Jordan School District
MINUTES OF BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING
August 6, 2019

The Board of Education of Jordan School District conducted a public Truth in Taxation hearing on Tuesday, August 6, 2019, beginning at 6:00 p.m. at Riverton High School (Auditorium), 12476 S. Silverwolf Way (2700 West), Riverton, Utah.

PUBLIC HEARING

Those recognized or signed-in as present:
Bryce Dunford, Board President
Tracy J. Miller, Board Vice President
Matthew Young, Board Secretary
Jen Atwood, Board Member
Marilyn Richards, Board Member
Darrell Robinson, Board Member
Janice L. Voorhies, Board Member
Anthony A. Godfrey, Superintendent
John Larsen, Business Administrator
Paul Van Komen, Burbidge & White
Sandy Riesgraf, Director, Communications
Doug Flagler, Communications Manager
Curtis Hagen, Staff Assistant, Auxiliary Services
Jeri Clayton, Administrative Assistant
Robert Conder, AV Maintenance
Mike Maughn, AV Maintenance
Bruce Cooley, AV Maintenance
Vicki Olsen, President, Jordan Education Association
Officer Alcivar, Riverton Police Department
Officer Ashley, Riverton Police Department
Officer Fernandez, Riverton Police Department
Officer Wilson, Riverton Police Department
Richard S. Osborn  Christine Strong  John Arthur  Dennis Mullen
Linda Isbell  Rodney Hoffmann  Mike Laws  Matt Davis
Bruce Merrill  Caitlin McCullough  Jay Eastley  Gary Monk
John Lee  Rebekah Peterson  Sherri Coleman  Amy Martz
Shasta Burton  Jody DeLand  Lisa K. Read  Mike Atencio
Chelsea Johnson  Shireen Larsen  Pamela Bryson  Melissa McDaniell
Vicki Olsen  Kay Johnson  Janet Blackmer  Michelle Snarr
Clint Ostermiller  Heather Reich  Steve Schiele  Ellen Casalino
Gary Eastman  Chuck Gwilliam  Jonathan Lawes  Maxine Dee
Sylvia Panter  Laraine Lawes  Lyle Hessing  Patti Ault
Rebecca Blue  Rachelle Smith  Richard Coles  Eric Price
Amber Avery  Mike Nelson  Troy Anderson  Crystal Coe
Crystal Nebecker  Kerry Simi  Anna Kelsch  James Romero
Corey Nebecker  Jennifer Manning  Diana Alm  James Maughan
Melissa Brown  Jennifer Boehme  Charlotte Wakefield  Ashley Mortensen
Carol Ramsay  Wendi Bailey  Rhonda Hair  Michael Lohrke
Deborah Brown  Paul Wayman  Haley McCall  Rae Boren
Amanda Parker  Jennifer Black  Crystal DeMass  Hannah Peltier
Erik Wieben  Jacob Rollins  Michael Stone  Oden Kelsch
Alexandra Eframo  Paul Mikstas  Dwayne Boring  George Welch
Tony Romanello  Hal Edwards  Scott Silver  Rodney Kelsch
Michelle Foote  Becky Rendell  Pat Christianson  Virginia VanLeeuwen
President Dunford presided and conducted the hearing. He welcomed those present and invited audience members to participate in the Pledge of Allegiance. Following the Pledge, members of the Board of Education each introduced themselves. The hearing proceeded as follows:

A. **Presentation on Potential Tax Rate Increase**

President Dunford invited the members of the public to view the video created by the Board to explain the potential tax increase. The Board of Education is proposing a tax increase of about $20 per $100,000 of home value per year for the sole purpose of increasing pay for teachers. If approved, the tax increase will fund a starting salary of $48,000 and an increase in pay of just over $6,000 for all teachers.

B. **Public Comments**

President Dunford invited the members of the public that expressed interest in speaking regarding the potential tax increase to address the Board. Each person was given three minutes to speak. Individuals assigned to speak on behalf of an organization were given six minutes. The following is a brief summary of the comments made by each person that addressed the Board:

Richard S. Osborn, retired teacher and former Board member, said ten years ago the Board short-changed the teachers and it is time to do what is right and increase teacher salaries.

