

Unofficial

Regular Meeting
Board of School Trustees
October 12, 2020
Administration Building

Board members present were:

	<u>Present</u>	<u>Absent</u>
Gabe Widmer	X	
Edward Schroeder	X	
Robert Sondgeroth	X	
Jennifer Barce	X	
Chad Tolen	X	

Also present were administrators, faculty, staff, and patrons.

Call to Order, Recognize Quorum

President Edward Schroeder called the regular meeting to order at 7:03 p.m., and recognized a quorum. The Board, Interim Superintendent, administrators, faculty, staff and patrons stood for the pledge of allegiance and took a moment of silence. Mr. Wittenauer indicated there was one emergency addition to the agenda. He stated it would be E.7 to approve live streaming of the board meetings. The board approved the amended agenda on a motion by Jennifer Barce and a second by Robert Sondgeroth. The motion carried.

Audience to Visitors

Amanda Mullins, a teacher at Benton Central Jr./Sr. High School, addressed the board regarding levying the full .31 cents of referendum monies. Miss Mullins read the following statement to the board: "Good evening. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak this evening. I come to you as a concerned teacher of the Benton Community School Corporation. Concerned not only for my co-workers and myself but more importantly for all of the students in our school corporation. In my fourteen years of teaching and 9th year at Benton Central I have witnessed many wonderful things our students have had the opportunity to do in and out the classroom. They have been able to be successful in numerous programs that have led them to success past high school. I realize along with my co-workers that times are tough for all, but now is not the time to take away from our students and inevitably our community. Our students are the future of our community and if we limit their opportunities and exposure during their secondary school years we are hurting our community as well.

I have witnessed students succeed through our Fine Arts programs, PLTW program, athletics, Speech and Debate, Drama, Agriculture and FFA, and many other avenues. I of course am much more familiar with the success the students of our Agriculture education program have had. To highlight some of those successes:

- We have had ten nationally competing judging teams where students had the chance to travel from North Carolina to Denver, Colorado to compete and develop relationships with college and industry professionals.
- 11 students have received academic scholarships varying from partial to full tuition scholarships to be members of collegiate judging programs at colleges and universities in Texas, Kansas, Oklahoma,

Illinois, and here locally at Purdue. Those students have competed in Soil Judging, Dairy Cattle Evaluation, Livestock Evaluation, Horse Evaluation, and Meat Evaluation and Technology. Many of those students are now working in that same industry that helped pay for their college education. Some are still competing and completing their degrees.

- We have had two Indiana FFA state officers.
- We have had 19 state winning proficiencies that started as SAE programs for our students. Those SAEs have allowed FFA members to earn money, gain career skills, build their resume, and be recognized on a state and national level. From those 19 state wins, two students have gone on to win the national championship in their proficiency area.

These are just a few of the numerous accomplishments the Ag Education program has had since Fall of 2012. I am not here to brag about the program I lead but to share with you what our hardworking and deserving students are able to accomplish when they are given the opportunity to pursue these programs like CTE, Drama, Fine Arts, and numerous others.

I come to you asking you to stop and thoroughly think through your decision about the taxi levy and the effects it will have on our students, employees, and community. I would like to take a moment and remind you of what we the teachers did to help pass the tax referendum earlier this year.

We (BEA teachers) backed the board when they wanted to pass a referendum. We walked in parades, talked to friends and neighbors. We stood up for the board and your request for a 31 cent max. Now, it appears that you are not willing to stand up for us.

Our school corporation is in dire need of this referendum money. Passing 31 cents this year does not mean it has to be 31 cents every year in the future. But it is needed right now. Leaving money "on the table" is crazy.

Taxpayers voted in favor. There is a civic responsibility to do what the MAJORITY of voters approved, not just what the few have complained about. That's how democracy works.

We have great teachers and great students. It is inevitable that we will continue to lose staff and students if we cannot compensate fairly and if we cut programs. This will just multiply the problem we are facing.

So I ask you to think about those little Kindergarten students who have just begun their school careers. Don't you want those students to have the same opportunities that our recent graduates have had? Without utilizing the full amount of money that could be available through this tax increase as passed earlier this year, those Kindergarteners would likely never have the opportunities that our recent graduates have had and so in my mind it should be an easy decision to utilize the full tax levy increase so that those students aren't penalized in the future. Yes, we are a unique school corporation due to our land area and sparse population but that shouldn't prevent our students and community from continuing to achieve success and be proud to call Benton County home. Thank you!"

Heather Screen, a teacher at Benton Central Jr./Sr. High School addressed the school board next regarding levying the full .31 cents of referendum monies. She stated she was not here tonight on behalf of the BCSC staff, not as a representative of the union and not to represent her own personal beliefs. Rather, she is here tonight on behalf of the BCSC students. She

