

WALWORTH COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
PUBLIC BUDGET HEARING
OCTOBER 26, 2006

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Chairperson Lohrmann at the Walworth County Government Center, 100 W. Walworth St., Elkhorn, Wisconsin. Roll call was read with all Supervisors present except Supervisor Arnold. A quorum was established.

The invocation was delivered by County Board Supervisor Allen Morrison, District # 19.

Approval of the Agenda

On motion by Supervisor Muzatko, seconded by Supervisor Polyock, the agenda was approved as presented.

Comment Period by Members of the Public

There were none at this time.

Motion to Convene as “Committee of the Whole”

On motion by Supervisor Grant, seconded by Supervisor Kuhnke, the Board convened as a “Committee of the Whole.” Chairperson Lohrmann turned the meeting over to Supervisor Russell, Chair of the Finance Committee, to conduct the Public Budget Hearing.

Finance Chair Russell welcomed visitors and explained that the Supervisors were there tonight to listen. She said that the Supervisors would address the budget at the November 13, 2006 County Board meeting. Russell asked that the citizens be respectful and not get personal about their comments and address the comments to the 2007 budget. Russell asked David Bretl, County Administrator, to present budget highlights. Russell said that she wanted to remind everyone that the County Board voted and asked David Bretl to present a budget at this level; and, at this point this is the Board’s budget, although it can be amended.

Bretl said traditionally we have offered a brief overview about what is contained in the 2007 budget and the purpose of this meeting is to receive input from the public. This budget is not set in stone and the way the process is set up is to allow the public to have input and Supervisors can contemplate whether or not they want to make amendments before the budget is finally adopted on November 13, 2006. Bretl said that the 2007 budget preparation began in May and at that time he asked the County Board to establish guidelines to follow when preparing the 2007 budget. Two proposals were discussed by the Board: one with a budget limiting a levy increase to 9% which failed by a vote of 10 to 14; and the second proposal recommended an increase to 10 % or less, which passed 17 to 7. The budget guidance was based on our projections that a budget increase of approximately 10% would yield a status quo budget that is one that would not cut

programs or positions and would maintain our commitment to the CDEB program. The increase was a 9.8% increase in the levy and was presented to the Finance Committee on September 7. After that Supervisors had a chance to submit appeals. The appeals resulted in a reduction to 9.55%. After that the Committee forwarded the proposed budget for publication and for the Public Hearing tonight. Bretl reviewed reasons why the budget has increased over the past four years and revisited some of the tough decisions the Board has made in recent years. 1. Bretl said that this is not the final budget and any of the 25 Supervisors can propose amendments to add or delete programs. He said that the purpose of this public hearing is to hear your views on this matter before modifying or approving this budget on November 13. Bretl said that that County Board meeting is also open to the public and will begin at 6:00 p.m.

County Administrator Bretl turned the meeting over to Nicki Andersen, Deputy Administrator-Finance, Tracy Schulze, Comptroller, and Stacie Johnson, Budget Analyst. Andersen turned the Power Point presentation directly over to Stacie Johnson.

Johnson began the presentation by explaining that the Budget is a legal document, ensures fiscal control, and is a planning tool. Johnson said that a five-year CIP Plan is also developed at the same time and that CIP authorizes the budget for the first year only.

Johnson said that tonight we are talking about the tax bill but only the portion of the tax bill that is the County portion, which is approximately 24% of the tax bill. She explained that there are six parts to the property tax bill and they are: 1) State of Wisconsin, 2) city, town or village, 3) Gateway Technical College, 4) school districts(s), 5) special taxing districts, and 6) County of Walworth.

Johnson explained the parts of the levy and they are: library levy, debt service levy, CDEB Levy, and other operating. The CDEB levy is also isolated, which is new this year. The total levy is \$53,900,002 for an average mill rate of 4.235302. Last year our average mill rate was 4.39 so the mill rate has actually gone down a little over 16 cents this year.

Johnson explained how to calculate the County property tax rate. There are three things needed to calculate the property tax rate: equalized value, tax levy, and a mill rate.

Wisconsin State Statute 59.605 imposes an operating levy rate limit on counties. The operating mill rate cap may not exceed the operating tax levy rate in 1992. The operating mill rate would include the CDEB but excludes library and debt service. We are under this cap by \$1.16 this year. There is also a 2005 Tax Levy Cap, which was established by Act 25 and we are under this cap by approximately \$97,000. Another cap is a self-imposed levy cap, which the Finance Committee established. This year we are over that cap by 4.87%.

Johnson explained 2007 preliminary revenues and expenditures. She also explained the changes between 2006 and 2007 expenditures and revenues and also explained how to calculate the tax on property.

