

Community Roundtable: Athletics & Extracurricular Activities

Monday, January 10, 2011 - Discussion Questions

Question 1: Save athletics or go without?

If a property tax cap goes into effect, the community would have three options regarding athletics:

- 1. Accept the loss of the athletics program.*
- 2. Save athletics by approving a larger budget that includes the athletics program with a 60 percent majority vote, assuming this is an option under an implemented tax cap.*
- 3. Raise enough money through the Athletics Booster Club to support the program independent of the district's general fund budget.*

Which option do you believe the district should pursue? Which option do you think the community would support?

- Regarding option 1 (accepting the loss of the athletics program)
 - People are tired of the idea of all or nothing.
 - This idea was unacceptable to most groups.
 - Other groups said cutting sports is completely unacceptable, but if it comes down to sports or teachers, sports would have to be cut.
 - Merging sports teams with other districts would be a better option than cutting them completely.
 - What would the savings be of merging?
 - Instead of cutting sports, could we scale back the ones we do offer?
 - The district should make an effort to let the public know the alternative—if there are not sports kids may end up spending their time unproductively, hanging out in the village with nothing to do.
 - Sports participation boosts academic performance.
 - For some students, athletics is the only thing that keeps them in school.
 - The effect of athletics literally saved some lives by helping kids become drug free.
 - There is a definite benefit of sports for kids on the “verge.”
 - There is a large demographic of people who are not in sports to consider.
- Regarding option 2 (saving athletics by approving a larger budget with a 60 percent majority vote (if a tax cap is enacted and the majority vote is required to override it))
 - Voter turnout would be extremely important with this option.
 - Community anger is often vented on the school budget, in other words, people vote no because they can.
 - One group was doubtful that this would be sustainable for more than a year.
 - Another group said, “It also smacks of holding the taxpayer hostage.”
 - Voting segments are not supportive of higher taxes, so this would have to be overcome.
- Regarding option 3 (the Athletics Booster Club supports the program independent of the general fund budget)
 - The Booster Club is doing the best it has done in a long time, but it can't raise \$290,000.
 - It would be a really big jump for the club to increase from \$10,000.
 - Other groups felt that even if the club could raise enough money for one year, it would not be sustainable.

- If the booster club can raise the money, it would be obvious that the community is supporting the program.
- Could alumni help raise money?
- Many individuals felt this wouldn't ease the burden on the taxpayer because they'd be paying through taxes or through donations.
- The public would want to know more about exactly how the booster club was spending its money.
- If booster money now pays for the main athletic expenses, what would happen to secondary costs like teams going to sectionals or the other items the booster club provides—special shirts, etc.
- One group said this would be challenging, but several members believe it is doable.
- It would make it necessary to end team fundraisers (for warm-ups, etc.) and redirect those efforts toward paying for needs as opposed to wants.
- Other thoughts
 - More than one group said the district needs to build the tax base and give people an incentive to move in—a loss of athletics would not be an incentive for people to move in.
 - Could we generate revenue with the turf and lights?
 - Could we hold an event to generate revenue, using the turf?
 - Could we encourage corporate donations or partnerships to generate revenue?
 - People on fixed incomes/budgets or those who don't want to pay for athletics need to be convinced of the value of sports.
 - During the Depression, people had to “do without” so those who lived through this era may see sports as extras—they may not have had them when they were in school.
 - Could coaches take a stipend freeze?
 - Could we partner with the Y to offer modified sports?
 - The district should be entrepreneurial beyond the boosters and look for ways to strategically support the operational budget.
 - Could coaches receive non-material benefits instead of pay? i.e. promotional consideration?

Question 2: Merging extracurriculars

Is merging athletic teams and extracurricular activities with other districts something that should be considered? Who should B-P consider merging with? And for what sports?

- Most groups felt merging is something that should be considered.
- The success of merging sports teams would depend on the number of students playing the individual sport and the proximity of the merging school.
- Wrestling, football and indoor track were sports that were mentioned as possible sports to merge.
- Merging sports seems like “nickel and diming.”
- If it saves money and increases (or retains) opportunity, then merge.
- We should merge sports if it will save them.
- People mentioned the possibility of merging wrestling with Galway or Mayfield.
- Cons of merging:
 - Current athletes might be excluded from making a team.
 - Transportation costs seem like they wouldn't be saved with a merger.
- **The idea of merging sports raised many questions.**

- Is a merger worth it? There was a very sour taste from the B-P merger.
- Would there be insurance issues?
- Where would practice be held?
- Would B-P then have to compete with bigger schools?
- Would merging sports mean a change in class?
- Would coaches favor their own kids?
- How much money would this actually save?
- Could the district add a swim team but eliminate something else?
- Could we trade indoor track for a tennis team?
- Could we invite other districts who don't have a team for particular sports to join ours?
(Galway might be a good district to try to merge with—they do not have tennis or football, but they do have a good wrestling team.)
- Athletics is such a small slice of the overall budget—where else can we cut?

Question 3: Booster club's role

If a tax cap is not enacted and the B-P athletics budget is at the bare minimum (which it essentially is now) should the booster club be expected to pay for some of the items the district is not legally required to fund?

- Raising money through the booster club could work, but most groups saw large obstacles:
 - Club is not organized by the school so the district is not in control of it.
 - The sports program would be at the mercy of the booster club being able to raise enough money.
 - Group has no obligation to the district.
 - Raising a large amount of money like this would be hard to sustain for more than one year.
- Some people felt that community members are already paying a lot into the booster club—it would be hard to pay more.
- Many taxpayers already struggle to pay their taxes.
- Could the booster club ask for money from corporations?
- Could more community businesses donate to the booster club? Would this help raise more money?
- The booster club has a good relationship with the district, but it would be hard for the district to rely on the booster club alone for athletics funding.
- Some people suggested that the booster club having to fundraise to support the entire athletics program is “just a proxy for pay to play.”
- One group suggested looking at ALL other options before asking the booster club to take this on.
- Another group suggested that there are currently too many fundraisers and people are often asked to buy things they don't really need. Asking for money for a specific cause might work better.