

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

Financial Advisory Committee
December 4, 2019
Administration Building

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

Mr. Hoover welcomed and thanked the members for attending the meeting. He began by apologizing if the recent media coverage had caused any member any unwanted attention regarding their spot on the committee. Mr. Hoover had said the corporation wants to be transparent on these issues and that was the reason for the media coverage and information going out to staff and parents. Mr. Hoover let the members know that they can direct any questions they receive to him and the corporation office and they can also direct people to our website where the information they have been given is also located. Mr. Hoover said that this meeting would consist of additional information from questions asked at the last meeting as well as new information. Mr. Hoover said the goal is to have quality educators, quality programs and to be able to care for all aspects of the student population.

Tracy Albertson presented a power point presentation that consisted of historical information on enrollment, salary increases and buildings. Mrs. Albertson's presentation also contained information on previous reductions and budget cuts and the financial decision making of the school corporation. The presentation ended with information on planning for the future by way of expense reductions, revenue increases or both. There were several questions and comments from committee members throughout Mrs. Albertson's presentation. Highlights included:

- State legislative impacts have caused the corporation to make significant changes, including \$1.9 million in budget reductions between 2008 and 2012
- Enrollment decreased by 174 students over the last five years
- Staff salaries have increased on average by around 2 percent annually over the last ten years
- The corporation addressed facility and operational needs by consolidating buildings in 2006
- Over the last year, the school board has considered a broad range of options to reduce the budget or increase revenue

Brock Bowsher gave a presentation regarding Education Fund Financial Projections. The presentation consisted of baseline revenues and expenditures for the next 8 years. Mr. Bowsher's presentation then went on to give an illustrative overview of different operating referendum models and the impact for the average taxpayer in Benton County as well as

what each model would give the school corporation in revenue. There were questions and discussions throughout the presentation. Highlights included:

- Expenses are forecast to continue to exceed revenues
- Operating levy options showed that an increase in the property tax rate would create financial stability over the next 8 years
- An increase in the operating levy would result in increased annual taxes on an averaged value home of between \$91 and \$100
- Tax impact on business and farm properties was also discussed

Jeff Dehler gave a power point presentation with the results of the public survey that was conducted in June of 2019. Mr. Dehler touched on different aspects of the results. Mr. Dehler indicated he would be providing the committee members with a copy of his presentation as well as it being posted on the website. There was some feedback and a few questions from the committee members as to the results and the presentation. Highlights included:

- Community members gave the school corporation higher grades in accomplishing its mission than the national average
- Providing academic support to students needing extra help, and maintaining science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) programs were prioritized
- Respondents were least likely to support cuts to elementary art and music, and teaching staff in general (which would increase class size)
- In order to avoid budget reductions and support educational priorities, 66 percent of respondents would support an annual property tax increase of \$100

The meeting ended with members asking questions and talking about their reactions and opinions on the information provided throughout the meeting. A few members spoke about conversations they have had with others in the community since the last meeting.

Meeting ended approximately 9:35 p.m.