

# Vital Millage on August Ballot



I am often asked by people in the community “What can I do to help the school in these tough economic times?”

Often, I say “contact our legislators.” Have them make education a top priority in Michigan. Restructure the way public schools are funded. Stable funding would go a long way in helping us avoid radical budget reductions every time the state’s economy takes a dip.

Soon you will have another step you can take that is vital to the future of our students in Comstock Park.

On Tuesday, August 3, you will find an important school millage proposal on the ballot at your voting precinct. This proposal concerns the school district’s non-homestead operating millage.

The proposal is our request for you to *renew* a property tax millage that is levied only on *non-homesteads* in the school district. It represents funding that is crucial to our students and the programming we are able to provide.

## A Little Background

Proposal A, passed way back in 1993, changed the way public schools are funded. It shifted the primary burden of financing schools away from property tax millages and to the state.

The catch, however, is that the state is only required to pay the *majority* of the costs for public education. For Comstock Park to receive its full share of state payments, we must collect millage on non-homestead property in the district.

## It is important to understand two points:

- This is a renewal, not a new tax.  
We ask you to renew it every 5 years.
- It is a tax that homeowners vote on **but do not pay.**

Our revenue from this millage is about \$2,484,000 per year, about 12 percent of our budget. The rest of our funding for general operations comes from the state on a

per-pupil basis, what is called our Foundation Allowance. We now receive \$7,177 from the state for each student. Our projections for next school year reduce this amount to \$7,092, based on state revenue estimates.

## Here’s how all of this affects our operating budget:

Student Count	2,375
Foundation Allowance	\$7,092
Total Allowance	\$16,843,500
Less Non-Homestead Tax	<u>\$2,484,000</u>
<b>Total State Payment</b>	<b>\$14,359,500</b>

You can see that it is critical for us to collect a non-homestead millage for a portion of our budget. The state assumes we will collect this local money. Their payments to us factor this in.

You can see why we take this millage renewal so seriously. It represents revenue that is vital to the continued education and success of our students.

We have already reduced our operating budget by more than \$1.5 million for next fall, largely due to a shortfall in the state’s per pupil Foundation Allowance.

The non-homestead property millage represents about \$2.5 million in much-needed local revenue.

## Why 19 Mills?

School districts often request additional mills in case the full 18 mills on non-homestead property are reduced by the state’s Headlee Amendment. Comstock Park is asking for a renewal of 18 mills - plus 1 additional mill to ONLY be used to offset or restore any Headlee reduction.

By law, we cannot levy more than 18 mills. Your approval of the 1 additional mill ensures that our students will always receive the full foundation grant allowed by law.

# Please plan to vote on Tuesday, August 3

Ethan Ebenstein  
Superintendent