

# Twin Valley School Board Meeting – May 11, 2020

## Public Comment Responses

Posted Procedures for Public Comment at Virtual Board Meeting

Please email the following information to: [publiccomment@tvsd.org](mailto:publiccomment@tvsd.org), prior to the public section portion of the agenda.

1. Name
2. Address
3. Municipality
4. Phone Number
5. Topic
6. A brief summary of your concern and/or question

The Board President will recognize each emailed public comment/question during the public comment section of the agenda. Each individual's emailed comment will be read and/or displayed and is limited to a maximum of 3 minutes. Public comment is not a question and answer period directed to the Board, but a time for the public to submit comments to the Board.

---

The questions below were received and displayed during the live streamed public comment section of the board meeting on May 11, 2020.

Gary McEwen responded that since most of the questions were tax formula related the Business Manager would provide a detailed response and it would be posted on the website.

### **Michelle Raymond**

Twin Valley is expected to obtain \$440K in funding from the PA Education through the US Dept of Ed's Emergency Relief Fund. How does the District plan on spending these monies?

*TVSD response: The district will follow the proper procedure and application process to request the funds which will be used in accordance to the Cares Act parameters when they are received.*

Please provide an update on the planning for Fall.

*TVSD response: Dr. Pleis is a representative on the State level taskforce and local level information will be distributed to parents/guardians when available.*

Please include key stakeholders including Staff, Admin, Student Representatives, Taxpayers/Business owners as well as parents. Please include working parents, parents at each of the three school levels as well as parents with children with different educational needs.

*TVSD response: Thank you for your feedback*

### **Therese Mauchline**

I'm asking you to not raise taxes this year in Chester County. It seems like every year, taxes are raised in Chester County and not always in Berks County. I understand that your budget was potentially pushed out of whack due to COVID-19 as you had to make sure everyone had a computer. However, with COVID-19, many people have either lost their jobs or lost income due to the virus. This takes a long time to recoup and the stimulus money funded through the federal government was not enough to help us pay our bills. I say this with confidence and I know that both the Twin Valley Food Bank and the Honey Brook Food Bank have had increases in the amount of people they serve. I work at the Honey Brook Community Library and before the virus closed us, I saw how many people already were coming in to use the computers as they could not either afford the internet, afford the ink for their printer, or lost their jobs. Now, it is worse. The Honey Brook Borough and Honey Brook Township cannot afford this increase.

*TVSD response: Thank you for your feedback*

**Lisa Goldman**

Why is Chester County taxes increased and none for Berks County? We are the same school district yet Chester County has consistently had to pay higher taxes. The economy has tanked. Many people have lost their jobs or have taken pay cuts. I realize the school budget has to be met but it seems unfair to only tax a portion of the same school district, especially during this time.

*TVSD response: Business Manager's county tax comparison response is below*

**Scott B. Harre**

Where is it fair that not only is our millage rate higher, but now you want to increase Chester County tax and not Berks. What is the number of board members in Berks compared to Chester County? What you can't or don't want to pay more in taxes on your own property. I know times are tough, I'm a teacher myself, but fair is fair, if I have to pay more then so should everyone in the District. Or maybe you need to look at your budget again and make some of those hard decisions that many districts across the state have to make in these trying times. Many people are out of work and may not be in the best position to have to put more money out. Let's think about tabling this and looking at it again and do what is not only right, but fair. And one last comment, what happens if the state comes down and says that districts are not allowed to raise taxes, what's the plan then? Thank you for your time.

*TVSD response: Business Manager's county tax comparison response is below and thank you for your feedback.*

**John Skosko**

I would like an explanation for why my taxes should be increased, but those of Berks county residents would not be. We have experienced the same loss of income from the pandemic and our students receive the same education.

*TVSD response: Business Manager's county tax comparison response is below*

**James Johnson**

A brief summary of your concern and/or question:

I've just become aware of proposed increase to property taxes levied by the school district. Taxes in the district (and PA generally) are already excessive and it is unclear what would warrant an increase at this time. In addition to the burden this places on taxpayers, it is concerning that there would not be a surplus with what should be a reduction in facilities, transportation and activities expenses with closures that have taken place during the 2019-2020 school year.

With any proposed increase, I would expect to see published, and easily accessible, details to include the following:

- What expenses were not incurred by the district with state-mandated closures? If there were not savings here, why not and what is being done to rectify this rather than passing that on to the taxpayers in a future event?
- What projected expenses has the board considered cutting to mitigate the need for an increase (or heaven forbid, provide a decrease) in taxes?
- What is the impact to our school children if these cuts are made, so that the public is aware and provide meaningful feedback to support or correct the position of the board?
- Calculations used to justify the different millage for Chester vs Berks counties. I realize this is state mandated, which is perplexing since percentages are naturally equalizing, but as a taxpayer, insight into this is a must.

With the current situation any increased burden on families or businesses should be avoided, and relief might be in order. There has been a push in recent years to move school funding to state. Having lived in a state where this state-wide approach was taken, I can attest to it not being in the interest of our community, but continuing to raise already high taxes will only add fuel to that fire.

*TVSD response: Business Manager's county tax comparison response is below and thank you for your feedback.*

**Elizabeth Dumond**

I am very concerned and disagree with the constant tax increases by the school board. As in every other business you need to adapt and do more with less. You can't keep piling more and more burdens on our backs, especially the additional burdens we will be carrying after the COVID-19 situation. Our school taxes have gone up over 30% in the last 15 years! It's time to be creative with the budget and resources and stop increasing our taxes!

