

BOARD MINUTES
May 13, 2024

The Board of Education of Unified School District No. 273 met in regular session on Monday, May 13, 2024 at 6:30 P.M., at the Board of Education Office with the following members present: Joe File, Amber Krier, Kelsey Adams, Jacob Ludwig, Jonathan Stillwell and Tony Thompson (6:36 PM). Also present were Jeff Travis, Superintendent; Tiffany Schroeder, Clerk; Janet Porter, Beloit Elementary School Principal; Garry Lowry, Beloit Elementary School Assistant Principal; Casey Seyfert, Beloit Jr-Sr High School Principal (6:37 P.M.); Christie Gerdes, Beloit Special Education Cooperative Director; Cassie Kopsa, Special Education Assistant Director; and Brady Dean, MCPC/MCELC Executive Director.

President File called the meeting to order at 6:30 P.M.

Guests present were: Jim Johnson, Heather Matter, Stephanie Porter, Rick Nobles, Brian Debey and Heather Johnson (6:35 PM).

A motion was made by Krier, seconded by Ludwig, to adopt the agenda. Motion carried: 5 Yeas, 0 Nays.

A motion was made by Ludwig, seconded by Adams, to approve the consent agenda with this motion, the following were approved:

Minutes of April 8, 2024 Regular Board Meeting and April 29, 2024 Special Meeting;

Payment of Bills and Claims;

Approval of Revenue Journals;

Approval of BOE, BES and BJSHS Activity Funds;

Contracts:

Erin Suelter, School Readiness Specialist, Mitchell County Partnership for Children, 2024-25 school year;

Paige Goddard, 5th Grade Teacher, Beloit Elementary School, 2024-25 school year;

Resignations:

Bernadette Gibilisco, Paraeducator, Beloit Special Education Cooperative;

Felisha Bland, School Psychologist, Beloit Special Education Cooperative;

Carli Denning, Special Education Teacher, Beloit Special Education Cooperative;

Mandy Gerstner, Social Worker, Beloit Schools;

Cathy Harris, Business Teacher, Beloit Jr-Sr High School;

Heather Isbell, School Readiness Specialist, Mitchell County Partnership for Children;

Vicki Jackson, 5th Grade Teacher, Beloit Elementary School.

Motion carried: 5 Yeas, 0 Nays.

BILLS

PAID APRIL 3, 2024:

Advance Life Ins of KS

PAID APRIL 11, 2024:

962.46 KSDE

44,217.00

PAID APRIL 19, 2024:		Beloit Jr-Sr High School	361.81
City of Beloit	16,154.45	Beloit Medical Center	700.00
MG Trust	700.00	Beloit Typewriter	42.94
Am Fid Health Svcs Admin	250.00	Felisha Bland	1,192.10
American Fidelity Assurance	14,876.60	Boettcher Supply, Inc	663.11
Am Fidelity Assurance Co	8,203.40	Julia Budreau	41.92
Flex Account Admin	7,295.19	Cardio Partners, Inc	968.00
Meredith Johnson, Treasurer	468.00	Card Services	12,072.31
First National Bank & Trust	1,098.46	Cawker City Ledger	58.13
First National Bank & Trust	173,513.36	CDW Government, Inc	5,472.00
KPERS	51,092.80	Central Valley Ag	972.73
KPERS Retirement WAR	2,659.10	Dawn Chandler	310.01
KPERS-Optional Life	323.12	City of Beloit	14,752.81
KPERS Summer Optional Life	106.95	Skylar Cleveland	30.75
KS Dept of Revenue	29,782.29	Jana Coil	302.80
KS Employ Security Fund	773.44	Conscious Discipline	5,070.00
Security Benefit Life Ins Co	800.00	Sheri Cooley	41.92
USD 273 Health Reserve	120,243.40	Linda S. Cox	568.84
FTC-Fiduciary Trust Co of NH	1,200.00	Craig Home Care	72.68
Total	429,540.56	Crumbaker Oil & Feed, Inc	7,191.49
		Cunningham Telephone	1,244.81
PAID APRIL 22, 2024:		Data Recognition	472.95
Julia Budreau	300.00	Delta Dental of KS	10,215.28
Reliance Standard	2,418.24	Carli Denning	72.05
Total	2,718.24	Dollar General	132.50
		Stephanie Draayer	26.20
PAID APRIL 26, 2024:		DS Busline, Inc	72,229.86
KSDE	1,163.95	Ashley R. Eck	165.72
		Rachel Ellenz	16.96
PAID APRIL 29, 2024:		Ron Elniff	1,061.76
BlueCross BlueShield of KS	135,774.70	Joelle Emerson	610.46
BlueCross BlueShield of KS	1,420.55		
Total:	137,195.25	Kayle Ester	105.00
		Flint Hills Music	533.33
PAID MAY 13, 2024:		Fire Alarm Specialist, Inc	125.00
American Digital Security	1,892.83	Fort Hays State University	1,916.70
Amanda Anderson	528.59	Fouts Insurance, LLC	500.00
Beloit City	2,500.00	Ashton Fraley	108.00
Beloit Country Club	1,471.73	Lijah Gerstner	54.00
Beloit Elementary School	247.12	Thomas W. Goss	62.23