Johnson said that budget books are available in the Finance Department and County Clerk's Department. She thanked the citizens for coming out this evening.

Public Comments and Questions

Barbara McComb, W9230 State Highway 59. Ms. McComb said that special needs children are entitled to quality education and it is a burden borne by the taxpayer. Lakeland School is a tax burden but whether it is on the County taxes or school districts is the difference. Ms. McComb compared the concept between shopping at two different grocery stores. She said the question is where you can get the most for your money. She said that it has been shown that running the school through the County is less costly than with school district taxes. She said she continues to support Lakeland School, a new facility, and continues to support this Board's attempts to make the best use of our tax dollars.

Michael Quernemoen, N6256 Sugar Creek Prairie Road. Mr. Quernemoen said he doesn't think the calculations are correct regarding the tax increase. He said that if it is necessary to offer services he thinks it can be done for less. Mr. Quernemoen said that the taxes in this State are too high. He also said that he thinks the levy should be increased by trying to attract tax-paying businesses.

Frank Taylor, N8678 Tamarack Road, Whitewater. Mr. Taylor said that common sense tells us that it is cheaper to educate children in special education in one spot. He said that he recently toured Lakeland School and he said we cannot continue with this school as it is in its state of disrepair. Mr. Taylor said that leaves us three alternatives: stay in the same school, remodel the school, or build a new school. Mr. Taylor said that you can judge a society by how you treat your weakest and he thinks we have been neglecting our weakest and it is our obligation to make it right.

Mike Waedekin, N8067 Kadad Lane, East Troy. Mr. Waedekin said that he too thinks the school needs to be replaced but he would rather have the local school districts handle it. He said he wants this to go to the voters so they can have a chance to decide. He asked why the County did not replace the school first rather than the nursing home. Mr. Waedekin said that he wants the debt paid down first before building more buildings.

Betty Felten, W6827 Hazel Ridge Road, Delavan. Ms. Felten said that she was here to say I told you so. She said the Supervisors are here to represent the citizens of this County and that they should listen to the less fortunate. The Board has been continuing to live above their means. She asked that the Board not make the same mistake with the school that we did with the nursing home. Ms. Felten said that education belongs with the educators.

Gail Taylor, 832 Hazel Ridge Road. Mr. Taylor said that this meeting is not about the school. He said this meeting is about all the remodeling that has been going on in other buildings. Mr. Taylor said he thinks that now the children are suffering because of the choices that should have been made years ago.

Jennifer Karr, N7966 West Shore Drive, Elkhorn. Ms. Karr said that if anything can be done to keep the taxes down she would appreciate it and she agrees with all the other comments that have been made tonight.

Frank McClellan, N3753 Old 89 Rd., Darien. Mr. McClellan said he was here representing the United Church of Christ in Delavan to address an Emergency Homeless Shelter. He said there is a need to address a plan for these homeless people. He said that these people have been neglected and is asking the County to plan for a permanent solution to the homeless situation. Mr. McClellan presented a package of signed letters from the members of his church addressing the homeless issue.

Emmily Taylor, 832 Hazel Ridge Road. Ms. Taylor said she was here to voice her distress about the proposed tax increase. She said that the Supervisors are here to pick the most important things to pay for and make it a matter of priority to pick the best ones. She said that the numbers are really high compared to the counties around us. She thinks that the taxes are too high in Wisconsin and that the County needs to pare down the increase.

Connie York, 208 W. Page, Elkhorn. Ms. York said that she was a graduate of Lakeland School. She said she made many friends and learned how to trust people. She said she also learned how to use a sewing machine and cook her food. She said she also attended other classes such as History, Spelling, Math, English, and Driver's Ed. She said she also helps others accept their disabilities. Ms. York said Lakeland School was a special place for her and she wants the school to continue for those who need the help.

George Howland, W5388 Mandla Trail. Mr. Howland said it is very disturbing that this Board has asked Mr. Bretl for a 10% tax increase. He made comparisons between Walworth County, Milwaukee County and Waukesha County. Mr. Howland said that he has to live within his means and he would like the County Board to do the same for the County expenses.

Kathleen Walter, Sharon. Ms. Walter said her sons have gone to Lakeland School since they were 8 months old. She said she supports Lakeland School whenever she can, she said that the old school is in very bad shape, and she hopes we can get a new school.

