

School board approves levy for ballot

PAT GALBINCEA
Plain Dealer Reporter

Cleveland school board members voted unanimously Tuesday night to put a 15-mill levy on the Nov. 6 ballot.

The board voted 9-0 to put the issue to voters, drawing mixed reactions from about 40 people who attended the meeting.

The tax is estimated to cost the average Cleveland homeowner with a \$64,000 home an additional \$294 a year for the next four years. Cleveland voters last passed an operating tax in 1996,

and they approved a \$335 million bond issue in 2001 for school construction.

Resident Donna Brown told the board she will not vote for the levy because she doesn't trust the school board.

"To give that kind of money to a failing school district is idiotic," she said.

Others, including Al Porter, asked why the district is not precise on how the money would be used. Eric Gordon, the district's chief executive officer, has said the district doesn't want to be tied to a specific spending plan

because it needs flexibility.

"Will you beg us for money every few years?" Porter asked.

Gordon said that the district has specific goals for spending the expected \$65 million it would receive if the tax passes.

"We have 10 specific requirements you'll be able to hold us accountable to," Gordon said.

He said the specifics include attracting and retaining excellent teachers, replacing failing schools with new quality ones, increasing student graduation rates, ensuring that all graduates are college- or work force-ready,

and providing disciplined classroom environments.

Other goals are providing real-world experiences in local businesses, upgrading textbooks and computers, making the school year longer for students who need it, basing teacher and principal pay more on performance, and guaranteeing accountability for high-performing charter schools.

Resident Mary Campbell Stack said she was disappointed that of the 15 mills, one would be used for charter schools. Gordon followed up by saying it would be for six charter schools that part-

ner with the district.

The tax also had its supporters, including Cleveland Teachers Union official Kurt Richards and Anneliesa Henley, a retired substitute teacher.

"Fifteen mills gives you a lot to think about even when you support the levy," Henley said. "But we have the chance to see how the money is being used for the next four years. We must pass this levy to save the school district."

To reach this Plain Dealer reporter: pgalbincea@plaind.com, 216-999-5159

CONFERENCE

FROM B1

East Cleveland man spotlighted at conference

Stallworth said this would give youths a "day every year to know that they need to stand up for this issue until we have no new cases of HIV infection."

Four out of every 10 new HIV infections occur in people younger than 30, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"We have this golden opportunity to actually end the HIV and AIDS epidemic," said Stallworth, who works as a community educator and outreach coordinator at the AIDS Taskforce of Greater Cleveland.

"We do ourselves a disservice by standing on the wayside and not being involved," he said. "We do ourselves a disservice by not holding our legislators accountable for policies and actions that affect us directly."

At the conference, Stallworth sat on a panel on "Young People Leading the Fight Against HIV: U.S. and Global Perspectives on How to Make a Difference." He spoke forcefully into the microphone as he told the audience about being diagnosed with HIV.

Stallworth said he became incredibly sick one night and over the next few weeks lost 20 pounds. He went to the emergency room, where he was tested for Hepatitis C, given an IV and discharged. When he returned for a follow-up appointment, the doctor looked at him and said, "Why did they let you out of the hospital?"

It was not always easy to be open about his HIV-positive status. Stallworth recalls the difficulty he had telling his family, especially his father.

"My mom sat there and she comforted me and my dad — I could tell he was hurt because he had already said some things prior to that that he probably regretted in the moment," said Stallworth.

A little while later his father came back and said, "Lawrence, if there was a way I could take this away from you, you know I would."

As a gay black male, Stallworth knew he was at a high risk of contracting HIV and went to get tested every few months. A Fenway Institute study presented at the conference reported that young black men who have sex with men, those 30 years of age and younger, contracted HIV at a rate of nearly 6 percent per year, about three times the rate of their white counterparts.

Stallworth said his cautious behavior was not enough to protect him.

"Black gay men — we don't have high-risk sexual behaviors in general but the reason why we're at risk is that there's already so much HIV in the community. It only takes one slip-up," said Stallworth. "We have to have more access to testing. We need to remove the stigma so people feel comfortable about getting their HIV test."

"If we want to move forward, we have to become a society where it's OK for young kids to talk about who they are and come out to their parents and say, 'Mom and Dad, I'm gay' and 'Mom and Dad, I'm having sex,' and for them to be accepting of that and to actually say, 'OK, son or daughter, that's fine but here's the things you need to do to make sure that you're safe, and here's some organizations I know that could help you with that.'"