stated as staff members, community members, board members and volunteers, our priority is what is in the best educational interest of our students. She stated how and when we spend money should be driven by the goal of providing the best educational opportunities possible to our students. She stated that in this time, our money is indeed short but our community has stepped up and said we can help you and we're willing to make our educational priorities number one. Mrs. Screen stated she was here tonight pleading for the board to vote for the full 31 cents for the tax referendum. She said she had two points to make, one is that the board was elected to represent this community and whether you agree or disagree the community voted for a maximum 31 cent referendum. She stated that as a representative the board has to listen to it and choosing not to listen to it is an egregious misrepresentation of the community. She stated the board has a responsibility to represent the community for which they were elected. She stated without voting for the full 31 cents, the board will be knowingly and openly choosing to limit educational opportunities. She stated we all know the numbers, we know what is going to happen without the money. She stated if the board says we don't need the money they are limiting opportunities. She stated the board will, by default, drive families to choose to attend neighboring school districts where a more varied set of programs is offered. She stated limiting our programming and cutting what we offer only increases our problem. Mrs. Screen stated we will lose more kids on ADM and lose more funding. She stated it is our responsibility to find creative ways to continue to provide the students with the highest quality education which may or may not mean cuts but if the board does not pass a full referendum it does mean cuts now and there is no time for creativeness. She stated choosing less than 31 cents is choosing your pocketbook over our students. She stated there is no simpler way to say it. She stated it seems to me that we need to make our students, and our community, priority number one.

Barbara Holmes, a teacher at Prairie Crossing Elementary, addressed the school board next regarding levying the full .31 cents of referendum monies. Mrs. Holmes state this is her 30th teaching here. She stated she was here because she believes in the schools. She stated her dad believed in the schools. She stated you can see it in the news every day. She stated there are people who went to ours schools that are very successful. She stated her family alone has three nurses, 3 teachers, an SIA employee who is very successful and a brother who is a principal at a high school. She has nieces and nephews that are very successful as well. Mrs. Holmes stated that when she went to have children her husband is a Harrison grad and he wanted the children to be educated there but they chose to educate them in our school district. She stated that when we went for the referendum she trusted the numbers she was seeing and she knows we need money. She stated she trusted that the 31 cents was what we needed, that's what we asked for and that is what we told everyone. She stated that is what our community voted for. She stated if we only needed 15 cents we would have asked for that. She stated we asked one other time and it didn't pass but today the time is dire. She stated the board needs to do what the community asked. She stated our schools deserve it and our students deserve it. She said we have a great thing here. She stated she is always telling others not from here what good things we have going here and all the things our kids are able to take part in. She stated we have to do what the community voted and do the 31 cents. She stated we don't have to do it every year but it is important to do it the first year. She stated we have to get our finances up. She ended with saying please do it.

Teresa Minier, a teacher at Benton Central Jr./Sr. High School, addressed the school board next regarding levying the full .31 cents of referendum

monies. She stated she teaches AP Lang and AP Lit to the seniors and juniors and she has our first year of dual credit English 11. She stated she currently working on taking 18 hours because her masters is in Education and not English and in order to teach dual credit she has to have 18 hours in a graduate course in English. She stated she has to pay for her own books but luckily through the State of Indiana the tuition for teachers to go back to do this is covered. She stated she is doing this for the kids and she is telling the board this because this is a sacrifice she is willing to make. She stated she is here as a teacher, as a member of the BEA and as a community member. She stated she lives in this community so she is going to be paying these taxes. She stated her father-in-law owns land in the county and understands the tax ramifications of this referendum. She stated that he does not have any children in the school besides his granddaughter for one more year but he is willing to do this. She stated he went to the community round table as well. She stated she volunteered to help at them and went to 3 of those meetings and stated she learned a lot about financing and what we need to do. She stated she did not have a clue beforehand about the separate accounts and where different things came from. She stated one of the things she learned most was what everyone else has said is that we asked for 31 cents from the tax payers because we were told and from everything that was presented it was understood we needed that to survive. She stated she respects the job the board was elected to do and that it can't be easy. She stated that she voted for the 31 cents because it is important to keeps things for our kids. She stated she is not worried about her job and not worried about being able to teach AP Lang. She stated her daughter will graduate next year and there is nothing else holding her here. She stated she could go ten minutes the opposite way and make \$10,000 more a year. She stated we are going to lose teachers if we can't afford to keep good programs here. She stated the one person that would be a huge lose would be Mr. Weitlauf. She stated he has multiple offers every single year with outrageously more money than he is making here but he stays here because of the community and the students and the program he has built here. She stated that if we can't keep the status quo with the 31 cents that the referendum passed than we are going to lose great teachers. She stated the State will come in and decide for us on what we need to do, what we need to cut. She encouraged the board to approve the 31 cents based on all the research and information that was presented. She stated that if we cut into the rainy day fund it is going to be gone quickly and we will be in a deeper problem than we are already in. She stated that she is not looking forward to paying more taxes but it is needed. She stated that getting the 31 cents this first year is a step in the right direction to get us where we need to be.

Routine Matters

The board approved the minutes of the Regular meeting of September 21, 2020, and the minutes of the Executive Sessions of September 23, 2020 and October 5, 2020, on a motion by Robert Sondgeroth and a second by Jennifer Barce. The motion carried.

Mrs. Albertson presented the vouchers to the board for approval. Mrs. Albertson pointed out the voucher to Sentry Roofing. She indicated this was for the auditorium roof project at Benton Central. She indicated the project was complete and the warranty inspection was done. Mrs. Albertson indicated she didn't have any board members email her any question regarding the vouchers and asked the board members if they had any questions now. There being no questions from the board, Mrs. Albertson asked the board to approve the vouchers as presented. Chad Tolen moved, seconded by Edward Schroeder, to approve accounts payable vouchers totaling \$602,611.27 and payroll and benefits vouchers of \$620,525.04 for a grand

total of \$1,223,136.31. The motion carried with Robert Sondgeroth abstaining.