Linda Isbell, a senior on a fixed income, said her taxes increase every year and while she is not saying teachers don’t deserve the increase, she is living paycheck to paycheck and may have to sell her home if taxes are raised.

Bruce Merrill said he is for an increase in teacher salaries but wants the Board to go through its budget to find the money instead of raising taxes.

John Lee spoke against the tax increase and said while he loves this state, if taxes increase he will be taxed out of his home.

Shasta Burton asked Board members to vote “yes” for the tax increase so the District will have competitive salaries and be able to attract and retain teachers.

Chelsea Johnson said a quality education surpasses everything and if the District wants to remain competitive it must increase salaries. She spoke in favor of the tax increase.

Vicki Olsen, president of JEA, thanked the Board for holding the hearing and for what they are doing to help educators and students. She said although she will retire soon, she supports the tax increase.

Clint Ostermiller, a resident of West Jordan, said he was speaking on behalf of himself as well as his neighbors on a fixed income who he said are being taxed out of their homes. He asked the Board to not raise taxes.

Gary Eastman said he owns three homes and will be affected three times as much by an increase. He believes teachers need a pay raise, but the money should come from other sources rather than property taxes.

Sylvia Panter, a member of JEA with 25 years in education and resident of West Jordan for over eight years said she has children that attended Jordan schools and that it is time to invest in those that can have the greatest impact on student learning. She expressed support for the tax increase.

Rebecca Blue said she is an educator and supports the tax increase because the increase is minor compared to the difference it will make for teachers.
Amber Avery said she supports the tax increase because she is a teacher in the District, her children attend District schools, and teachers care about students.

Crystal Nebeker, a resident of South Jordan for 27 years and a teacher said she does not support the tax increase even though that makes her unpopular with her colleagues. She suggested with proper management of funding, salaries could be higher.

Corey Nebeker said it is the nature of taxing entities to spend frivolously and the District should not burden taxpayers in order to pay teachers more.

Melissa Brown, resident of Riverton and Jordan teacher, thanked the Board for holding the hearing and said she supports the tax increase to provide competitive salaries so teachers won't feel they need to leave the District for higher pay.

Carol Ramsay, resident of Riverton, said she taught for 24 years and encouraged the Board to vote for the tax increase.

Deborah Brown expressed support for the tax increase because she has seen a decrease in the number of college students willing to go into education. She said without competitive salaries the District will not be able to staff the new schools.

Amanda Parker, a Jordan District teacher, commended the Board for leading out in raising teacher salaries and said students deserve quality educators. She expressed support for the tax increase.

Erik Wieben, a band teacher at Sunset Ridge Middle School, said he has a passion for Jordan District and music but it is difficult to support himself on his current wages. He encouraged the Board to vote for the tax increase.

Alexandra Eframo said she is 86 years old, on a fixed income, and a tax increase is not fair to people 65 and older. She said the decision to raise taxes should be put to a vote of the people.

Tony Romanello, a teacher at Herriman High and 25-year resident of West Jordan, spoke in favor of the tax increase and said he is three years away from retirement but will continue to support reasonable increases that support education.

Michelle Foote said she made more money 20 years ago than she does now as a teacher and expressed support for the tax increase.

Christine Strong, a 20-year teacher, thanked the Board for placing Jordan District as the front runner in raising teacher salaries. She said she supports the tax increase.

Rodney Hoffmann, a resident of South Jordan, said his taxes have increased dramatically and he does not support a property tax increase. He suggested asking the legislature for the money to increase taxes.

Caitlin McCullough, teacher at Copper Mountain Middle, said she supports the tax increase for salaries because she will not have to work as much to make ends meet.

Rebekah Peterson said she hopes the Board votes for the tax increase to show teachers and students they are valued. She added that her neighborhood classrooms have had revolving teachers and she hopes the increase will provide stability.

Jody DeLand, a Jordan District teacher and resident, expressed support for the tax increase because she wants her own children to have the best teachers. She said people are not choosing to go into education and the bucket of new teachers is empty.
Shireen Larsen, a Jordan District teacher, said she supports the tax increase but would like to see it done over a ten-year period.