Susan Grabon	80.57	Bethany Mitchell	109.28
Emma Griffiths	33.75	Mitchell County Clerk	10,180.73
Leann Griffith	60.92	MC Co Sheriff's Office	30.00
Michelle Hahn	391.69	Mitchell Co Solid Waste	38.40
Amanda Hawkins	11.79	Madelynn Moore	39.30
Martin Hesting	107.95	Gina Nelson	41.92
Hiserote Trash Removal	320.00	Marlene Nelson	645.18
Bernetta Hlad	170.30	Nex-Tech Wireless	2,183.03
Elizabeth Holway	818.75	Kansas One-Call	1.20
Meagan Housh	86.92	OPAA!	62,369.25
Debra Howell	41.92	Hayley Ortiz	39.30
HQ H2O/Culligan	94.00	Chirine Ouzin	40.00
Korryn Hubert	76.50	Sheryl Ann Palmer	68.12
INAalert	1,993.27	Paper 101	1,736.00
Heather Isbell	236.72	Janet Parker	26.20
Austin Jablonski	32.70	Pearson Clinical	514.56
Vicki Jackson Catering	171.88	Audrey L. Pingel	35.05
JAG-K	12,750.00	Pitney Bowes, Inc	246.27
Allison Johnson	141.49	Pitney Bowes, Inc	308.22
Johnson Controls Fire	11,942.28	Positive Promotions	1,934.86
KASB	15,010.39	Postmaster	2,086.00
KCCTO	32.00	USPS	600.00
Daniel Kelly	395.62	Prairie Fire Coffee	329.90
KETC, Inc dba WebKIDSS	9,113.93	Providence Working Canines	844.13
Kingdom Cartridge	810.00	Pur-O-Zone	420.28
Kansas Gas Service	2,610.76	Quill Corporation	2,788.31
Jase Labertew	40.50	Ray's AppleMarket	3,099.75
Leah Larsen	512.21	Desiree Richards	433.61
Lathrop GPM, LLP	47.00	Angela K. Ringler	269.21
Matheson Tri-Gas, Inc	967.63	Sarah Rowden	141.48
Denise A. Long	26.20	Salina Steel Supply, Inc	268.52
Loving Guidance	540.00	Savvas Learning	4,600.80
Shelton Lund	60.00	Toni Schlaefli	26.20
Karen MacCrory	660.24	Anna N. Schoen	99.57
Renee J. Mason, RPT	658.28	School Specialty	208.38
Master Teacher, Inc	127.95	Tiffany Schroeder	66.91
Amanda McGuire	864.00	Casey Seyfert	226.63
McHenry Electric & Supply	32.00	Shar Products Co	51.84
Becky Byarlay-McQueen	476.44	Solomon Valley Home Center	714.79
Midwest Music, Inc	31.00	Janelle Streit	482.08

