



Ohio School Boards Association Capital Conference and Trade Show

November 7 – 10, 2010

Greater Columbus Convention Center
Columbus, Ohio

Passing three levies during difficult economic times

Finance/facilities

Tuesday, November 9, 2010

9:00 a.m.

C 213–215

Dean Wittwer, superintendent, Findlay City
Robert Sprague, city auditor, City of Findlay
Phillip Riegle, county commissioner, Hancock County
Rick Hoffman, board member, Findlay City
Peter Mattiace, editor, The Courier

Treasurers' Clinics

Mark your calendars for the OSBA's Annual Treasurers' Clinics in 2011.

Keep an eye out for detailed and important information on the 2011 clinics to be held in September. OSBA, in collaboration with the Ohio Department of Education, auditor of the state's office and the Ohio Association of School Business Officials, will share the most up-to-date information for treasurers.

For more information, contact Van Keating at (614) 540-4000 or (800) 589-OSBA.

OSBA Mission

OSBA leads the way to educational excellence by serving Ohio's public school board members and the diverse districts they represent through superior service and creative solutions.

Ohio School Boards Association

8050 North High Street, Suite 100
Columbus OH 43235-6481
(614) 540-4000 fax (614) 540-4100
www.osba-ohio.org

Aug. 20, 2009.

Officials: Plan worked out in private

By **DENISE GRANT**
Staff Writer

It is a plan born of desperation and hashed out in two weeks, but Findlay City Schools Superintendent Dean Wittwer says it "has synergy."

"Sometimes the best plans come out of crisis," he said.

"Sometimes when you have tough times, the synergy starts to happen," Wittwer said Wednesday afternoon during a meeting with Courier reporters and editors.

"I think that's our conversation with (the media) today and our conversation with community members. I know they like to see elected officials, and people like myself, sit down around the table and get it done."

Win or lose, the tax issues being pursued by Findlay, Hancock County and Findlay City Schools are now intertwined.

There will be no conflicting campaigns. No pick or choose mentality. The city's leaders are planning a united front as they go after the tax issues on the November ballot.

Officials say details of the plan were worked out in private conversations, mostly over the telephone. Wednesday was the first time the plan was discussed publicly, but they insist they did not violate public meeting laws.

County Commissioner Phil Riegle said the commissioners did discuss moving county offices to Central Middle School in an executive session.

Findlay City Auditor Robert Sprague said he built consensus on City Council in "numerous ad hoc committees" and over the phone.

Up until Wednesday, Sprague said, council members only had "snippets of information" and ideas, but no formal proposal.

"I've called the council members and said, 'Look, there is this idea afoot. What do you think about this? Do you have some input? Is there anything you don't like?'" Sprague said.

Talks on the joint tax strategy started Aug. 4 at the Rocking U restaurant, where a large group of supporters for the Findlay City Schools bond issue had gathered to listen to results of the special election. The issue failed by 483 votes.

"When I was growing up, there was a perception that this community valued education. When I saw that vote, I thought, 'My community is having a crisis of civic will,'" said Sprague, who was at the Rocking U that night.

Sprague is a 1992 graduate of Findlay High School and was valedictorian of his class.

"Out of the 6,000 students that go to the Findlay City School system, they only generated 3,200 'yes' votes. That is when it dawned on a lot of people that our community is in trouble," said Sprague.

"We're divided. We've been beat down. We're not able to go forward and provide the services that our community needs and we've got to come up with a plan, as leaders, that is going to turn the boat around."

So why the closed-door discussions?

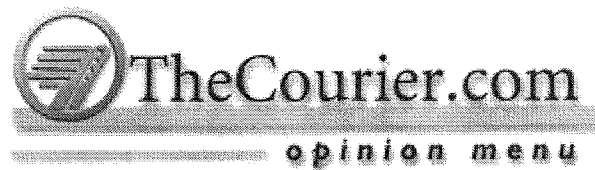
Part of it was timing, officials say. Today is the filing deadline for the November election, so the work had to be done quickly.

