



BOARD OF EDUCATION REGULAR MEETING

July 8, 2026 | Administration Building

MEETING NOTES

Meeting Notes are not official until they are voted on by the Board of Education at its next Regular Meeting.

- A1 President called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.
- A2 Members present: Ms. Arnold, Mrs. Byler, Mrs. Crowley, Mr. Moog, and Mr. Perry.
- A3 Pledge of Allegiance

NOTE: *Portions of the meeting's audio recording were difficult to decipher; therefore, this document may contain several incomplete sentences or inaccuracies. Additionally, some of the participants' names may be misspelled.*

B PROGRAMS / PRESENTATIONS

- B1 No Presentations

C ROUTINES

- C1 The agenda is correct as submitted.
- C2 The Board of Education adopted the agenda.
- C3 The Board of Education approved the June 2026 Treasurer's Report.

Mrs. Swearingen: Expenses came in lower than we forecast. Revenues came in higher than what we had forecasted. We have quite a few outstanding encumbrances: we had encumbered funds but had not received invoices to pay, so those carry over into this fiscal year. Because we have to approve the forecast in August of this year, I will have that presentation for you where we discuss how we ended the year and rolled it into the forecast presentation.

Mr. Perry: Everything she said was great. I have never heard lower expenditures and higher revenue in the same sentence.

- C4 The Board of Education approved the minutes from the following meetings:
 - a. June 8, 2026 – Regular Meeting
 - b. June 8, 2026 – Meeting Notes

D PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Board of Education appreciates citizen interest in meetings of the board. This place on the agenda is set aside to hear comments from visitors. When called, please go to the microphone so that remarks may be clearly heard and recorded. You must give your name and limit comments to three minutes. Comments must be respectful and professional in nature. Board members may or may not ask questions or make comments. No board member has the power or authority to act for the board; therefore, no response

from an individual board member should be interpreted as an official action of the board. Portions of this meeting are being recorded.

Cindy Rieman

Hello, and thank you for listening. My name is Cindy Rieman, and I am a former teacher in Hilliard. I am now the grandmother of two children who will be attending Hilliard schools this coming school year.

As I was listening to us say the Pledge of Allegiance today, it just hit me. They talk about liberty and justice for all. I think that those words need to really be in our hearts and in our minds when we start thinking about this voucher situation. We really want all children to have an excellent education. Education is the only way that I can see to level the playing field. And if we start eroding our public schools because we don't have enough money, that means we will be taking away, first of all, special programs. We'll have to take away the arts. We'll have to take away things that just aren't required by law, or we have to keep going back to our people and asking them for more money, for more levy money, and we all know that's never a popular thing to ask a community.

I feel really strongly that Hilliard has backed Hilliard schools in almost every way. I've lived here now for, oh, golly, forty years, and I think that every time there's a levy, you hold your breath hoping that it passes. And I think that Hilliard has almost always come through. So, I'm asking you to come through for the children of Hilliard, and not just them, for the children of Ohio, because if this voucher goes forward... And I think our job, before it's even a governor situation, is to encourage and educate every parent in this Hilliard school district so they know what the voucher situation is. I talk to people, and they look at me with blank faces. They have no clue what I'm talking about. And most of them, many don't seem to really care. But they will care if their grandchild or their children are in the system.

I want to thank you, first of all, for listening to me all the times I've been up. I think this shows a bit of a mini democracy: how it works when people care about something and talk freely. That is the way our democracy should work, from the bottom up. So, thank you.

Debbie Cochran

Hello, I'm Debbie Cochran, and I would like to thank you all for your time and service to our community and schools. You are very much appreciated. I would also like to thank you for putting tonight's item, G2, Ohio's Voucher Program, on the agenda for discussion. I appreciate the opportunity to have on public record your individual thoughts and opinions about joining the more than 330 Ohio school districts that have come together to demonstrate to their communities and constituents that they are standing up for their students in public education.

The Columbus Dispatch recently reported that the state's share of public school funding has fallen from approximately 47 percent following the 1997 Ohio Supreme Court's landmark DeRolph decision to a projected 32 percent in 2027. It is unsustainable. Forty-seven percent to thirty-two percent.

School districts across Ohio are increasingly left with only two choices: reduce educational opportunities for students or ask local communities to approve additional property tax levies. Our Hilliard community has supported our schools through our votes and with our wallets. We are anxious to hear how you, our board, will in turn demonstrate appreciation and advocacy for Hilliard Schools, public education, and our community. I hope it is by reaching a collective conclusion and putting a resolution on the agenda to join the Vouchers Hurt Ohio lawsuit. What say you? Thank you.

