



**Referendum Advisory Committee
March 22, 2022
Videoconference**

The Referendum Advisory Committee for Monroe County Community School Corporation (MCCSC), conducted the second in a series of four meetings on March 22, 2022, via Zoom. Composed of community leaders invited by MCCSC, the committee - over the course of its four sessions - is learning about and offering feedback on the possibility of the school board placing an operating referendum on the November 8, 2022 General Election ballot as the current voter approved operating levy expires this year. (Notes on the initial meeting may be found [here](#)).

Superintendent Dr. Jeff Hauswald welcomed guests. MCCSC Board member Cathy Fuentes-Rohwer explained her referendum support, noting that before being elected to the Board she volunteered on behalf of the district's successful 2010 referendum. That vote was conducted after 2009 state legislation reducing assistance to public schools. Fuentes-Rohwer cited personal experience, noting that the district has offered varying pathways for her own children's varying interests and provides a wide range of support for students with divergent and special needs.

Adam Terwilliger, Assistant Director of Business Operations, outlined community benefits to a strong school district, including academic opportunities, increased property values, attract and retain businesses, stable employment, lower incarceration and mortality rates. He noted that while MCCSC has increased starting teacher salaries and hourly rate for classified staff in the past decade, it has not increased its annual referendum fund levy, which has remained constant at \$7.3 million per year since 2011.

John Kenny, MCCSC Director of Business Operations, explained the corrosive effect of inflation, even with relatively low inflation rates until recent months. He noted that each \$1 received in 2011 currently has a buying power of 75 cents. He said total dollars lost to the school district because of inflation has topped \$10 million, cumulatively, since 2011, in basic state tuition support, and another \$9 million in operating levy value since MCCSC began levying \$7.3 annually in 2011.

Kenny explained the formula by which tax rates are calculated: the referendum tax rate equals the district's overall levy multiplied by 100 and divided by the county's total equalized assessment, or AV. Because the county's AV is consistently growing and likely will continue to grow, the referendum rate for taxpayers typically declines over time. The rate paid by property owners for school operating levy taxes was \$0.14 per \$100 of property value in 2011, and declined to \$0.09 in 2022. The state average of the 141 Indiana school districts with operating levies is \$0.28. The MCCSC has the eighth lowest total tax rate amongst the nearly 300 school districts in the state, at \$0.63 per \$100 of property value, less than half of a number of districts of similar size.

Kenny and Terwilliger noted that state tuition assistance is linked to enrollment, which - in MCCSC - has been steady over time except for a decline of about 500 students with the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Kenny noted that while MCCSC currently maintains adequate cash balances in all funds, these balances would undergo a steep decline beginning in 2023 in the event of a failed referendum in 2022.

Kenny and Terwilliger summarized by noting that the four primary reasons MCCSC is considering an operating referendum on the November 2022 ballot are:

- To protect against inadequate state funding
- To protect key programs against funding loss due to any enrollment decline
- To keep pace on funding with increasing property values across Monroe County
- To continue student services, increase programming and provide competitive wages

Committee members asked questions to be addressed in future meetings, including:

- Is MCCSC asking for sufficient funding to meet student needs?
- With the city of Bloomington also asking for new revenue, how will the district coordinate with the city on explaining the needs of each?

RAC members in attendance were: Ross Grimes, April Hennessey, Cathy Fuentes-Rowher, John Kenny, Adam Terwilliger, Markay Winston, Glen Hopkins, Paul Farmer, Chris Finley, Jenny Robinson, Eric Spoonmore, Jen Pearl, Ron Remak, Bruce Rose, Lisa Schubert Nowling, Jennifer Crossley, Tina Peterson, Julie Warren, Jon Barada, Mary Catherine Carmichael, Beth Leney, Vanessa McClary, Jeff Hauswald, Karen Butcher, Kelby Turmail.