

Should voters authorize \$233 million more for Green Bay Schools?

On April 4th, Green Bay School District voters are being asked to consider two referendum questions. The first asks for authorization to exceed state revenue limit spending by \$16.5 million per year, for the next ten years, for district operations. The second asks for authorization to bond for \$68.25 million for building and facilities improvements. The District further states that these additional expenditures will not result in any increase in the levy mill rate, due to retirement of prior debt. These are significant questions for the taxpayers. Strong, quality schools are vital to a vibrant community. There is a responsibility of the community to properly fund those schools, with the expectation of prudent operation and financial management. School District and Board members met with our group twice to provide more detail and allow for our questions concerning these ballot items.

The BCTA Schools Committee is taking a "Vote No" position against the operational referendum and a neutral position on the building referendum.

Question #1 -

Operation Budget - "Vote No"

We have many concerns about the operational referendum. The District is asking local taxpayers to increase their direct contribution to the district by almost 20%, or a total of \$165 million over the next ten years. A major part of their argument is that the Green Bay District is not getting their "fair share" of education funds compared to the other large districts and the state average. If inequity exists with the state

formula, the path to correct that is with the state legislature, not with individual districts asking to increase local spending to get them to the average. WI Act 10, passed in 2011, provided significant financial flexibility to school districts, with a commensurate reduction in state aid during that year, and it has been increasing each year since that time. According to the DPI website, the Green Bay district will see an increase in State General School Aid of greater than 5% from 2015/16 to 2016/17 school years. The current state budget proposal includes significant increases for education. While that is a proposed state budget, the Green Bay district carries a fund balance of nearly \$38 million that could be used to help bridge the time until the budget is passed. An operational referendum could then be considered next year, if warranted. Now is not the time to ask local taxpayers for a nearly 20% increase, each year for ten years, in local aid.

Question #2 -

Baird, Building Upgrades - Neutral

There are several components of the building referendum, spread across multiple facilities. Some

NEW Meeting Location The Village Grille

The BCTA has moved our monthly meetings to **The Village Grille** at the corner of Hoffman and East River Drive, Allouez. Our new location has no stairs or steps, convenient parking, and a room to better accommodate speakers and conversation. There will be three selections from which to choose lunch - each one will be priced at \$10 (including tip.) Lunch is at 12:00 noon with monthly speakers presenting at 12:30 pm.

January Meeting Notes

County Executive Streckenbach Speaks to BCTA

Brown County Executive Troy Streckenbach presented an update of Brown County operations and issues. He noted that many things have not changed since he became the County Executive. He is trying to reduce debt, run the County like a business, and obtain the best return on County investments. He has presented no tax increase budgets every year. The County board is changing; some members who were fiscal hawks are now advocating more spending. His last budget was overridden by the County Board to add more dollars for wage increases and healthcare benefits for County employees.

With the cratering of interest rates, the County Treasurer's Office no longer generates \$3.4 million from investment income which subsidized services provided to municipal governments by the County. The 911 Center is an example of a service provided by the County. Last year, non-salary operating costs for the 911 Center increased by more than \$300,000. Unfortunately, this increase was not covered by growth in property tax revenue from the municipalities. He explained that the County needs growth to maintain services. Without growth, services must be reduced or tax rates increased.

To grow the County economy, Mr. Streckenbach is concerned about developing an environment conducive to new business creation and increasing the number of skilled jobs within the county. NWTC has very high placement rates for graduates of its programs. There is a possibility that UW-GB may establish a Mechanical Engineering program. Overcoming events like Wisconsin Public Service headquarters moving to Milwaukee, causing the loss of 160 professional jobs, demands a healthy business climate in the county. Along with skilled employees, we need entrepreneurs plus venture capital. The County has 240 acres of undeveloped land across from UW-GB, adjacent to the old Mental Health Center.

The phosphorus problem facing Brown County might cost up to \$1 billion to comply with regulations. A committee is working to find alternative solutions that will cost less and minimize the damage to the County's economy.

BCTA officers were elected for one-year terms:

President – Rich Heidel
1st Vice-president – Rod Goldhahn
2nd Vice-president - Dave Dillenburg
Treasurer - Tom Sladek
Secretary – Dave Nelson

Dave Nelson - Secretary

(Continued from page 1) **GB Schools Referendum**

are clearly necessary and should be supported by the voters. Those include entrance security upgrades at several schools. As a community, we must take the necessary steps to ensure our children have safe and secure schools. There are also capacity increase projects at various elementary schools, the largest being the replacement of Baird in its present location. Baird has been an issue for the district for some time, and we agree the time has come to replace that school and make it viable for future years. Smaller expansion projects are planned for other elementary schools to allow for future growth and eliminate the need for leased space. The remaining spending is for Fine Arts facility

improvements, Charter School improvements, and Community Service space to be used by service providers such as mental health and dental services.

