

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL BOARD OF EDUCATION TRUTH IN TAXATION HEARING held Tuesday, August 6, 2019, at 6:00 p.m. in the district office boardroom.

The following Board Members were present: Stephen Allen, Michelle Jorgenson-Jones, Michelle Lambert, Mary Ann Kemp, and Dale Brinkerhoff. Also present were the following: Shannon Dulaney, Superintendent and Kent Peterson, Business Administrator. Directors Kevin Garrett, Steve Burton and Roy Mathews were also present.

Steve Burton offered prayer.

Roy Mathews led the Pledge of Allegiance.

President Stephen Allen welcomed those in attendance and introduced Kent Peterson, District Business Administrator, to offer an overview of what is being proposed. Mr. Peterson began by assuring those in attendance that the district is not raising taxes by 5.5%. He explained that the Board is actually setting the tax rate the same as the total rate that was certified to us by the Iron County Auditor. The Iron County Auditor, in conjunction with the State Tax Commission, set our certified rate at .006212. He explained that the Iron County School Board was required by State Legislature to raise their Board Local Levy this year by .0001 over last year's rate in order to qualify for the Teacher Student Success Act funds. Iron County School District will receive 1.4 million dollars in Teacher Student Success Act funds. He pointed out that the current Board Local Levy rate is .001016 and the proposed rate would need to be .001116 in order to qualify for that money. That increase alone has required the school board to hold a Truth in Taxation hearing. He explained that the Board has also opted to raise the Capital Tax Levy from .000944 to .001000 and the Voted Local Levy from .000756 to .000800. The Board decided they did not want the overall certified tax rate to increase so they elected to drop the General Obligation Bond levy from .001824, which is the certified rate, to .001588. By dropping the bond levy it keeps the district right at the certified rate of .006212. He explained that 40% of the 1.4 million dollars from the State will go toward teacher salaries and the other 60% will be allocated to each school to use as they choose. The State requires each school to construct a plan as to how they will spend their money. He explained that the additional funds from the Capital Tax Levy will be used to pay for security and other capital needs to the extent the money will allow. The district is in the process of purchasing security cameras for schools and additional security cameras where needed. He mentioned that funds generated from the Capital Budget cannot be used for salaries, only for school facilities. The money generated from the Voted Local Levy will be used to fund salary and benefit increases for teachers and other district employees. He explained again that by opting to reduce the General Obligation Bond levy below what the County Auditor has certified for the district, it keeps the district at the overall certified tax rate of .006212. He explained there is no tax increase above the certified tax rate, we have just moved it within categories.

The time was then made available for comments from persons in attendance at the hearing.

Beverly Grimm addressed the Board and asked for an explanation on why the taxes don't go down when bonds are paid off? She expressed her concern that many people don't make much money in Iron County and they will lose their homes if they are taxed much more.

Doug Hall addressed the Board and read a statement indicating the school district has raised their taxes above the certified tax rate a total of 18.5% in the last seven years. He made the point that other taxing entities in the county have not raised their taxes above the certified tax rate in the last decade and they are able to manage their funds without placing the burden on taxpayers. He felt the Iron County School Board can find ways to stay within the funds provided without increasing the certified tax rate. He also commented that he thought that increasing local tax rate to receive money from the state is not a good idea. He urged the Board to accept the certified tax rate and not increase it.

William Presgrove expressed his concern that students are not being educated any better today than they were twenty years ago. He felt that all of the "extra" stuff, like laptops, etc. won't guarantee that students will perform any better because education is dependant only on the student, not the supplies and facilities. He felt that students are falling further and further behind and the only way to fix the problem is to hold their feet to the fire and keep them engaged. He agreed that teachers need to be paid more and felt parents need to support teachers and make their children more accountable.

Dawn Rae Smith, a teacher at Cedar Middle School, thanked the Board for allocating the funds for the schools. She mentioned that she serves on the committee that determines where the Teacher Student Success Act money will be distributed in her school. She explained that the money will go toward practical and reasonable things that will help students achieve higher. She pointed out that the money will be extremely helpful as the district moves toward standards based grading.

John Donner asked for clarification on the tax rates and if some people in the county will pay more of this rate than others? Mr. Peterson explained that the total levy of .006212 applies to everyone across the county. Mr. Donner requested a copy of the budget. He explained that he is a strong believer in efficiency and wants his money to be put to an effective use.

Barry Short asked for clarification on the General Obligation Bond payments and reducing the rate. He felt that decreasing the payments by 13-14% this year would cause problems in the future when we are trying to figure out a way to pay the bonds that we have put off for a year. Mr. Peterson pointed out the district is not putting the payments off for a year. He explained that when the county certifies the rate they certify it based on our payment for the year, which includes the principal and interest. We have some reserve in the bond indebtedness fund and intend to use some of that reserve to make that payment. There is a bond that will be paid off a year from now so we will be able to adjust going forward. There will be no problem making that

payment between what is generated by the levy and what we will take from our reserve. Mr. Short then asked if last year's rate was a little higher than it needed to be. Mr. Peterson indicated that that was possible.

Brittany Parry praised the students in Iron County School District and credited the wonderful teachers in the district for their success. Our students are not behind, they are brilliant. She praised her daughter's teacher for encouraging her to become an editor someday. She pointed out that our schools need to be safe.

