

BENTON COMMUNITY SCHOOL CORPORATION
405 South Grant Avenue
Fowler, Indiana 47944

Financial Advisory Committee
December 18, 2019
Administration Building

The Benton Community School Corporation Financial Advisory Committee met for their third and final meeting commencing at 7:00 p.m. All committee members were present as well as Superintendent, Gregg Hoover, Director of Finance, Tracy Albertson, and Public Relations Consultant, Jeff Dehler.

Mr. Hoover welcomed and thanked the members for attending and being a part of the committee over the last 6 or so weeks. Mr. Hoover again reiterated that a good resource for them as well as community members that have approached them with questions is our website. He stated under the community tab there is a Financial Advisory Committee tab that has the information that has been presented at these meetings. Mr. Hoover informed the committee that he and Mrs. Albertson have been going to the schools this week and presenting the information to the staff so that they are informed and can answer questions if approached. He said he asked the staff to be supportive of whatever direction the board decides to go. Mr. Hoover informed the committee that in January there would be community meetings at the schools to present the information and receive feedback from them as well.

Mr. Hoover started the power point presentation off with some slides that he noted as points of pride for the corporation. There was information of graduation rates, AP courses offered, clubs, sports, etc. Mr. Hoover said they pride themselves in the classes and other things offered to our students especially for our size and rural location of our school corporation. Mr. Hoover then handed the presentation over to Tracy Albertson.

Mrs. Albertson started the presentation with a recap of what had been discussed in the previous two meetings - the school corporation's financial situation. Mrs. Albertson provided new information on how the state funding is not keeping up with normal inflation. Mrs. Albertson also presented the committee with information of the reductions / additions in the last 2-5 years that the corporation has done. There was information of energy savings and the cost avoidance this has created for the corporation in the last 10 years. Mrs. Albertson provided information of strategic planning that has taken place and a recap of how revenue in 2019 was rerouted to the education fund. The next part of the presentation discussed ways to solve financial challenges through different scenarios of eliminating programs, increasing class sizes, reducing staff, closing buildings, moving students, etc. with estimates of the savings these cuts would bring. Mrs. Albertson stated these are the types of cuts that will have a tremendous and adverse effect on our students and community. Mrs. Albertson's then presented ways to solve financial challenges by way of a school tax levy referendum. She presented information of area schools that have successfully passed

operating levy referendums and the per student revenue these referendums had created. Mrs. Albertson ended her presentation with a recap of the impact on tax payers should a referendum be approved by voters and a brief summary of the survey results again.

Mr. Hoover and Mrs. Albertson asked the committee members for questions, suggestions, comments. The overall consensus of the committee was that the school corporation needed to pursue a school tax levy referendum. Members suggested also that the school corporation should make some level of budget reductions that have minor impact on student learning in addition to passing the referendum. One member made the comment of how far and what are we willing to give up to reach the level of savings that is needed. The members agreed that the amount of cuts that would need to be made to close the deficit would have a great detrimental impact on our students, staff and community. Most were in agreement that they would not want to give up through budget reductions what would be needed to eliminate the shortfall. There were suggestions from committee members on how to present the need for a referendum to the community. There were minor suggestions of rewording how the information is presented to take away confusion that may be caused. One committee member stated that it is an important part to show the community and make sure the community knows how the corporation has ended up in this situation. They stated the community needs to be shown that the finances of the corporation have been handled appropriately. He suggested it needs to be shown how the decline in student enrollment, state funding declines, loss of windmill money, and monies spent to retain quality staff, have all contributed to the current situation of the corporation. One member stated students have even been talking about the situation and inquiring how it is going to affect them. Two committee members relayed they were asked to take a survey by students for a class project and the subject of the project was economic development in the county but more specifically the situation of the school corporation, how it is being addressed and what they could do to help.

The meeting ended with positive feedback and comments. Mr. Hoover again thanked the members for participating on the committee and hoped to see them at community meetings scheduled for each Wednesday in January, beginning January 8.

Meeting ended approximately 9:00 p.m.