Tracy Sulsar	227.43	Xerox Financial Services	7,033.40
Superior Publishing Co, Inc	72.00	Zachary's Ace Hardware	312.79
Telephone Systems of Nebraska	75.00	Total	328,182.01
Ramsey Solutions	1,199.40		
Dawn Thomas	34.06		
Thompson's O.K. Tire, Inc	2,292.20	FUND SUMMARY:	
Lynne Thrun	65.50	GENERAL FUND	152817.38
Tom's Music House	1,400.00	SUPPLEMENTAL GENERAL	20052.12
Trane US, Inc	1,118.33	AT-RISK (K-12)	13222.95
Jeff Travis	403.48	CAPITAL OUTLAY	695.00
United School Administrators	1,200.00	FOOD SERVICE	59420.48
USD #298 Lincoln	247.84	PARENT EDUCATION FUND	3077.80
Waconda Trader	69.60	CAREER & POSTSECND ED	3091.53
Brianna Walter	95.63	HEALTH CARE RESERVE	10215.28
Ward's Natural Science	876.39	TEXTBOOK & STUDENT	4600.80
Watts & Sons	832.69	COOP SPECIAL ED	40644.32
Anita Wirth	43.23	MEDICAID	1582.50
WoodRiver Energy, LLC	2,445.24	SMART START (MCPC)	18761.85
Carlton Wright	33.56	TOTAL	328,182.01

Rick Nobles with Excellence K-12 explained that his company helps schools get information by conducting random phone surveys to community members. This would help the district get a better understanding of what the community thinks about the district's strengths, challenges and long-term facility needs. It is possible to do an online survey, as well.

Board Attorney, Jim Johnson, discussed insurance certificates and waivers the district needs to start requiring for groups to use the district's facilities.

The Superintendent gave an update on the legislature. The Governor signed into law a bill that allocates \$75 million in new Special Education state funding. With a new bill that passed, the legislatures will require all teachers, current and new, to take part in the Science of Reading. Current teachers will have six years to get this new endorsement on their certificate. The Superintendent discussed the summer projects at the buildings. The high school parking lot will be resurfaced within the next three weeks. The west end sidewalks at the elementary school will be replaced. There will be painting being done at both buildings. The floor in the multi-purpose room at the elementary school will be replaced. The only food service bid received was OPAA!. It looks like their bid for next school year is an increase of \$0.56 per meal and a decrease of \$0.15 per breakfast. KSDE has finished reviewing the district board policies. Mr. Travis will get the policies to the board members for them to review. The district needs to consider changing the fees for facility usage. The board office will get more information for the board to determine what other district's do and reasonable fees. The Superintendent explained the water restrictions that have been set by the city. It is possible that the 8-man All-Star Games may not be able to be played on the same day due to the damage it may cause to the football field. Board member Tony Thompson asked how many track meets are held on our track during a year. Mr. Seyfert answered there

is usually 5 or 6 with Beloit schools hosting two, St. John's school hosting three and the NPL league track used to be held in Beloit also. The Superintendent reminded the board members of the retirement reception that is going to be held on Wednesday, May 15th.

The Superintendent gave an update on the upcoming bond. President File discussed an email conversation that took place between a patron and himself. This patron also emailed President File feedback she and the members of her group had received regarding the bond election. Both of these emails will be attached to the board minutes. Mr. Travis will get a new quote from Excellence K-12 before the board votes on using their services. The board would like to have a special meeting on Monday, May 20, 2024 at 7:30 AM at the Board of Education office.

Kelsey Adams left the meeting at 9:33 PM

A motion was made by Thompson, seconded by Ludwig, to approve Dawn Harmon to paint up to 40 hours per week this summer and Marshall Musil to mow up to 30 hours per week this summer. Motion carried: 5 Yeas, 0 Nays.

Kelsey Adams returned to the meeting at 9:37 PM.

A motion was made by Stillwell, seconded by Thompson, to approve the Special Education ESY contracts as presented. (List attached) Motion carried: 6 Yeas, 0 Nays.

A motion was made by Adams, seconded by Krier, to approve the LEA Assurances as presented. Motion carried: 6 Yeas, 0 Nays.

A motion was made by Ludwig, seconded by Krier, to approve the Special Education Cooperative Agreement as presented. Motion carried: 6 Yeas, 0 Nays.

Stillwell made the motion to approve the driver education contracts for Brad Mason and Garry Lowry, seconded by Thompson. Motion carried: 6 Yeas, 0 Nays.

A motion was made by Ludwig, seconded by Stillwell, to approve the Test Coordinator job description as presented and to add it to the supplemental duty list. Motion carried: 6 Yeas, 0 Nays.

