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IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Open Letter to the Parents of Springboro Students

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SPRINGBORO, Ohio – As the new school year begins many parents, students, and community members have questions. The elimination of high school and day care busing along with pay to participate, have understandably caused confusion and concern. In this two page informational letter, we will attempt to address the questions/concerns we have been asked so far this year.

Busing issues at the high school were quickly and efficiently resolved. Parents were fantastic following signs and directions. The entire drop off and pick up of students was well orchestrated with great cooperation from everyone. Why was high school busing on the chopping block? The school district is required to have a five year financial plan. This plan outlines expenses, revenue, and gives a good picture of current and future financial needs. Those projections indicate that as we continue to grow, our revenue sources are not keeping up with the inflationary costs of fuel, food, and additional students. To fix this shortfall, we proposed a 5.99 mill levy in March to provide us with additional funds starting in February 2009. That levy failed. We listened to community concerns about the current economy and devised a plan to phase in the money needed over a three year period rather than all at once. Thus, the August levy of 3.99 mills, plus one mill in 2010 and one mill in 2012 was placed on the ballot. By reducing the 2008 fiscal year budget by \$800,000 and the fiscal year 2009 budget by \$1.6 million, we were able to spread the levy over three years. The thought was to minimize the initial cost to each taxpayer. You asked us to begin cutting, just like you need to at home. Over two years we have cut \$2.4 million dollars. This levy also failed.

With the failure of the August levy, some form of additional revenue (pay to participate) and/or expense reduction (high school busing) was needed. Ohio schools are not permitted to operate in a deficit budget. The Board of Education and the administration reviewed the options and made a commitment to avoid direct cuts to the classroom as long as possible. Since 81% of our entire budget is spent on staff and benefits, and 4% of our budget is spent on utilities, we only have 15% of our budget to use as discretionary money. So what is left to cut? High school busing and day care busing are not required by Ohio law. It made more sense to cut busing than to further reduce supplies and materials like textbooks. By eliminating high school and day care busing, the district will save \$225,000 per year, not counting fuel savings (expense reduction). Our pay to participate will generate \$400,000 (additional revenue). These

changes, along with the \$2.4 million in budget cuts over the last two fiscal years, will enable us to finish the 08-09 school year.

These changes were not decided upon lightly by the Board of Education or administration. The Board of Education anguished over these decisions. No one wants to cut anything or charge anymore to already overtaxed parents. Until the state sees fit to increase revenue by some means other than property tax, or until Springboro stops growing, there continues to be a need for additional funds.

The Board and administration also struggled with how to communicate cuts to parents. If parents were told prior to the levy that busing would be cut and pay to participate implemented, the reaction is often that we were using scare tactics, attempting to hold the parents hostage. If we did not tell parents about busing cuts and pay to participate until after the levy failed, we would be guilty of not giving parents time to prepare for alternative transportation. We decided to inform parents on June 13 when bus schedules went out that a cut would be coming. It seemed only fair to give parents a chance to get a plan together.

Many people have graciously made suggestions on ways to save money or earn money. Many parents stated they would have gladly paid for high school busing rather than the current arrangement they have made. Unfortunately, Ohio law does not allow school districts to charge for busing. Another suggestion was to sell advertising on school buses to help with costs. Again, Ohio law does not allow this.

The Warren County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities voted to reduce the amount of money they are collecting from property taxes. The Springboro Board of Education planned back in 2005 to reduce the money collected from property taxes to pay off the new elementary buildings. These two items plus the Warren County commissioners increasing property taxes confused many voters; and rightfully so. The bottom line is that if the November levy passes, the property taxes for a \$250,000 home will go up \$104.12 per year. Since property taxes are paid twice a year, each tax bill will go up \$52.06 for that \$250,000 home.

Enrollment in our schools is another area of concern. With the challenging economy, record foreclosures, and high number of homes on the market, many people were confused on why we continue to plan for 225-250 additional students each year. There are two reasons. One - daycares and preschools in Springboro have more than enough students to keep our numbers increasing. Two - as of September 2, we have 270 more students than we had at the end of last year. We predicted that we would end the current school year we just started (08-09) with 5,515 students. We currently have 5,520 enrolled the second week of this school year.

On a more positive note, we were ecstatic to learn that our rating from the Ohio Department of Education for last year was **“Excellent with Distinction”**. This is the first year that this rating has been available. We are very proud to be one of 70 out of 610 school districts to receive this honor. This award was a team effort with the Board of

Education, administration, staff, students, and parents teaching and motivating our children to do their very best. Our future success as a society and profession is a quality education for every child.

We will have to continue to make whatever cuts are needed to keep our budget in the black as we continue to grow. We are very proud that we have cut \$2.6 million and so far have maintained the quality of education. Now that some class sizes have risen to 29/30 per class, maintaining the “Excellent with Distinction” rating will become more and more difficult.

Thank you for taking time to read this letter. We hope we have resolved some rumors and answered many questions. We consider your willingness to entrust us with your most prized possession a sacred trust. We will do our professional best to keep the quality and standard of Springboro Community Schools as high as we can for as long as we can.