

Tax Increases, Will it Ever End?

By Brian K Verheyden, BCTA Board Member

Is there no end to the spending? Our local schools continue finding ways to spend excessive amounts of our tax dollars.

In order to get a ~~good wish list~~ facilities plan, the Green Bay Area Public School District Board hired Plunkett Raysich Architects (PRA) to create a facilities master plan. They inventoried the 42 schools for size, student capacity and improvements needed. Listening sessions were hosted throughout the community along with literature and questionnaires being mailed. That plan was presented to the school board on December 19, 2016.

Issues brought up so far include:

- Discrepancies in the enrollment numbers used. There are several different sets numbers for each school; there is maximum student capacity, target capacity, and SAGE capacity, then actual and projected enrollment.

- Boundaries of the schools can also be adjusted moving students to adjacent schools that are currently under capacity.
- Projected costs are over \$300/SqFt
- Bonding for furniture, computers, technology, items with a life span of 4-6 years or less
- There is also a strong effort to bring the 4K & 5K into the elementary schools. Is this best learning environment for all students or disruptive

At the Jan 3rd meeting the School Board decided that a fifth high school should not be pursued at this time. That does however leave **\$180 Million** in other projects still out there. There are meetings scheduled for Jan 9th, 16th, and the 23rd. The deadline for getting a referendum on the ballot is January 24 2017.

Brian

The ten year facilities plan for Green Bay Area Public Schools includes:

Baird Elementary 4K-5	23	Million
Elementary and Middle School Capacity	57.5	Million
New High School	80.4	Million ??
Support Vibrant High Schools	18.6	Million
Flexible Learning Environments	84.5	Million
Projects Total	264	Million

November Meeting Notes

The results of the November 8th election were discussed. In general, the election results were very favorable to taxpayers. Both national and state elections produced majorities of fiscally conservative legislators.

Members commented that they were pleased to see increasing numbers of younger people taking active roles in campaigns.

Brown County Treasurer Paul Zeller reported that progress has been made regarding the requirements for publishing Class 3 legal notices. Certain notices can now be published once and then posted on the County's website, saving thousands of dollars for taxpayers and providing better service.

It was noted that the Brown County Board overrode three of County Executive Strechenbach's county budget vetoes related to wages and benefits for County employees.

Financing road construction and maintenance was discussed. Tom Sladek noted that the City of Green Bay updates its inventory of all City streets every two years, by block.

Rod Goldhahn, Chair of the Nominating Committee for 2017 directors reported that elections will be held at the December BCTA meeting.

Dave Nelson - Secretary

December Meeting Notes

GBSD Enrollment Projections Questioned

Randy Fondow, a retired teacher, said he first became interested after seeing newspaper articles from Green Bay School District sources relating to bursting classrooms and huge enrollment increases over the last 10 years. He had questions about where this enrollment growth was coming from.

The school district distributed a graph showing an 11.8 percent enrollment increase from the 2006-2007 school year through the 2015-2016 school year.

Mr. Fondow discovered that the establishment of 4-year-old kindergarten (4K) in 2008-2009 increased enrollment by more than 1,100 students. When the 4K enrollment is subtracted from the total enrollment history for the last 10 years, the enrollment history shows essentially no growth.

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) website lists the official enrollments for each Wisconsin school district based upon attendance recorded on the third Friday of the school year. The third Friday count is the official number for determining state aid for each district. The official DPI enrollment number for 2015-2016 is 20,953, yet the graph distributed by the school district indicates a value of over 22,000 students. Where are the missing 1,000 students?

The title of the School District graph was changed from "enrollment" to "membership". Membership includes those approximately 1,000 students attending schools outside the Green Bay School District under the State's open enrollment option. It seems unprofessional to use students attending schools in other districts to justify building programs in the Green Bay School District.

The District has recorded 1.5 percent growth in the number of elementary students over the last 10 years, indicating some justification for addressing elementary school needs.

Election of Directors and Officers: The following BCTA Directors were elected for three-year terms:

Jim Frink
Rich Carlstedt
Rich Heidel
Dave Nelson
Richard Parins
Steve Terrien
Craig Fletcher
Tony Theisen

Dave Nelson – Secretary

**Things That
Make Us Wonder.**

The 2016 Presidential Election itself is now history, but the aftershocks are still being dealt with and likely will continue for some time. When the U.S. Constitution was drafted, Article II provided for the Electoral College, based on the two Senators and Number of Representatives from each to vote for a President. This has been based on the popular vote by the citizens of each state represented, While perhaps not a perfect system, and that there only 13 states when it was initiated, it seems to have served quite well.

