

Dear Leelanau County Board of Commissioners:

After viewing the meeting posted on YouTube yesterday, I wanted to reach out to all of you and share some thoughts (and concerns) with you about this possible decision to vote no regarding the Early Childhood millage. Commissioner Bunek, as you are “my” commissioner (as I reside in the village of Suttons Bay), I particularly want to reach out to you and let you know that this is a very disappointing situation, especially since I am one of your voters who voted “yes” for the Early Childhood millage. So did my husband.

Commissioner Rushton, I also want to mention that we have served on the Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition together for a few years, now, and one of the most important topics of conversation has been prevention. It’s part of the title of our coalition, for a very good reason. Prevention starts even before a child is born, when you support the parents of that child with resources and services, but the early childhood years are of upmost importance when we’re talking about keeping kids safe and healthy. Support for our young families is paramount--at whatever level they need it. This is not a socioeconomic issue, necessarily, but support in all of its forms is so important for our families raising children here. This is the best prevention possible--positive, community-based experiences with knowledgeable and trained professionals leading the way.

Having parenting/play groups is key to building relationships, recognizing need for services, networking, and just having the opportunity to have a support system ready and waiting. I know that my husband and I very much depended on Parenting Communities and the different playgroups available when our son was young here in Leelanau. We created friendships, heard about other opportunities, built connections within our school community, and our son learned how to be part of a group of kids. Huge stuff for our family!

Now let’s think about a single mom with three young children, and she doesn’t have any of these opportunities or resources. Now we’re talking about the potential for more adverse childhood experiences. Families need these resources here in Leelanau. This is a really good investment in the future of our families, and the future of our young people.

As a taxpayer, I think the minor amount of money that this will cost my family per year is worth every penny. I want to build up my community. This is a great way to do it. Parents and caregivers need support and educated people in position to provide that support. That’s what this millage will provide for our community. Please consider giving it more time, especially now that the programs are able to meet in person. Give it a year and reassess. With the pandemic, everything has been put on hold or delayed in some manner (4-H is a great example of that)--it’s not a good time to assess the programs when they have been so affected by restrictions. The program will continue to grow, as the word spreads about it. Families talk to each other, especially when something is working and is done well.

Please reconsider your vote for Monday and vote yes to keep the millage for Early Childhood for the good of our beautiful county and its families.

Thank you,

Rosali Collier
Suttons Bay village resident