E CONSENT AGENDA

The Board of Education approved the consent agenda, items E1 through E3.

E1 Approved the following Certified Personnel actions – See attachment to the Minutes.

E2 Approved the following Classified Personnel actions – See attachment to the Minutes.

E3 Approved the following trip requests:

- a. Davidson Boys Cross Country, Buck Creek State Park – August 3, 2026
- b. Davidson Boys Cross Country, Attica, OH – September 12, 2026
- c. Davidson Boys Cross Country, Terre Haute, IN – November 15, 2016
- d. Davidson Boys Soccer, Winston-Salem, NC – July 24, 2026

Mr. Stewart: Okay, in that consent agenda, you just approved two new administrators to the district. Both are here with us tonight. First is Erica Boone. She'll be joining us as the Gifted coordinator. And she's coming to us from the Olentangy Local Schools.

Ms. Boone: I was told to keep it brief. After many years at Olentangy, I'm excited to join the team here, bringing the experiences I've had and gaining new ones with the curriculum team and with all the people I will meet, grow to know, and learn alongside. So thank you. Thank you.

Mr. Stewart: And the second one is Bob Keep. He is joining us from Bexley City Schools and will serve as our coordinator of instructional technology.

Mr. Keep: I was also told to keep it short. Thank you for the opportunity. I'm excited and looking forward to working with a great team.

F ACTION AGENDA

F1 The Board of Education approved the following resolution:

**AUTHORIZING RENEWAL OF THE DISTRICT'S INSURANCE COVERAGE PLAN AND AUTHORIZING
ENDORSEMENTS FOR CYBER LIABILITY INSURANCE AND CRIME INSURANCE**

The Chief Operating Officer ("COO") recommends the Board authorize the renewal of the District's insurance coverage through the Ohio School Plan ("OSP") and authorize endorsements for cyber liability insurance and crime insurance.

Background:

1. The COO and Treasurer, working with the Ohio School Plan, have identified a need to renew the District's insurance coverage through the Ohio School Plan, and to add policies for cyber liability and crime insurance.
2. The Ohio School Plan has submitted a quotation for coverage from July 1, 2026, through July 1, 2027, in a total amount of \$889,127 ("Total Insurance Premium"), broken down as follows:
 - a. OSP Property Premium: \$508,043

- b. OSP Liability Premium: \$129,315
- c. OSP Violence Premium: \$6,907
- d. OSP Automobile Premium: \$200,258
- e. Pollution Policy Premium: \$5,313
- f. Cyber Liability Premium: \$31,552
- g. Crime Liability Premium: \$7,739

3. The COO recommends that the Board authorizes Payment of the Total Insurance Premium to OSP for the coverage described herein, for the term beginning July 1, 2026, through July 1, 2027. The Board of Education hereby resolves as follows: Board authorizes Payment of the Total Insurance Premium to OSP for the coverage described herein, for the term beginning July 1, 2026, through July 1, 2027; and authorizes the Superintendent, Treasurer, Board President, and COO to execute any documents, as appropriate, consistent with the intent of this resolution.

F2 The Board of Education approved the following resolution:

SELECTING MODERN OFFICE METHODS, INC. FOR THE DISTRICT-WIDE MULTI-FUNCTION PRINTING SOLUTION

The Chief Operating Officer recommends the Board select Modern Office Methods, Inc. (“Modern Office”) for the District-Wide Multi-Function Printing Solution (the “Project”).

Rationale:

- 1. The District identified a need to consider alternative vendors to provide a district-wide printing solution.
- 2. The Project is outside the scope of competitive bidding under ORC 3313.46 as it does not relate to improvements to District property.
- 3. Consistent with Board policy, District administrators issued a request for competitive proposals for the Project and received three proposals.
- 4. Modern Office provided a proposal for the Project in the amount of \$82,418.4 for an initial one-year term (\$6,868.20 per month) for a managed print program.
- 5. Based on a review of all proposals submitted, the Chief Operating Officer recommends the Board select Modern Office for the Project.
- 6. Accordingly, the Chief Operating Officer requests authority for the Chief Operating Officer and Treasurer to negotiate and enter into an agreement with Modern Office for the Project for an initial one-year term in an amount not-to-exceed \$82,418.40.