The candidates in the last race understood this, and their efforts seemed directed and reported in the media more towards electoral votes rather than the overall number of popular votes which could be won.

* * * * *

Oddly, it seems it was largely the number of votes cast for candidate Clinton in some of the larger Democrat controlled cities like New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles which gave her the popular vote majority. Of the 3,141 counties in the 50 states, it was reported that Trump received the most votes in 3,084 of them while Clinton won in only 57. In fact, if the popular vote in just the two most liberal states, New York and California, were to be reversed, Trump would have won by over 3,600,000 popular votes nationally. Draw your own conclusions.

* * * * *

People calling for change because the popular and electoral

votes differed this last election should note that if the Electoral Votes in the country were counted by party across the board, there are considerably more Republicans than Democrats in the Congress and Senate at this time, and the vote would likely be based on party lines corresponding to the states Washington representation.

In other words, as far the last Presidential election went, "No Change."

While the losers have been making every excuse imaginable, including blaming their pollsters and the media for misleading them, and the difficulties involved with picture ID's they seemed to forgot the people who voted were left to sort out and make their own decisions based on the evidence presented them, including character, ability, and where they felt the country is headed.

Unfortunately It seems that in many of the races during past elections from the Presidency down were based on fear and distortion of information which perhaps gave us all a poor opinion of the integrity and capabilities of just about all politicians in general. One common theme we noted was criticizing an opponents record of high taxes, but offering no solutions to paying for all of the services and improvements being offered.

* * * * *

Someone once quipped that "All people are born alike except Democrats and Republicans." This statement has probably never been more true than during the recent contentious Presidential election campaign. Although both

parties have their visions of what is best for the country, at times there are differences calling for compromise which is often a good thing as it gives two sides to work things out.

A complete change of administration which we will be seeing calls for absolute cooperation between the parties involved. Unfortunately adversaries, especially those with a political grudge can hinder rather than cooperate by compromise. Politicians from both sides can and do make things work and cooperate, but they can and do just as easily make things "not work"

Politicians from both sides have good ideas that can be negotiated and compromised for the common good without the "My way or the highway," mentality.

* * * * *

The planet Earth is just a little speck somewhere in the Milky Way Galaxy, and there are a lot of things to be learned from our neighboring planets.

Now scientists with the use of space telescopes estimate there are as many as 200 BILLION other galaxies floating around in space. Considering it sometimes may take a few million light years just for the image to get here makes us wonder if we're really alone.

* * * * *

Despite increased costs for just about every thing, it sounds as though our property tax bills again will be reasonable, and we thank and congratulate our elected officials for their concern.

* * * * *

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

ObamaCare has been sitting in the bull's-eye of the Trump administration, and promises to be one of his first challenges. No one will deny the need for affordable health care for all but there are too many flaws hidden in this plan to be acceptable. or affordable.

Recall that it was passed into law with very little bi-partisan input or discussion. It started with about 1,000 pages and has grown to 10,535 pages with 11.585,000 words with additions and clarifications that no one can understand anyway. It establishes numerous taxes and penalties on business and individuals. creating a number of Federal bureaucracies for enforcement purposes.

Either by design or neglect it appears very little is included to control the cost of services provided and it seems these costs have risen dramatically as a result. Why should providers try to keep their prices down when they know insurance or the government will pay whatever they charge or include on their bill?

On the other hand, is there any mechanism for protecting medical providers from frivolous lawsuits which add to the cost of care to everyone. There are still millions of citizens without medical insurance despite the law. It has caused more problems than it's solved and should well be replaced or rewritten.

The problems created by this monster could be addressed and resolved by a non-partisan committee of medical professionals, insurance executives, business em-

ployers, social workers and economists to help figure how to pay for it without bankrupting the country. Unfortunately, most of these people seem to have been left out of the discussions last time. Leave the politicians and profiteers out this time.

* * * * *

It is always considered an honor when candidates for national office stop in Green Bay on their barnstorming trips around the country. Only problem is they usually occur without much advance notice, cause traffic problems with their motorcades, and require a lot of extra law enforcement overtime for security purposes.

