

The Charter Committee Endorses the March CPS Tax Levy

The Charter Committee has endorsed and will support the proposed Cincinnati Public School 7.89 mill tax levy which will be on the ballot March 4th. When Charter endorsed the CPS tax levy last November, we recommended that citizens vote for the levy while at the same time we insisted upon greater accountability from CPS and from the school board. We believed that the district was losing credibility with the voters. The failure of the November levy made it clear that CPS needed to take significant steps to rebuild the public's confidence. The Charter Committee is endorsing this school tax levy because we believe that several of those steps are now underway.

1st, the school board has agreed to have the district undergo a thorough financial review to be performed by the State Auditor. This review will compare CPS with other districts throughout Ohio. By comparing Cincinnati Public to high performing districts, this financial review should determine where CPS is using revenues efficiently and where some savings might be found. 2nd, the school board has agreed to an efficiency review of Cincinnati Public Schools. This review will take a detailed look at CPS "business" functions to see if better business practices can be applied. It is critical that the school board and administration not allow these reviews to gather dust on a shelf. The public needs to have confidence that the findings of these reviews will be quickly put into action.

In another important step, the school board made public its commitment to far greater openness in the search for a new superintendent. Chief among these commitments are: seeking input from neighborhoods as to qualities needed in the next superintendent. Additionally there will be a diverse 'community-based panel' that will review the applications and select the final candidates for the school board to consider. The superintendent is the CEO of the school district; the public must not only have confidence in the new superintendent, but also have confidence in the process to make that selection.

These are significant steps in the right direction, however other important steps remain. The board must find ways to attract and keep young and energetic faculty. Efforts at professional development need to continue. Effective teaching must be rewarded; the process of merit pay for teachers and administration must finally be taken seriously, because continuing to accept the status quo is not satisfactory. Finally, the Charter Committee still believes strongly that CPS should institute a truly independent advisory panel to focus on the district's finances. This independent panel would be akin to Hamilton County's Tax Levy Review Committee and it would judge the appropriateness of future levies. The work of such a panel would build the community's confidence in the school district's programs and build trust in the district's management of its finances.

Notable progress has been made in Cincinnati Public Schools over the last several years. Some programs are the envy of urban school districts nationwide. The Charter Committee believes the children of Cincinnati deserve access to a high quality public education. We also believe that a strong public school system is necessary for Cincinnati to be a thriving city that maintains its property values; therefore every citizen has a stake in the success of Cincinnati Public Schools. We urge the voters of Cincinnati to vote for the levy and to hold the school board to a high standard in its commitment to greater accountability.

Michael Goldman, President
The Charter Committee