Hancock County Commissioner Ed Ingold said, "Frank discussions sometimes occur. I don't see the benefits of discussing it in public, other than creating rancor. We may have come up with plans or ideas in these discussions, back and forth between us, that one person thinks is a good idea, but two don't."

"I think everybody's goal here is a better community," Ingold said.

However, "There are people out there that are going to vote 'no' no matter what. It is a tax."

Oct. 31, 2009



Moment of truth

It's time to ask ourselves the basics.

First, does anyone think it will not flood here again? And does anyone think we should do nothing about it?

Our new reality: We worry whenever it rains a little too hard or a little too long.

And does anyone think Cooper Tire & Rubber Co., Marathon Petroleum Co., Whirlpool Corp., and other fine businesses present and future, will pay their costs of our flooding forever?

And why should they stay here, or others come here, if we won't help ourselves?

Let's wake up! Texas, China and Mexico are calling.

And does anyone have better plans to lessen flooding than those offered by the Northwest Ohio Flood Mitigation Partnership with the Army Corps of Engineers?

If so, let's see them.

And does anyone think we can control our flooding without spending some of our own money, or that the federal government always will pay 65 percent of costs?

There is no free lunch. Remember, Congress slashed the federal share of some similar projects in 1986. It can do so again.

And, separately, does anyone think lives will not be in danger when our government must cut its services; when, for example, a tired engine in an aged sheriff's cruiser gives out as a deputy races to help our own?

And will there be a deputy to send?

And what about our courts and our jail?

And, yes, even our 4-H?

These are our people!

And does anyone think our county commissioners, sheriff, auditor, and judges -- in a conspiracy -- are bluffing about the county "running on fumes"?

And who dares to call that bluff?

Our conclusion: Please vote yes on Issue 4 to retain Hancock County's 0.50 percent sales tax for flood control projects and county operations.

Second, does anyone think a city is not in financial trouble when it needs the estate tax of a leading citizen just to keep it afloat, and needs charity just to pick up its leaves?

And is anyone sure their home won't burn down because firefighters are late and shorthanded? Or be sure they can take a walk in safety?

Our conclusion: Please vote yes on Issue 5, a modest increase in Findlay's income tax.

Third, does anyone think schools from the early 20th century can well-equip our children to compete against the world into the late 21st century?

Many boast they did well in an 80-year-old school. But can our children do better?

And does anyone think our state is always going to pick up a quarter of the

cost of our new schools?

Our state gambled on slot machines to meet its budget.

Our conclusion: Our students need excellent teachers and modern schools, and the state has put schools on a one-time-only sale. Please vote yes on Issue 15, the Findlay school bond issue.

Finally, who wins by voting no, no, and no?

Does anyone think we can deny our challenges in the 21st century?

Is civic cynicism our answer to the unbridled optimism of our 19th century people who built a stone courthouse for the ages?

Is civic stagnation our answer to the foresight and hard work of our 20th century people who invested in our schools, roads, bridges, and so much more?

They stood up in their times. They straightened the river, recruited professional police and firefighters, and built new schools, often during very bad times.

Yes, this is a bad time.

But when is a good time?

Our needs are now.

We tax ourselves not because we want to, but because we have to, and to use our common wealth to advance our people in our communities.

The Courier's editorials express the view of its editorial board, which is Publisher Karl L. Heminger, Editor Peter Mattiace, and Editorial Page Editor J. Steven Dillon.