Sponsors of these events don't always agree these expenses are their responsibility, if they can leave local taxpayers paying the bill for their "free" publicity.

* * * * *

If just anyone can file a petition requesting the Mayor of a city be removed from office on the basis of accepting excess campaign contributions, it makes us wonder who keeps track of the donors and contributions to the Presidential and Congressional campaigns.

Millions and millions have been raised and spent, much of it from undisclosed or disguised donors; including foreign sources. We are sure the cost of the 2016 elections will bring the usual calls for public financing from some of the losers but our taxes pay for enough foolishness already.

* * * * *

What started out as simple repairs to the Coburn Park Swimming Pool soon grew to proposals

costing as much as \$7 Million to replace it with an Olympic size lake.

The water-park type pools at Baird and Fisk Parks are well patronized during the summer and serve the purpose intended for the benefit of the city. Nonetheless they still require maintenance and supervision, and are usable only three months of the year. Perhaps the question should be does the city want to pay for an Olympic training pool or just a family/youth oriented facility, or would the two be compatible at an even greater cost? (On Dec.20, the Green Bay City Council approved \$11.2 million in bonding, pool construction, related costs, and interest costs for a new Colburn Park pool.) (On Dec. 28, Mayor Schmitt vetoed the Colburn Park pool.)

* * * * *

United Airlines has announced they are considering to charge passengers for the use of the overhead compartments on their flights. So far use of the restrooms and toilet paper is still free,

* * * * *

Like it or not, referendums in various states, one at a time, have us all trending towards the legalization of marijuana for "recreational:" use. proponents can come up with all sorts of arguments in favor except admitting they are probably already hooked on the stuff. but we realize there are arguments for and against.

The worst argument in favor is that states would profit immensely through taxes, which seems the same as promoting liq-

(Continued on page 5)

(Continued from page 4)

uor and tobacco taxes for the revenue and then complaining about the costs created by fighting all of the expenses caused by their abuses. Medical use could be addressed and regulated on its own merits.

Several states, including Washington D.C. approved legalizing or modifying marijuana sales in the last election. It was about 95% for in the D.C., about the same percentage that voted for Hillary.

In Wisconsin, it is reported the number of drug related traffic arrests is rising. The DOT reports about a quarter of drivers pulled over for impaired driving are on drugs, with 150 drug related traffic deaths so far in 2016.

Problem is the same politicians pushing to liberalizing marijuana laws to make this what they consider a better place to live are likely the same ones who want to take our guns away because they are "dangerous."

* * * * *

The disclosure that there was an overpayment of the .5% Packer Tax reminds us of children visiting Santa Claus with their wish lists. It turns out there are a lot of good uses for the windfall, some of them applying to city budget items and some for additional spending by various groups. The final allo-

cation is yet to be made.

* * * * *

President-elect Trump is submitting himself to a crash course of being leader of the free world, and hopefully is selecting cabinet members and advisers who can help. So far his picks seem to be compatible with him and have outstanding records of accomplishment on their resumes. While running the country peacefully and orderly has been the announced goal of all of our past Presidents, his vision and agenda appear to be considerably the opposite from President Obama's. However, it may take some time to "drain the swamp" as he promised but we should give him a reasonable chance.

* * * * *

"Fake news" coming from Russia and other sources and spread through the internet are the latest excuses for Trump's election as President. It was a highly contested, contentious, campaign and a lot of events and factors figured into the outcome.

It seems that neither candidate was overly popular even within their own party. This election was mostly to maintain power and control of government decisions. A majority of people were not happy with how things were going and simply didn't want four more years of the same which is exactly what Hillary promised. Better to

take a chance with Trump and see if he can "Drain the Swamp,"

* * * * *

The term "Fake News", could probably apply to more than bogus news stories planted clandestinely with the intent to deceive people or alter their opinions.

For example, during the recent election cycle we were all bombarded with commercials sponsored by candidates from both parties making outlandish claims presented as fact about their opponents views, voting records, and what would happen if he/she were elected.

We were subjected to daily polls purported to represent popular opinion and let us know if we were out of line. It turns out that many times the polls were not entirely accurate either.

