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## **Bozeman Area Chamber of Commerce Supports Upcoming School Levies and Urban Transportation District**

**Bozeman, Mont.**—The Bozeman Area Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors voted Wednesday, March 22, 2023, to support two school board levy requests for the May 2, 2023, election. The Board also supports the formulation of an Urban Transportation District.

School Board Trustees are requesting a \$380,000 operating levy increase, allowing the greatest purchasing power for programs and personnel. Tax increases would be approximately \$1.73 annually per \$100,000 of a home's assessed market value.

The second, a School Safety Levy, provides a dedicated revenue stream for ongoing costs of school safety, including counselors and school resource officers. Safety-related costs would be removed from the general funds and coded to the safety levies if approved. This structure would reduce pressure on the general fund budget. The district requests a 4-mill safety levy in the Elementary District and a 2-mill safety levy in the High School District. The tax impact for this levy would be \$2.70 per \$100,000 of home value. The combined levies would total \$9.83 per \$100,000 of home value annually if approved.

Chamber President and CEO, Daryl Schliem, said, "The Bozeman School District has a track record of being fiscally responsible. After a thorough discussion at our March 22, 2023, Board meeting, we unanimously voted to support all three levies on the upcoming May ballot. Our business community has recognized that public education and public safety are critical factors to attracting quality businesses and families to our community."

Currently, the Elementary and High School General Fund budgets are using limited one-time funds to make ends meet, a solution that is not sustainable. The upcoming levy requests would help offset this imbalance.

"Conservative estimation on property valuations was another critical factor in our decision. It is estimated on the ballot initiative to be seven percent, and the board feels this is a very conservative number with all the home sales and new development," Schliem said.

Bill Fiedler, Chamber Board Chairman, said of the support, "The residents of Bozeman have historically been supportive of Bozeman Schools, and I think this is a very important moment for us to come together to ensure our local educators have the tools they need to support the safety and education of our kids."

Another ballot measure, approval of the formation of an Urban Transportation District (UTD), is also supported by the Chamber Board. The formation of this district is vital to preserving much-needed public transportation services in the Gallatin Valley. Due to Rapid growth, Gallatin Valley is now categorized as a “small, urbanized area” by the Federal Transit Administration. This qualifies us to create a UTD, allowing Streamline and Galavan to continue receiving federal funding to help support operations.

“For the past few years, we have been discussing the day that Bozeman’s population would grow past 50,000 residents and that the need for an Urban Transportation District would become necessary to receive Federal Funding directly to the new district. The board emphasizes that there is no fiscal cost to creating the district and is necessary to make the flow of funds from the Federal Government streamlined to the district,” said Schliem.

Fielder goes on to say, “It’s important to remember that voting for the formation of the Urban Transportation District will not increase taxes. Rather, it will allow Federal Funds to flow into our community to help alleviate some of the transportation challenges growing regions like ours experience.”

Ballots will be mailed to voters on April 14 and are due by 8:00 pm, May 2, 2023. For more information on the school levies, go to <https://www.bsd7.org/election2023>. To learn more about the Urban Transportation District, go to [yesforstreamline.org](https://www.yesforstreamline.org).

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