The Board of Education resolves as follows:

- 1. The Board authorizes the Chief Operating Officer and Treasurer to negotiate and enter into an agreement with Modern Office for the Project for an initial one-year term in an amount not-to-exceed \$82,418.40.
- 2. The Board also authorizes the Chief Operating Officer and Treasurer to execute any other documents consistent with the intent of this resolution.

F3 The Board of Education approved the following resolution:

AUTHORIZING AGREEMENT TO CONVEY A CONSERVATION EASEMENT TO THE CITY OF HILLIARD, OHIO

The Superintendent recommends the Board authorize an agreement with the City of Hilliard, Ohio (the “City”) conveying a conservation easement (the “Easement”) to the City, for the purpose of permitting the City to maintain the Easement in its natural state, and to take measures to improve water quality and enhance ecological conditions within the Easement, upon property owned by the Board.

Rationale:

1. The Board is the owner of real property situated in the State of Ohio, County of Franklin, City of Hilliard, lying in Virginia Military District 4854, commonly known as Parcel No. 050-003037 (the “Easement Property”).
2. As part of its Capital Improvements Project, the Board is constructing its Norwich Elementary School – Preschool Addition Project (the “Project”).
3. The City has requested that the Board provide the Easement in connection with the Project for the purpose of permitting the City to maintain the Easement in its natural state, and to take measures to improve water quality and enhance ecological conditions within the Easement. The area covered by the Easement is as generally depicted in the attached Exhibit A.
4. The conservation activities to be undertaken by the City within the Easement will facilitate and enhance educational opportunities available to students.
5. Accordingly, the Superintendent requests authority for the Treasurer and Board President, with assistance of legal counsel, to negotiate and sign an agreement conveying the Easement to the City and to negotiate and sign any documents consistent with the intent of this Resolution.

The Board of Education resolves as follows:

1. Treasurer and Board President, with assistance of legal counsel, are authorized to negotiate and sign an agreement conveying the Easement to the City, and to negotiate and sign any documents consistent with the intent of this Resolution.

Ms. Arnold: I was just surprised we didn't already have an easement there.

Mr. Stewart: This was a bit of a surprise to us as well.

F4 The Board of Education approved the following resolution:

AUTHORIZING AGREEMENT TO CONVEY AN EASEMENT TO COLUMBIA GAS OF OHIO, INC. FOR CONSTRUCTION, MAINTENANCE, AND OPERATION OF GAS LINES AND ASSOCIATED INFRASTRUCTURE

The Superintendent recommends the Board authorize an agreement with Columbia Gas of Ohio, Inc. (“Columbus Gas”), an Ohio corporation, conveying an easement (the “Easement”) to Columbia Gas, for the purpose of permitting Columbia Gas to install, maintain and operate gas lines and associated infrastructure over, upon, under, above and through property owned by the Board.

Rationale:

1. The Board is the owner of real property situated in the State of Ohio, County of Franklin, Township of Brown, lying in Virginia Military Survey 6637, commonly known as Parcel No. 120-001332 (the “Easement Property”).
2. As part of its Capital Improvements Project, the Board is constructing its New Brown Elementary School on the Easement Property (the “Project”).
3. Columbia Gas has requested the Board provide Columbia Gas with an Easement for the installation, maintenance and operation of gas lines and associated infrastructure, upon, above and through the Easement Property, in connection with the Project. The area covered by the Easement is as generally depicted in the attached Exhibit A.
4. Accordingly, the Superintendent requests authority for the Treasurer and Board President, with assistance of legal counsel, to negotiate and sign an agreement conveying the Easement to Columbia Gas and to negotiate and sign any documents consistent with the intent of this Resolution.

The Board of Education resolves as follows:

5. Treasurer and Board President, with assistance of legal counsel, are authorized to negotiate and sign an agreement conveying the Easement to Columbia Gas, and to negotiate and sign any documents consistent with the intent of this Resolution.

F5 The Board of Education approved the following resolution:

AMENDING PRIOR RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING GMP AMENDMENT NO. 2.1 FOR THE NEW BEACON
ELEMENTARY SCOPE OF PHASE 1 OF THE CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT

The Chief Operating Officer recommends the Board amend the prior resolution authorizing the negotiation and execution of GMP Amendment No. 2.1 for the New Beacon Elementary scope of Phase I of the Capital Improvements Project with Ruscilli Construction Company, LLC (“Ruscilli”).