We encourage our members and readers to visit the School District Website: www.gbaps.org, to review the referendum information and attend one of the public meetings on March 14th and 16th. This will allow you access to more information and the opportunity to ask questions. You can then make your own informed decision on the ballot questions.

Rod Goldhahn
-BCTA Schools Committee

February Meeting Notes

Green Bay Area School District Referendum Questions

Representatives of the Green Bay Area School District presented their justification for two referendum questions appearing on the April 4 spring election ballot. Board of Education President Brenda Warren identified the referendum questions. One question is a construction referendum for \$68.25 million to meet immediate facility needs. The other question is an operational referendum to increase the school district revenue limit by \$16.5 million. This is a nonrecurring referendum, which means that the Board of Education is granted the authority to exceed the revenue limit by \$16.5 million for each of the next ten years without returning to the voters for annual approvals.

Superintendent of Schools Michelle Langenfeld explained that other large school districts in the state have revenue limits per student that are \$500 to \$1,000 higher than the Green Bay Area School District. The \$16.5 million increase would raise the District's revenue limit per student to the state average of \$10,444 per student.

Chief Financial Officer Andrew Sarnow explained that increasing the revenue limit at the CPI rate would have resulted in an additional revenue limit of \$15.22 million in 2016-17. He stated that, due to several factors, including retiring existing debt, passage of the

referendum questions would not increase the property tax rate.

The Green Bay Area School District has had to deal with more social and demographic changes than other districts. Higher rates of poverty and non-English speaking students affect several schools in the District. Superintendent Langenfeld noted that it takes 7 years for non-English speaking students to become proficient in English, which is too long.

President Warren noted that the construction referendum focuses on capacity (overcrowding), safety and security, and adequate space. Projects at 18 schools are included in the construction referendum. The major project is replacing the Baird Elementary School at the existing site with a building that doubles its capacity to 600 students.

Director of Facilities Mike Stangel stated that there are no maintenance items in the construction referendum. Those items are addressed in the \$3.5 million annual maintenance budget within the District's operational budget. The maintenance budget has been increased to cover repairing and replacing items such as roofs and parking lots. (In the past, the BCTA has been critical of the District for having a tiny maintenance budget and accumulating maintenance projects for referendum approvals.)

Dave Nelson - Secretary

Things That Make Us Wonder

Immigration to the United States, both illegal, and authorized by Presidential decree has been an area of concern to many and one of the first priorities of President Trump after his inauguration. It was also an opportunity for his many opponents to demonstrate being President is not going to be easy.

While building a wall along the Mexican border proposal may have been more campaign rhetoric than reality, the Mexican government

seemed to take it seriously. Hopefully the whole idea was to demonstrate to Mexico to keep their people at home, and that they are not welcome here without proper procedure.

Banning entry to the U.S. to all citizens from certain countries may have been a good national security move, but is not going to make us any friends in the world. Negotiations with other nations with similar concerns, exceptions and rules will have to take place if anything positive is to be accomplished.

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Talk about breaking established trade agreements and "Bringing jobs

back to America," is a hot potato which has just about every other nation, friend or foe, concerned. There is no doubt we have lost jobs and manufacturing capacity in recent years, Some of this has been the result of established companies going overseas to avoid our high labor costs and regulations, and some is the availability of items simply not made here.

It is also a fact that many jobs, especially in manufacturing have been eliminated throughout in recent years by robots and other cost cutting

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methods.

While it is painful to see brands and products formerly made in Wisconsin produced elsewhere, there is opportunity for our state and national government to recognize that perhaps they are part of problem.

Hopefully some good can come from all this. Does it seem the country has been taking a timid approach to potential and real problems in recent years? Problems such as illegal Immigration, job loss, trade deficits and national security have been ignored. Often, (but not always) differences between nations can be resolved through discussion, negotiations, compromise and cooperation to the interests of all.

When a neighbor wants to build an ugly fence across his back yard to keep your dog and children out, and expect you to pay for it, wouldn't it be easier to discuss the problem, and both take action to resolve it amicably? Now just what would Hillary have done?

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Ringling Bros. Circus has announced it is closing down after 146 wonderful years of operation. While they cited animal rights activists for objecting to their treatment of elephants and other animals, the real problem was it no longer could operate at a profit. They will be missed.

