

Hearing draws a few foes of Columbus levy shared by district, charters

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By [Bill Bush](#)

Only six people took the time yesterday to speak at a public hearing about a proposed property-tax levy on the November ballot that would share Columbus City Schools dollars with charter schools.

Five of the speakers voiced concern about the plan, and three of them — all parents of children who are in district schools or about to enter them — demanded separate ballot questions for charters and the Columbus district. They threatened to work against the levy if the two questions are combined.

“I’ll wait for the next levy, I’ll wait until next year,” rather than vote for a charter-schools tax, said Miriam Abbott, who will send three children to Indian Springs Elementary in Clintonville this fall. “I’ll wait for a levy that is ethical.”

Terra Goodnight said of supporting a combined levy: “I don’t know if I can go that far.” Goodnight is a policy director for the left-leaning advocacy group Innovation Ohio, and she will send two kindergartners to a Columbus school this year. The district needs money, and a levy should have been on the ballot last November, she said.

“We’re a year behind, and we’re now in a position where we’d have to make horrible cuts if this levy doesn’t pass,” Goodnight said.

Although the state legislature has approved a bill — expected to be signed into law by Gov. John Kasich within weeks — mandating that the Columbus Board of Education put a joint district-charter levy on the November ballot, that doesn’t prohibit the district from also putting its own levy on the same ballot, Goodnight suggested.

Last night’s poorly attended hearing was early in the process of tax-issue planning, said Michael Dalby, president of the Columbus Chamber. He expects more charter-school supporters to get behind the plan of Columbus Mayor Michael B. Coleman’s education commission to fund high-performing charters.

“I’m sure there are some people who have their kids in charter schools where their kids have benefited, and so they need to step forward and say this is a positive thing,” Dalby said. “I mean,

the whole purpose here is to serve our students ... so that they get the highest education possible.”

Dalby urged the district to embrace goals to reduce spending by up to \$100 million a year, a figure proposed by a management study commissioned by Coleman’s education commission. Dalby said the district also needs to focus on spending for new programs identified by the education commission as a priority, such as expansion of pre-kindergarten; expanding classroom technology; and supporting charters, while district schools rated D or F on state report cards shouldn’t be tolerated.

Another public hearing is scheduled for 6 p.m. July 9 at the district’s Downtown headquarters, 270 E. State St.

Original Article:

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