While the medias mission is to inform and report the facts, often they obviously seem to have their own partisan agenda. While we are fortunate to have freedom of the press, our media also has the freedom to omit, edit, or place articles at their discretion, and in effect, favor one party or candidate over another with free publicity.

While these items may not qualify as "fake news" planted from unknown sources, they can have the same intent and results and are accepted as politics as usual.

* * * * *

Whether the requirement of a photo ID had any effects in the recent elections made any difference in the outcomes is a matter of speculation, and the recount in

(Continued on page 6)

Articles and views appearing in the "TAX TIMES" do not necessarily represent the official position of the Brown County Taxpayers Association. We want to encourage discussion and input on current issues of taxpayer interest and invite your comments or articles suitable for future "TAX TIMEES." Please send them to the BCTA, P.O. Box 684, Green Bay, WI 54305-0684 or email BCTaxTimes@gmail.com

(Continued from page 5)

Wisconsin indicated everything in order. A lot of the fuss seemed to come from college towns and we wonder if any students would try to vote there and in their hometowns.

* * * * *

If you like elections, and didn't hear enough campaigning leading up to November 8, cheer up. A number of local and state races are scheduled for next spring, with primaries on Feb. 21, and elections on April 4.

* * * * *

We all appreciate the quality and dedication of the Green Bay Fire and Police Departments, and realize the need to provide them with the best of facilities and equipment.

While estimates in excess of \$40 Million have been made for a new joint facility for the two departments, this sounds like a lot even by today's standards, but probably not when the city council approves spending \$11.2 Million for a swimming pool. We realize this is still in the planning stage

along with additions to the jail, new schools, library and museum upgrades, a baseball stadium, street repairs and more.

We assume our elected officials are aware of all this and are keeping taxpayers in mind. While hired consultants working on commission keep designing fancy and costly projects, do they factor in possible taxpayer disapproval or even the ability to pay for everything?

* * * * *

Meanwhile, the State of Wisconsin has been warning the need for massive funding for highway building and repair is getting crucial, and the answer of course is to give them more money. Suggestions are the usual, a wheel tax, increase the gas tax and/or license fee. Our gasoline taxes are already higher than many states.

Watching the I-41 project proceed, we wonder if it is still within budget. It will be wonderful when finally finished, but makes us wonder what the final cost will be.

We realize land acquisition is expensive and of highway jobs placed without competitive bids with huge cost overruns. In other words, could the state do a better job to get more with our money before they ask for more?

* * * * *

Wisconsin has a beautiful state park system, and does a good job of preserving some of our natural wonders. Many of us took visiting them as being a resident perk until a few years ago, the DNR has started charging admission fees in addition to camping charges.

While this was no problem to many people, it was annoying to those who simply wanted to drive

through a park on a trip to Door County or elsewhere in the state. The popularity of our parks brings visitors from throughout the Midwest to camp and enjoy our parks which is good.

While admissions and fees have been rising since their inception, the cost of improving and maintenance has also increased. In addition, as a recent budget move, the entire cost of the park system is now dependent on these fees, which is probably good in the respect that users pay the entire bill for the parks. However, plans now are being discussed to increase all park fees, including \$5 to \$10 more for admission which could keep some people away.

* * * * *

Many communities in the country, including some in Wisconsin, are having problems providing an adequate supply of safe water for their residents. Dropping ground water tables, sewage and industrial contamination, and natural ingredients harmful to health are all factors.

Thanks to officials who during recent years were aware of the potential problems we could be having, we have an excellent supply of water which should also meet our future needs. It is constantly monitored for safety, and even though Lake Michigan water contains minute traces of various elements, it has been considered completely safe to drink.

* * * * *

Illegal immigration is a problem that seems to have no acceptable solution. Some claim building walls is ridiculous, and giving

(Continued on page 7)

Meeting Location Change

The BCTA has moved our monthly meetings to **Doug's Take 5 Grill** at the Four Seasons Tennis Club, 3600 Riverside Dr., South end of Allouez. Our new location has no stairs or steps, convenient parking, and a room to better accommodate speakers and conversation. There is a basic menu available, with a sandwich, cup of soup, and beverage for \$9 including tax and tip.

(Continued from page 6)

up and offering amnesty every few years is even stupider as it gives away the citizenship privileges we have all earned and paid for. All countries of the world have strict quotas and procedures for citizenship to become a citizen. So do we but nobody seems to pay any attention or care about the many consequences.

