

Board member gives call to action

Arnold Engel wants district to stand tough in contract talks this summer.

By Lindsey Hilty
Staff Writer

FAIRFIELD — A Fairfield Board of Education member often at odds with his counterparts has challenged the district to “play hardball” this summer during bargaining talks.

Fairfield City Schools will negotiate three union contracts, and board member Arnold Engel said tough bargaining will help head off money problems.

“The Board of Education was elected to represent the entire community and not special interests,”



Arnold Engel

Engel said at the Wednesday, April 2, meeting. “I remind the board that our community voted down four of the last five operating levies.”

Engel also pointed to a report released by the Ohio School Boards Association that stated only 46.1 percent of school tax issues passed in the March 4 primary. It was reported the lowest for a primary election in the last 25 years, according to the Education Tax Policy Institute.

“I would like the community to understand every levy they put on

the ballot is driven by contracts,” he said. “In light of the weak economic climate, I pray that our school employees realize they are fortunate to even have a job. I further hope that they will be considerate to their neighbors, who are fighting for survival on a day to day basis, by being open to contract concessions ... Only a foolish, uncaring school board would consider raising taxes in this kind of pain,” he said. “We have the opportunity to save millions of taxpayer’s dollars.”

Board President Mark Morris halted the conversation after Engel’s speech, and said it is against policy and the law to discuss contract negotiations in public.

The board also discussed plac-

ing signs in front of buildings to let the public know how permanent improvement levy funds have been spent over the past five years as it pushes for district voters to pass an upcoming levy renewal.

The board also discussed an upcoming Student Success Summit, in which facilitators from Key Alliance LLC would help the district compile ideas from the community in order to define student success as part of the district’s strategic plan.

“We really want to get a wide variety of people to participate ... not just us,” Morris said. “I think it’s going to be one of the most important things that we do.”

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