

First Energy Corp. recently invited area elected officials and first responders to a presentation they had on emergency responses to power outages due to catastrophic events such as tornadoes, floods, etc. It was held at their facility on Angola Rd. in Holland, which is their operations center for NW Ohio, and Fire Chief Chad Smith and I attended from the Village of Swanton. They shared with us their comprehensive policies and procedures that are taught and practiced with incredible detail in every state where First Energy Corp. is the electric supplier. Their attention to every necessary task is impressive. Employees are often sent to other regions to assist when disaster strikes. Every one of their employees, from secretaries to meter readers to executives, is trained thoroughly to operate at any desk of any call center in any of their ten locations in six states. One of the main messages they stressed was that you should always report your power outage individually, even when you know that several of your neighbors have already reported it. The number of outages reported helps them determine where their repair crews are needed most.

Swanton Local Schools has a renewal levy on the ballot August 7. I am personally supporting this levy and am writing this opinion as a citizen and voter. The renewal levy is for five years. It was originally passed in 1995 and has been renewed twice. It is for 4.45 mills, providing \$825,000 annually. It costs a homeowner \$136 a year on a home valued at \$100,000. If you are a homeowner, you are already paying this. This levy is not an increase.

The renewal of this levy is crucial to the operation of Swanton Local Schools. This money is used toward operations such as utilities, classroom supplies, textbooks, and salaries. The Board of Education has already taken the following steps to reduce expenditures: the elimination 2.5 teaching positions; not replacing retiring teachers; reducing the secretarial staff; reducing school building budgets and eliminating other programs. Levy failure will cause deficit spending which would require further deep cuts that would directly hamper academic programs.

It is a well-known and proven fact that when communities do not or cannot provide a high quality education and well equipped, properly maintained facilities that values of homes and lack of community pride are the result. In order to remain a school system with an excellent rating and be competitive with our neighboring towns, **passage of this levy is imperative. The need will not go away.** You may call the Board of Education with any questions at 419.826.7575. There is a committee you will be directed to that will respond to your concerns.

Remember to patronize the Farmers Market on Saturdays for fresh produce and other goodies. There will be a **bicycle rodeo** this **Saturday, July 28**, for kids starting at 9:00 AM which teaches them skills and safety rules of bike riding. Each participant will be given a free bicycle helmet and will be entered into a drawing to win a new bike in August. The local Lions Club is operating the bicycle rodeo. Thanks Lions! Also, there is either a breakfast or lunch scheduled for each Saturday. There is a link to the Farmers Market website at [www.villageofswantonohio.us](http://www.villageofswantonohio.us) under community links.