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Report on School District No. 1 Revised Special Tax Levy for Maintenance and Operation Funds -- Proposal

City Club of Portland (Portland, Or.)

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**REPORT
ON
SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 1 REVISED SPECIAL
TAX LEVY FOR MAINTENANCE AND
OPERATION FUNDS...PROPOSAL:**

For the reason that estimated expenditures which will be required to care for and maintain the public property of the District and to carry on and operate its public school system exceed the estimated revenue which will be available to the District from all sources for the 1967-1968 fiscal year by the amount of \$6,520,000 shall School District No. 1, Multnomah County, Oregon, make a special tax levy outside the limitation imposed by Article XI, Section 11, Oregon Constitution, in the fiscal year beginning July 1, 1967, in the amount of \$6,520,000?

- Yes, I vote in favor of the proposed levy
- No, I vote against the proposed levy

* * *

To the Board of Governors,
The City Club of Portland:

On May 12, 1967 the City Club adopted the report of this Committee entitled "Report on School District No. 1 Special Tax Levy for Maintenance and Operation Funds". The Committee had recommended passage of the measure submitted to the voters of School District No. 1 at a special election on May 19, 1967. This measure would have authorized the District to levy property taxes up to \$9,820,000 beyond existing estimated revenues within constitutional limitations.

This special levy measure was defeated by a margin approximating 3 to 2⁽¹⁾.

A new levy measure, reduced to \$6,520,000, will be submitted to the voters of the District at a special election on Thursday, June 29, 1967.

Members of your Committee have studied the revised 1967-68 budget upon which the reduced levy is based and have again interviewed fiscal officers of the district.

In view of the fact that the original special levy was rejected by the voters, the District has reduced the amount of money asked for over and beyond constitutional limitation and has made a corresponding reduction in the originally proposed expenditures. Reductions range from a two per cent cut in one area (number of teachers) to complete elimination in others (portable classrooms other than for Model Schools.) The following schedule shows the areas and extent of the reductions:

Instruction	\$1,205,423
Administration	40,459
Operation of plant	100,000
Fixed Charges	119,325
Maintenance of Plant and Equipment	378,000
Capital Outlay	247,000
Sports, Rentals, Miscellaneous.....	338,107
Total General Budget Reduction	\$3,332,531
Model Schools Program	508,000
Community College	396,217
TOTAL BUDGET REDUCTION	\$3,332,531

⁽¹⁾Of 57,350 votes cast at the May 19, 1967 special election, 21,994 votes were cast in favor of the measure, and 35,356 votes were cast in opposition.

As one of the principal means of cutting costs, the District chose to reduce its teaching corps and custodial personnel by 74 teachers and twenty custodians.

Salary levels for personnel will remain as originally proposed for 1967-68. These will include the increases previously approved by the School Board. Budget items of equipment, materials and supplies for instruction, administration and maintenance have been curtailed. Building repair allocations have been reduced approximately fifteen per cent. A proposal to purchase needed portable classrooms for schools outside the Model Schools Program has been cancelled. Other areas of curtailed expenditure include portions of allocations for the athletic program, summer school program and the Portland Community College.

Some might say that the District has cut "fat" from its budget. Your Committee is of the opinion that there was no "fat" to cut. It has been necessary to delete services essential to the maintenance of the adequate central urban school system which Portland presently enjoys. Further reductions can only lead to major damage to our school system.

It does not seem practical or advisable for this Committee to question the decision of the administration to reduce certain areas of expenditure and not others. The Committee agrees with the acknowledged philosophy utilized—that the primary concern is to maintain the integrity of the classroom. Such integrity may only be maintained if our teaching corps is retained. This necessitates keeping salaries attractive. If salaries are not kept competitive, it is unreasonable to think that the District would not lose its better teachers to higher paying districts. Physical necessities may always be purchased or provided for when funds become available, but it is unlikely that teachers who have moved away or left the teaching profession will return at any later date.