Rationale:

1. The Board previously authorized a not-to-exceed amount for GMP Amendment No. 2.1 (“GMP 2.1”) for the New Beacon Elementary scope of the Capital Improvements Project in the amount of \$27,899,895.5
2. Due to unforeseeable delays with permitting during the Project preconstruction process, Ruscilli submitted a revised proposal for GMP 2.1 in a total amount of \$27,918,120, thereby increasing the cost of GMP 2.1 by \$18,225.
3. The Chief Operating Officer recommends the Board amend the prior resolution authorizing GMP 2.1, to account for the revised GMP proposal, and authorize the negotiation and execution of GMP 2.1 on behalf of the Board in an amount to not exceed \$27,918,120.

The Board of Education resolves as follows:

The Board hereby amends the prior resolution authorizing the negotiation and execution of GMP 2.1 and authorizes the Chief Operating Officer, Superintendent, Treasurer, and Board President to work with legal counsel to negotiate, finalize, and execute GMP No. 1 in an amount not to exceed \$27,918,120, and to execute any related documents on behalf of the Board.

Ms. Arnold: Do we anticipate any more movement on this, or do we think we're locked in?

Mr. Stewart: Actually, we were just talking about this. This is good until August 1st, so we'll know then. I would like to say yes.

G REPORTS / INFORMATION / EXHIBIT ITEM

G1 Committee Reports

Mr. Moog: I actually went to the senior coffee chat today. I got roped into being the speaker because they didn't have one. Tina Powell came and recruited me and said, "Would you speak?" I'm like, "Sure, happy to." So I just gave them a quick update on the construction projects that we've been talking about so far. They had some good questions, but it's really good to hear feedback from grandparents of their kids who have gone through the schools and the great experiences that they had through there. And I'm also planning on going to the senior day at the fair in two weeks. I bought my ticket today, so I'll see them over there. It's a fun group.

G2 Vouchers for Ohio

Mrs. Crowley: The discussion item G2, the Vouchers Hurt Ohio lawsuit, has, as we know, come up at several of our meetings during public participation. As the board president, I often get asked, "What does the board think about this item?" And the answer is, I don't know. Because of Sunshine Laws, we're not able to discuss it. We can only discuss it in a situation like this in public, which is great. But I just wanted to add that to our agenda and open it up for discussion to gauge how people feel about it. This is not an actionable item. It is just here for discussion. That's how I wanted to open it, and I just want everybody to be respectful. I know we all have different opinions, but just making sure we share how we feel so Dave and I can both listen and decide whether we need to put something on a future agenda as an action item.

Mr. Moog: I'll go ahead and start. I've got 50 pages of comments here. No, I've actually got four in large print, but I did put some thought into this and put some things down, and so I'm basically going to read what I've written down here. Firstly, thank you to our past speakers. I know Debbie and Cindy are here, and Maxene has come frequently as well, and others. So thank you for that, and for your thoughtful and respectful comments. As a citizen, a taxpayer, and a board member, I oppose the voucher program because I believe public education dollars should be primarily invested in public schools that serve all students.

The continued growth of the voucher funding has real implications for public school districts, including Hilliard's. But the discussion we're having and the decision we'll ultimately make are not simply about whether we support or oppose vouchers. Joining the lawsuit is a decision that should be considered on its own merits. It's important to separate the question of voucher policy from the question of whether joining the lawsuit is the right step for our district. While a successful outcome would not restore the dollars our district has already lost to vouchers, it could help protect future public education funding and reduce the amount diverted from public schools going forward.

Before making this decision, I want to ensure we have support and understanding from key stakeholders, including our educators through the HEA and our broader community. Community engagement and stakeholder buy-in are important considerations in determining our path forward.

When I consider whether to join, I don't view it solely as participating in the lawsuit. I also view it as a membership in the Ohio Coalition for Equity and Adequacy for School Funding, the group spearheading the lawsuit, and becoming part of a larger statewide effort focused on school funding issues. I see this similarly to other memberships we maintain, such as the Ohio School Board Association.

I also recognize that there's a meaningful financial commitment associated with joining. The \$2 per student cost comes to approximately \$33,000, compared to our annual OSBA membership of a little less than \$11,000. Whether or not the lawsuit ultimately succeeds, being a part of the lawsuit and being a member of the coalition sends a message to our policymakers that school districts across Ohio are paying attention to school funding issues.

Currently, participation includes six of Ohio's ten largest school districts, sixteen of the top twenty-five largest districts, and, as was mentioned earlier, 331, I counted this morning based on their website, 331 out of about 609 school districts. In Franklin County, eleven of our school districts are currently participating in this. This demonstrates solidarity among districts that believe the state's education funding policies need to be continually examined. It communicates to the state house that districts are working together to advocate for what they believe is a fair and sustainable approach to funding public education.

