

# A LEVY FACT SHEET

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL LEVY FOR ORCAS ISLAND SCHOOL DISTRICT VOTERS

The levy before you in this election cycle is essential to the operations of our school district. It provides approximately 25% of the school district's budget. This means that it pays for 25% of our teaching staff and 25% of our office staff, bus drivers, maintenance and cafeteria staff, principals, custodians, classroom assistants, etc. This also helps fund what the state does not provide for basic education.

The current levy (2011) is 55 cents and the replacement levy (2013) will be 54 cents per \$1000 of assessed property value. This means that the tax on a property with an assessed value of \$500,000, the cost of the current levy would be \$275 per year. The cost of the new levy on a property with an assessed value of \$500,000 will be no more than \$270 a year. Even at the highest amount that can be collected, this is **less than the current levy**. This critical funding will keep current programs/class offerings intact. Try to imagine our public school with 25% of the high school, middle school, elementary, Waldron, and OASIS staff gone. **Ballots are out now**. On them you will be asked to vote on a levy proposal put forth by the Orcas Island School District.

The levy proposal is labeled as **MAINTENANCE AND OPERATIONS LEVY aka M&O Levy**. If this measure is approved, the current M&O levy collections expiring in 2012 will be replaced in 2013 by property taxes estimated to be \$0.54 per thousand dollars of assessed valuation, and in 2013 by property taxes estimated to be \$0.52/thousand. Those figures are maximums: Future state law may limit collections to lower amounts, or the school board may decide to levy less than the voters approve.

### ANSWERS TO COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

#### 1. What is a school levy?

It is a voter-approved tax placed on real property and collected over a specific period that provides the necessary funding to make up the difference between the costs of the educational program the community desires and what is funded by the State of Washington and the federal government.

#### 2. How is this levy different from the levy that we passed in November 2011?

The levy that we passed in November 2011 was a one year only **Capital Projects Levy**. That tax will be collected in **2012 only**. Those funds are designated to pay off the debt that the school district took on to match the

grant for the repairs and upgrades to the elementary school that took place last summer.

This current measure is for a four year Maintenance and Operations Levy that provides about 25% of the school district's overall budget. It will not be collected until 2013. The last Maintenance and Operation Levy was passed in February 2010.

## **2. Is this 2012 M&O Levy added to the M&O Levy approved in 2010?**

No, the 2010 levy was approved by voters for 2011 and 2012 only. **This levy will cover 2011- 2016.** It *replaces* the expiring levy that was approved in 2010.

## **3. Why a four year levy?**

The Washington State Constitution allows school districts the choice of two, three or four-year levies. The Orcas Island School District chooses to have a four-year levy for a variety of reasons, the most important of which is that we want to stabilize tax receipts and limit tax requests to the voters.

## **4. How will the Maintenance and Operations money be used?**

M&O dollars are used for many items in the school program including the following:

- Staff - both certificated(teachers) and classified (everyone else). The M&O levy pays for nearly 25% of the teachers and other staff at each of the schools: elementary, middle, high school, Waldron and OASIS.
- Utilities, insurance and other overhead costs.
- Textbooks, curriculum adoptions and classroom supplies.

## **5. What is the M&O levy proposal?**

Voters will be asked to approve a four year maintenance and operations levy that, if approved, will provide the Orcas Island School District with a maximum amount of \$1,880,000 in 2013 and 2014 and \$1,990,000 in 2015 and 2016.

## **6. What will the levy cost district taxpayers?**

The estimated tax rates for the proposed school levy are as follows:

- 54 cents per \$1000 of assessed valuation will be collected in 2013
- 52 cents per \$1000 of assessed valuation will be collected in 2014
- 54 cents per \$1000 of assessed valuation will be collected in 2015
- 52 cents per \$1000 of assessed valuation will be collected in 2016

If you own property assessed at \$100,000, your special levy tax is estimated to be \$54 in 2013 and 2015 and \$52 in 2014 and 2016.

Also, if the district's budget goes down during this four-year period, it is likely that the levy will be "rolled back" (or not collected) to match what are called "qualifying

revenues” which are based on enrollment.

There is also a possibility that the state legislature will change the percentage amount that can be collected, or the way in which school are funded which could also reduce the amount of money that can be collected.

**7. Are all property owners subject to the levy?**

No, some property owners may qualify for exemption from special levy property taxes if they are enrolled in the Senior Citizens and Disabled Persons State Exemption Program.

For more information about the Senior Citizens and Disabled Persons State Exemption Program, contact the County Assessor’s Office in the Courthouse in Friday Harbor or visit: <http://www.co.san-juan.wa.us/assessor/exempt.aspx>

**8. Where does the money come from to fund public schools?**

In 2010-11, funding for public education on Orcas Island came from the following sources:

<b>Local Levy:</b>	<b>\$1,086,255</b>
Local Non-tax:	\$312,581
State, General:	\$2,858,602
State, Special Purpose*:	\$467,015
Federal, Special Purpose*:	\$654,276
Other Districts:	\$20,000
Other Financing Sources:	\$115,000
Misc. Grant:	\$10,000

As you can see, our local levy is an important part of our budget and an integral resource for our programs.

\* Special Purpose is money that can only be spent on special programs such as Career and Technical Education, English Language Learners, Special Education, etc.

**9. Does it take a simple 50% majority to pass the levy?**

**YES**

**10. When and Where Do I Vote?**

This is a mail-in ballot election. You will receive your ballot in the mail on or about January 27<sup>th</sup>. Your return ballot must postmarked no later than February 14, 2012.

**NOTE: You can also drop your ballot at the Senior Center in Eastsound before 8pm on Election Day, February 14, 2012 where there is a special ballot collection box.**

**11. Other Questions?**

For more information, please call us at the Orcas Island School District office at 376-2284, or stop by and visit. We will be happy to answer your questions.