Kay Johnson said she has lived in West Jordan for 50 years and appreciates the education her children received; however, she is on a fixed income and can’t support the Board increasing taxes.

Heather Reich, sixth grade teacher at Majestic Elementary and resident of West Jordan, said she loves her community and those she serves. She has dedicated her life to helping other people’s children and said the tax increase is more about taking care of each other.

Chuck Gwilliam, a resident of South Jordan and a teacher (second career), said he wholly supports the tax increase and appreciates that it has been ten years since the District raised taxes.

Laraine Lawes, a Jordan District teacher for 32 years, said she just passed her 178th hour of work this summer preparing for the upcoming school year which she is happy to do because she wants her students to succeed. She expressed appreciation for the Board’s vote to increase taxes to validate what teachers are doing and to attract quality teachers.

Rachelle Smith, teacher and resident of Riverton, said she was honored to be the Jordan District Teacher of the Year. She added that she did not obtain this title on her own, she was helped along the way by many mentor teachers who left the profession because of the wages. She expressed support for the tax increase.

Mike Nelson, resident of Herriman, asked if the tax increase is sustainable and suggested that there are other things besides money to motivate teachers and that applicants should be “sold” on the position. He suggested the new superintendent plan a strategy for increasing funds to the school district.

Kerry Simi, Jordan District teacher and resident, said she attended 90 percent of the Board meetings and has seen the Board do research and due diligence to budget appropriately. She trusts the Board’s decision and supports the tax increase.

Jennifer Manning, a special education teacher and instructional coach, said she has two children in Jordan District schools and supports the tax increase.

Jennifer Boehme, a ten-year resident of South Jordan and Jordan District teacher for 24 years, said she is a public education advocate and expressed support for the tax increase because today’s students are tomorrow’s educators.

Wendi Bailey said she supports the tax increase and appreciates all the Board has done to benefit teachers.

Paul Wayman suggested that the District’s tax increase is being done at the wrong time with the legislature discussing tax reform. He suggested the Teacher Grant money be put into wages.

Jennifer Black, a District teacher and resident, said this is a pivotal time with other District’s raising salaries and teachers have families to support so they will go where the money is. She said the tax increase is necessary to keep quality teachers.

Jacob Rollins said he is a District teacher but can’t afford to live in the District. He supports the tax increase because studies show that the greatest impact to students is the teacher and the District will lose teachers unless they are paid like they are valued.

Paul Mikstas said he is opposed to the tax increase because he lives on a fixed income.

Hal Edwards said he was unfamiliar with the format of the meeting and came prepared with questions. He would appreciate being able to have them answered after the meeting.
Becky Rendell, a 30-year resident and teacher in Jordan District, said she loves teaching and expressed support for the tax increase and the work being done by the Board to support teachers and students.

John Arthur said he is a resident of Bluffdale and was educated in Jordan Schools. He currently teaches in Salt Lake District and can’t afford to change to Jordan because he couldn’t pay his mortgage on the wages. He said the wage increase will increase the quality of education for students.

Mike Laws, resident of West Jordan, expressed his opposition to a tax increase. He suggested the District use its money more efficiently or use the state’s surplus to pay teachers more.

Jay Eastley, a 16-year resident of South Jordan, commended the Board for considering a tax increase and said he has a large family and has been pleased with the education his children have received. He encouraged the Board to do what will be of the most benefit to students.

Sherri Coleman stated she wonders why, when the state has a surplus, the homeowners are being asked for more money. She feels the tax increase is being done without the consent of the voters.

Lisa K. Read said she worked as a teacher’s aide and saw the dedication and hard work of the teachers but she is against a tax increase. She suggested there needs to be an independent auditor to find out where the money goes and to trim the fat and tighten the budget.

Pamela Bryson – signed up to speak but did not take the opportunity.

Janet Blackmer – signed up to speak but did not take the opportunity.

Steve Schiele said he has been on a fixed income for six years and while he is not saying teachers don’t need a raise, he can’t afford a tax increase and doesn’t want the pay for teachers done on his back.