A motion was made by Krier, seconded by Adams, to approve the certified staff recommendations for 2024-2025 as presented by administration. (List attached). Motion carried: 6 Yeas, 0 Nays.

A motion was made by Stillwell, seconded by Thompson, to approve the 2024-2025 supplemental duty assignments as presented. (List attached). Motion carried: 6 Yeas, 0 Nays.

A motion was made by Krier, seconded by Thompson, to approved technology purchases as presented by administration from ImageQuest for \$64,446.18. Motion carried: 6 Yeas, 0 Nays

A motion was made by Adams, seconded by Ludwig, to approve First Agency as the district's student accident insurance company for the 2024-2025 school year for \$7,108.90. Motion carried: 6 Yeas, 0 Nays.

Thompson moved that the Board of Education go into executive session at 10:00 P.M. for the purpose of discussing matters relating to actions adversely or favorably affecting a person as a student because if this matter were discussed in open session it might invade the privacy of those discussed and that the Board of Education reconvene into open session at 10:10 P.M. in this room with Jeff Travis and Casey Seyfert remaining. The motion was seconded by Ludwig. Motion carried: 6 Yeas, 0 Nays.

The meeting reconvened into open session at 10:10 P.M.

Thompson moved that the Board of Education go into executive session at 10:10 P.M. for the purpose of discussing personnel matters on non-elected personnel and their contractual obligations because if this matter were discussed in open session it might invade the privacy of those discussed and that the Board of Education reconvene into open session at 10:25 P.M. in this room with Jeff Travis, Casey Seyfert, Janet Porter and Christie Gerdes remaining. The motion was seconded by Ludwig. Motion carried: 6 Yeas, 0 Nays.

The meeting reconvened into open session at 10:25 P.M.

Thompson moved that the Board of Education go into executive session at 10:25 P.M. for the purpose of discussing personnel matters on non-elected personnel and their contractual obligations because if this matter were discussed in open session it might invade the privacy of those discussed and that the Board of Education reconvene into open session at 10:30 P.M. in this room with Jeff Travis, Casey Seyfert, Janet Porter and Christie Gerdes remaining. The motion was seconded by Ludwig. Motion carried: 6 Yeas, 0 Nays.

The meeting reconvened into open session at 10:29 P.M.

A motion was made by Thompson, seconded by Adams, to approve the salary recommendations as follows: increase \$1,500 for any employee on the certified salary schedule; to raise all hourly classified employees 3% or a \$1.50 per hour, whichever benefits the employee the most; to increase all other salaried employees 3%; raise the Parents as Teacher wages by \$1.50 an hour; and to increase the ELC employees by 3% starting July 1, 2024. Motion carried: 6 Yeas, 0 Nays

A motion was made by Ludwig, seconded by Adams, that the meeting adjourn. Meeting adjourned at 10:30 P.M. Motion carried: 6 Yeas, 0 Nays.

President, Board of Education

Clerk, Board of Education

Mr. File,

I wanted to thank you again for taking the time to visit with me. I appreciated your time and the candid and cordial conversation we had. Our taxpayer group did get together recently to discuss the community feedback you requested for your board. We are happy to provide this in an effort to come together and advocate for our school and community. This attached feedback is based on our group's observations and what was communicated to us from many community members during and after the USD 273 bond election.

As a whole, and in response to your question, the group consensus is that whether we oppose a future bond or not would depend entirely on what was proposed in the bond, but as well if all necessary information is given up front for the public to consider before voting and looking at it from an angle of what should be done to create a bond the community will support. Each of us are part of a community we've chosen to sink our roots, It is our sole goal to be an active force for worthy, earnest and positive transformation for Beloit, and this includes our USD 273 public school system. Thus, our hope is this feedback could be helpful in moving forward.

Sincerely,

Valerie Strathman

To Whom It May Concern:

The following is feedback based on the communications with and observations by the members of Taxpayers For Responsible Spending during and after the recent USD 273 Bond election. This feedback is intended as a starting point and is not a conclusive list intended to represent the entire USD 273 population (or that specifically of Taxpayers For Responsible Spending) as much work obtaining feedback from the entire community will be needed to result in such. We have also included suggestions on how to possibly address or remedy particular concerns, where applicable, drawing from the communications we received. Items are numbered, not necessarily in order of relevance, but in an effort to create ease of reading and locating the major points of feedback. Moving forward, finding out what the community will and will not support in a future bond proposal is, of course, key. It is our hope providing respectful and honest feedback will better enable the USD 273 board and our community as a whole to find a path in resolving issues regarding USD 273.