It would be needless repetition to the Committee's May 12 report to reflect further upon the position of the Committee with respect to the resubmitted measure. Your Committee has found no valid evidence to vary its prior observations and conclusions. They are adopted for this report and the conclusions are reprinted as an appendix to this report. See Appendix A).

Therefore, your Committee re-endorses its original stand in favor of providing additional operating funds through a special property tax levy, but only as a temporary measure, pending realistic relief from the Oregon State Legislature.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Your Committee recommends that the City Club go on record as approving the passage of School District No. 1's Revised Special Tax Levy and urges a vote of "Yes" thereon.

Respectfully submitted,

Joseph M. Almand, Jr.
 Myer Avedovech
 Keith M. Barker
 George S. Gearhart
 William H. Holm
 Edmund A. Jordan
 James S. Leigh
 James A. Larpenteur, Jr., *Chairman*

Approved by the Research Board June 16, 1967 and submitted to the Board of Governors.

Received by the Board of Governors June 19, 1967 and ordered printed and submitted to the membership for discussion and action.

APPENDIX A

The Portland School District presently offers an effective program of basic education for its children, but it faces the unique and serious problems that have plagued central-city school systems in metropolitan areas throughout the nation. These problems principally relate to the education of the disadvantaged child. It must be recognized that an urban center such as Portland attracts the families of disadvantaged children. Some of those children are handicapped by substandard, socio-economic backgrounds; others have physical, mental, or emotional handicaps. Most of these disadvantages can best be cured or alleviated by the medical and educational resources found in urban centers.

The Portland School District is doing its best to implement the recommendations of the 1964 *Race and Education Report*. It is also developing projects designed to combat the unique problems faced by central urban school districts. Your Committee concludes that the rather minimal amount proposed to be expended from District resources for these special projects is a good and necessary investment. Not only do these projects serve a vital local need, but they also generate substantial federal funds which free other District funds for application in basic school operations.

In order to conserve requests for additional operating funds, the District has, in recent years, sacrificed maintenance allocations. That policy is unfortunately continued in the proposed budget. Your Committee feels that more monies should be provided for maintenance to preserve the aging school plant, and that present allocations are unrealistically low. The District must soon face the fact that its rapidly deteriorating physical plant cannot be maintained only on an emergency basis. It is the Committee's hope that the District's present study will generate a long-needed realistic capital improvement and maintenance program.

Qualified teachers are the backbone of quality education. From such teachers our children develop attitudes, incentives and abilities which prepare them to meet the challenges of post-high school life. Since Portland must remain in the mainstream of competition for competent teachers and since the District cannot offer competitive conditions in the way of reduced class loads and an attractive physical plant, Portland must at least make a determined effort to maintain attractive salaries. Ideally, Portland's salary structure should be above that of surrounding districts to compensate for the more difficult conditions facing the Portland teacher. Even under the proposed structure, Portland's salaries are not top ranking, particularly at the more experienced levels. Portland's main attraction to the young career teacher appears to be the challenge of the obstacles he faces. Your Committee does not feel that a central city public school system can continue to attract teachers on that principle.

Your Committee concludes that the proposed salary increases are reasonable, not extravagant, and are necessary for procurement and retention of qualified teachers.

An operation presently utilizing almost \$50,000,000 and employing approximately 5,000 employees is vulnerable to waste and extravagance. Your Committee does not find any significant waste or extravagance in the District's programs. It feels that School District No. 1 continually strives to increase its efficiency, and derives maximum use from all available funds.

Proposed 1967-1968 expenditures for basic school operations are designed only to *maintain, not improve*, the District's present general school program. The District must have the funds available to meet these expenditures. Passage of the proposed ballot measure is mandatory, since there is no assurance that other sources will provide the necessary funds..

Your Committee does not approve of continual fundings of sums needed to maintain our schools by additional property tax levies, when District residents pay far more to the state than the District receives from the state. This levy must only be considered as a temporary stop-gap measure to maintain our local education system pending receipt of further state financial support. Your Committee feels strongly that the Oregon Legislature must revise the basic school support formula to effectuate more equitable distribution of state funds and to supplement revenues of the District to combat the special problems this District faces.