50c
Chance of rain
High: 46 Low: 36
Partly sunny tomorrow
Details, A10

The Courier

'First in the morning in Northwest Ohio'

www.thecourier.com

Findlay, Ohio

THE VOTE 2009 AT-A-GLANCE

- Findlay City Council**
Ward 2
WINNER
Randy Van Dyne
Ward 3
WINNER
K.C. Collette
- Details on 3 -
- Findlay School Board**
WINNERS
Barbara Dysinger
Shane Pochard
- Details on 3 -
- Riverdale Schools 6.9-mill renewal levy**
PASSED
- Details on 3 -
- Fostoria Schools 3.3-mill levy**
DEFEATED
- Details on 8 -
- Fostoria's City Manager Amendments**
DEFEATED
- Details on 8 -
- Fostoria's City Council President**
WINNER
Joseph Droll
- Details on 8 -
- Fostoria City Council At-Large**
WINNERS
David Bettenhausen
Barbara Marley
George Widmer
- Details on 8 -
- Fostoria City Council**
Ward 1
WINNER
Paula Dillon
Ward 3
WINNER
Teresa J. Lee
Ward 4
WINNER
Thomas Lake
- Details on 8 -

All results are unofficial reports from election boards.

INSIDE

| | | | |
|---------------|------|---------------|----------|
| Classified | B7-8 | Local/State | A3, A9-9 |
| Comics | 89 | Obituaries | A5 |
| Entertainment | 95 | Public Record | B4 |
| Family | A6 | Sports | B13 |
| Financial | 86 | Viewpoint | A4 |



Yes, yes, yes

Voters approve sales tax, income tax, school tax

Commissioners hail passage of sales tax, other big issues

By MICHELLE REITER
STAFF WRITER

Hancock County commissioners enjoyed a victory Tuesday night when a sales tax, the third proposed in the past four years, not only passed, but by a 60-percent margin.

The half-percent sales tax, which will be divided between county operations and flood control efforts, won handily with 14,628 votes for the tax, and 9,061 votes against.

The tax will remain in effect for 10 years. "I'm really appreciative that people decided to support the program we put forward," Commissioner Phillip Kiegle said. "I think the community knew the alternatives to the tax, and didn't want the reduced services. The community is also supportive of flood mitigation."

It is the first time Hancock County residents have devoted money to long-term flood control plans. Other flood-reduction ideas have come and gone without the public's financial support, but on Tuesday voters agreed to invest about \$2.5 million a year toward flood control, or half of the \$5 million annual revenue from the tax. In 10 years the commissioners are hoping the tax will have generated \$25 million toward flood reduction.

Commissioner Ed Ingold said he was pleased that all three major ballot issues passed in Findlay

How did Hancock County vote?

Local Issues

Sales tax

FOR: 14,628 (61.75%)
AGAINST: 9,061 (38.25%)

City income tax

FOR: 6,316 (54.58%)
AGAINST: 5,257 (45.42%)

School bond issue

FOR: 6,241 (51.25%)
AGAINST: 5,936 (48.75%)

and Hancock County, not just the county's.

"I think it would be safe to say that this is unprecedented for a community to vote for a sales tax, income tax and school levy all in the same day," he said Tuesday night. "It shows what the community is all about."

The commissioners imposed both a half-percent sales tax and a quarter-percent tax last year, but

See HALL, Page A5



HOWARD MOYER / for The Courier

Celebration

Supporters of the Findlay income tax increase and the Hancock County sales tax cheer Tuesday night as they see election results posted at the Findlay Inn. A similar celebration was under way at the Rocking U, where supporters of the Findlay School District's bond issue gathered. All three major tax issues were approved by Findlay and Hancock County voters on Tuesday.

Mayor says residents 'stepped up to the plate'

By JOY BROWN
STAFF WRITER

A Findlay income tax hike was approved by city voters Tuesday, preventing 18 firefighter layoffs and a fire station closure.

Tuesday's unofficial election results showed 6,316 (54.5 percent) voting for the three-year, quarter-percent income tax increase, and 5,257 (45.4 percent) voting against it.

The tax will generate about \$3.5 million per year, with \$600,000 of that to be set aside annually for flood control studies and projects.

Mayor Pete Sehner called the victory "a coup" amidst economic hardship.

Residents "really stepped up to the plate," said Sehner. "With this recession, I think people knew the seriousness of this," he said of the city's deteriorating finances.

No additional funding would have meant the lay-

offs of 18 firefighters, the closing of Fire Station 4 on the east side, and 16 layoffs in public works, all effective Sunday.

