1. Why are the Sandusky City Schools requesting the citizens to pass a levy on November 3rd?

Answer: The Board of Education and administration have worked hard to control spending and make the most of taxpayer dollars. In fact, the district has not asked for new operating funds in **14 years**. However, the cost of educating students has continued to rise faster than state funding. This levy will help the district continue providing a quality education while meeting increasing costs.

2. What is the amount of the millage, and how much will it cost me?

Answer: The Board of Education has placed a 4.9 Mill levy on the ballot for November 3, 2026. This levy will raise approximately $3.4 million annually. The owner of a $100,000 home in Sandusky will pay $14.33 per month to cover the cost of this levy. Homeowners who qualify for the Homestead Exemption or live in their own homes may pay less.

3. Has the Sandusky School District taken steps to cut costs and reduce expenses, as any good business would do in the times that we live?

Answer: Yes. Sandusky City Schools and the Board of Education have taken significant steps to reduce expenses and operate as efficiently as possible while maintaining a strong commitment to student learning.

During Fiscal Year 2026, the Board of Education and Administration implemented approximately $1.9 million in staffing reductions through careful planning, restructuring, and the elimination of vacant positions. In Fiscal Year 2025, the District also reduced payroll expenses by approximately $500,000 through attrition, allowing positions to remain unfilled when employees retired or resigned, when appropriate.

These reductions were made with the goal of having no direct impact on students or the educational services they receive. While decisions involving staffing are never easy, the Board of Education has remained committed to making responsible financial decisions that preserve the District's long-term fiscal stability while continuing to provide students with a high-quality education.

4. What is our current budget of the Sandusky School District, and how is the money spent?

Answer: The District's current operating budget is approximately $54.8 million dollars. We currently operate six educational facilities and educate approximately 3000 students. As with most businesses, we spend about 78% of our budget on staff. The average class size in the District is 26:1 in grades K-6 and 26:1 in grades 7-12. As a result, the District has received numerous awards for efficiency and accuracy in its financial management.

5. Why do we depend on property taxes?

Answer: Ohio's school funding system relies on a combination of state funding and local property taxes. Property taxes provide the local share of school funding and help pay for the day-to-day costs of educating students. State funding does not cover the full cost of educating students, so local funding helps provide the resources needed for student success.

6. Why do the Sandusky City Schools need more money, especially if there are fewer students?

There are several parts to this **answer:**
House Bill 920 limits local revenue growth. Revenue from existing operating levies generally does not increase over time, even as inflation drives up the cost of operating schools.

State funding does not cover all costs. Sandusky City Schools receives approximately **55.1% of its funding from the State of Ohio**, but state funding is not keeping pace with inflation. In addition, much of the state funding is designated for specific purposes and cannot always be used to address the District's greatest operational needs. Like most Ohio school districts, Sandusky City Schools relies on a combination of state funding and local property taxes to support day-to-day operations.

The District has lost revenue. The District has also experienced revenue reductions, including the loss of approximately $500,000 in federal funding during Fiscal Year 2026. In addition, the Erie County Commissioners voted to increase the Homestead Exemption and double the Owner-Occupied Credit as permitted by law. While these changes provide a benefit to eligible homeowners by reducing their property tax burden, they also reduce the amount of local property tax revenue received by the District by approximately $500,000 annually.

Many costs are fixed. Expenses such as transportation, building operations, technology, safety, and required educational services do not decrease at the same rate as enrollment.

For these reasons, declining enrollment does not result in a proportional reduction in the District's operating costs, and additional local funding is needed to help maintain educational programs and services.

7. What are the Sandusky City Schools doing to retain students and find additional revenue?

Answer:
The Sandusky City Schools continue to invest in programs that attract and retain students by offering a variety of academic and extracurricular opportunities. These include Advanced Placement (AP) courses, College Credit Plus, Career Technical Education, the Sandusky Digital Learning Center, the Great Lakes Visual and Performing Arts Academy, the Regional Center for Arts and Academics, and the Sandusky Career Center. The District also supports students' efforts in a wide range of athletics, music, drama, clubs, and other activities.

The District also works to maximize available revenue while carefully managing expenses. Recent efforts include reducing staffing and facility costs, rebidding utility contracts, and pursuing grants and other available funding opportunities.

Unlike a private business, however, Ohio school districts have limited ability to increase revenue. Under House Bill 920, revenue from existing operating levies generally does not grow with inflation, making careful financial management and periodic voter-approved funding requests necessary to maintain district operations.

8. Why is it important for citizens to pass the levy?

Answer: Passing the levy will help ensure Sandusky City Schools can continue providing a quality education for students. Our schools are an important part of our community and help make Sandusky a great place to live, work, and raise a family.

Strong schools support our students, our community, and our local economy. Investing in our students today helps prepare the future leaders of Sandusky.

9. What are Tax Increment Financing (TIF) agreements and property tax abatements, and how do they affect the school district?

Answer: TIFs and property tax abatements are economic development tools used to encourage new business investment and development, as well as residential development, in the City of Sandusky.

A TIF redirects some of the property taxes generated by a property's increased value to pay for public infrastructure improvements instead of distributing those additional taxes to local taxing entities, including schools, for a period of time. A property tax abatement reduces or eliminates property taxes on qualifying improvements for a specified number of years.

In Ohio, property tax abatements and TIF agreements that are 75% or less and 10 years or less are generally approved through the local government process, such as the city or county. School district approval is required for certain abatements that exceed 75% or extend beyond 10 years. The District does not initiate or control most economic development decisions, we do support local economic development, however. In most cases, these projects would not take place without the support of the district and, therefore, the property tax collected would remain stagnant or be nonexistent.

10. What happens if the levy does not pass?

Answer: If the levy does not pass, the District will need to continue making difficult financial decisions to address the ongoing gap between revenue and expenses. This may require additional reductions to programs, services, and staffing to maintain a balanced budget.

The District will continue to carefully review all expenses and look for efficiencies; however, without additional revenue, maintaining current educational programs and services will become increasingly challenging.

12. **What happens if the levy passes?**

Answer: If the levy passes, the additional funding will help maintain the educational programs and services currently provided to Sandusky City Schools students. The revenue will support the District's ongoing operating expenses, including staffing, classroom instruction, student services, transportation, technology, and maintaining safe and effective learning environments.

The funding will also provide greater financial stability and help the District continue to plan responsibly for the future.