Communications

Mr. Wittenauer indicated that the evaluation plan has been resolved with the teachers but due to some personal circumstances he did not have the document ready for the board to review. He stated he would get it out to the board soon and that he had been working with the BEA on the plan.

Mr. Wittenauer acknowledged the following donations:

Corporation

- \$500.00 from Chad Tolen to Benton Community School Corporation.

Benton Central

- \$918.50 from Benton Co Country Club Inc to BC CAAP;
- \$918.00 from Benton Co Country Club Inc to Literary Magazine "Phoenix";
- \$100.00 anonymous donation to BC CAAP;
- \$100.00 from Benton Co Sherriff's Department to BC Varsity Cheer.

Mr. Wittenauer also added that he had been working on a special project and has gotten help from the corporations PTO's. He stated he wanted to thank the PTO's for their donations to help support the project.

Mr. Tolen requested to make a comment. He stated that he would request that his donation be put into the education fund. He stated his reasoning for giving this donation was looking at imposing a massive tax increase on the community is a very tough thing to do. He stated if you just own a home you are not going to pay much. He indicated it is the business and land owners who are going to pay for this. He stated he did not think it was fair to impose that without paying and having a little bit more skin in the game, a little bit more pain and he hoped others would do the same. He stated as it was said earlier don't worry about your pocketbook if you care about the school get your checkbook out.

Mr. Wittenauer presented the board with the fundraiser report.

Mr. Wittenauer gave an update on the 2 hour delay schedule. He stated the teachers really appreciated this time they were given for professional development to help balance virtual student teaching and in class teaching. Mr. Wittenauer indicated he gave the board feedback he had received from the teachers. Mrs. Holmes stated that they had been wonderful and very helpful and thanked the board for giving them the time. Mr. Schroeder stated that he had a couple people say something to him about it and everyone believes it is well done and time well spent.

Mr. Wittenauer informed the board that our Boys Soccer team received an exemplary behavior report from the ISHAA on an event that happened on October 5th. He stated it is always nice to get reports and recognize our students and he wanted to take this time to announce it at this public meeting. Mr. Schroeder inquired if the team members were told about the report. Mr. Wittenauer indicated that they had been. Mr. Schroeder asked who turned in the event. Mr. Wittenauer stated it came from someone at the event. Mr. Schroeder stated he thought it was very nice.

Mr. Wittenauer stated that we have just finished the first nine weeks and that we had maybe 140 virtual kids during the first nine weeks. Mrs. Albertson stated it was actually 230 virtual kids. Mr. Wittenauer indicated that the last number he had was that 70 of those students have come back to in class instruction. He stated he cannot say enough about our students, staff and parents and the cooperation between them all. Mr. Wittenauer stated that the students and staff have done an excellent job in following COVID protocol and with the rising numbers all around us we cannot let our guard down. He stated he is very proud that we have made it through the first nine weeks and that our students have gotten to have fall athletic activities. Mr. Wittenauer stated that we all thought we wouldn't get through this without having to shut down and he is so happy we have made it this far. He stated that it is a culmination of the cooperation between everyone. He stated that the students are all following the rules and wearing their masks and that both the high school and elementary students are doing an excellent job.

Old Business

None

New Business

Mr. Wittenauer presented the staff report to the board. Jennifer Barce moved, seconded by Gabe Widmer to approve the following staff report as presented:

Leaves

- FFCRA leave for the following employees:
 - Megan Traylor - September 21, 2020 through September 30, 2020;
 - Amanda Williams - September 25, 2020 through September 30, 2020;
 - Hannah Harden - September 21, 2020 through September 28, 2020;
 - Heather Holder - August 10, 2020 through August 18, 2020;
 - Kayla Brant - September 16, 2020 through September 18, 2020;
- FMLA leave for Brianna Weitlauf from approximately November 17, 2020 through February 15, 2020.

Employment

Benton Central

- Teresa Gretencord as long term substitute in Little Prairie Preschool for FMLA leave beginning November 17, 2020;

Otterbein Elementary

- Sarah Bostian as PBIS Coordinator;

Prairie Crossing Elementary

- Tony Anderson as part time custodian beginning October 1, 2020.

Motion carried. Mr. Wittenauer inquired what the PBIS Coordinator was. Mrs. Albertson indicated that it was stipend from Title IV for positive behavior support.

Mr. Wittenauer asked the board to approve the field trip request of Benton

Central FFA to Trafalgar Indiana on November 6, 2020 through November 8, 2020. Robert Sondgeroth moved, seconded by Gabe Widmer to approve the field trip request of Benton Central FFA to Trafalgar Indiana on November 6, 2020 through November 8, 2020. Motion carried.

