

A crowd of more than 100 people packed the Borden Town Hall on Wednesday, September 6 to ask questions and voice concerns over the \$95 million West Clark Community School referendum which will appear on the November 7 ballot.

West Clark Superintendent Chad Schenck and Board Members Crystal Gunther and Brian Hurst were also in attendance. The meeting's purpose was to dispel or clarify rumors and misinformation that have made their way into the public, according to Schenck.

". . . I don't want this to become a tumultuous situation," Schenck said. "I want to make sure that you have your voices heard. This meeting is for information, but it's OK if it gets emotional. If you don't feel comfortable asking here in this setting, I am available for you to get with me in a more private setting to ask. My door is always open."

The first rumor Schenck addressed was the tax impact. He said because of the way the Indiana Statute requires the referendum question be written on the ballot, as it reads it does appear there will be an impact of \$.7314 per \$100 of net assessed value.

Schenck said that's not the case.

In fact, he said the impact for local taxpayers won't be more than \$.2424 per \$100 of net assessed value. He said that's due to current debt falling off over the course of the new bond issuance should the referendum pass.

"As some of the debt falls off, the overall impact changes," Schenck said.

He compared what will happen with the school corporation's budget to that of a family budget when paying off a car. He said when a family pays off a car, they can either save the extra money, or they can put the money toward the mortgage payment.

"We are applying the extra money to our mortgage," Schenck said. "As (current) debt falls off, for our two major current bond issuances, we take our current yearly payment for those bond

issuances and we don't put it into anything else but the \$95 million."

Schenck said that will allow the Debt Service impact to remain at \$.24.

Even though the impact is minimal, Schenck sympathized with any impact at all. He said if the taxpayers vote yes for referendum, the impact won't start until 2020.

"That allows some time for people to prepare, because it is a tax increase and I know it will be hard on some families," he said.

Another topic to hit the floor quickly was what some consider extravagant spending of the \$95 million, including a possible \$750,000 field turf installed at Silver Creek for the football team.

Schenck didn't dance around the possibility of that being included in the project.

"The turf is in the discussion, and it needs to be, I won't apologize for that," Schenck said. "We have 3,000 students on that campus using one football field. It needs to be an alternate project perhaps, but it needs to be a major discussion piece. If it gets approved, I won't apologize for that."

Another concern by citizens at the meeting was to make sure Henryville and Borden aren't excluded should the referendum pass.

"The board has decided on \$95 million," Schenck said. "The bulk of that money is going to be spent at Silver Creek High School. They are not going to come off of that. I am not going to recommend that."

Schenck said but there is an allotted amount for all three campuses and his goal and the goal of the board is to highlight each school as the best school in the area as the school of their size.

“There is a resolution the board is going to pass on September 14 that says we are committed to three campuses,” Schenck said. “We have said that openly and now we are going to take that up for resolution openly and vote on it.

“We need to showcase all three campuses. Our board president Joe Basham says what helps one, helps all and we are spending money from this referendum at all three campuses.”

Should the referendum fail, Schenck said a likely “plan B” for the board would likely move forward using General Obligations Bonds. Which would allow them to spend up to \$5 million on each building by board vote.

The board recently approved \$5.7 in those General Obligations Bonds on all three campuses.

Schenck said should the board decide to spend the \$5 million at all nine buildings in 2018 in the West Clark system, that would be a total of a \$45 impact.

He said legislators are pushing to increase that number even higher for 2019 and some have said it could be as high as \$7 million per building.

Schneck’s mention of spending money with board approval caused one citizen to ask how she can be assured that the board wouldn’t spend that money in the future even if the referendum passes.

Schenck said that’s where trust has to come in.

“There is no assurance,” he said. “I can tell you as leader of this district it won’t be a recommendation of mine.

“. . . If that were to happen all credibility is shot and quite honestly I don't think I'd be around, because I think I'd have a bulls-eye on my back and I'd have to leave in the middle of the night. I am telling you right here and now that has not been a board discussion.”

Gunther said as a taxpayer in the community she doesn't want to pay more taxes than she has to and has no plans to add more than necessary to the school corporation's debt.

She also talked about spending time as a student at Borden and having family who lives in the Borden district and her personal commitment to seeing all three schools do well and thrive within the West Clark school corporation.

The meeting ended on a lighter note and several in attendance thanked Schenck for taking the time to attend and being more transparent than they felt took place in 2016.

A number of informational meetings are planned in the coming weeks for anyone who would like more information.

Borden Community

Input Session #1

Tuesday, September 12, 2017

6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Borden High School Group Presentation Room

Henryville Community

Input Session #1

Thursday, September 14, 2017

6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Henryville High School Group Presentation Room

Silver Creek Community

Input Session #1

Tuesday, September 19, 2017

6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Silver Creek Middle School Group Presentation Room

Henryville Community

Input Session #2

Tuesday, October 17, 2017

6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Henryville High School Group Presentation Room

Borden Community

Input Session #2

Wednesday, October 18, 2017

6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Borden High School Group Presentation Room

Silver Creek Community

Input Session #2

Tuesday, October 24, 2017

6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Silver Creek Middle School Group Presentation Room