List of Concerns

1. USD 273 Bond was created by a smaller, select group and not inclusive or representative of the community at large.

The resulting vote seemed to reflect this sentiment, as 1400 plus people, a vast majority, disagreed with this spending plan. Now the objective needs to be to find out what the public wanted to see and what it is about this bond that they didn't support. Finding and fixing the problems will more likely lead to success on a future bond.

2. Lack of transparency and communication of school issues prior to presentation of bond.

From what we heard and saw, a majority of people in the district were not aware the board was proposing a bond, let alone what was in it. This was upsetting to many that there was no opportunity for public input before drafting the bond and it felt secretive to only begin giving information a few months before the vote, after bond wording, structure and what it would cover were already set in stone which created a sense of mistrust. It also left little time to answer the many valid questions raised by the community and to be properly informed. It has been communicated that info regarding the bond planning was available to the public as school board meetings are open to the public to attend. If everyone is required to attend all the school board meetings in order to be advised of upcoming bond proposals or major news and changes, that defeats the whole purpose of having a school board that is elected to represent the public. One easily feasible way to be inclusive to far more citizens would be to live stream and record school board meetings from here on out and post the videos to make it

more accessible to the public. In addition, update school board minutes timely as they are often many, many months behind. In addition, perhaps a consideration of sending out communications in other methods such as email, facebook, mass texts, etc. to include as many as possible moving forward and providing better access to upcoming agenda items would be helpful to inform the public, especially since according to local board rules it seems a person attending a meeting has no opportunity to speak or give input if they aren't on the agenda prior to the meeting.

3. Little to no opportunity for the community at large to provide input, planning or involvement prior to presentation of bond.

Due to lack of involvement, the only option for the public was to accept or reject the bond exactly as presented. Judging by attendance at the community meetings held and by the voter turnout, many in our community are very interested in this process and in our school. Our community has a plethora of talented and hardworking people who are willing to and have expressed a desire to give input and help personally with improving the school and town. There were references in the state application to surveys being taken, but who was given an opportunity to even do that basic input is unknown, and many have expressed feeling that not even that simple of an effort was made to involve the public in the process to gauge its level of support for projects or costs. We suggest tapping into that desire and giving a variety of opportunities for those in our community who desire to contribute to the process the ability to do so! Many have communicated this openly and privately, and voters at each community meeting expressed it as well. Moving forward, we suggest involving more people in the foundation and the process, allow them to step forward to help and get a variety of people from the community to participate and offer their gifts. Ask what they are able and willing to do, offer, and contribute. Reach out and get community input on what voters believe should be done and what they would support in a future bond as well as other suggestions to the problems the bond was proposed to resolve. There are so many different ideas on what is needed or not needed, things that could be done a different way, how to raise money outside of taxing (including interested and invested alumni), etc. that our community has expressed. We suggest to begin by holding a few open community meetings prior to any future proposed bonds or fundraising. Advertise it publicly so anyone interested can attend and conduct surveys to gather input from the community to consider for future proposals. Actively seek out the public's input and gauge their support of several options before creating a bond to be voted on. This will be much more efficient to obtain all of this upfront before another bond is proposed.

We heard many express a different mindset of what is considered a want and what is considered a need. Instead of fighting the community on this

mindset, we suggest working together to find the common ground to figure out a way forward. Our consensus was that much of the population agrees that heating and cooling the school classrooms where students are learning each day is vital and needs to be addressed immediately.

4. Lack of transparency regarding the financial information and project details of the bond available/given to the public created mistrust and feelings of insinuated incompetence of public in understanding financials.