Stallworth said there are organizations in Cleveland, such as the AIDS Taskforce, that address the needs of HIV prevention at the "ground level," but funding,



THOMAS ONDREY | THE PLAIN DEALER

"I want young people to know that just because you get HIV it's not the end of the world," said Lawrence Stallworth II, 20, who works at the AIDS Taskforce of Greater Cleveland and spoke last week at the International AIDS Conference. To stay healthy, he exercises, eats well and takes his medications.

he said, is always a concern. The Taskforce's youth center, for example, once open five days a week, is now open three.

In the face of adversity, Stallworth frequently quotes a line from one of his favorite films, "The Shawshank Redemption," a movie about a man who, based on circumstantial evidence, is sent to prison for murdering his

wife and her lover.

"Morgan Freeman says you can either get busy living or get busy dying," said Stallworth. "I made the decision to dedicate my life to fighting HIV/AIDS."

"It didn't stop me from graduating from high school, it didn't stop me from going to college for nursing and I just made the dean's list this semester."

Stallworth said his dream is to become an infectious-disease nurse and work at the Cleveland Clinic. He said it is his homage to his aunt, his "rock," a nurse who helped him seek medical attention in the first place. Stallworth also said he has "political aspirations."

"I want to change my city and really my country for the better

— the world if I can," he said, laughing. "I know I dream big, but I was always taught to."

Stallworth said the day he was diagnosed HIV-positive his life changed.

Not for the worse, but for the better.

To reach this Plain Dealer reporter: cccapachi@plaind.com, 216-999-4098

Cuyahoga County Insider



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THE PLAIN DEALER

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Obituaries

ABBOTT
THELMA JEAN ABBOTT, age 90, beloved wife of 60 years to Charles, loving mother of Cindy Sendar (Emile), Deborah Abbott, Donna Okin (Martin), and Judy Abbott, cherished grandmother of Chip, Jennifer, Megan (Rod), and Matthew, sister of Richard Hart and Donna Arnold, aunt to many, entered into rest July 30, 2012. Private services with inurnment at Sunset Memorial Park.
www.dostalbokas.com



ANDREWS

ANNALISS "TOOTSIE" ANDREWS (nee Merker), 78, of Brunswick, passed away on July 30, 2012. She was born in Cleveland to John and Helen (nee Dapo) Merker. Tootsie is survived by her beloved husband, Richard; sons: John (Cindy) and Rick (Lou Ann); daughter: Karen (Bob) Yateson; grandchildren: Genna Leigh Andrews Kingon (Justin) and Melissa Marie Andrews. She was preceded in death by her sister, Joan Burke and her parents.

FRIENDS MAY JOIN THE FAMILY FOR VISITATION ON FRIDAY, AUGUST 3, 2012, FROM 2 - 4 P.M. AND 6 - 8 P.M., AT CARLSON FUNERAL HOMES & CREMATION SERVICES, 1642 PEARL RD. (1/2 mile South of Route 303), BRUNSWICK. Mass of Christian Burial will be held on Saturday, August 4, 2012, at 10:30 a.m., with visitation one hour prior at 9:30 - 10:30 A.M., at St. Ambrose Church, Brunswick with Fr. Robert Wenz officiating. PLEASE MEET AT CHURCH. Interment will follow in Eastlawn Memory Gardens, Brunswick. Family requests donations be made to St. Ambrose Catholic Church, 929 Pearl Rd., Brunswick, OH 44212.



BALCER

See WOLBERT Notice.

BERARDINELLI

See RUPP-PINNEY notice.

BERKHEIMER

JERRY K. BERKHEIMER (aka Jerry Sarver), 43, passed away Monday, July 30, 2012 after a short illness. He is survived by three brothers, John Russ and Randy; by six nieces and nephews; by his mother and by his wife, Cynthia Hubbell-Berkheimer. The family will receive friends on Friday, August 3, 2012 from 4pm until the time of the funeral service at 8:30pm at the LISTON FUNERAL HOME, 36403 CENTER RIDGE RD. (at Stoney Ridge Rd.), NORTH RIDGEVILLE. In lieu of flowers, the family suggests that memorial contributions be made to the American Cancer Society, 10501 Euclid Ave., Cleveland, OH 44106. To leave an online condolence please visit www.listonfuneralhome.com.

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