We all pay the price with crime rates, welfare fraud, sabotage, law enforcement, bi-lingual signage and the like. While our government pounds its head against the wall and offers all kinds of excuses, but I would like to point a finger at the Social Security Administration and IRS for starters.

By nature we are a peaceable and compassionate nation. Social Security numbers are issued at birth, providing for retirement benefits based on your income and reported by your employer or financial institution. This retirement benefit is earned and sacred to workers, but we hear of immigrants, sometimes illegal but offered amnesty receiving benefits. We hear of illegal aliens able to obtain Social Security numbers through clandestine sources and able to receive benefits upon application.

By law, when a person is hired for a job, the employer is required to examine their Social Security card and match it with a reliable picture identification. Like going to vote. When the employer files their required annual Federal income tax returns, they are first sent to the Social Security Administration, not the IRS. This is

where the employers payroll expenses are verified, and individual accounts are updated by name and SS account number. Deaths, name or other status changes are supposed to be reported to the agency as they occur, and the agency is to contact the employer with any discrepancies.

If done properly, there is no excuse for an unauthorized card being issued or benefits disbursed. In this computer age it should also be impossible for non-citizens to obtain employment without identification. Just because It's the governments system doesn't mean it's OK to give our retirement money to someone else.
* * * * *

There are several ways to compare individual tax burdens from one state to another. Average income varies along with the level and costs of government services, making it difficult to compare one state with another. Each state uses their own combination ,of income sources such as income, sales, property, excise, fees or whatever else works to keep functioning. Percentage of total individual going to state taxes is a way of comparing each state.

For years Wisconsin languished in the top 10 highest tax per capita states, with most available forms of taxation being utilized to the maximum. Bit by bit, possibly because other states have been raising taxes faster than Wisconsin, it was announced by the Census Bureau that we are now only the 16th highest per capita with 10.6% of income going to state and local taxes.

We certainly wouldn't want to take this disclosure to the Legisla-

ture as a signal that it's OK to start raising taxes, as there are still 34 states operating more prudently. Our biggest problem is that just about all of popular taxes used by states such as sales tax, income taxes, property taxes, gaming taxes, excise taxes on tobacco, liquor and gasoline, are already amongst the highest in the nation and we are running out of things to tax.

As usual, lots of things to wonder about.

"Things That Make Us Wonder," consists of taxpayer related thoughts that occur to us from daily news events. We use reliable, published information and statistics, Some items are unimportant and probably not worth commenting about while others could easily be expanded to full length feature articles worthy of future study and action to protect our interests as taxpayers. We try to cover a wide variety of subjects in limited space and perhaps put a different spin on items from what you read in the papers or see on TV. We acknowledge that some of the views and comments expressed in this column may be contrary to that of some of our readers. However, one of our purposes is to encourage debate, and we realize there are two sides to every question. Comments or suggestions are welcome for inclusion in future "TAX TIMES."
Jim Frink

"A billion here, a billion there, and pretty soon you're talking about real money." Everett Dirksen

The TAX TIMES

Brown County Taxpayers Association
P. O. Box 684
Green Bay, WI 54305-0684

PRSRRT STD
U. S. Postage
PAID
Green Bay, WI
Permit No. 255

Address Service Requested.

Inside This Issue

November Meeting Notes
December Meeting Notes
Things That Make Us Wonder
and more

BCTA Meeting and Events Schedule – MARK YOUR CALENDARS.

Thursday - January 19, 2017. BCTA Monthly Meeting.
12:00 Noon. Doug's Take 5
Guest Speaker—Troy Streckenbach, BC Executive

Thursday - February 16, 2017. BCTA Monthly Meeting.
12:00 Noon. Doug's Take 5
Guest Speaker—Rep. John Macco

BCTA monthly meetings are held the Third Thursday of each month, 12:00 Noon, at Doug's Take 5, 3600 Riverside Drive, Allouez.

Meetings are open to the public. BCTA Members, their guests and other interested parties are cordially invited to attend and participate in our open discussions.

COST: \$9.00, Payable at meeting. Includes lunch, tax & tip.
Call Tom Sladek – 499-7701 for information or to leave message.

Jan - Feb 2017



**SUPPORT THE BCTA
New Members are
Always Welcome.
Visit our website
www.BCTaxpayers.Org
for Details.**