My opposition to vouchers is clear, but my decision on joining the lawsuit is based on what I believe best serves our district and our community. Ultimately, I want to ensure that whatever action we take reflects stakeholder input, uses our dollars wisely, and aligns with our district and board values. So, with that said, I still haven't fully decided which way I'll vote, but those are the things I'm considering as I'm contemplating everything.

Mrs. Crowley: One thing I wanted to add before we got too far in the discussion that I forgot in the intro was that Tony and I sat down with two of the Vouchers Hurt Ohio coalition members of the coalition that is giving money to the Vouchers Hurt Ohio lawsuit, Eric Brown and Bill Phyllis, and collected some information. We did bring three pages of questions from the board, which Tony was wonderful at, and left space for notes. But these were all sent to us by the five members of this board. We also reached out to HEA and let them know this would be on the agenda. They sent a statement at about four thirty this afternoon, saying they supported our joining, but without mentioning any actual actions they would take to support it.

Mr. Perry: So, one of the questions that I posed that was interesting to me was the possibility of the union contributing some kind of financial amount to the overall cost because there is a financial cost to this. Not a significant one from our budget perspective, but every taxpayer dollar is important. And when a group, or especially the teachers' union that works with us in partnership, openly advocates for us to make an expenditure that directly affects them, other school districts have found ways to help subsidize the cost. How are other school districts contributing? And I believe Lakota had found a way to contribute a percentage, I think it was maybe half or something like that, of their annual fee. Because it is annual, you have to renew it every year. School districts cannot allot funding indefinitely. It has to be for a definite period of time. I would be interested to see if HEA would be willing to contribute as well if they're going to advocate openly. We talked about stakeholders. To me, there are three main stakeholder groups. One, there's the administration and the district itself, the district employees. Then there's the union and the employees that they represent in the bargaining unit, who act as partners with us, and then there's the community as a whole, right? From my understanding, we don't necessarily have a large amount of community knowledge. It's not even that they don't have buy-in; it's that they don't know what's

happening, and they truly don't. There's an educational component to this that I think we really need to engage with. If this is something we're going to participate in, I would love to see additional community buy-in and input, as well as a show of support, from all three sections of the board, the union, and the community as a whole. I agree that input is incredibly important. Do you know how many other school districts are having their unions help subsidize? Did they mention that?

Mrs. Crowley: He only mentioned Lakota, and I believe that they are doing something. When I spoke with Lena on the phone, she had mentioned something about an outside dues collection, not using the dues that they collect currently, but like an opt-in type system. But the details of that were unknown.

Mr. Moog: The way Lakota collects that is so the coalition bills the school district, and then the school district pays it, so the union actually gives money to the school district, so it's routed that way.

Mr. Perry: What percentage of the total payments going to the coalition are being used for the lawsuit versus the coalition itself?

Mr. Moog: We were not given that information.

Mrs. Crowley: One thing that I think is important to note, I mentioned these three pages of questions that I had. As I was looking through them, you can see all of the spaces where I don't have any answers. And a lot of times I wrote down, didn't know, didn't know, didn't know, unknown, going to send later, unknown."

Mr. Perry: The Vouchers Hurt Ohio folks, you asked a question at the meeting.

Mrs. Crowley: So this was... Yes. So this was when we met them. They came to the meeting, and maybe Tony felt differently about this, trying to sell us on why vouchers are bad. But I agree with Tony. I don't need to be sold on that. I already have a certain view of those types of vouchers. Definitely not the vouchers where students are in financial need. I feel very differently about those. But I do believe that these other vouchers do hurt Ohio, so I didn't need to be sold on that. But what I wanted to know was the specific answers to your specific questions. And it was very difficult to get any of those answers. And when we even asked about the budget, somebody had sent the question, "How much money has been collected to date? How much money has been spent? How much money do they currently have on hand?" They could not even give us an estimate at the meeting. We said, "You don't have to give us an exact number, just an ish." They did send later, but it wasn't — We've never seen it itemized for what's been collected or how it's being spent. We were just given a total, which we sent to everybody. But many of these notes focus on how this started and where it's going. But a lot of the questions, as I said, are just unknown. How much money do you need? Unknown. If there's a surplus of money at the end, what will you spend it on? Unknown. They said they'll use it to continue fighting for public education funding, but they don't know how much money they'll need, how much they'll have left over, or exactly what they'll spend it on.

Mr. Perry: But this is an annual renewal, right?