Jonathan Lawes said he lives and teaches in Jordan District. He appreciates the arguments of those who oppose the tax increase, but said if the Board doesn’t raise salaries, then teachers will choose higher paying districts. He urged the Board to approve the tax increase.

Lyle Hessing, a South Jordan resident and husband of a retired Jordan teacher, expressed concern that retirees like himself don’t have the money to pay the tax increase. He is also concerned about a tax increase for his children who scrimped and saved to buy a home. He suggested the Board find another way to fund salary increases.

Richard Coles said he supports the salary increase but not through a property tax increase.

Troy Anderson said he feels there is a salary war with other Districts and expressed concern about when this will end. He challenged the Board to look for other ways to fund the increase without raising taxes.

Anna Kelsch said she agrees that teachers need a raise, but she is against the tax increase because the money should not be taken from senior citizens.

Diana Alm said she is the wife of a teacher who works four jobs during the school year and she was speaking on his behalf to state that he is against the tax increase.

Charlotte Wakefield – signed up to speak but did not take the opportunity.

Rhonda Hair, a 14-year resident of South Jordan said she is representing the people on her street who are on fixed incomes and can’t afford a tax increase. If taxes are increased it will price them out of their homes.
Haley McCall said she lives and teaches in Jordan District and is a single mother of children attending Jordan schools. She thanked the Board for the increases in salary and said she supports the tax increase.

Crystal DeMass expressed appreciation to the Board for showing respect for teachers by increasing salaries. She said she supports the tax increase.

Michael Stone said he teaches history and coaches debate and while he understands the struggles of those on fixed incomes, there are options available to them to mitigate tax increases. He said the elected Board has performed due diligence and urged them to vote for the tax increase.

Dwayne Boring said the Board should give more credence to the citizens rather than the teachers because having his taxes go up $100 is not a small tax increase. He asked the Board to vote against the tax increase.

Scott Silver said he and his wife were both educators but couldn’t afford to start a family and pay a mortgage so they left teaching. He expressed support for the tax increase.

Pat Christianson – signed up to speak but did not take the opportunity.

Dennis Mullen, resident of West Jordan, said he supports the increase to provide a living wage for teachers and that the investment in teachers will maintain higher standards of education for students.

Matt Davis, resident of South Jordan and District teacher, said he supports the tax increase because of the support a teacher gave to his daughter. He said the increase is for the children.

Gary Monk said he is not against an increase if there is accountability. He suggested finding other ways to fund an increase and leave money in the citizens’ pockets.

Amy Martz, a District teacher and mother of three children in District schools, said she has read the budget and there is no extra money lying around. She said other states pay more for education and she supports the tax increase.

Mike Atencio said he is married to a retired teacher and he supports the tax increase. He said teacher salaries were listed in a publication last week and it was dismal. He added that education is important for society.

Melissa McDaniel said she has lived in Riverton for 15 years but grew up in Chicago and her parent’s home is half the size of hers but their taxes are far higher. She said her husband’s parents are teachers and he is the only one of their six children that didn’t become a teacher and she supports the tax increase.

Michelle Snarr said she has lived in the District for 22 years and her sons graduated from Riverton High. While she believes that teachers deserve higher wages, it is not fair to homeowners to raise taxes. She asked the Board to vote against the tax increase.

Ellen Casalino said paying teachers more and increasing taxes are two separate issues. She suggested reallocating money from other programs to pay teachers and asked the Board to not raise her taxes.

Maxine Dee – signed up to speak but did not take the opportunity.

Patti Ault said she has lived in Jordan District for 38 years. When she moved to Riverton in ’96 her taxes were $1,300 and are now $3,030. She asked the Board to be judicious before raising taxes.

Eric Price said when he graduated from BYU and saw teacher salaries in Utah he went to Texas to work. He became a recruiter and would come to Utah to recruit teachers to Texas. He expressed support for the
tax increase and said it won’t solve all the problems but will help teachers meet their needs which will help the children.

Crystal Coe said she understands the concerns expressed by senior citizens on fixed incomes because her mother lives in a declining area and has concerns about the sale of her home. She expressed hope that the Board would consider the needs of the senior citizens.

