

A statement from Ozark Special Road District President, read at the September 8, 2026, monthly meeting:

Statement Regarding the August 26, 2026 Tax Levy Meeting

The 2026 tax levy meeting of the OSRD was held on August 26, 2026. During that meeting, Office Administrator Jennifer Belin presented information concerning the district's need for the full tax levy amount authorized by the State Auditor's Office. Ms. Belin explained the purpose and necessity of the levy, including the pavement and stormwater infrastructure assessment prepared by Toth and Associates.

The assessment identified a significant number of roadways within the district that are classified as being in critical or poor condition. Ms. Belin further explained that, even if the district receives the maximum levy permitted, it will require several years to address these deficiencies while simultaneously maintaining the remaining roads and meeting the district's ongoing operational obligations.

The district's attorney, Pat Platter, also presented his legal opinion concerning the tax levy and the district's filings with the State of Missouri. Mr. Platter explained that, following the restoration of the tax levy amount in 2022, the paperwork and documentation submitted to the state have been properly completed and filed.

Following the presentation and an opportunity for questions and discussion, the Board approved a 2026 tax levy of \$0.3393 per \$100 of assessed valuation, as reflected on the Pro Forma Compensation Form prepared by the Missouri State Auditor's Office, for purposes of the 2026 tax assessment.

Conduct and Statements Made During the Meeting

During the course of the meeting, Commissioner Bilyeu stated that the other commissioners were responsible for having "the most corrupt road district there is." This statement is unsupported by the facts and unfairly damages the integrity and character of the commissioners serving this district.

Neither Jerry Countryman, myself, nor the other commissioners who have served since Commissioner Bilyeu's prior resignation have received any personal financial benefit or otherwise profited from our service as commissioners. Further, contracts entered into by the district have not been awarded on the basis of personal friendship or favoritism. The district has also undergone a financial audit conducted by an independent professional auditor. The existence of disagreements concerning the expenditures of public funds does not, establish corruption, misconduct, or improper financial benefit. There is a legitimate distinction between disagreeing with a board's decisions and making unsupported statements concerning the honesty, integrity, or character of the individuals serving on that board. Commissioners are entitled to express differing opinions regarding district policy, expenditures, and operations. Such disagreements, however, should be addressed through appropriate discussion and debate rather than through personal accusations or statements that unfairly impugn the reputation of fellow commissioners.

Expectation of Professional and Respectful Conduct

For the benefit of the OSRD and the taxpayers we serve, I respectfully request that all commissioners adhere to the standards of conduct established in the district's written employee guidelines and handbook, which provide:

"Commissioners and employees are expected to treat each other with mutual respect."

That standard should apply to every member of this Board.

Public service requires accountability, transparency, and the ability to disagree. It also requires that disagreements be expressed in a professional and respectful manner. The taxpayers of this district are entitled to a Board that may have legitimate differences of opinion, but that can nevertheless conduct its business in a manner that is civil, professional, and focused on the best interests of the district.

Accordingly, I ask that all commissioners refrain from personal attacks, unsupported allegations, and statements that impugn the integrity or character of other members of the Board. Nothing in this request limits any commissioner's right to question expenditures, challenge decisions, raise concerns regarding district operations, or otherwise participate fully in the Board's deliberations. It simply asks that such concerns be raised responsibly, respectfully, and in accordance with the standards applicable to all members of the organization.

Our obligation is to the taxpayers of the OSRD. Regardless of our individual disagreements, we should conduct ourselves accordingly and work together, to the extent reasonably possible, to protect the interests of the district and ensure that its roads, infrastructure, finances, and operations are properly managed.