Going forward we strongly suggest making sure all of the numbers and details are available up front in an effort of transparency with the public. Most, if not all people communicated they certainly understood the “overfunding to cover unexpected/unplanned contingencies,” yet the gist of the answers to specific public requests for project numbers/costs was that no more detail could be given regarding the numbers/costs that went into the very broad \$16.2M and \$3.8M figures for the two questions on the ballot. The public simply didn’t believe that was true and they were correct. It would seem foolhardy to take that approach if there is a future attempt at a bond regardless of what the outside professional bond consultants who stand to make money by passage of a bond advise. Include all financial information relevant (estimated interest rates/amounts, breakdowns, proposed plans, etc) to the bond and let voters make the decisions for themselves. It should be clear to taxpayers how the money is going to be used. People understandably wanted to know details of the proposed projects and their estimated costs. Giving that upfront in an effort to be transparent along with explaining the contingencies can easily be explained. In future bonds, we suggest being up front with the costs and plans so voters can decide if they believe it is a financially responsible plan.

5. Concerns sending so many dollars outside of our community (over the course of 25 years in the case of this bond) and the negative impact that would have on our economy.

People want their dollars to remain local, whether it be the people overseeing the projects, the people being contracted to do the work or the interest dollars (many expressed concern our contractors would not get many of the projects). They want the money to stay here to continue to support our community. Beloit supports each other, and this was a clear message that they live by what they say! There were many concerns over the consultants and the overhead dollars they consumed in the bond process as well. Allow the public to see every effort is made to ensure money that goes into these projects remains local whenever possible. The public did not like the idea of outsiders coming into our community and having such a level of control in this.

6. Current/past use and spending of USD 273 dollars.

Specifically, we saw many express concerns of current expenditures in the board minutes and people questioned the responsible use of taxpayer dollars (multiple attorney fees being paid when USD 273 has a KASB membership which includes legal services, multiple catering bills annually, pricy mural expense, etc.). Prudent analysis of current expenditures and what can be cut should be explored as it seems it is being and will likely be watched closely by the public after this. The public, of course, wants to see their tax dollars being used wisely if they are being asked for more. Communicating cuts to the public could be done to make them aware of your efforts to do this as well. We also heard many concerns to the use of COVID funds and dissatisfaction with answers given at community meetings. This cannot be remedied as it is done, but goes with concerns about prudent spending for the future. There were also concerns regarding the lease payoff being included in the bond (without being technically included) and what many felt was irresponsible use of funds this way. The loose language and use of the bond dollars in this way created more concern and mistrust among those we heard from. We would recommend eliminating this language if possible and not using bond funding to pay off the lease.

7. Ag center concerns. This came from both supporters and opposers of the proposed ag center plan. Many felt there was a need for added space for the ag center, although the proposed plan in the bond was too much or excessive for high school level education and should be scaled back.

Multiple times the messaging surrounding the necessity of the Ag center was related to preparing students for careers after high school. According to USD 273 mission statement students will be given the opportunity to become “3) aware of vocational opportunities”. The district’s mission statement does not align with the bond proposal to prepare students for Ag careers after high school. If the real goal of USD 273 is to prepare students for careers after high school, then that should be communicated in the school’s mission statement. If you are preparing students for Ag careers, what about health care, design, engineering, etc? Is USD 273 planning to build separate buildings for other careers? Many community members voiced concerns about what number of students who were involved in FFA and Ag classes actually went onto work in the Ag industry. When the district brought up the safety issues surrounding the space in the Ag and Woods areas, community members questioned whether students should be engaged in such large projects if there is not space. Are students being put at a safety risk and should the teachers and admin simply not allow these projects? Are these large projects really necessary for the student learning at the high school level? Comments received like “a student can certainly be taught to weld without having to build projects

that require 20 foot or more ceilings heavy overhead cranes, etc.” or “what farmer in their right mind is going to bring their \$1M combine in to a high school to be repaired by students (and/or instructors) with little or no expertise, special tools, etc. rotating in hour-long class periods?” or “Some added space I’d be OK with, but multiple bays with the capacity to hold several huge machines that will also have to be heated and cooled, maintained and repaired year-round adding more and more expense. It just doesn’t make sense for a high school program.” and “There is a tech school within a couple blocks of the high school with open building space. Can no one figure out how to work together to take advantage of that instead of spending millions to build and maintain more facilities at the high school?” We heard these comments so often from so many different areas (business owners, farmers, everyday workers, former and even current BHS students, etc.) that it seems impossible that they wouldn’t have been expressed to supporters of the bond as well had those people been asked and not felt threatened to say what they really thought. Perhaps it was missed, but the feeling, accurate or not, is that the opinion of the voters was not valued, or it was openly ignored by those making the decision to put this bond forth.

