

**MINUTES OF THE WORKING SESSION OF
THE BOARD OF SCHOOL TRUSTEES OF
THE AVON COMMUNITY SCHOOL CORPORATION**

Held on January 29, 2018

The working session of the Board of School Trustees of the Avon Community School Corporation was called to order by the Board President at 7:00 p.m. in the Avon Administration Center Board Room.

Five Board members were present: Mrs. Pam DeWeese, Mrs. Anne Engelhardt, Mr. John McDavid, Mrs. Cindy Simmons, and Mrs. Kim Woodward. Dr. Margaret Hoernemann, Superintendent of Schools; Dr. John Atha, Associate Superintendent; Dr. Maryanne McMahon, Assistant Superintendent; and Dr. Scott Wyndham, Director of Finance and Operations; were also present.

There were forty patrons in attendance.

Mr. McDavid thanked everyone for coming and expressed the importance of this meeting and all of the work that has gone into preparation. He stated that the Board has taken into account comments from the four Community Engagement sessions, social media, as well as comments made in the public in general. He reminded the audience that previously shown budgets have been drafts. He then turned it over to Dr. Hoernemann to present the final budget.

Dr. Hoernemann gave a presentation on the proposed final referendum budget.

Three patrons made comments in support of the referendum.

Mrs. Woodward made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Engelhardt that the Board of School Trustees adopts the 2019 Referendum Tax Levy Fund Resolution as presented. The governing body of this school corporation determines that it cannot, in a calendar year, carry out its public educational duty unless it imposes a referendum tax levy under Indiana Code 20-46-1-8. I recommend that the following be placed on a ballot to be considered in a referendum of voters residing within the school corporation boundaries in an election on May 8, 2018 and the question is as follows:

“For the eight (8) calendar years immediately following the holding of the referendum, shall the Avon Community School Corporation, Hendricks County, Indiana, impose a property tax rate that does not exceed thirty-five and thirty-six hundredths cents (\$0.3536) on each one hundred dollars (\$100) of assessed valuation and that is in addition to all other property taxes imposed by the school corporation for the purpose of reducing class size, funding to attract and retain teaching staff, and increasing instructional support and opportunities for students?” The motion carried, 5-0.

Mrs. Simmons stated that from a retired teacher's perspective, smaller class size allows one-on-one attention that results in better performance and test scores. She noted the high number of ESL students in Avon which is increasing as Avon continues to grow. She expressed the need for more ELL assistants to enhance the learning of these students. She was surprised to learn that there are not many extracurricular activities at the middle school level, especially compared to the opportunities available when she attended Avon. She stated that there is a strong need to add extracurricular opportunities to enhance students' education. She expressed that teacher compensation needs to improve in order to attract and retain the best teachers. She noticed at recent faculty meetings that we have a lot of young, eager teachers that we need to keep.

Mrs. Woodward thanked Mrs. Simmons for representing the educator point of view. She stated that tonight is the culmination of hundreds of hours of collective work which is necessary when asking the community to voluntarily increase the amount spent to support the school corporation. For the Board there were many hours spent in "getting smart," learning the financial landscape from administrators and then engaging in dialogue with our public to inform and receive feedback. Finally, there were hours spent in taking our public's input and creating a final document that honored all of the work that had come before it. She stated that Dr. Hoernemann was there along every step of the path leading the way to tonight's action. She called upon each of us as a community to join on this path and to work to tell the story that this collective group, led by Dr. Hoernemann, has provided to the Board and public so transparently. She thanked Dr. Hoernemann for her stamina and strength in leading us. She expressed that we all pledge to help Dr. Hoernemann carry the noble message of our students, teachers, and staff. She feels that the best days of Avon can be seen through a windshield rather than a rearview mirror. We are Avon, "A Valley of Neighbors," and as a community we will take this path together.

Mrs. Engelhardt thanked the community and stated that they have been engaged in the school district long before the Community Engagement meetings. She noted that the Oriole Advocates have become an entity to be reckoned with and have done a great job representing the district. She thanked the community for asking hard questions as it has allowed us to tell our story. She is impressed at how people have informed themselves. Tonight has been a tapestry woven together by community and teacher input. She stated that the final budget represents competitiveness and puts Avon at the top. With lower class sizes students can learn how they're designed and deserve to. She stated that our staff deserves to be compensated at a competitive rate—that is how we retain our great teachers. Competitiveness in school districts is a reality we face. She asked the public to continue asking questions and to join and work alongside us to get the referendum passed because our community deserves a great school corporation.