Now the elephants can stay in Africa where their only worry is poachers killing them for their ivory tusks.

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We have been hearing a lot of talk about the dire need for tons of money to fix and expand Wisconsin highways. Probably true, but also to blame are huge cost overruns on present projects.

We all realize the cost of everything keeps going up, but also wonder if low-ball estimates of projects in

order to gain approval, and if competitive bids to get the best price on projects are factors? To what extent are contractors obligated to honor contract terms? Hopefully toll roads and wheel taxes will be the last resort.

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On the subject of immigration, we acknowledge our population largely consists of immigrants and their offspring who came here from all over the world under different circumstances and for various reasons. We have formed a nationality known as Americans, open to anyone willing to abide by and contribute to our society. Like any other civilized country, we will accept new immigrants, but reserve the right to know a little bit about their background, job skills, and what they plan on doing here.

They have to apply for and be approved by the immigration officials, and learn to speak English and some basic American History and laws.

In recent years the rules have been largely tossed aside by open borders, sanctuary cities, amnesty advocates, and lax government oversight of entitlements.

Turmoil in other parts of the world has created huge numbers of homeless refugees with no place to go. We have to protect our own interests including National Security. It is possible that half the people would like to come and live here, see movie stars, and receive our benefits. Maybe President Trump should ask Hillary what she would do with the problem.

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Candidates for the State Supt. of Schools post now held by Tony Evers claim they will seek elimination of the Common Core federal standards adapted by 400 Wisconsin school districts. The claim is that it was sold to the public as a Corvette, but came through as a manure wagon. Should make for an interesting spring elec-

tion.

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It is puzzling that the National Anthem or Air Force flyovers paid for by taxpayers are not featured on televised home Packer games, even for the nationally televised playoffs. The people of Green Bay wouldn't want to be associated with the likes of Colin Kaepernick.

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The President has the ultimate authority to pardon convicted felons, but this makes you wonder about the integrity of our entire legal system, and why these people were incarcerated in the first place. President Obama has granted clemency to over 1,000 individuals from various prisons during his term in office because in his words, they were "deserving."

Sentences are supposedly based on laws and the nature of the offense. We realize judges don't appreciate having their decisions overturned but nobody is perfect. Sometimes who the defendant is, who their lawyers are, and who else they know also helps.

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Before the November election, it seemed that both Democrats and Republicans were saying they looked forward to working together again for the good of the country. It's probably happened before, but elected official boycotting inaugural events and stonewalling confirmation hearings for key Government officials because they don't share your point of view or philosophy only makes things worse.

We do congratulate President Obama for his graceful and cordial public turnover of power in the days preceding and during the televised inauguration.

Unfortunately President Trump on occasion has problems with saying what he means or worse yet, meaning

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what he says. The best legislation can come from open discussion and compromise on differences. Being difficult and obstructive can and likely will come back to haunt you next election.

In the meantime Politics as usual is making approval of President Trumps Cabinet and other key positions as difficult as possible, along with acceptance of his many executive orders. While this was expected, fixing Obamacare and Dodd-Frank will be real challenges.

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Clinton supporters still won't acknowledge the election is over, even after the inauguration ceremonies have been held. They also still blame the Russians and their own pre-election pollsters for being wrong. While the difference in the popular vote may be confusing, the state by state analysis isn't.

We note most of the states carried by Democrats are dominated by large cities like Chicago, New York or Los Angeles, with their machine politics who will vote Democrat no matter who is running or how bad things are managed. The plurality in California, was 4,269,976 for Clinton, while she only had 3,168,520 more votes nationally. Much of the fuss is coming from California. It is interesting that New York, California, and Illinois are three states that DO NOT HAVE voter picture ID laws yet they requested a recount for Wisconsin. We all know how that came out. The re-

count should have been in California.

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Another item worth noting is that it appears that only about 60% or so of voting age (18) citizens of the country even bothered to vote last November. Maybe they were waiting for the pre-election polls to declare the winner but this also is a way to say "none of the above."

The media has no trouble finding a demonstration of young hoodlums to televise, even if they don't really know what they are trying to accomplish except to have fun. Whether or not this sector even bothered to vote is questionable. Unfortunately, the November election and subsequent events resemble a choreographed revolution in the making more than Democracy in action.

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We are all subject to several layers of government including local, schools, county, state and national. They all have their areas of responsibility, sources of revenue, (fees and taxes), and usually manage to work quite well together.