Mr. Wittenauer indicated the next action item was to approve the 2021 advertised budget. He indicated there needed to be some discussion on this matter. He stated that one of the reasons was that we need to know what the boards thinking on the referendum so that we can negotiate with teachers on October 23rd. Mr. Wittenauer stated he would like to address the board about the referendum levy. He stated that he had been here for about two months and had a good grasp on the financial situation. He stated that first the decision of the board is not going to affect him as superintendent and he is trying to be as objective about this as he can be. He stated our deficit for 2020 is 1.2 million, that will mean using 1.2 million from our rainy day fund, to get us back to even going into 2021. That will reduce our rainy day fund to about 2.6 million. If we look at 2021, we start with a loss of about \$500,000 due to losing about 100 students. We still are at a deficit of 1.2 million from 2020 because no cuts have been made so now our deficit is 1.7 million to begin the year. If we get to the end of 2021 with no significant cuts we will use another 1.7 million of the rainy day which would bring that to \$900,000. This does not take into account possible raises or the possibility of less funds from the legislature because of the Pandemic. If you approve only 15 cents that raises about 2 million. He stated we could use that in 2021 to once again break about even. My recommendation is to either take the 31 cent hit next year or do the compromise plan which was mentioned last time of 25 cents and 1 million from rainy day. Mr. Wittenauer stated that his concern from the superintendent stand point is that it is never good to mess with the tax rate any more than you have to. He stated his thinking is and he recommends and supports the full 31 cents for the various reasons he has mentioned in the past and today. Mr. Wittenauer stated it is easier to take the 31 cent hit now as our tax payers are expecting it than it would be to take 15 cents now and have the tax rate continue to go up. He stated it is easier to take the tax rate down then to keep taking it up. Mr. Wittenauer again stated his recommendation was to pass the 31 cents and if that does not pass than to take the compromise of 25 cents and 1 million from the rainy day fund but he will respect whatever is decided. He stated he felt it was not right to put the new board and new superintendent in a situation where they are behind the 8 ball. He stated he wants the new board and new superintendent to have a firm fitting when they start. Mr. Wittenauer reiterated that it is always easier to lower the tax rate than it is to raise it.

Mr. Schroeder stated he had a few questions for Mrs. Albertson. He asked why did we take the 15% or 1.8 million out of the education fund. Mrs. Albertson stated that if they remember there used to be the general fund, capital projects, bus replacement and transportations funds. She stated on January 1, 2019 we went to 2 funds, the education and operations funds. She stated that 85% of the general fund went into the education fund and 15% of the general fund went into the operations fund. She stated the basic grant that supported the entire general fund now needed to be divided between the two new funds so we did the transfer. Mr. Wittenauer stated that it couldn't all remain in the education fund because the other funds now made up the two and it had to be transferred.

Mr. Schroeder inquired whatever was passed tonight what was the deadline they could change it. Mrs. Albertson indicated whenever the DLGF works the budget sometime between November 1st and December 31st. Mr. Schroeder stated so in December. Mrs. Albertson stated that if we are one of the

first people that have our budgets worked then it could be the first of November. She stated a couple of years ago we had our budget worked the first couple weeks of November so she cannot say an exact date. Mr. Schroeder again asked what the last date it can be changed. Mrs. Albertson reiterated that it could be anywhere between the 1st of November and December 31st whenever the DLGF works our budget. Mr. Wittenauer stated that there may not be a board meeting in time to make changes after the budget is worked. Mr. Schroeder stated we could call a special meeting. Mr. Widmer stated that it would be too late for that. Mrs. Albertson stated that we advertised today as our budget adoption and that she has five days from today to submit the approved budgets. She stated the DLGF then works our budget between November 1st and December 31st. She stated at that time when we get the 1782 notice we have 10 days to respond to make any changes to the advertised budget. She stated you can reduce what was advertised but you cannot increase it. She stated the resolution to reduce that is done every year gives her the authority to reduce the numbers as needed. Which would give her the authority to reduce the tax rate but the board needs to set that tax rate tonight so that they know how much money they are working with for negotiations and to tell her if she needs to reduce the tax rate lower than the 31 cents. Mr. Schroeder asked that if they reduce the tax rate to lower than 31 cents then the budget has to be redone. Mrs. Albertson indicated that it did not. She indicated that they would have to redo the form they were going to sign and redo the tax rate to whatever they decide. Mr. Schroeder asked her what she meant. Mrs. Albertson stated it was the form 4, that they sign each year adopting the approved budget. Mr. Schroeder asked if they set it tonight could it be raised. Mrs. Albertson stated that no what they set tonight can only be further reduced it cannot be raised. Mr. Schroeder asked if it was .15 then it would be .15 period. Mrs. Albertson stated that was correct.

Mrs. Barce inquired if our original research actually recommended higher than the 31 cents. She stated she believed it was 34 cents. Mrs. Albertson stated that was correct. Mrs. Barce stated then with the 31 cents we have already reduced what we needed based on the idea that we would also be doing cuts. Mrs. Albertson stated that we changed that to 31 cents because we based it on the 2019 actual expenses not estimates. She stated we were able to reduce it to the 31 cents if we took the actual 2019 expenditures and projected it out over the eight years. She reminded the board that in 2019 we only gave a 1.5 % salary increase. She indicated we already reduced it to 31 cents to stay status quo. She reiterated the projections are on a year we only gave a 1.5 % salary increase.

Mr. Widmer stated that some other things to look at was that those projections were based on a 2% ADM decrease each year and this year we had a 6% decrease in ADM. He stated we also projected a 1% increase in state funding each year and we will be lucky to not be decreased.