Mrs. Crowley: Yes. Correct.

Mr. Perry: So if the lawsuit were to conclude, we could then, if we decided to join, of course, decide that we've done our part and that's enough for us. I don't love the indefinite nature. So, to put this in perspective, not to say like back in my day, but being the longest serving current board member here, this

has been going on since I've been a board member. This has been going on for six, seven years plus, and that's an annual renewal of expenditure. And so far has not expended. That's over; it's a six-figure plus number at this point for us. I do like the idea that this is finally going towards litigation, towards, we think, the Ohio Supreme Court level, at which point it cannot go further. That is the end, one way or the other. There hasn't been a ruling yet. From my understanding, they've finished oral arguments and whatnot, but there has not been a ruling at the appellate level. This is the only time I can talk about this in public, so I might as well do it here. I would be interested in a resolution with parameters for future action, with specific, explicit parameters to consider. I have a proposal before the board, or propose it at the-- it would be under a future action item. But the board will not join until XYZ is met, until an MOU from the union commits them to contribute a portion in a legal way they're allowed to do, as Lakota has. The Vouchers Hurt Ohio lawsuit is at the Ohio Supreme Court level, which means it has been appealed by one of the two parties. We know whoever loses will appeal it. So there's a specific, timely end date and a specific contribution backing up people's advocacy. I would even suggest that there be some sort of, I want a hundred, or a number of signatures from the community equivalent to one percent of the voting population here, to show that there's community support and buy-in as well. We need signatures to demonstrate we have enough support to be on the ballot. I have no issue with a certain signature count being verified by either the Secretary of State or the Franklin County Board of Elections, equal to a percentage of registered voters in the district. And once those things are met, I would have community support, I would have union support, I would know an end date, and I'd feel a lot more comfortable than with an indefinite, ambiguous proposal from folks who support things. But, I don't want to spend any money in the way that we need them to, especially when there's a financial component to this taxpayer dollars. That's, I'm spitballing a little bit here, but that's where I'm at with things. Obviously, I naturally oppose the universal voucher system. Most of those students who are going to the private schools anyway, there's hardly any accountability for those dollars that are taxpayer dollars. I think it's incredibly illegal. This is my professional opinion on the matter as an attorney. But so again, opposing the vouchers, joining the lawsuit, two different things but they go hand in hand. So that's my thoughts on it.

Mrs. Crowley: I think Tony and I were both surprised at the discussion that the group, the coalition, is funding the vouchers, but the money goes to the coalition. So the coalition was-- it's called the Ohio Coalition for Equity and Advocacy of School Funding. So we are not essentially paying the voucher lawsuit. We are paying a coalition that uses a portion of its funds to fund the lawsuit, but it also pays a portion of that money for publicity. When we asked about that, the question of how they're educating the community was very unclear. They said they send a quarterly newsletter. It only goes to superintendents. We've asked what they've done to educate the state of Ohio as a whole. As Cindy mentioned in her speech, we come across people who don't know about it, don't seem to care about it, and really couldn't give us an answer about... they said the radio's too expensive. Commercials are too expensive. They couldn't tell us how much they spent on those publications. Just a lot of unknowns there. And they also mentioned somewhere along the lines of 50 cents out of every two dollars going toward funding the coalition and the two people on salary. It's not... they're not making very much anyway. But not all of that money is going to the voucher lawsuit.

Mr. Perry: I just want to see an accounting from- I'd want to see an accounting from the coalition, because if we're essentially joining the coalition, I want to know what they're doing. And I think that's a fair question to ask. I know what OSBA does. We pay dues to them. We're a member. We show up, and we have a representative who goes and formulates the platform every year. I want to know what group we're advocating for because if they're doing something we obviously don't like, I'm not saying that they are, but we'd want to know that before we start funding a group that has free rein over their money, and I would want to know exactly where we are joining.

