

# ZCS votes to move ahead with referendum

BY EMILY ATWOOD  
For The Lebanon Reporter

**ZIONSVILLE** — An approval for the operating referendum resolution squeezed through the Zionsville Community Schools board with a 3 to 2 vote, at the Wednesday meeting.

If the language of the levy is also adopted by the Boone County Council, voters will see it on the Nov. 2 ballot.

If passed at the Nov. 2 general election, taxpayers would be pay an additional 29.5 cents per \$100 of their assessed property value.

In a sample assessment of a \$300,000 home, the owners would be paying \$1.31 a day, said ZCS Chief Financial Officer Mike Shafer.

After making \$4.85 million in cuts since 2009, the budget will still see a shortfall of \$5.56 million in 2011.

"It's a frightening place for us to be," Shafer said. But the referendum would make up for that lost revenue, he said.

In his presentation to the board, Shafer showed that the referendum would offset the loss from the 2011 \$2.4 million property circuit breaker, which would be used to maintain buildings. In addition, it would preserve most academic and extracurricular activities in the general fund as well as prevent teacher layoffs.

If will not, however, return the school to a pre-recession time. Shafer said the referendum will not make up for the \$1 million loss from the 2010 property circuit breakers, \$1.5 million reductions to the general fund in 2010, or the reduction of \$150 per student from state funding in 2010.

If residents don't vote in the referendum, ZCS Superintendent Scott Robison said in a newsletter

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MATT DOUBLESTEIN  
VP of the Zionsville  
Educators Association

the result would be "draconian program losses that most parents would find shockingly inconsistent with the learning experiences they envision for their children." Those consequences could include larger class sizes; consolidating elementary and middle schools; ending elementary art, music, physical education and science by specially-trained teachers; cutting elective and advance placement courses; and ending transportation opera-

tions, Robison wrote.

Matt Doublestein, vice president of the Zionsville Educators Association, spoke on behalf of the teaching community to urge the board members to approve the referendum.

"We are in total agreement that everyone loses if it fails," Doublestein said.

The ZEA agreed to compensation cuts resulting in \$1.05 million in savings. Faculty voted for pay freezes, layoffs and cuts to retirement.

Zionsville resident and Boone County Economic Development Executive Director Dax Norton spoke about the need to keep ZCS's high national school rankings.

"We're going to have to continually innovate this school system," he said.

But others, such as former Boone County commissioner Wendy Brant, thought that the school was getting

a little out of hand. She reminisced about her high school days as a swimmer. She said that she swam in a YMCA swimming pool as opposed to a school-funded one.

"I think the schools overspent on things that are lower priorities," she said. "The time has come where we have to say, 'no, we have too much debt.'"

A suggestion of how to cut back on some costs came from Kathy Fon, who said it's unnecessary to employ a physician at the Wellness Center for ZCS employees.

But in the end, it came down to the board's vote. Outgoing board president Chip Cravens and Jim Longest opposed the referendum.

Jane Burgess, Robert Wingerter and Mark Englert approved it, as long as the language was amended to say that no tax money would go to a third party advocator of the referendum.