Mr. Schroeder asked what we were using the referendum money for. He stated it goes into the education fund period. Mrs. Albertson indicated that was correct. Mr. Widmer stated yes that it goes in the education fund and that almost all of that fund goes to salary and benefits for our staff.

Mr. Tolen asked Mrs. Albertson what the basic grant was for this upcoming 2021 year. Mrs. Albertson stated we will not know the actual fiscal year... Mr. Tolen cut into Mrs. Albertson's answer and stated it was \$7100 dollars per student roughly. Mrs. Albertson stated yes that if you look at the full amount that includes honors, CTE and special education. Mr. Tolen

stated so you take \$7100.00 times roughly 1600 students. Mrs. Albertson stated that if he was to look at the documents she sent the board on October 5th the first attachment has the 1621 in there so the total funding using that number assuming that nothing else decreased this year, that special ed stays the same, that honors and CTE stays the same and our February count stay exactly the same at 1621 then we would get 11.6 million total. Mr. Tolen asked how much funding per student did we get a year ago, he stated wasn't it \$6300. Mrs. Albertson stated that was for just the basic grant we needed to compare apples to apples. Mr. Tolen stated yes just the basic grant. Mrs. Albertson said that the funding formula had several different parts, you have the basic grant, the honors, the special education and the CTE and all of those are in the total funding. She stated that the basic grant portion per student last year was \$6190.00 per student and this year is \$6257.00 per student. She state if you look at the full funding amount with all the variables it was \$7049.00 per student last year and \$7164.00 per student this year. Mr. Tolen stated so it was over \$7000 last year for everything. Mrs. Albertson stated that it was.

Mr. Tolen stated that his comment on the levy rate is one that when Baker Tilly did the analysis on was that the numbers they put in and put no changes and here is what you are going to need in 8 years. Expenses going up and enrollment going down. Mr. Tolen stated that his comment then and now is that of complete incompetence of this board if we allow expenses to continue to sky rocket as enrollment is going down. Mr. Tolen stated he does not plan on letting that happen. He stated that is why he does not think we need the .34 or the .31. He stated that all of the meeting we went to they had feedback and he had a tally how many times people said they were willing to pay more but wanted cuts as well. Mr. Tolen stated he wanted to ask each board member what have we cut? Mr. Widmer stated that we have not cut anything. Mr. Tolen stated they cut one thing, school bus purchases that 3 of the board members voted to cut. Mr. Widmer stated that nothing was cut that you just pushed the expense down the road. Mr. Widmer stated we did not cut any buses out of the fleet just kicked the can down the road. Mr. Widmer stated why would we reduce our money coming in if we haven't cut our expenses. Mr. Widmer stated we can't do that yet that is why we need the 31 cents this year because we can't lower that rate until we cut expenses. Mr. Tolen stated that .15 will bring in 2 million and we are 1.7 million short. He stated it would plug the hole which is what we told tax payers we would do to keep the programs and teachers not build a 1.2 million reserve in the first year. Mr. Widmer stated those numbers do not keep those programs. Mr. Tolen stated and we also have the rainy day fund and there is not more of a rainy day situation then there is now. Mr. Tolen stated that when he ran he campaigned that he would equally represent 3 entities of the school corporation, the students, all the employees and the tax payers. Mr. Widmer stated that two thirds of those say 31 cents. Mr. Tolen stated yes but there is other portion that he equally represents and that is why he is at .15 and cuts. He stated that he hopes the teachers get good pay raises 1 to 2 percent. Mr. Widmer stated that his math just does not add up. Mr. Tolen stated isn't 2 million more than 1.7 million and 3.8 in rainy day. Mr. Widmer asked Mr. Tolen if he looked through the numbers that Mrs. Albertson provided this week. Mr. Tolen stated yes. Mr. Widmer stated that his numbers do not add up. Mr. Widmer stated we are not going to be able to keep the programs without the 31 cents. Mr. Tolen stated the .15 raises 2 million and then the 3.8 in rainy day. Mr. Widmer stated we can't use that from rainy day this year that we only advertised for 1 million. Mr. Tolen stated that would be plenty we do not need to use the whole 3.8 million. Mrs. Albertson stated that if we do not get the money up front then what are we going to do in years 5, 6, 7 and 8. She stated