James Romero, a West Jordan resident for 60 years, said he is representing the seniors that couldn’t be at the hearing. He said older Americans can’t afford homes, groceries, medication or taxes and while he is not against a pay raise for teachers, he doesn’t want taxes increased.

James Maughan thanked the Board for the courage to raise taxes. As an administrator he wants the best teachers teaching the students in his school. He also said he lives in Granite District and a few years ago they raised taxes. He was happy to pay the increase to invest in teachers and kids.

Ashley Mortensen, West Jordan resident and Jordan District teacher, thanked the Board for the pay raises received and said as the cost of living goes up salaries haven’t kept up. She asked the Board to vote for the tax increase to provide a more livable wage.

Michael Lohrke said he is a seventh grade math teacher and loves teaching. He moved to Utah from California and said if the tax increase is not approved then he will need to leave the State for higher wages.

Rae Boren, a 20-year teacher and resident of West Jordan, thanked the Board for what they have done on the teacher’s behalf. She said Utah spends the lowest on education in the nation and if not addressed, it will be more of a crisis. She said as a taxpayer she wants to attract and retain the best teachers and asked the Board to vote for the tax increase.

Hannah Peltier, resident of Riverton and District teacher, said she does not support the tax increase and suggested coming up with non-monetary ways to encourage teachers to stay in Jordan District.

Oden Kelsch said he is a former Jordan District student and he does not support the tax increase because he doesn’t think all teachers deserve a raise based on his experience when a teacher asked him if he was stupid.

George Welch, a former Jordan District teacher and administrator, said if salaries aren’t raised then teachers will leave and the District will not be able to fill openings. He said he supports the tax increase and hopes the Board will vote for it.

Rodney Kelsch said he is struggling to make ends meet and can’t afford the tax increase. He asked the Board to vote against the tax increase.

Virginia VanLeeuwen said she is a senior citizen and can’t afford a tax increase.

C. Action by Board of Education Regarding a Proposed Tax Rate Increase for Teacher Salaries and Adopt the 2019-20 Budget Accordingly

President Dunford stated that making this decision is a heavy responsibility. Over the past two months Board members have sought input at three public open houses and received emails, phone calls, and text messages. He expressed hope that whatever the decision, the public will understand the Board is trying to do what is best. He explained to the public that he would call for motion and second and then invite Board members to comment, after which a vote on the motion would be held.

**MOTION:** It was moved by Janice Voorhies and seconded by Tracy Miller to approve the tax increase as indicated on property tax notices and set the total tax rate at 0.006676 which is an increase of 0.000372 or $8.5 million and direct staff to reflect this change in the 2019-20 budget.
Comments by Board Members

Mr. Robinson said he loves Jordan District, its teachers, and the community and he has spent hundreds of hours studying this issue, talking to patrons, answering emails, and thinking out loud on social media. He said he truly wants to do the right thing. He expressed appreciation to former Board members that started the process for increasing teacher salaries, especially Lynn Crane who he promised that he would keep the focus on teachers. He thanked his fellow Board members for the public way this issue was approached with three open houses, two post card mailings, and inviting public input. He explained the factors that led to his decision to vote for the tax increase. He said there has been no tax increase for ten years. The Board doesn’t control how tax laws are written and it has no power to collect impact fees or change equalization laws. He said the District leads the way in budgeting and low administrative costs. The Board has worked to reduce the cost of new school construction by 17 percent without sacrificing quality and the renovations planned for Bingham High will save the District $70 million. New schools open on time and under budget, the District has the lowest debt ratio in the state, the District leads the way with its fleet of natural gas buses that save taxpayer’s money in transportation costs and by applying for grants used to supplement CNG bus purchases. The District faced issues related to mental health and found solutions paid for with grant funds rather than taxpayer dollars. Through careful management, lunch prices have not increased in ten years. He stated that Jordan is leading the way in teacher compensation and he wants Jordan to attract the best teachers and become a leader in innovative learning. He wanted teachers and community members to know they are being listened to and hopes the community will understand his decision to support the tax increase.

