney, representing more than 200 community members who attended numerous meetings since November. He told the board about the in-depth study of all aspects of the district and what the panel learned about its needs. "Not every child has a textbook to take home to assist with homework," Whitney said. "The district often cannot support the technology needs within the school environment. There are students trying to master modern 21st century skills on 10-year-old computers that cannot operate today's software. School safety and security is a growing concern everywhere. We have not been given the resources to protect our students.

"In all, there were dozens of items and issues we identified that would greatly benefit our students and their schools, enhancing the quality of education," he said. "However, our panel also discovered that addressing these needs requires additional funding that is presently not available."

Whitney noted the significance of the fact that District 6 ranks 170th out of 178 school districts in Colorado and that every other district in the surrounding region has a mill levy override which allows local residents to directly contribute to their schools and thus their communities' vitality. "We are not competitive with our neighbors in northern Colorado," he said. "This has a profound effect on our economic development efforts. We are in fierce competition to the west for economic quality."

The CBRP's recommendation is that the board ask for a 16-mill increase in residents' property taxes. Whitney said that equates to roughly \$16 per month for the average Greeley homeowner, or less than \$200 a year. Whitney detailed what the panel thinks should be funded:

- **"6 mills for instructional resources for teachers and students.** This would be for newer and more textbooks and computers, and other tools that teachers and students require for high-level academic instruction.
- **"5 mills for academic programs supporting all students.** This would include something for students at every level on the spectrum. It would support advanced programs and magnets, college readiness and career preparation programs, additional individualized special support for students, and all-day

kindergarten at every school. Kindergarten is where maximizing a child's development begins.

- **“3 mills for a safe and positive learning environment.** This would include safety items such as video cameras and more campus monitors. The number one deterrent for prevention of crime and disorder. Positive behavior support programs for students would be enhanced. To make sure our schools stay in good condition, some of this money would be used for facility repairs, traffic and parking lot upgrades, and general maintenance.
- **“And lastly, 2 mills for transportation needs.** We are using 30 year old buses. Safety is becoming a concern. This would allow the district to purchase more new buses, building up the fleet to better serve the demand, and also reducing the average age of the fleet. Eventually, with the addition of new buses over time, this would position the district to be able to have two start times for schools rather than the current inefficient three start time model.”

The panel further recommended that the district's charter schools should share in the funding that would come from an override.

The panel acknowledges the fact that this is a difficult time to consider a mill levy override, Whitney said, but it points to a “gradual neglect of our financing obligation to our schools and the education of our children.”

“Yes, this is not a good time to raise a tax,” Whitney said. “It never is. But like a leaky roof, the action can be no longer delayed. We have no option. We cannot change the past, but we can address our obvious future.”

The board of education will continue to seek input from the community over the next two months before deciding in August whether it will indeed pursue a mill levy override and file the necessary documents with county election officials.

Community members of the panel were present at the meeting and announced that anyone interested in laying the groundwork for a campaign can send mail to Greeley-Evans Citizens for Strong Schools, PO Box 337096, Greeley, CO 80633, or e-mail citizensforstrongschools@gmail.com.

Members of the public who want to share their opinions may visit the Office of School/Community Relations at 1025 Ninth Ave., in Greeley, call 970-348-6000, or e-mail school-communityrelations@greeleyschools.org.

The full text of Whitney's recommendation to the board can be downloaded and read under the Citizens' Blue Ribbon Panel button on the front page of the district's website, www.greeleyschools.org.