that she agrees there needs to be cuts. She stated she 100% agrees with that but in her opinion we need to let the long range planning committee convene and figure out what those cuts are going to be. She stated that we need to get the 31 cents and by the end of the 8 years we should be able to be sound and that should be our goal. She stated that she agrees that is what everybody said to us, we are going to give you enough money so that you can get by and make your cuts and you can figure out what you are going to be doing in 8 years. Mrs. Albertson stated that by not getting the full amount you are cutting us in half of being able to have that goal at that point. She stated we are not going to be able to make those cuts gradually. She stated that a lot of these programs these kids start when they are freshman and so we need to keep it for four years so we need to decide if we don't have enough kids in this program or whatever then we need to start weeding that out as a freshman class with not offering it to those students and in four years it is going to be gone. Mrs. Albertson stated that by not doing the full 31 cents the first year we are not giving what we said we were going to do. She stated we said give us this 31 cents and we will develop a committee... Mr. Tolen interrupted and stated he did not say that. He stated he stood in the library with his back against the wall that we had to vote that the deadline was coming for it to be on the May primary. Mrs. Albertson stated yes that deadline was known months before that night. Mr. Tolen stated that he wanted it lower and he was told that if we set .31 max it didn't mean that it was going to be that, that we could set the rate lower later. Mr. Tolen stated that he said to vote on the rate now and that Mr. Widmer stated right now was not the time to set the rate. Mr. Widmer stated that was not the time to set the rate. Mr. Tolen stated he has people asking him why he didn't set the rate lower if he didn't think we needed it. Inaudible comment from a board member. Mr. Tolen stated let me speak and then I am done. Mr. Tolen stated to the board that here is the budget we were given a few weeks ago. Mr. Tolen asked if the board had any input on what was going into the budget to be spent on. Mr. Sondgeroth stated no. Mr. Widmer stated yes. Mr. Widmer stated we have had many meetings when this stuff was talked through. Mr. Tolen stated no they had not that it was just handed to him done. Mr. Widmer stated at those meetings the board members were asked for their input. Mr. Schroeder stated the school board is supposed to be involved in their budget. Mr. Widmer started to comment and Mr. Schroeder stated yes they are. Mr. Schroeder stated it says that one of the main things a school board is supposed to do is to be fiscally responsible and involved in the budget. He stated the way it should work is the Superintendent, the Finance Director and the board needs to be involved. He stated we get a bunch of numbers and we don't get any answers. He stated I am not going to get in an argument. Mr. Schroeder stated to Mrs. Albertson that she said the long range planning committee was going to decide what cuts were going to be made. Mrs. Albertson stated no that she said the board has to be the ones that decide was it cut but that the committee can look and make recommendations to the board on what they feel needs to be cut. Mr. Schroeder stated we have a big disagreement about how this budget is made and it needs to be worked out. Mr. Schroeder stated that at the rate he is going he won't be here anyway because he won't win reelection. He stated he hopes that whoever takes his place has enough to stand up for some things. Mr. Tolen stated his second comment he was trying to make is that this is the last meeting before pay raises for teachers are going to be decided and he wanted to know if anyone had been asked their input on what to give teachers. Mr. Widmer stated that it was negotiations were starting. Mr. Tolen stated that yes they were starting next week. He state that this is his second year on the board and he has been given no input on setting the budget and not input on teacher's raises. Mr. Tolen stated that .15 will give us 2 million dollars and that he wanted on the

record that his input for raises was 3%. Mr. Tolen stated to the audience if you know what your pay raise is let me know because you will find out before me.

Mr. Sondgeroth asked what .15 brings to the table for our teachers. He stated he asks what .24 brings to the table for our teachers and what .31 brings to the table. He stated he was told we can't decide that was the answer until after the budget has been approved. Mr. Wittenauer attempted to answer the question. Mr. Sondgeroth stated that is what was said. Mr. Wittenauer asked if he wanted him to answer his questions and Mr. Sondgeroth stated yes. Mr. Wittenauer stated to please calm down. Mr. Sondgeroth stated do not tell me to calm down this is a very hot issue. Mr. Wittenauer stated he was not going to argue with him. Mr. Schroeder stated he felt it was time to move on in this discussion. Mr. Wittenauer asked where we were moving to. Mr. Schroeder stated someone needed to make a motion. Mr. Widmer made a motion to set the referendum tax rate at 31 cents. Mrs. Barce seconded the motion to set the referendum tax rate at 31 cents. Mr. Schroeder roll called each board member for their vote which was as follows: Robert Sondgeroth voted no, Gabe Widmer voted yes, Chad Tolen voted no, Jennifer Barce voted yes and Edward Schroeder voted no. Motion did not carry. Mrs. Barce stated she would like to make a motion that is a compromise. She stated .25 and 1 million from rainy day would get us 4 million which is what we needed to function. Mrs. Barce stated that she feels if we go all the way down to .15 we will never be able to raise it and then down the road we can't do another referendum and we are going to lose a lot of things in the next few years. Mr. Schroeder stated that he did not know why we couldn't raise it in the next years it is a flexible rate. Mrs. Barce stated perception wise the tax payer takes the hit and it is easier to take that down then to raise it again the next year. Mr. Widmer stated that there is also all that money that we miss out on that we can never make back. Mr. Widmer stated we need to get it now. Mr. Schroeder stated he did not agree with that statement but that it was fine. Mr. Schroeder stated that with everything going on in this country there are a lot of variables. He stated we live in a farming community and you don't know what is going to happen and don't know what is going to happen with the election and that .31 is deep. Mr. Sondgeroth asked what the teachers will receive. He stated the money goes to the education fund and salaries come out of the education fund so what percentage would be available to the teachers at .15 and .25. Mrs. Barce asked what he meant by what percentage. She stated if it is the percentage for the teachers that has to go through negotiations. Inaudible comments from different board members. Mr. Sondgeroth stated he is not negotiating. Mrs. Barce asked if his question is how much goes into the education funds at those rates. Mr. Sondgeroth stated that could possibly be his question. Mr. Schroeder stated you want to know how big of a pile we have to negotiate with. Mr. Sondgeroth stated yes. Mr. Wittenauer stated that with this proposal there is 4 million dollars to work with but he can't state what percentage that is to work with. Once we know how much we are getting we can start the negotiation process but we can't sit here and say it is going to be 8 or 9 or 6 percent. Mr. Schroeder stated so you have other things that this 4 million dollars is marked for. Mr. Wittenauer stated that they know that better than he does, that there was a list that they used to sell the referendum to the community. Mr. Wittenauer stated that obviously salaries and benefits was a major one. Mr. Tolen stated maintain class size and programs for teachers was another. Mr. Tolen stated it wasn't that we were going to add 1.2 million in cash reserves for the first year. Mrs. Albertson stated that that is for the end of the 8 years. She stated to please understand that the 31 cents is to stay status quo over the 8 years. She stated that in in year 8 you are still only going to get 4 million dollars but you are going to