Mrs. DeWeese expressed her gratitude to those who have attended forums and staff meetings, and to those who have contacted her personally to ask good questions and offer input. She expressed gratitude for those who do not accept rumor as fact and genuinely try to understand and be well-informed. As Dr. Hoernemann has stated, the district has worked hard over the years to avoid this by tightening our belts, enlisting the help of community and staff to implement efficiencies of operations, seeking and being awarded hundreds of thousands of dollars in grants, and repositioning bank accounts to make more interest. Volunteers and parents, advocates, PTOs, booster organizations, and the Avon Education Foundation have stepped up to help and we are really grateful for that. We will continue to have in-depth discussions with local town, township,

and county leaders about the impact of their decisions on our schools and vice-versa. She is grateful that Mr. Eisenbarth and Mr. Hodson were in attendance. She clarified that the town and township have no control over how the school corporation spends referendum dollars, while the school corporation has no say in the budgets of other taxing entities. She encouraged the public to talk to appropriate officials as issues of concern may be beyond the school corporation's control. The Board, administrators, and members of the community will continue to work on getting the state legislature to improve its per-student funding for our district. While we have seen some positive movement, state-level change is slow and for Avon, we cannot wait as our funding has not kept pace with inflation or the state average. The Board and administrators have worked hard to be transparent, open-minded, inclusive, and to gather as much information and input from students, staff, parents, and community members. She explained the top five reasons why she voted in support of the referendum and why she thinks it's the right thing to do. First, this is a General Fund Referendum so money generated will be used for teachers and to improve class sizes and instructional opportunities for our students—no money will go to building construction or administrators. The referendum is for eight years and cannot be extended without the approval of the voters in eight years. There is transparency and accountability as money generated by the referendum can only be used for the stated purpose and the budget will be publicly reviewed annually. Second, it would be irresponsible to ignore the issues and not try to take action. We are starting to lose good teachers, class sizes are large, and we are starting to see signs that students are being impacted. Third, this is the only option given to the school corporations by the state. The state created referendums as the mechanism for local citizens to collect local dollars to be used locally for a finite amount of time and only for the stated purpose. She believes this is a viable option for those who believe in local control and choice. Fourth, the quality of our schools impacts everyone in our community. Schools impact families and a students' options after graduation, a potential workforce and customer base for businesses, and schools are one of the top three reasons someone moves into – or out of – a community according to realtors. The value of everyone's home is impacted by quality schools, so investing in schools provides a good return on investment. Fifth, having listened carefully to input from all sides, she believes this is the right thing for our schools – and our community. Considering that this decision has to last eight years, she believes we cannot be short-sighted and cannot put a band-aid on problems as we also have ground to make up. She stated that the Board and administrators listened and made adjustments to the originally discussed drafts based upon public comment. She thanked staff and fellow board members for the intense, open-minded and deliberative process. She thanked everyone for thoughtfully considering the future and not just what is easy as it takes courage, thoughtfulness, civility, and devotion on everyone's part to consider the longer view and do the right thing. She urged the public to continue to be involved and to vote, as voters, not taxpayers, will determine the outcome. She thanked everyone who has and will continue to contribute to the process in a positive and civil manner. She knows this touches all of us personally – but it also touches the future – and she sincerely believes that the education and well-being of our children is our collective future.

Mr. McDavid thanked Dr. Hoernemann and the administrators for all of the work they have done. He stated that leading up to tonight the Board had to answer two questions: "Is a referendum appropriate?" "If so, at what level?" It is clear that we were beginning to fall behind on test scores with large class sizes. He stated that much of the public wants to see objective data—people can grasp on to falling test scores and teacher compensation comparison data. He moved to Avon in 2003 with the schools being a primary reason, and his children have experienced a good portion

of large class sizes. He stated that we have not sat still on finances—our efficiencies and grants have helped the slide to be less dramatic. The Board, administrators, and Oriole Advocates have talked to legislators to try to get additional money. He stated it is apparent we cannot count on the state for school funding. The state is spending more on schools than ever before, but it's still not keeping pace with inflation. He believes they recognize education is important but we still need to work on educating them on just how important it is. He expressed that in dialogue with legislators regarding school funding the notion has been set forth that it is expected of the schools to pursue a referendum. He stated that the Board and administrators wanted to be in a position where they have exhausted its financial means before asking the community for more funding, and that they wanted to wait a period of time after the first referendum. He reminded the audience that Avon is one of three school districts hit this hard from state funding and tax caps, and that a referendum is meant to be a solution for this. He believes the case is clear that a referendum is needed and that the only question is at what level. He states that the budget is focused on the students and classrooms, not buildings or administrators. He stated that while the room may be filled with supporters of the referendum, there is a good portion of the population outside who are indifferent or do not support it. He expressed that it is all of our jobs to educate the public, and that the Board has great reason and sound basis for this decision.

Supportive documents are posted on the ACSC website.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:14 p.m.

Board Secretary

Board President