Mrs. Byler: I just want to second that, too. When we asked a lot of these questions about the finances, we were all in, or I was under the impression that the money per year is going solely to fund the lawsuit. And I think that the biggest surprise out of your guys' meeting was that it's not indeed going to the lawsuit, and that actually they have almost more funding for the lawsuit than they currently need to have the lawsuit. And so a lot of our questions were where does our money go then? We even asked, if so many districts are joining it, and you have all this money, is it going to be a lesser requirement then to join the lawsuit? Because once you're fully funded, why would we need to spend \$2 per child when we could spend less and still put our names on the lawsuit? They didn't seem to have answers for those, from what I read in what you guys sent. And so my issue also is the process. I would love to go on record and say that universal vouchers in Ohio are hurting public education. We have to educate every child that walks through our door. These other schools are getting public dollars, and they can turn anyone away they choose. It also includes religious education, which I don't think public money should fund. So I believe the argument here is not, again, about our position on vouchers, because I feel very strongly that vouchers are hurting public money. But the process here is saying we need to send \$33,000 dollars a year, with no end in sight currently, which is going to add up. What are we gonna message to the community is my biggest thing, and we want to be honest. I want to be as transparent as possible, and if we're going to say we're joining a lawsuit and that this money is going toward a lawsuit, it's really not fully going toward a lawsuit. It's going toward a coalition which is going toward... if we wanna get those answers so that when we say we're spending these tax dollars, we can say, "This is what this money is going toward." It looks on the surface like it's heading toward a lawsuit, but again, they have a lot of funding right now.

Mr. Moog: I'm looking at the email I got from Bill Phyllis after we met with him. Their fiscal year ended in June. I'll reach out to them and ask how we can access their books, if you will, rather than just getting their revenue and expense totals. So I'll see what I can find with that and share it with the board, because they should have that wrapped up here pretty soon, I would think, if it's not done already.

Mrs. Crowley: Yeah, that would be great. I agree with Sarah. I feel conflicted. I was just having a conversation with my husband this morning, who's also a public educator, and for every reason he was giving me to join, I was giving him reasons not to join. And then he was like, "Okay, then these are reasons not to join," and I was giving him reasons to join. So he was like you better make up your mind before six o'clock." And I was like, "I just wish the community could understand it's just not such a black-and-white issue." The way I feel about universal vouchers is very black-and-white. I have a strong stance, as I agree with Sarah, that vouchers do harm Ohio and that public education funding should go to public education. There's no doubt that I feel that way. And I wish that, if people were accepting public money, it came with transparency and accountability. I just think it's crazy that they could be accepting public money without the same type of transparency that we have to give.

But joining the lawsuit doesn't feel as black-and-white to me because, if it were me and they were like, "Kara Crowley, give \$25 to the voucher lawsuit," I would be like, "Sure." But as a board member, I feel a great responsibility for our taxpayers' money, and I just wish our taxpayers knew more about this issue. I wish they were more educated about it. I wish they cared about it. I wish they spoke about it. I wish they had begged us to join because I do think that they would feel a certain way about it if they knew what was going on. But we don't hear from them, and it feels different to spend money that doesn't belong to me, that belongs to this community, when we could be adding an aide to a classroom or another teacher or something like that. I always just struggle to make sure the dollars we have go towards kids. And also, as Sarah said, if we are going to spend this money, I want to be 100% sure that I can walk up to any person in the community and defend this wholeheartedly, and I don't feel like I'm there yet. I don't feel like I have

enough answers. And it's not because I haven't done my homework. I have. I have talked to so many people. I was on the phone with a board member from a different community on the way here, and I was like, "Why do I keep asking questions and coming up with more questions?" And she was like, "You're not alone in feeling that way." So I just feel like I've done a lot of homework, and I still feel like I'm left with a lot of questions and not a lot of answers. And I want to make sure that if I'm going to spend the hard-earned tax money of this community, like you guys mentioned, putting a levy on the ballot is so stressful. That changed me on a personal level. And also the teacher negotiations, I know how hard we fight for every dollar and cent in this community. And so I just want to be 100% sure that I'm giving it to a group that will use it in the very best way possible. If I'm taking it out of kids' hands, I want to be 100% confident where I'm putting it, and I just am not there yet. It's not a no. I'm just not sure yet.

Mr. Moog: I agree with you. I had dinner with friends of ours just before we came here, and he asked me, he goes, "Do you think our schools spend money wisely or is there waste in there?" I said, "I don't think we have any waste." I said, "We are agonizing over a \$33,000 expenditure on a 250-plus million dollar budget." So I'm in full agreement with you. I'm back and forth. I can argue on both sides. Joining and not joining, and there are some unanswered questions yet regarding the finances.

Mr. Perry: Did anyone ask why this is not a ballot initiative?

Mrs. Crowley: We did ask that, yes. Give me just a second to find it. But they seem to think that as a ballot initiative, it would've been a losing issue. Do you remember something from...(unintelligible)...

Mr. Perry: This has never been lost in any state where this has been tried as a ballot initiative. In red states and blue states, it's never once lost, and it wouldn't have taken seven years to do so before an entirely Republican Supreme Court.