Despite Tuesday's election success, the tax increase will not be a panacea to the city's problems.

Schneer said the 16 public works employees will still be cut Sunday, a decision he had warned weeks ago would probably happen. The city will recall most or all of them when the first extra income tax money arrives in February.

"Between now and then, we'll look at how things are running. Some of our services will definitely take a little bit of a hit," Sehner said. Snow plowing, for instance, could take longer this winter.

"We've still got to be cautious. We've got to toe the line yet. This (tax money) isn't by any means a big windfall," Sehner said. "People have got to understand we're still short in several departments."

See MAYOR, Page A2

School chief: Thank you!

By DENISE GRANT
STAFF WRITER

48.75 percent.

All vote totals are unofficial and include absentee ballots.

With the city income tax, the county sales tax and the school issue all passing, Wittwer said voters made a clear statement.

"I think the voters just said that we don't want this community to be average, we want this community to be Findlay. This is Findlay and we want better," Wittwer said.

The bond issue will raise \$54 million, and will be matched with

See SCHOOL, Page A5

New Cory-Rawson school building wins voter approval

Arbaugh 'thrilled for the kids, for the community'

By LOU WILIN
STAFF WRITER

RAWSON — Cory-Rawson School District voters resoundingly approved a tax increase Tuesday for construction of a new pre-kindergarten through eighth-grade building.

The 5-mill, 29-year bond issue was approved by a vote of 951, or 58 percent, to 683. The vote total includes absentee ballots, but the results are unofficial.

Superintendent Jay Arbaugh was elated.

"It's beautiful. It's great," he

said. "I'm just thrilled for the kids, for the community."

Going into Tuesday, Arbaugh had a "good feeling" the measure could pass.

"But seeing the numbers in front of you after the vote, it's very gratifying," he said.

Today, Arbaugh and the district's consultants will begin planning for the 56,749-square-foot building, which they hope to have ready for students in fall 2012.

It will be financed with \$6.3 million from the bond issue, matched by \$6.8 million from the state.

The pre-kindergarten through eighth-grade building will extend west from the high school at 3930 Hancock County 26, Rawson.

It will erase a variety of shortcomings at the 94-year-old

elementary school in Rawson, which will be demolished.

The new building will have room for art and music classes, so they will no longer be held in a garage. The new building will be fully accommodating to disabled students. The old building was not.

The new building also will bring cost-saving efficiencies by being attached to the high school, Arbaugh said. The structures will share a kitchen and other areas. A single location for bus pickup and dropoff of students will save expenses. Maintenance and utility costs also will be saved, Arbaugh said.

Rooms in the new building also will be larger to accommo-

See NEW, Page A2

Ohio opens doors to casinos

Voters also agree to Issues 1 and 2

By JULIE CARR SMYTH
AP STATISTIQUE CORRESPONDENT

COLUMBUS — Ohio voters hit hard by the economic downturn have approved casinos tied to new jobs after a fifth try by gambling supporters in the past two decades.

Tuesday's passage of Issue 3 marked a significant victory for Penn National Gaming Inc. and Cleveland Cavaliers owner Dan Gilbert, who spent nearly \$35 million promoting four big-city casinos in Columbus, Cleveland,

See OHIO, Page A5

How did Hancock County vote?

State Issues

Issue 1

Bonuses for veterans
FOR: 16,458 (70.63%)
AGAINST: 6,843 (29.37%)

Issue 2

Livestock board
FOR: 16,043 (68.49%)
AGAINST: 7,381 (31.51%)

Issue 3

Casinos
FOR: 8,951 (37.73%)
AGAINST: 14,775 (62.27%)

Congratulations to Bridge Home Health & Hospice
Listed in the Top 25% of home health agencies in the U.S.
by Home Care Elite for 2009 • Visit www.bridgehomehealth.org • 419.423.5351



Bridge Home Health & Hospice
BLANCHARD VALLEY HEALTH SYSTEM