Paul E. Kremer, 429 W. Court Street, Elkhorn. Mr. Kremer said that he has lived across the street from Lakeland School for 25 years and has become acquainted with many of the students and they need the Board's help. He said that he retired a few years ago and he does volunteer work with VIP Services, which employs the disabled. He said that Walworth County does the best job of taking care of the disabled. He agrees that we need a new school and he said he is also glad that the disabled have VIP Services. Both Lakeland School and VIP Services teach independent living. He said that Lakeland School and VIP Services work hand in hand to give these students the very best chance they have to live their lives productively and with dignity. He said this should not be a

hard decision for this Board. Mr. Kremer said he does not think we should take steps backwards and we should give these children what they deserve.

Kevin Bong, N7231 Bowers Road. Mr. Bong said that it is our responsibility to educate students with special needs in the least restrictive environment. This is an expensive thing to do and he thinks taxpayers have been getting a bargain in this County because of the consolidation of resources of Lakeland School. He felt these students need a new school. He said that the taxes in this County will go up, but they will go up even more if the schools districts take over the responsibility. Mr. Bong thanked the Board for their support of Lakeland School.

Yasmin Thaha, 928 W. Geneva Street, Elkhorn. Ms. Thaha thanked the Board for allowing her to speak, for educating her special needs child, and also educating her other child in the public school system. Walworth County is known for helping those in need and she thinks that taxpayers are getting good services, good education, and safety, which are all very important.

David Dessant, 2930 Main Street., East Troy. Mr. Dessant asked if the Board thought about what this increase will do to people with fixed income taxpayers out of their homes? He said the taxpayers are the Supervisors' bosses. Mr. Dessant said that he wants the tax increase to go to a referendum.

David DeHaan, 305 W. Oak Lane, Elkhorn. Mr. DeHaan said that he is a local business owner and employer in Elkhorn. Mr. DeHaan said he pays plenty of taxes now and does not want to pay more. He said it is very hard for a small business owner.

Dorothy J. Kaufmann, W7005 Savannah Lane, Delavan. Ms. Kaufmann said she was here to discuss special education in Walworth County. She said school boards adopted resolutions to allow that special education be transferred to the school districts. The special education school is in a state of disrepair. Ms. Kaufmann said that many consultants have found that the needs of these children are being met for the least cost with one building. She said that building Lakeland School is critical and it needs to begin immediately.

Jim Thometz, N2647 Forest Drive, Elkhorn. Mr. Thometz said that he agrees with everyone tonight that it is not about the school. He said that a 9.55% tax increase is not responsible. He said we have to stop spending money we do not have. Mr. Thometz said that a special school is needed but nursing homes should be left to the private sector. He said that health insurance should be cut and taxes should not always increase.

Patricia Simons, 1698 Brandi Street, Lyons. Ms. Simons said she is here tonight because she is disappointed in the actions of some of the elected members of this Board. She said that needs should be met and wants should be taken care of only after that. She doesn't think that employees should be given raises if they do not deserve one. Ms. Simons said that increases in taxes need to be justified and expenses must be decreased if expenses are increased. She said that the information should be put before the taxpayers and voted on.

Pete Stefan, W1378 Bloomfield Road. Mr. Stefan said we all have to work within our budgets. He said that property values are going up and also the taxes. He said he agrees that we have to take care of those who cannot take care of themselves but there must be a balance between responsibilities and wants. He said he agrees with those that want to reduce the size of the Board and he also thinks that medical benefits are too high. Mr. Stefan said everything is going up now and there is no reason to raise the taxes 10%. He said that a 10% tax increase should require a referendum.

Ron Fero, W7683 Shereda Road, Whitewater. Mr. Fero said he is also Chairman of the Town of Whitewater Board. He said that the tax bill is driven by your assessment, not the mill rate, and if your assessment goes up then your taxes will go up. Mr. Fero said that he is not here tonight because he is for or against Lakeland School but he thinks the tax increase should have gone to the taxpayers in the form of a referendum.

Amanda C. Imase-Farka, N3116 Tamarack Road, Lake Geneva. She said that this increase would tax us out of our home. She thinks the Board should rethink their 10% increase and take into consideration everyone that this will be affecting.

Brother Dustin Jenks, 353 Tyrrell Court #319, Delavan. Mr. Jenks said that he was once one of the homeless and is now a taxpayer in this County. He said there is a need to care for the homeless in this County and he is in favor of an Emergency Homeless Shelter to be included in the 2007 budget. Helping these people would help them become taxpayers. Mr. Jenks asked that the Supervisors please remember that they are also taxpayers in this County.

