

Inform and Educate Your Local Public

An information/education program is a must to receive a favorable vote on the mill levy. The normal public response is to deny any new tax or tax increase. Voters need to see the benefits that the proposed tax dollars will provide to them as individuals. Those who are against the tax will be at the polls so the emphasis must be to have the “yes” voter present in larger numbers.

A fact sheet should be prepared to show the actual cost of the mill levy to the taxpayer. It should state a figure for different land uses and include a figure for the urban homeowners as well. This information will enable the taxpayer to analyze the costs versus the benefits of the tax.

The following is a list of suggestions that may be used to inform and educate your local public about district activities and programs.

- ? Utilize your local media; send them at least one article weekly at least 2-3 months continuously prior to the election.
- ? Speak to various civic groups to explain your programs, projects and basic duties under state law. See 6-21 for sample key messages.
- ? Depending on your financial position, you may want to hire a consultant to help you implement a public information program. You may find a civic minded person who would volunteer these services.
- ? Flyers or brochures work well to introduce your district to the general public. The public may not be familiar with your organizational structure or your statutory duties. Special interest groups such as 4-H, FFA, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, etc. may volunteer their services to distribute your flyers.
- ? Posters distributed in high traffic areas generate interest. Make sure that they are eye catching and include your address, phone number and an invitation to call or visit for more information.
- ? Hold one or more public information meetings in central locations. These meetings can be held in conjunction with other activities, such as fairs, political information conferences, district tours, an open house or coffee hour at your district or included in your regular board meeting.
- ? Visit with your local main street businesses and explain who and what you and your district are. If you produce a newsletter, place a picture of your local business and business person in your newsletter showing his/her support of your district. You may also want to provide these businesses with a certificate of support they may display for the public to view.
- ? Utilize your local radio station’s public information (community services) spot to let the public know who and what you are. There is usually no cost and you may work up

several short statements that generates the public's interest in the district. Several stations will allow up to 30 second spots also, be prepared with numerous length statements. See 6-33 and 6-34 for sample radio advertisements.

- ? Designate supervisors to appear on local television or radio talk shows to promote the mill levy and to answer questions the public might have. See 6-21 for sample key messages.
- ? Develop a video or Power Point computer presentation that can be sent to the media outlets and be used for presentations to other groups. See 6-23 for a sample Power Point Presentation.
- ? Compose an informational letter to be sent to all district cooperators and other people of significance in your community and local, state and federal offices.
- ? Contact local businesses, cooperators, local and county officials and state legislators asking for a statement of support that you can use while working with the general public. These statements can also be used as letters to the editor in your local paper. See 6-20 for a sample letter to the editor.
- ? Produce a newsletter or place an ad in your local paper telling the district story and listing all the businesses, governmental officials, legislators, etc., that have given their statement of support.
- ? Purchase ad space in your local newspaper or weekly classified guide to promote district programs and activities. See 6-22 for sample newspaper ads.
- ? Design an ad for an outdoor billboard space. These are eye catching and can be useful when placed in high traffic areas.
- ? Other items that can be used to advertise the district are placemats distributed to local restaurants, signs to be placed in cooperators lawns or along their fence line; table tents; pencils, pens, stickers or other giveaways; bumper stickers, etc.
- ? If you are going for a mill levy for a second time, request the previous election results for all precincts within your district's boundaries. These should be utilized to see where you need to respond with extra effort.
- ? Design postcards to be mailed to all registered voters reminding them to vote for your district on the ballot. See 6-35 for sample voter postcards.