

We have all heard the phrase, "I was in the right place at the right time". Usually this phrase is used when someone wins the lottery or gets chosen for a highly desirable job or award. We all understand its implication.

Last August, the Swanton School Board found itself in such a place. After years of waiting their turn, The Ohio Schools Facilities Commission offered \$23 million in funding and credits for a new K-6 grade school with additions to house the 7th and 8th grades in a separate wing at the high school. Swanton area property owners need to provide 13,499,000 to fulfill the final figure of \$37.1 million. Understand that these monies also include .5 mills for the maintenance of the new building. The money CANNOT be used for operational costs, including payroll.

Having two schools on one campus will allow the Swanton Schools to offer more in the arts and other electives by sharing teachers and other resources with all grades, and will allow for gifted programs to return. Also, a new building will have the most student safety construction, plus reduce utilities and maintenance costs by \$200,000 per year.

It is important to understand that very recently the school district was able to refinance the 2001 bonds which cause a net reduction in the millage to feel like 3.6 mills until 2016 when it will be further reduced to feel like 2.6 mills. At that level, a \$100,000 valued home will incur only **\$79.63** for this obligation per year. At this point, it becomes a simple choice. At less than \$80.00 a year for the average homeowner, we can provide our students a state of the art building to further support their recent "Excellent with Distinction" status. The students, faculty, and staff of the Swanton Schools have worked diligently to achieve that ranking; it is our time to tell them we are happy for them and proud to be contributing to their future success.

I think the bigger question is, however, what happens if the levy does not pass? The answer is that students remain in old, outdated buildings for the immediate future. But, in two years, the middle school will close, with sixth graders being forced into Park Elementary, and the 7th and 8th graders moving to the High School anyway, with the voters picking up the tab for \$11 million that the State of Ohio will require us to invest in state mandated changes, all on our own dime. There will be no help with funding from the State at that point.

There are additional points that can be made. If you need further information, you may contact the School Board or the Board office. They will be happy to answer all questions. The number is 419.826.7085. Please know that this is my personal opinion. I am a taxpayer, too, and believe this is one tax I will actually be pleased to pay and will be able to see tangible results on a daily basis for decades to come. I hope you all can see the true value in supporting this levy, and happily cast your vote in favor on May 7.