This is intended as observation and not criticism. If there is any question, it's their rate of growth, and cost in relation to other items in our economy. The County government by state law is responsible for a great many services we take for granted. Record keeping, property surveying, the court system, county jails, collection of taxes, libraries, roads and parks to name a few.

Remembering back to the 1950's and 60's, the population has more than doubled to over 250,000, but our

county government has managed to keep pace, step by step. Recall in 1960, most of the county offices were tucked away in the existing courthouse. The jail and Sheriffs Dept, occupied a rather small building at the corner of Adams and Doty and that was it.

First the old Post Office on Adams St. was added as a courthouse annex. Following in no particular order for various purposes where a grocery store on Adams St, the 6 story Northern Building, the Donovan School, the White Store on Broadway, the Post Office on Jefferson St., and the automobile dealership in Bellevue. New construction included a downtown jail now the work release center, a much larger jail on the northeast side, a museum and library needing replacement, plus numerous additions and remodeling projects accommodating our 1,700 or so county employees

Again, this is intended as observation and not criticism. The need for each move was established, debated, and budgeted by our elected officials while still keeping up with growth and keeping taxpayers in mind.

Can we say the same for Madison, where a virtual "Emerald City" has been created at our expense with white marble buildings so each department of government can compete with each other for importance, or for that matter Washington, D.C. where they still seem to believe that money grows on trees?

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Women's groups have been organizing and demonstrating recently for a number of causes, and we assume their interests will be somehow resolved.

Unfortunately, they do not have this privilege in Russia, where their parliament just voted 380-3 to de-

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criminalize domestic violence, "as long as it doesn't cause substantial body harm," Either they only have 3 women in their parliament or domestic relations are really bad and their women should learn how to demonstrate.

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It's often apparent that preparing a government budget is not an exact science. Locally the budget is a tool to prepare the tax levy for the coming years expenses. On the state and national levels it seems more intended indicating to various interest groups that they weren't forgotten about even though they never seem to get as much as they wanted.

Locally, where borrowing for non-capital projects may be a last resort, a budget can soon become meaningless as emergencies arise, income falls, or adjustments are made in priorities. In the unlikely event that reserve or emergency funds were set aside someone will find a more pressing need for them.

On the federal level, no-one ever seems to care.

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We are probably anxious to have the iconic Hotel Northland returned as the centerpiece of downtown Green Bay. It is a treasure and not much else remains from the area to

re-

mind us how things used to be.

While \$44 million for renovation seems like an extravagant amount, (\$275,000 per 160 guest rooms + interest), developers were able to sell their plan, arrange financing and proceed. It reportedly cost \$1 million to build back in 1924, and a lot of things have changed since then. .

While for some reason or reasons work on the project is being delayed, which also means no income in the meantime. Lets hope problems can be resolved and the job completed to bring downtown back to life. It is too valuable to demolish and way too big to dismantle and haul to Heritage Hill for salvation.

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Sooner or later Wisconsin will have to come up with a plan that makes sense with our voting districts.

The problem arises from the fact that every ten years after the national census every state is required to realign their Congressional districts to have equal populations and with other states. Then state senator and legislature districts are realigned to provide equal representation in each congressional district, It may turn out to be more complicated than it sounds.

The logical approach would be by counties, but the counties vary so much in size and population nothing seems to work. The real problem, and it exists in about every state is that some areas have more Democrats than Republicans and vice versa. The party in control at the time, will find that by isolating partisan neighborhoods or cities one from another with the aid of computers they could in effect control elections, This technique was credited to Gov. Elbridge Gerry of Massachusetts in 1812 and referred to as Gerrymandering to this day. Whether intentional or not we seem to have examples in Wisconsin.

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The announced Billy Joel concert

in June is sure to be an exciting show and attract attention to the area. While estimates claim this type of event puts a substantial amount of money into the local economy through hotel rooms, restaurant sales and shopping, we wonder if anyone ever factors in any amount of money which leaves town for the same reasons in their calculations?

Considering ticket prices can be rather high, especially for those on limited incomes, and the entertainers and their entourages are all well paid for their talent but also take most of the gate with them when they leave town, who is coming out on top?