need 6 million so when you got the extra in the first years that covers the later years short falls. Mrs. Albertson stated she knows that conversation was had before with the board and Baker Tilly. Mr. Tolen stated that this new year will be the best new year of his life. He stated that besides getting through 2020 we have a new superintendent starting January 1st and he has a feeling that he is going to be a good leader and he has experience at cutting. He stated he just wants to get to there. Mr. Tolen stated that in the soon to be superintendents interview presentation he stated we do not need the full 31 cents and the board didn't even bring it up. Mr. Widmer stated that the person's figures were wrong. Mr. Tolen stated that the issue is we spend 22 million dollars and we have 1615 ball park students that is just shy of \$14,000.00 per student. He stated that the teachers have roughly 25 students in each class and that is \$345,000 for each class. He stated where is the money going. Mr. Widmer stated that Mr. Tolen should show up to the budget meetings to see what is going on. Mr. Tolen asked well when were they. Mr. Widmer stated that Mrs. Albertson just emailed a whole list of them again that said when they all were. Mr. Widmer stated there was very big packet of all the information provided over the last two years and it seems like nobody can remember what we have been doing and talking about. Mr. Schroeder asked what the tax rate would be at .15 compared to .20. Mrs. Albertson asked if he meant the amount of what the levy would be. Mr. Schroeder stated no how much it would be to the tax payer. Mr. Wittenauer asked what our tax rate was now. Inaudible comments from board members. Mr. Wittenauer stated he thinks Mr. Schroeder is asking what the tax consequence is at .20. Mr. Widmer stated it was on the chart sent once again to the board by Mrs. Albertson last week. Mrs. Albertson stated she wasn't sure what Mr. Schroeder was asking. Mr. Wittenauer stated that compared to other school corporations our tax rate is one of the lowest in the state. Mrs. Albertson stated it is the lowest. Mr. Schroeder stated that is not his question. He stated he wanted to know the difference. Mrs. Albertson stated she did not know the difference, she would have to go use the tax calculator to figure that out. Mr. Wittenauer stated that you are wanting to know what a tax payer is paying at 15 cents on their home as compared to 20 cents on their home. Mr. Schroeder stated yes. Mr. Schroeder then stated we are putting this dog to rest. Mrs. Barce stated she had a motion on the floor. Mr. Sondgeroth asked what percentage of the education fund goes directly to teachers' salaries. Mrs. Albertson stated probably 95%. Mr. Sondgeroth stated so we are saying that 95% of 4 million goes to teachers? Mr. Sondgeroth stated that that is a lot more than a 3 percent raise. Mrs. Albertson said it goes to the education fund. Mr. Widmer stated that part of that 4 million goes to cover the deficit. He stated that it is not new money it goes to pay off what we are already spending. Mr. Sondgeroth asked what fund the debt was incurred in. Mr. Wittenauer stated debt service. Mrs. Albertson stated no it was incurred in the education fund. Mr. Sondgeroth stated he wanted the teachers to know he has their backs and he knows it doesn't sound like it but he does. Mrs. Barce made a motion to set the referendum tax rate at 25 cents and 1 million from the rainy day fund. Gabe Widmer seconded the motion to set the referendum tax rate at 25 cents and 1 million from the rainy day fund. Mr. Schroeder roll called each board member for their vote which was as follows: Robert Sondgeroth voted no, Gabe Widmer voted yes, Chad Tolen voted no, Jennifer Barce voted yes and Edward Schroeder voted no. Motion did not carry. Mr. Schroeder stated we are all back to where we knew we were going to be. Mr. Schroeder made a motion to set the referendum tax rate at 15 cents. Chad Tolen seconded the motion to set the referendum tax rate at 15 cents. Mr. Schroeder roll called each board member for their vote which was as follows: Robert Sondgeroth voted yes, Gabe Widmer stated you really have their back Bob and voted no, Chad Tolen voted yes, Jennifer Barce voted no

and Edward Schroeder voted yes. Motion carried by a majority of the vote. Mr. Sondgeroth stated you don't think 4 million is having their back. Mr. Widmer stated that is not what you just did and voted for. Mr. Sondgeroth stated we can still take it out of rainy day. Mr. Schroeder stated we needed to move on.

Mrs. Albertson asked the board to approve the resolution to reduce. She stated it gives here the authority to reduce the advertised budget after the DLGF works the budget. She stated that it gives her the authority to reduce what we don't spend. She stated the only change from previous years is the form. She stated the resolution is basically the same it is just that the line numbers have been changed. Edward Schroeder moved, seconded by Robert Sondgeroth to approve the Resolution to Reduce as presented. Motion carried.

Mr. Wittenauer presented the board with the 2021 school board meeting calendar. Jennifer Barce moved, seconded by Edward Schroeder to approve the 2021 school board meeting calendar as presented. Motion carried.