I am not adding my address or phone number, as the procedures state this information will be displayed or read publicly. If you would like to contact me please reply to this email. Thank you.

*TVSD response: Thank you for your feedback.*

**Messages received after the Monday, April 20 board meeting comment section**

I propose an interactive zoom call. This should be a back and forth question and answer time as other districts also allow. This should also be publicly posted as Downingtown has done.

Who hosts this? A chat was enabled and then taken down?

**Jessica Bickley**

*TVSD response: Thank you for your feedback.*

TV School Board,

Thank you for taking my question.

**Mike Labruto**

Topic: Athletic funding

Question: The discussion held during tonight's (20Apr) meeting regarding the lacrosse funding does not respect the interests of all student athletes. Three sports that do not currently receive funding; they are swimming, wrestling, and lacrosse...each of which have been brought to the board for funding consideration during the last calendar year. The board's response to all three sports was that the board will look at all the numbers to see what could be done, and it was a topic that the board wants to consider.

The board choosing only to discuss funding for Lacrosse, demonstrates the board's bias towards one sport over the others. The athletes in each sport deserve to be treated equitably and so does their safety. Students in these sports drive their own cars to events, and without appropriate funding for each, the board has chosen to accept the risk that this presents to our athletes, as one example.

Will the board review the comprehensive athletic budget for all sports so that the commitment given to those teams by the board can be upheld?

Thanks In advance for your consideration,

Mike LaBruto

*TVSD response: Thank you for your feedback.*

### **Business Manager's County Tax Comparison Response**

*As indicated at last evening's Board Meeting, the question of multiple tax rates within a district is confusing when attempting to compare between municipalities and counties.*

*The issue with comparing properties in multiple counties is that each county has the option to assess on its' own timeline. Therefore, some counties have chosen to reassess properties periodically (i.e. 5-year, 7-year intervals, etc.) while other counties delay the process. In fact, there are counties within Pennsylvania that have not been reassessed since the late 1960's (i.e. Bucks) resulting in assessed values that are a small fraction of the actual market value.*

*Because of the above factor, the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) must take into consideration the difference in "market" versus "assessed" value between Berks and Chester Counties in order to establish tax rates for the Twin Valley School District. Market Value does not equate to Assessed Value. When a property is purchased it is at "market" value (cost of the property) but the annual tax bill is based upon the "assessed" value. The assessed value has been placed on the property by the County Government in prior years and is only based upon the value of the land and structure, not including the "amenities" added to that property.*

*The Commonwealth uses a State Tax Equalization Board (STEB) calculation, but it is easier to think of this in terms of percentage of market value. Berks County has an assessed value that is approximately 75% of the market value of properties, whereas Chester County's assessed value is approximately 70% of the market value. As a result, when PDE considers tax rates, the calculation for Chester County includes an adjustment for this "lower" assessed value and requires a slightly greater tax increase to be equivalent to the Berks County properties.*

*PDE calculates the permitted increase (index) on the lower values, and therefore, until Chester County updates their assessments, they will continually have a slightly larger increase because of this variable. Should Chester County reassess and Berks County delay that process, the future may require a reversal of this calculation (see attached history chart) with higher increases in Berks County.*

## Twin Valley School District Millage Rate and Act 1 Index History

Fiscal Year	Berks County	Chester County	Act 1 Index	Millage Rate Changes		
				Average % Increase	% Increase Berks County	% Increase Chester County
2001-2002	16.9000	16.9000				
2002-2003	16.9000	18.0000		3.25%	0.00%	6.51%
2003-2004	17.6000	18.9000		4.57%	4.14%	5.00%
2004-2005	17.7000	18.9000		0.28%	0.57%	0.00%
2005-2006	18.1000	18.9000		1.13%	2.26%	0.00%
2006-2007	18.6000	19.0000	4.50%	1.65%	2.76%	0.53%
2007-2008	19.3000	19.5000	3.40%	3.20%	3.76%	2.63%
2008-2009	20.3000	21.1000	5.10%	6.69%	5.18%	8.21%
2009-2010	21.4000	21.3000	4.80%	3.18%	5.42%	0.95%
2010-2011	21.7000	22.5000	3.40%	3.52%	1.40%	5.63%
2011-2012	22.0000	23.2000	1.40%	2.25%	1.38%	3.11%
2012-2013	22.6000	24.3000	1.70%	3.73%	2.73%	4.74%
2013-2014	23.8814	25.4606	2.00%	5.22%	5.67%	4.78%
2014-2015	24.5425	26.8903	2.40%	4.19%	2.77%	5.62%
2015-2016	25.7406	28.0028	2.30%	4.51%	4.88%	4.14%
2016-2017	26.7702	28.6049	2.80%	3.08%	4.00%	2.15%
2017-2018	27.5465	29.4248	2.90%	2.88%	2.90%	2.87%
2018-2019	27.5465	29.4248	2.90%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
2019-2020	27.5624	30.1215	2.70%	1.63%	0.06%	2.37%
2020-2021 Prelim	27.2529	30.4688	2.60%	0.00%	-1.12%	1.16%

\* - Refer to 2020-21 Preliminary Budget Millage Rate Calculation