Zane Jones addressed the Board and explained how his late wife would have to take money out of her own pocket for student supplies every year when the school budgets fell short. He pointed out that these budget changes are needed so teachers do not have to take money out of their own pockets and the schools can afford to provide the essentials that are needed.

Ron Pesinturo asked the Board if a person can opt out of paying school taxes due to the growing number of people moving into the county? Mr. Peterson explained that you cannot opt out of paying your taxes. Mr. Pesinturo then asked the Board if they thought it was a good idea for people who are homeschooling their children to have the option to opt out of paying taxes? He suggested that public school is a form of socialism. President Allen explained that as a school board member he is an advocate for public education and does not believe that individuals opting out of paying their taxes would be valuable to any community. The Board referred him to contact the State Legislature regarding his questions about opting out of paying taxes.

Joann Taylor inquired about the process the Board followed in approving a proposed budget in June before the Truth in Taxation was held. Mr. Peterson explained that by law the district must hold their budget hearing in June and then report the certified tax rates to the county so they can be reflected on individual tax notices. He pointed out that the County has to have an adequate amount of time to do that. There is a process and dates we, and the County, have to meet and we just followed that process. She asked if the increase was subject to voting. President Allen explained that it will be voted on tonight. Mrs. Taylor expressed her disappointment in the tax increase.

Erick Houle expressed his opinion that we need to be super sensitive to those who are on fixed incomes. He also pointed out that the bond that was not approved last year would have paid for security measures to be taken in our schools. He explained that school systems are soft targets for people who have a desire to harm other people. The bond would have possibly saved some lives. He informed the Board he coaches young kids and the kids coming out of Cedar are awesome and will be great leaders in the future. He felt this is because of the great teachers and leaders they have had in their lives. He pointed out education, wisdom and knowledge can be short lived if we don't take care of our students in our communities. He suggested that by passing these bonds we can continue to grow as a community and inspire the next generation to come.

Bylynda Murray, Principal of Cedar Middle School, expressed her support to the school board and the teachers in her school. She pointed out that people don't have an idea of what teachers do day to day. Times have changed and society is changing. A student's home life today often times looks very different from what many of us are used to. Teacher's jobs are getting harder each and every year because of the changes happening. She thanked the Board for thinking into the future and for allowing teachers to have a raise and for giving value to what they do.

Josh Killian, a father of five and a teacher in Iron County, pointed out that on the census records, 20% of the population accounted for in Iron County is college students, therefore we will always have a skewed poverty number. He praised the students he has worked with in the district and expressed his appreciation for the Board looking at this issue. He expressed his appreciation to Mr. Peterson and Superintendent Dulaney for all the good work they do for teachers in the district.

Dan Jessen, Iron County Auditor, addressed the Board and gave an explanation of this complex process. He explained that he works hand in hand with the state tax commission to calculate the rates each year. He pointed out that as hard as they work to make this understandable it's still very difficult to understand what is going on. He explained that the 5.5% people see on their tax notice is not a 5.5% increase from last year's rate, it is a 5.5% increase on what he set as the certified rate for the school district. He pointed out that the rate this year is less than the rate last year. He also pointed out that there are a lot people who didn't have the value of their home change this year who will pay less in taxes even with the school board's increase. There are also other people who are going to pay more in taxes due to their home value rising this year. He mentioned that everyone would've paid less in taxes if the Board had decided to not go through Truth in Taxation. He suggested that anyone who feels that their home value had unfairly risen to visit his office to appeal the value of their home through the Board of Equalization.

Trevor Heaton, Principal of Parowan Elementary, addressed the Board and expressed his appreciation for his school, students and teachers. He also expressed his appreciation to the State Legislature for giving districts local control over funds through the School Land Trust and Teacher Student Success Act. He thanked the Board for being willing to take risks so teachers can do even more for their students.

Ray Whittier, Principal of North Elementary, addressed the Board and thanked them for helping raise teacher salaries. He pointed out teaching has never been a lucrative profession, but we are a blessed district because there are some people who want to teach here regardless of the pay. He explained to the Board that hiring teachers is getting harder because we are competing with other districts who have the ability to pay a higher salary. Many teachers make the choice to work in the districts that pay more. He suggested we need to be able to compete with these other district and he thanked the Board for helping with this problem.

Neena Matthews, a teacher at Cedar Middle School, addressed the Board and recognized how carefully the Board looked at both sides and they are thinking about our community and students. She informed the Board that the teachers have their back and know that the Board values education and cares about the students.

Once comments had been made by those wishing to do so, President Allen welcomed a motion to approve the resolution adopting the final tax rates.

Mrs Lambert moved to approve a resolution adopting the final tax rates and budget for the next school year.

William Pressgrove called a point of order due to the fact there was not an action item on the agenda implying the Board would be voting tonight on the proposed budget.

Mrs. Lambert moved to withdraw her motion.

Mrs. Jorgenson-Jones moved to take a temporary recess to consult with legal counsel.  
President Allen seconded the motion.

The Board reconvened and President Allen informed those in attendance that the Board has opted to post a new agenda with adjusted language and finish the approval process tomorrow night. President Allen pointed out that 24 hours notice will be given.

The board meeting adjourned at 7:20 p.m.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
President

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Business Administrator