Ms. Voorhies explained that she, like many of those who spoke, has been living on a fixed income for seven to eight years and has great sympathy for them. She stated that she is a 25-year veteran teacher of Jordan District. She expressed appreciation to her fellow Board members for their differing perspectives that have made her more thoughtful. She explained that she has listened to many people on this issue and believes that supporting the tax increase is the right thing to do for the children in Jordan District.

Ms. Miller said many of her thoughts were expressed by Mr. Robinson. She added that many of the comments and suggestions expressed by community members are under the control of State legislators rather than the Board and she was grateful that many legislators were in attendance to hear those suggestions. She stated that Jordan District has not raised taxes in ten years and this increase is needed to keep up with inflation. Many of those who spoke said the District needed to make cuts to programs, etc. and she wanted the public to know that the Board is very careful with public money and has made cuts where it can but it is not willing to harm the safety and education of the children. She said children deserve a good education which is an investment in the future.

Mr. Dunford stated that he was struggling with how to proceed on this issue so he reached out to the community he represents to seek their input and opinions. He said his vote will be based on the feedback he received and believes that a clear majority were in favor of the increase which was in harmony with his own beliefs.

Mr. Young expressed appreciation to the teachers for the level of support they have shown for the tax increase, their passion about this issue, and making their voices heard. He said the Board is proposing to raise salaries and it would be inappropriate to say to teachers that because salaries are being raised “it is time for you to raise your game” because teachers “raised their game” years ago. He said he understands the teachers have frustrations at times with the Board as they walk a fine line between balancing the needs of all groups. He hopes the community of taxpayers will come to understand the hours of time spent exploring all the options discussed and that the Board will commit to continue to lead the state in the conservative nature of how tax dollars are spent. He said the Board’s commitment to raise the salaries of teachers started years ago when spending was frozen so the Board could make teacher compensation a priority and begin raising salaries. He said until now, the Board has not raised tax rates but he wanted to make it clear that he understands and acknowledges that property taxes have gone up, but the part of the taxes which the Board can control has not been increased in ten years.
said it is time, as market forces move rapidly, for the Board to utilize everything available to them. Mr. Young expressed appreciation to the State Legislature for its unprecedented infusion of needed revenue to help in the area of teacher salaries. He said the increases that have already been done would not have been possible without their support. He applauded them for their good stewardship and encouraged the community members to engage with legislators and let them hear their concerns. Mr. Young said the Board and District will continue to innovate and look for ways to improve the spending of tax dollars. He thanked all those who attended the hearing and said he was grateful for the high-level of discourse in which all have been able to participate. He expressed appreciation to staff members and technicians who did an amazing job of preparing for the hearing and making it run smoothly.

Ms. Atwood shared that she is a resident of West Jordan, a mother of students who attend Jordan District schools, a taxpayer of Jordan District, and a daughter of someone who will soon be on a fixed income who she had to sit down with in conversation so she had a good understanding of the tax increase. She said the Board has worked hard to develop relationships with legislators and help them understand the needs of the District and more importantly, the students’ needs. The Board will continue to support education and show teachers that they are valued.

Ms. Richards said as much as she hates to admit it, she is a senior citizen on a fixed income. She is also a retired Jordan District educator. She received an awesome education in Jordan District schools and believes in paying it forward and because she has never had children, her taxes have paid for the rest of the children she represents in Jordan District. She said children are her priority and she wants the public to know she listened to their comments, answered many emails and phone calls, and talked to many constituents, which included a lot of senior citizens, and she understands the many perspectives. She stated that in her heart she wants to do the right and best thing for the students of Jordan District so she will be voting in favor of the tax increase.

**Vote on the Motion**

President Dunford called for a roll call vote on the motion made by Janice Voorhies and seconded by Tracy Miller to approve the tax increase as indicated on property tax notices and set the total tax rate at 0.006676 which is an increase of 0.000372 or $8.5 million and direct staff to reflect this change in the 2019-20 budget. The motion passed with a unanimous vote as follows:

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<tr>
<td>Bryce Dunford</td>
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President Dunford directed Superintendent Godfrey to spearhead the release of a public statement about the Board’s decision.

**MOTION:** At 9:31 p.m., it was moved by Darrell Robinson to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed with a unanimous vote.

JL/jc