8. Concerns of the turf field.

Many concerns were expressed in regard to the negative environmental impact and cost of upkeep/replacement. Research studies were also shared with us that turf fields lead to higher numbers of athlete injury. It was pretty clear from an early stage once public meetings started that there simply was not support for this proposal from any significant portion of the public, yet this was promoted heavily as a “need” in the bond campaign. This again demonstrates a wide gap in the assessment of “needs” “wants” or “do without completely” between those who structured and promoted the bond and the public that would be voting and paying for it.

9. Cost of AC in gym adding to expenses for total HVAC, utilities and maintenance/upkeep on a budget already portrayed as very tight were also common concerns.

10. Regarding tennis court issues, while not a commonly heard point, a suggestion we feel was worth mentioning was brought to us regarding joining forces with the city to utilize the newly refinished Chataqua Park tennis courts for meets and/practice. (Combining resources until other solutions can be reached or even possibly permanent use for future.) The same taxpayers foot the cost for all these items, so duplicating the cost of establishing and maintaining them all doesn’t seem to be prudent use of public funds.

11. Many expressed a desire to be able to financially contribute voluntarily to particular projects they support as opposed to being taxed at such a high rate, and some threatened to pull voluntary financial support for the future if the proposed bond had been passed. Perhaps getting a gauge on this in community surveys as well would be useful in moving forward to maximize support for the school in a variety of ways. Having ways for voluntary contributions also allows interested alumni or family to contribute.

12. A concern we all heard over and over, was in regard to the behavior, both online and in person, by individuals directly and closely involved with the bond or the school.

This included false narratives (insinuated or stated) and disrespectful or intimidating behavior that was on display for the public (including those outside our community) to see. The public would reach out to us continually and were appalled by this. While it is of course fully understood one cannot control everyone and their actions, it was a common consensus expressed that everyone involved should be most prudent with narratives, information, respectful behavior and hold each other accountable. It projected unprofessionalism and was viewed as distasteful by the public. It damages relations and creates division among the community. Efforts before and after the election to paint anyone that raised questions or concerns with the bond or suggested there was an option to vote "No" on the bond proposal as being "anti-public school," "uncaring and anti-student," "dividing the community" and insisting that such activity could only be the work of big money outsiders operating directly or profiting from their agenda to destroy any bond, anywhere. This was patently false but continued to be repeated by leaders supporting the bond effort. The simple truth is no money was taken from or given to any outside actors, nor was there any attempt whatsoever by the taxpayers group to do any harm to any Facebook site, website or any other method of communicating publicly or privately. Expenditures at our end were minimal in comparison to what was spent in the effort to get the bond passed. All materials were designed and created by talented and passionate local citizens in our community.

Beloit is a small, tight-knit community and as proven time and time again when this community comes together, we work better together than apart. It is essential for our community to remain as such.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Joe File** <joefile@usd273.org>

Date: Mon, May 13, 2024 at 4:34 PM

Subject: Re: Feedback

To: Valerie Strathman <valeriestrathman@icloud.com>, Jeff Travis <jtravis@usd273.org>

Hi Valerie,

Thank you for the information. I appreciate the spirit of trying to work together to find a solution on these critical issues. There are many good points contained within your letter, many of which Jeff and I have already discussed as we have heard some of the same feedback, as well as some additional ones that certainly warrant further consideration on our end. However, I have to admit I'm a little disappointed in the lack of data and statistics. When we discussed you providing information, I was under the impression from our discussion you would be providing a summary of actual comments with numbers of individuals who made each comment. I was under the impression this would be more spreadsheet or database style. I thought we had agreed the individual names of people were not important and you would withhold those, but the numbers of individuals providing each comment was important as we're never going to be able to satisfy everyone, we simply have to figure out what the majority of voters will support.