Dr. Ann Callison, 452 Park Lane, Williams Bay. Dr. Callison said she is a wife and mother and works at the Mercy Clinic at the corner of Hwy 50 and 67. She said she works with children with physical and emotional needs. She said she is here to thank the Board for their support of children in this community and also the support of Lakeland School. Dr. Callison said she feels strongly about supporting Lakeland School and listed reasons. Lakeland School may not be for every student but for some young people it is the best. Dr. Callison thanked the Board for their support of Lakeland School and for supporting young people in our community.

Jean Ohl, 217 So. Main Street Ms. Ohl spoke about the need for volunteers and for housing for homeless. She said she volunteers at Christ Episcopal Church in Delavan, which helps homeless men. She said that most of them have jobs but cannot afford housing. There is a tremendous need to help the homeless and she is asking the Board to provide for the homeless. Ms. Ohl submitted a packet of letters signed by the members of Christ Episcopal Church of Delavan asking the Board to consider helping the homeless.

Deb Weber, 125 S. Main Street, Delavan. Ms. Weber said she is also delivering letters from Delavan United Methodist Church in support of addressing the issue of

homelessness in Walworth County. Ms. Weber asked the County Board to look into the homeless situation.

Steve Lehmkuhl, 210 Van Buren Street, presented a Public Comment Card but was not present to speak at this time.

Bob Berend, 2451 Partridge Woods Ct., Lyons Township. Mr. Berend said that he spoke with a representative from Lakeland School and he has listened to the speakers tonight in support of Lakeland School. He said that there is a need for special education but he is not convinced that the County should be paying for it. He said that other school systems across the State seem to be serving this needy population without a special school. Mr. Berend said he is not for or against Lakeland School but is against the 10% increase in taxes. He suggested that the Board sell the nursing home to an operator that has a lower cost operation to get the investment back to provide some funding for the school. Mr. Berend said the Board should rethink this tax increase and their priorities.

Jane Doyle, 128 Hidden Trail, presented a Public Comment Card but was not present to speak at this time.

Joyce Bezier, 1608 Meadow Lane, Elkhorn. Ms. Bezier said that she is very angry and she said the Board is extremely irresponsible. She doesn't think anyone is against disabled students and everyone wants to help them but this shouldn't be an emotional decision. Ms. Bezier said that you should let the whole County decide by referendum and then you would know this is our number one priority. If we do decide to help the disabled then we have to cut the budget in other places. She said she doesn't know where the concept came from that health insurance should be provided by the taxpayers.

Jim Simons, N6292 Paradise Drive. Mr. Simons said he is a small business owner and he is here to talk about why this is a bad budget. He said he thinks that the Supervisors should go back to \$450.00 a month and limit annual expenses to \$1000 each. He does not think the County should pay for health insurance as he does not pay for health insurance for his employees. He wants to know where all the money goes for the Sheriff Department. He said his constituents want to know why there was not a referendum for the school. He asked why the County's nursing home could not run without going in the red like other counties. He said people in this community want to reduce the size of the Board and he gave the reasons why. He said this Board has to make some hard decisions. Mr. Simons said you need to keep important projects but you also need to make deep cuts in what remains.

Bret Strong, N9159 Maple Street, East Troy. Mr. Strong said he represents Citizens for Responsible Government-Walworth County. He said that this meeting is not about Lakeland School but is about the spending practices of the County for the past five to six years. Mr. Strong said that we have no cost controls with Lakeland School and he is worried about the number of students the new school will bring into Walworth County. He said that the nursing home was built to reduce taxes but it has gone back up to where it was. Mr. Strong said he thinks health insurance should not be paid for employees of

the County. He also said that the sales tax amount in the budget is a big number and asked where that money is going. Mr. Strong said he wants to know why our Sheriff's department is so much larger than surrounding counties. He said his whole goal is to push the Supervisors out of office and he thinks the school should have gone to referendum. Mr. Strong also said, before we take on new responsibilities we need to pay down our debt. He said he would like the TABOR bill to come back on the table before the State.

Supervisor Russell asked if there was anyone else who wanted to speak. Hearing none, she turned the meeting over to Chair Lohrmann.

On motion by Supervisor Schaefer, seconded by Supervisor Grant, the Committee of the Whole was dissolved, the Public Budget Hearing was closed, and the Committee returned to a Board.

Adjournment

On motion by Supervisor Morrison, seconded by Supervisor Grant, the meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Kimberly S. Bushey
County Clerk

STATE OF WISCONSIN)

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COUNTY OF WALWORTH)

I, Kimberly S. Bushey, County Clerk in and for the County aforesaid do hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of the proceedings of the County Board of Supervisors for the October 26, 2006 Public Budget Hearing.

(These minutes are not final until approved by the County Board at the next regularly scheduled County Board meeting.)