

“A primary consideration of any major company evaluating Bay County as a prospective location is the condition and quality of its public schools. When companies relocate, they are sensitive to needs of their transferring employees, many of which who have children that will attend the local public schools. Communities are often eliminated early in the site selection process if the school system does not meet or exceed the company’s expectations.” ~ **Janet Watermeier, Executive Director, Bay County Economic Development Alliance**

Questions & Answers about the Half Cent Initiative

For more information, go to www.bay.k12.fl.us

- **WHY NOW?**
 - Our ability to provide **equitable technology** for all students in all our classrooms is impossible with our current resources.
 - Our **facilities and construction needs** far out pace our ability to meet them.
 - This is the only way to give **property owners tax relief**.
- **Options for capital and facility needs**
 - Continue to depend solely on Local Capital Improvement \$\$ (LCI millage), which is funded by property taxes.
 - Attempt to remove some of the burden from property owners through the sales tax referendum.
- **The Good and the Bad**
 - It is a tax, but not a **property tax**. A half cent sales tax assessed on purchases has restrictions and limits. Exclusions include gas, groceries, medical items, mortgages, rent . It is limited to a maximum of \$25 on large purchases like cars and boats.
 - **14 of 67 counties** currently levy a sales tax.
 - This is an effort to more fairly share the costs of technology and construction for public schools with all ~ not just property owners.
 - These are tough economic times for us all. We have made deep budget cuts and closed schools. But, we must still take responsibility to equip classrooms and keep facilities in good working order.
 - There will always be opposing views. Healthy discussion is always good and gives us an opportunity to share information and be transparent.
- **Why 10 years again?**
 - Capital needs for schools never cease with extreme wear and tear each school year in 35 regular public schools sites and 4 charter schools.
 - The current priority list has more than \$172 million in projects. About \$119 million were completed with the previous half cent sales tax.
 - Keeping up with **technology needs** is a growing challenge in a rapidly changing global network.
 - All **stakeholders** want their schools to benefit
- **More than \$130.5 million was generated over 10 years with the previous half cent sales tax.**
- **How was the priority list developed?**
 - School districts are required to produce a 5-year facilities plan, which is updated and posted on the school district web site.
 - A rubric to prioritize the project list was created by district officials, facilities and maintenance staff, and community volunteers.
- **Keys to a successful referendum**
 - Remove the Us vs. Them mentality
 - Share information/prioritize needs
 - Plan to level technology at all schools
 - Expand responsibilities of Citizens Oversight Committee
 - Emphasize transfer of tax burden from property owners
 - Communicate past successes/vision for next ten years
- **What to do if the half cent sales tax passes**
 - Follow the project list
 - Ensure technology needs are met at all schools
 - Build state-of-the-art special needs school
 - Remove as many portables as possible
- **Answers to top concerns in Chamber survey**
 - 24.5% of sales tax will be paid by visitors
 - \$13 million/year in project yields \$20 million in direct/indirect output (1.6 multiplier)
 - LCI millage reduction ~ relief to property owners
- **Millage comparison with other NW Florida counties**
 - Bay has the 6th lowest LCI millage in the state.
 - It is lower than others in this area.

Timing Really is Everything ~ Our schools are called “public schools” for a reason. We are mandated to provide a free education to all students, which is a public service like others funded through taxes. Which tax is most fair to all concerned?