Thank you for the feedback as we will take it into consideration. However, this unfortunately reads more like a letter from the Taxpayers Group rather than a summary of all community comments you received. I'm not saying your opinions aren't important, we value every voter's opinion, but we value them equally. There is no way for us to distinguish whether a particular comment is representative of 10 or 20 people, 100 or 200 people, or 400 people. We will never satisfy everyone and it would be nonproductive to try. However, in the end I personally would like to see us do something that has 2/3 or greater community support. If you have actual information on the number of people making each comment that would be helpful. Clearly, a majority of our voters did not support the bond as it was structured and we need to make changes. Many of your comments are very mainstream, and clearly need to be addressed to move forward. However, there are some that I believe are way outside the mainstream in the community. We are looking at options to do some independent polling that doesn't involve anyone from the board, district administrative staff, or the foundation for future generations. This will take all of our opinions out of it and put it into the hands of independent polling, to attempt to eliminate bias.

Finally, I feel I have to address a couple of points in your group's letter since your group felt the need to put it in the letter, even though our entire discussion was about sharing data.

1. We did try to involve people in this bond process throughout the entire community. People in your own group said they heard something on a bond more than a year before we made the decision to run a campaign, so it clearly was no secret. If you look at the names of the individuals in the original proposed steering committee, one of them is a St. John's teacher, and one of them is one of your small taxpayer group. Both declined to

participate with us, and of course the one in your group was instrumental within your group to fundraise and campaign against the bond. The truth is, I personally reached out to more than 30 people in the ag community prior voting to run a bond, and talked with several St. John's families. I know other board members had discussions as well. This wasn't done in a vacuum. However, I'll admit we didn't talk to enough people and missed the mark. After five community meetings (four from the foundation and one on your end), I think we have a much better feel for things. Additional independent polling and recommendations should help even more if we can move forward with that.

2. I had hoped we wouldn't need to discuss this again, but unfortunately I need to respond. While I would agree that some of the rhetoric was inappropriate during the election on all sides, I take exception to the fact that once again your group puts that all on the board, administration and foundation for future generations without taking any personal responsibility. The personal attacks on us and our families were extensive, and frankly some of that damage will not ever be repaired, it will be generational. I find it disheartening that in a discussion about how we can work together to find solutions, your group put this in a letter to me knowing it would not be productive and then disguising it as public comments. I'm certain there are those in the public that were disgusted with the back and forth. I'm certain there are those that felt I personally wasn't transparent and I would acknowledge in hindsight we should have included the build-up of the bond costs at the beginning (although I will point out everything I ever said with respect to costs was factually true). However, it is very disingenuous to put that all on one side and take no personal responsibility. Your group knew the bond interest rate would have been near 4%, yet you campaigned against it using a 5.2% until the end making people believe it would cost millions more than it actually would have. Even in your public forum where your group knew the lack of context of certain data you were putting up, you chose to put it up to intentionally make people believe something other than a factual unbiased understanding. That's just two examples of many things your group intentionally put out there without context to create confusion and mistrust. It would do me no good to go through all of the examples of things up on your fb page, or the comments that ensued from those. In the end, I'll give credit that your group was successful in creating confusion and mistrust and successfully directing that at the board and foundation for future generations. I will also say that even without the confusion and mistrust this created, this particular bond wasn't right for our community as a whole and would have likely failed anyway, although it could have failed without the anger and mistrust. I will be working toward moving forward on next steps and understanding community desires while addressing the District's most critical needs. The fact remains that a bond is the only funding mechanism available to the District, and so it's very likely we'll be headed that direction again. Assuming your group wants to be part of the solution, I think there will be opportunities for you to contribute and I'll be in touch with you as they present themselves. However, I'm done discussing who did what on the last bond with your group, especially without reflection and acknowledgement of your group on your own contributions to the extreme divisions that have been created, and likely never repaired in many cases.

On Mon, May 13, 2024 at 2:45 PM Valerie Strathman <valeriestrathman@icloud.com> wrote:

Good Afternoon!

Via our previous conversation, please see the attached document which has the feedback you requested from our group. I want to preface this with how I fully realize some of the things included may be hard to read as I acknowledge all the time and hard work that went into this bond by so many. To be extremely honest, this is not easy for me to compile this and send you in light of that. I just ask that an open mind is kept, as the majority of the concerns we heard are coming from the 2/3 portion of the voting population that opposed the bond (meaning some of these same concerns came from those that supported the bond as well, as is noted in the document). They are going to be understandably critical. My hope is this does not create any division or hard feelings, as that is absolutely not the objective on our end in complying with your request to send this. We want to give honest, respectful, feedback in the hopes that this will be fruitful for our school and community.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out. Have a great week!

Valerie Strathman