



Report on The Strongsville Schools Levy – Issue 25

Better Ohio PAC is a group of Strongsville parents and concerned citizens who believe in supporting our city schools and ensuring that our children receive the education they need to succeed in life. We write to you with earnest concerns regarding Issue 25, the school tax levy set to be decided on March 19, 2024. While our commitment lies in promoting excellence in education for our children, we are equally committed to safeguarding the resources of hardworking taxpayers like yourselves.

This past November, Strongsville Voters voted down a \$9.8 million renewal levy. This was likely due to the Voters' evaluation that the schools were already achieving excellence while operating with excessive budget surpluses. It is disheartening that the school board, instead of respecting the will of the voters, persisted in placing the identical previously failed levy on the upcoming ballot this March. What is more odious is that you will discover that subsequent research, bolstered by public records obtained from the Cuyahoga County Fiscal Officer, **uncovered a startling revelation that we detail below.**

*Strongsville Schools had a \$9 million surplus last year
and have \$71 million in the bank*

In September of 2023, we brought to your attention the substantial cash reserves of \$71 million accumulated by our school district including a \$9 million surplus last year alone. This amount compared to our annual \$78 million budget is staggering and unparalleled by any comparable district in Northern Ohio (see the accompanying chart on page 3 of this letter). This excessive surplus clearly called into question the need to renew the full \$9.8 million levy.

*Strongsville Voters spoke clearly when they
decisively defeated the levy in November 2023*

In the spring of 2023, the Better Ohio PAC School Finances Committee advised the school board to reconsider the full \$9.8 million levy and instead opt for a levy producing half the amount. Regrettably, they disregarded our concerns and pursued the full \$9.8 million levy, which the voters decisively rejected in November of last year. It is disheartening that the school board, instead of respecting the will of the voters, persisted in placing the identical failed \$9.8 million levy on the upcoming ballot.

*The School Board has ignored the will of the voters and has put the
same previously failed levy back on the ballot for March 19th, 2024*

In 2018, the school board initially proposed a \$11.3 million permanent levy, citing potential deficits and insolvency. However, voters expressed concerns and defeated that levy in November of 2018. This led to the school board changing course and offering a revised \$9.8 million levy in May of 2019. The voters of Strongsville decisively passed that levy. It is significant to note that when promoting that levy in 2019, **the School Board projected a \$27.0 million cash reserve in 2023. This projection was off by a staggering \$44 million causing the cash balance to balloon to \$71 million in 2023***.**

*In 2018, the school board heard the voter's message when the voters defeated the
\$11.3M permanent levy and REDUCED that levy to the current \$9.8M levy*

SHOCKING REVELATION:

Public records obtained from the County Fiscal Officer show the Schools have not spent one dollar of the 2019 levy on our children, instead banking the entire \$37.3 million.

What is truly shocking, revealed through public records obtained from the County Fiscal Officer, is that in the **FIRST FOUR YEARS** of this levy's collection, a staggering \$37.3 million was collected from hardworking taxpayers, yet **not a single dollar was allocated toward our students. The entire \$37.3 million was put in the bank only to amass our unnecessary \$71 million cash reserve.** This irrefutable evidence demonstrates that the district was able to achieve academic excellence without utilizing any of the proposed levy's proceeds.

How Strongsville Schools Spent The May 2019 School Tax Levy			
Tax Year	Taxes Paid By Strongsville Residents	Portion of Levy Spent On Our Kids	Portion of Levy Put In The Bank
Year 1	\$9,305,000.00	\$0.00	\$9,305,000.00
Year 2	\$9,315,000.00	\$0.00	\$9,315,000.00
Year 3	\$9,180,000.00	\$0.00	\$9,180,000.00
Year 4	\$9,504,000.00	\$0.00	\$9,504,000.00
Total	\$37,304,000.00	\$0.00	\$37,304,000.00

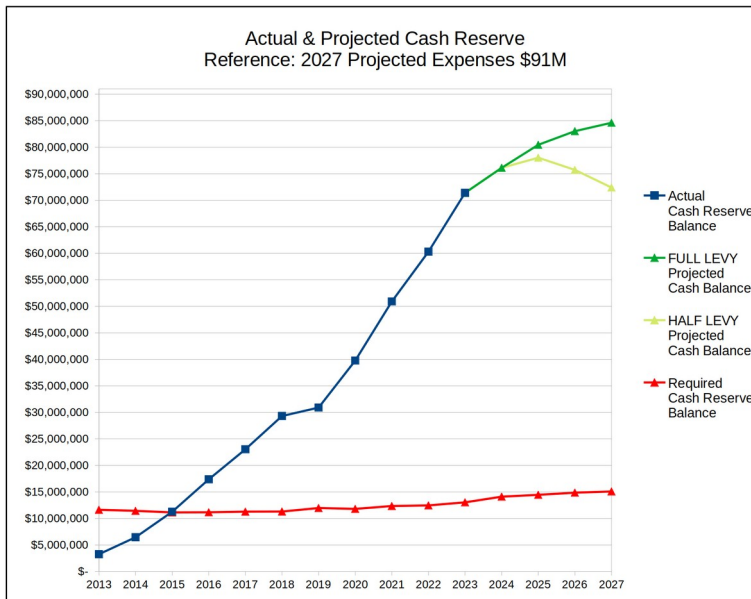
Cash Balance Increased By \$39 million in the first four years***	
Year	Cash Balance
December 31, 2019	\$32,633,497
December 31, 2023	\$71,328,812
Increase in Cash Balance	\$38,695,315

Therefore, we implore the Voters of Strongsville to **Vote NO on Issue 25** and send a clear message to the school board: reduce the levy by half, and we will wholeheartedly support it come November. It is imperative to hold our elected officials accountable and ensure fiscal responsibility while prioritizing the educational needs of our children. Together, let us stand firm in our commitment to excellence in education and prudent stewardship of taxpayer resources.

*The Strongsville City Schools are maintaining the largest cash reserve
of any comparable district in Northern Ohio***

School System	Cash Reserve	% of Budget
North Olmsted City S. D.	15.7	28%
Rocky River City S. D.	12.9	29%
Berea City S. D.	24.6	31%
Solon City Schools	35.9	39%
Medina City S. D.	40.0	44%
Brecksville-Broadview Hts S. D.	24.7	47%
Westlake City School District	32.8	56%
Strongsville City S. D.	71.4	90%

*If the district cuts the levy in half, the Strongsville Schools
will still operate at a surplus for years*



*We have established a website at www.StrongsvilleLevyFacts.org
that includes our research and supporting documentation on the school finances*



** Statistics available at time of printing from Strongsville Schools Treasurer and <https://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Finance-and-Funding>

*** Data directly from Strongsville City Schools Treasurer Financial Reports (<https://www.strongnet.org/departments/treasurer/financial-reports>)