

I was disappointed that the school district's Permanent Improvement replacement levy did not win voter approval on Tuesday. We are very grateful that so many residents of our school district did support it, but it's clear we have more work to do to explain the need for this funding.

The Permanent Improvement Fund is maintained to provide most of the funding for textbooks, technology and school buses, and all of the funding for major building repairs and capital equipment. The levy that voters approved in 2003 expires on Dec. 31 of this year, and the funding it provided will go to zero on that date. I truly believe that the majority of residents in our community feel we should repair school buildings and replace textbooks or school buses as they wear out. But I also think that with a very difficult economy right now, many voters saw the words "tax levy" and voted no without having closely considered the issue.

I do certainly understand the economic situation. That's why we worked very hard to eliminate everything that was nonessential before we even placed the request on the ballot, so that the tax increase would be as small as possible. That increase – \$5.17 per year on \$100,000 of real estate value – would have been a valuable investment in our children's education.

We do have a small amount of funds left from the 2003 levy that expires on Dec. 31, and we will stretch those as far as we can. What that means is that only items deemed as emergencies will be funded. We won't let a roof leak or a school go without heat, but items like replacing a worn carpet or repaving a parking lot will not be done. At its meeting two days after the election, the Board of Education also directed me to hold up on all planned purchases of textbooks, computers and school buses paid for from the Permanent Improvement Fund.

It is up to the Board of Education to decide if, and when, to return to the ballot and ask for voter support for the Permanent Improvement funding. But realistically, it is impossible to have the district's budget over the next five years cut by more than \$12 million and not have it affect students in some way.

On another matter, I would like to offer my condolences to the families of three retired employees who all passed away recently. Bob Disney died on Oct. 14, after courageously battling cancer for seven years. Bob taught math, English and German at the high school for almost 25 years. Pamela Fields, who died on Oct. 26, was a biology teacher, also at Fairfield High School. And Nancy Burdine, an aide at the Middle School, died on Nov. 2. All three of these individuals were highly respected by their peers. Their families are in our thoughts.

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