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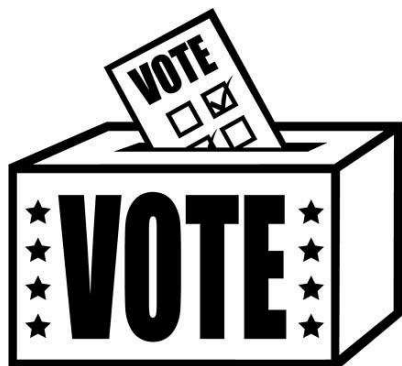
The DNR is not everybody's favorite state agency, partially because of their strict rules protecting wildlife, and environmental regulations interfering with business and many homeowner activities. In recent years they have become more powerful and obtrusive, due to increased environmental concerns and preservation of wildlife and natural resources. A problem is that they are becoming involved in too many areas and perhaps have too much authority and responsibility.

Proposals are out for discussion to basically split the DNR into two divisions, one for wildlife and one for environmental concerns, but there are a lot of areas that overlap, and the result could well be more of a monster.

If someone would come up with a plan that would save money AND give better service maybe people would listen.

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Approval of medical marijuana is turning out to be much more of a partisan political issue than a humanitarian one. Proponents point to benefits as a pain killer but ignore the reasons it causes so many problems.



April 4th, 2017

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We do know that with substance abuse one thing leads to another. Wisconsin reported 281 heroin deaths in 2015, and are still counting for 2016.

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The subject of what to do about the aging Brown County Arena keeps coming up. We do not know if many events are still held there, but if so, does it still have any economic value? It would seem that for events like the girls state basketball or a hockey tournament having two venues available would be an asset.

Otherwise, expanding Shopko Hall could be the most economic and productive way to bring business into Green Bay. Exhibitors will stay several days at hotels, entertain clients at restaurants, and attract visitors from all over. We already have plenty of hotel rooms.

One big problem could be our geographic isolation from the rest of the country which would have to be overcome by stressing other attractions

A bigger problem could be that conventions and exhibits are usually planned 2-3 years in advance. The Packer schedule gives 2 months notice and makes planning any other event impossible from Sept. through January, and in Green Bay, we know who comes first.

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Talk has been going on for several years about the need and location of a new Fox River bridge south of De Pere. Plans keep moving further south as other development moves in. We realize highway funding is tight, but this project should be working towards the top of the list one of these days.

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It was reported there were 217 arrests and 6 officers injured during the Presidential Inauguration ceremo-

nies in Washington. This sounds like the Monday morning report in Green Bay after home Packer games.

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While the Green Bay City Council mulls over action on Mayor Schmitt's election finances, the media ignores the sources, amounts, and political impact of the millions and billions raised and spent for the recent presidential and other key races held about th country.. It would take a lot of sorting out.

It is often said that the candidate with the most money to spend has the best chance of winning, but with partisan politics and the power that goes with it, more support may go through the party than individual candidates, and can make the source of funding difficult to track. Unfortunately it takes a lot of money to be elected to any office, and still while keep the playing field level.

They are still analyzing what happened between the polls and the election, but the costs will be in the Billions, It is estimated Ms. Clinton raised and spent about 50% more than Trump, and they both had their personal money involved creating another legal gray area. Trump is accused of using his private airline and other assets as tax write-offs, while Clinton still has the foundation with her name to still explain. And the list goes on.

One item that probably won't be in the discussion however is whether he deserved it or not, much of the media seemed to favor Hillary, and did everything in their power to present Trump in a negative manner and failing in the polls. This type of publicity no doubt has an effect on public opinion, but does not appear on candidates public disclosure reports. Maybe it should.

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The N.E.W. Zoo, and The National Railroad Museum have both

announced ambitious expansion projects to take place over several years. These attractions are not tax supported, but bring more visitors to the area each year which is the bottom line. They are constantly making improvements, and deserve your support

Visit them when you have a chance, and be prepared to be impressed.

"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 - BCTA

"Why does a slight tax increase cost you two hundred dollars, and a substantial tax cut save you thirty cents? . . Peg Bracken

The TAX TIMES

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**Meeting Changed to
The Village Grille, Allouez**

BCTA Meeting and Events Schedule – MARK YOUR CALENDARS.

- Thursday - March 16, 2017. BCTA Monthly Meeting.**
12:00 at the **The Village Grille, Allouez**
Guest Speaker—State Senator Devin LeMahieu
- Tuesday - April 4, 2017. Spring Elections - GO Vote**
- Thursday - April 20, 2017. BCTA Monthly Meeting.**
12:00 at the **The Village Grille, Allouez**
Guest Speaker—State Rep. John Macco

BCTA monthly meetings are held the Third Thursday of each month, 12:00 Noon, at , at The Village Grille, 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: \$10.00, Payable at meeting. Includes lunch, tax & tip.
Call Tom Sladek – 499-7701 for information or to leave message.

Mar - Apr 2017



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New Members are
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