Mr. Wittenauer indicated this was something that was worked on with Ben Schutter and that it was just something that needed to be approved by the board. Robert Sondgeroth moved, seconded by Edward Schroeder to approve the Resolution for Adoption of the Benton County Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan. Motion carried.

Mr. Wittenauer stated the last item was the addition of the motion to approve the live streaming of our board meetings. Mr. Wittenauer stated he felt we needed to have a motion on record since we have been doing this the last couple meetings. Edward Schroeder moved, seconded by Jennifer Barce that we continue to live stream board meetings in the future. Motion carried.

Mr. Wittenauer stated that he and Mrs. Barce met with the Dean of Students with Purdue's Education School. Mrs. Barce gave a brief update on the programs and partnerships that they are working towards partnering with Purdue on. She stated they are excited and hopeful that these programs will work out. She stated these programs will be attractive to students coming into our corporation. Mr. Wittenauer stated he is excited about this.

Mr. Wittenauer stated that he has met with a realtor and Mr. Jackson from the county economic development to discuss the lack of housing and people coming into our school district. He stated they have identified one land owner that might be agreeable to helping with a housing development. He stated they are talking to a couple of builders as well to help with the project. He stated they hoped to know something in the next month if this will be something that they can pursue. Mr. Wittenauer stated that the realtor said if he had 50 house to sell he could sell them all. He stated that houses in Boswell are selling for \$100,000. He stated the bottom line is we have a shortage on housing and he is working on that.

Mr. Wittenauer stated that he is disappointed that he has failed to convince the board that we need the 31 cents. He stated he is worried about how it is going to go in the future. He stated he did the best he could in presenting the situation to them and he is disappointed the board did not believe him. Mr. Schroder stated that had nothing to do with it. Mr. Wittenauer stated he is very disappointed he is not leaving the new superintendent with a whole deck of cards.

The meeting adjourned at 8:14 p.m. The next regular board meeting will be held at 7:00 p.m. Monday, November 16, 2020, at the Administration Office.

Respectfully Submitted,

Brandie Burton, Recording Secretary

President

Member

Vice-President

Member

Secretary

The Board of School Trustees of Benton Community School Corporation met in an EXECUTIVE SESSION Monday, October 12, 2020, at the Administration Building At 8:20 p.m. to receive information about and interview prospective employees.

Board members present were:

	<u>Present</u>	<u>Absent</u>
Gabe Widmer	X	
Edward Schroeder	X	
Robert Sondgeroth	X	
Jennifer Barce	X	
Chad Tolen	X	

The executive session adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Brandie Burton, Recording Secretary

President

Member

Vice-President

Member

Secretary

Public Meeting
Board of School Trustees
October 26, 2020
Administration Building

Board members present were:

	<u>Present</u>	<u>Absent</u>
Gabe Widmer	X	
Edward Schroeder	X	
Robert Sondgeroth	X	
Jennifer Barce	X	
Chad Tolen		X

Mr. Schroeder opened the public meeting regarding the Superintendent compensation package. Mr. Wittenauer stated the package had been advertised in the paper as required and this was a time for the public to come and ask questions or comment on the compensation package. Mr. Wittenauer invited the public to speak.

Ray Villalobos questioned the travel stipend in the compensation package. Mr. Cahill stated the compensation was for \$350 per month instead of filing a mileage claim each month. He stated the superintendent would use his own vehicle and this was compensation for that. Mr. Cahill stated the contract was identical to Mr. Hoover's package. Mr. Villalobos inquired if the person was going to be moving here and be local. Mr. Wittenauer stated that was not something he could answer as this was only a time to comment or question the compensation package itself. He stated the new superintendent would be named at the November board meeting. Mrs. Mullins questioned the fact that we have a corporation vehicle and why the superintendent could not use that instead of the stipend. She stated she was aware that Mr. Hoover used the corporation vehicle. Mr. Widmer stated the vehicle is used when available but that Mr. Hoover used his personal vehicle for most things like driving roads in mornings and visiting schools. It was suggested by an audience member that we could pay mileage instead of the \$350 stipend.

Mr. Cahill pointed out that this compensation package is less money than Mr. Hoover's first year contract and that there is not a \$15,000 technology director stipend on this contract either as there was on Mr. Hoover's.

Mr. Villalobos went on to question the HSA contribution for the superintendent. He questioned if this was something that the teachers received as well. An audience member stated the teachers have to make a match to receive the funds. Mr. Villalobos questioned if this was something that the superintendent could be asked to do or that the teachers did not have to make the match to receive the contribution.

Mr. Wittenauer asked for any other comments or questions and there being none the public meeting was adjourned at 7:10 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Brandie Burton, Recording Secretary

President

Member

Vice-President

Member

Secretary

The Board of School Trustees of Benton Community School Corporation met in an EXECUTIVE SESSION Monday, October 27, 2020, at the Administration Building At 6:20 p.m. to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining.

Board members present were:

	<u>Present</u>	<u>Absent</u>
Gabe Widmer		X
Edward Schroeder	X	
Robert Sondgeroth	X	
Jennifer Barce		X
Chad Tolen	X	

The executive session adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Brandie Burton, Recording Secretary

President

Member

Vice-President

Member

Secretary