Mr. Moog: Understood. And from my recollection, his response was...

Mrs. Crowley: I wrote down, "It'd be a very challenging process, and there would be a lot of smear campaigns."

Mr. Moog: And he said there would be a lot of expenses from out-of-state organizations, and that the coalition didn't have the money to run a statewide campaign like that.

Mr. Stewart: Just to jump in on that, I think understanding, as Kara said, they're an organization too. To run a statewide ballot campaign takes a huge infrastructure. So I'm sure that's why.

Mrs. Crowley: Kelley, do you have anything you want to...

Ms. Arnold: Yeah, I've been taking everything in, and I think there's a general consensus among us overall that if we were to put any resolution forward, it would be the fact that we oppose vouchers. Equally, everybody understands that this does hurt kids. This hurts kids who are in those schools. It hurts the overall system. So I think there's a general consensus there. But like we've said, what the heart wants and what the heart feels versus the nuances of an actual budget and spending other people's money. And that's where I have to pause. Brian and I sat in on the negotiations this year, and while I've always been someone who dives into our budget, it gave me a new appreciation for how these line items come about. And \$33,000 means something somewhere within that budget as we went through that process. So there's that piece of it.

But then I also look at it as the return on the investment, and I don't see that here. Mainly because when I look at it, this lawsuit has no remedy. In the end, it's—if it makes—well, it will make it to the Supreme Court. But let's just say the Supreme Court says, "Yes, this is unconstitutional." We will not necessarily see any further funding from that. While these dollars come out of the same line item, our legislature is not in the business of giving schools money these days. In fact, they actively look at ways to take it away. And when you look at what was commented on after the Tenth District Court of Appeals, there's no inherent connection between the EdChoice funding and the public school funding. They will be looking for ways to work around this, and that's where I pause before spending money that may not necessarily come back to our schools.

At one of the forums back in October of '25, Bill Phyllis actually said the Supreme Court might be a problem, and I would agree with that because we have a Supreme Court that doesn't even understand boneless chicken. So I don't know that they're even going to get this question right. But let's hope they do. Let's hope they understand the Constitution's context in this manner. But they cannot say you have to give public schools X dollars more. They can't. So that's where I get a little stuck on moving forward with joining the lawsuit, in addition to the questions that everybody's raised here about how that funding comes about. And Brian, you're right. Why not a ballot initiative? Again, it's a party of two, but everywhere it's gone, they've repealed legislation. It's not popular with people. People want their public dollars spent on public goods.

I'm going to wrap up with the thing that always gives me pause. Cindy, you said back in September, "I think this is our chance to band together and lay a foundation with other public schools in Ohio," and I think about that regularly. So I'm not saying no, never, but right now I'm not seeing the elements that say we should join on that work in the best interest of our kids and what we can do for them with the dollars we have. So that's where I land.

Mrs. Byler: I think if the idea is that the most school districts join the lawsuit possible, and we have, it seems again, like they're fully funded. I'm not saying that we get to just come in unfairly and do it for free. That's where there were many questions about how that would go forward, where it's easier for more of us to join, where it-- without this \$33,000 per year, it's endless. And again, it just seems like a strict two dollars, no questions asked, and I'm not sure that's the way to go about it when we're up here saying, "We are against the vouchers," but this piece. Again, that's a question for them. We'd love to hear more about how they can work with us. I think the idea is that we get six hundred districts on the lawsuit. And I think that's the goal above the money.

Mr. Perry: There was a school board member I was talking to recently who had another idea that their counselor floated around, which was joining as an amicus brief. And so, not actually joining as a named plaintiff in the lawsuit, but having their legal counsel, when it gets to the Ohio Supreme Court, write their own brief in support, saying that we're not a plaintiff, but from the outside looking in, we agree with the legal arguments being made. Again, showing that solidarity, if that's what this is about. 'Cause it's not about the funding. They're fully funded. If Hilliard doesn't join, nothing happens with the lawsuit. It's not about the funding coming back necessarily to us. It just means it won't go there. And I agree with it not going there. It shouldn't. But it doesn't mean it will come here. If it's about solidarity, an amicus brief would accomplish that goal. I'm not sure that's entirely the way we're going, but that is something that a board member from a different school district floated around to me, and I thought I'd bring it up, as it was an interesting conversation.

H EXECUTIVE SESSION / ADJOURNMENT

- H1 At 7:13 p.m., the Board of Education caucused to executive session to consider the appointment, employment, dismissal, discipline, promotion, demotion, or compensation of a public employee or official.