

Referendum Communications

West Lafayette Community School Corporation



July 5, 2023



AGENDA

1. Introductions
2. Building Trust
3. Situation Analysis
4. Referendum Communications
5. Timeline, roles, next steps

DEHLER PR

Educate. Communicate. Motivate.

About DehlerPR



CORE FOCUS

Purpose/Cause/Passion:

We improve communities through exceptional public relations, marketing, and strategic counsel.

About DehlerPR



**OUR
NICHE**

Public sector; school districts

About DehlerPR



CORE VALUES

- Trusted, Experienced
- Passionate, Principled, Problem solvers
- Caring, Committed, Counselors

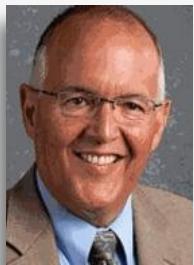
Meet Our Team



Jeff Dehler, APR, “Chief Relationship Builder”
More than two decades in PR. Louisville, KY



Dave Beery “Account Manager” Extensive experience in school PR and journalism. Fishers, IN



Ron Wilke “Senior Strategic Counselor”
40-year veteran of public schools. La Crescent, MN



Jayne Helgevold “Account Manager” Experienced in marketing and community engagement. Macon, GA

Our Approach | RPIE



RPIE: The Four-Step Communications Process

Effective communication sets and meets objectives to ensure our messages are effectively reaching the intended audience. The four steps of the process are:

DehlerPR adheres to the world-wide, industry-standard, four-step communications process of **Research, Planning, Implementation and Evaluation**, a process championed by the Public Relations Society of America and the National School Public Relations Association.

We overlay this process with our corporate values: We listen intently to client needs, dig deep to understand the situation, and work closely with clients to address their unique needs, and the unique needs of client stakeholders. **Always unique; never a cookie-cutter approach.**



About DehlerPR



SERVICES

- Strategic counsel
- Communications planning
- Branding/Messaging
- Marketing (including referendum)
- Crisis communications
- Traditional and social media relations

Referendum Websites



THE ROAD THROUGH LIFE BEGINS HERE.

Canvas | ParentSquare | PowerSchool | SchoolPay | ZCS Portal | Select Language | ▾

 **ZIONSVILLE**
COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

DISTRICT ACADEMICS SCHOOLS STUDENTS PARENTS STAFF COMMUNICATIONS

[Referendum Information](#) » What is the Plan?

WHAT IS THE PLAN?

Looking backward with PRIDE and forward with a PLAN.

A two-question referendum is proposed for Nov. 5, 2019, one question to build an elementary school, add on to the high school, and perform maintenance and renovations at all schools; the second question would extend our current operating levy by eight years.

We propose to build a new elementary school, add 32 classrooms to the high school, and facilitate long-term maintenance, repairs and renovation at each of our buildings, affecting the 1.6 million square feet ZCS uses to educate more than 7,000 students. The proposed facilities tax rate of (19.69 cents) would still bring the aggregate school tax rate to a lower level than in the current year. (To \$1.268 from this year's \$1.298). The rate will decrease because previous building bonds are being paid off.

We propose to extend the current Operating referendum at the same maximum tax rate of 24.4 cents for eight years. This is an extension of the same rate that was originally authorized in 2012 and extended in 2015. One hundred percent of the levy derived from this tax rate goes to classroom teachers, counselors and other specialists like speech and hearing teachers. This maintains reasonable class sizes and allows us to continue providing top notch education to a growing community.

Click here to read the [actual ballot questions](#).

TIMELINE

The new elementary school is proposed by 2022 while the high school classroom space is expected to open by 2023-2024. All facility and enrollment capacities are based on deep studies so the timeline is based

- Looking Forward With A Plan
- Referendum Information - Why Now?
- Challenges
- What is the Plan?**
- Tax Calculator
- ZCS Situation - Managing Increasing Enrollment
- What Was the Process?
- Media
- Resources
- FAQs
- Election Information
- Recommendation to the Board of Education
- Referendum Advocacy Rules

[Zionsville](#)
[Monroe](#)

Referendum Video

DEHLER PR



YouTube (708) Benton Community Sci X +

← → C ⌂ youtube.com/watch?v=JgW2pWd21tE

Google Bookmark Gmail - Inbox (3) - j... Welcome to Facebook! Blogger: Nourishm... The Current from M... Spotify Web Player WordPress Investments Music Bills Indy Indy B...

☰ YouTube Premium Search

Jim Schoen
HOOSIER ASSOCIATES, INC.

Benton Community Schools When You're Here You're Home

DehlerPR 5 subscribers

Subscribe

Like 0 Share Download Save

The video shows a man named Jim Schoen speaking to the camera in a school setting. He is wearing glasses and a dark sweater over a striped shirt. The background features a school gymnasium with a large "BISON" sign. The video is titled "Benton Community Schools When You're Here You're Home". The DehlerPR logo is visible at the bottom left, and the video has 5 subscribers.

[Zionsville](#)
[Benton \(1\)](#)
[Benton \(2\)](#)
[Other samples](#)

E-Newsletters

DEHLER PR



Zionsville eNexus

Branding

DEHLER PR



PANTONE 541 C



PANTONE 193 C



Branding

DEHLER PR



Direct Mail

DEHLER PR



Pre-Referendum Timetable



November Timeline

January - May: Internal and public facing communication

February: Public opinion survey

February: Staff Meetings

February - March: Community based committee/task force - 3-6 meetings

April: Community meetings, online and in-person

May - June: School board work sessions and decision

Referendum Timetable



November Timeline

April: PAC leadership recruitment, draft communications plans and timeline

May: PAC kick-off meeting, organization; District campaign rollout: Key messages, brand, website, fact sheet

August: Yes voter identification, tabling at events, activities; district mailing

September: Yes voter identification, tabling at events, activities

October: Yes voter identification, Get out the vote activities; district mailing

November: Election

Contact Us



YOU HAVE ONLY SO MANY HOURS IN A DAY

You are busier than ever and may not be able to afford a full-time communications person. A communications consultant could be your solution, as we can:

- Develop key messages & tell your good news
- Identify & reach varying audiences
- Produce newsletters/e-newsletters
- Manage crisis communications
- Guide referendum strategies
- Customize our services to your needs.

The DehlerPR team is a combination of in-house staff and strategic partnerships with accomplished professionals who have experience in many industries. Our virtual agency brings us to your doorstep in-person, via video conference, phone or email.

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Public Relations is the management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the publics on whom its success or failure depends.

Broom, “Cutlip & Center’s Effective Public Relations”

WHY COMMUNICATE?



Why Communicate?

- Retain resident students
- Build community support to help you - referendum
- Create understanding
- Maintain or improve staff morale and confidence
- It's good business



BUILD

TRUST

DISCUSSION

- What does a trusting relationship look like?
- What fosters a trusting relationship?
- What gets in the way of a trusting relationship?

Group Norms

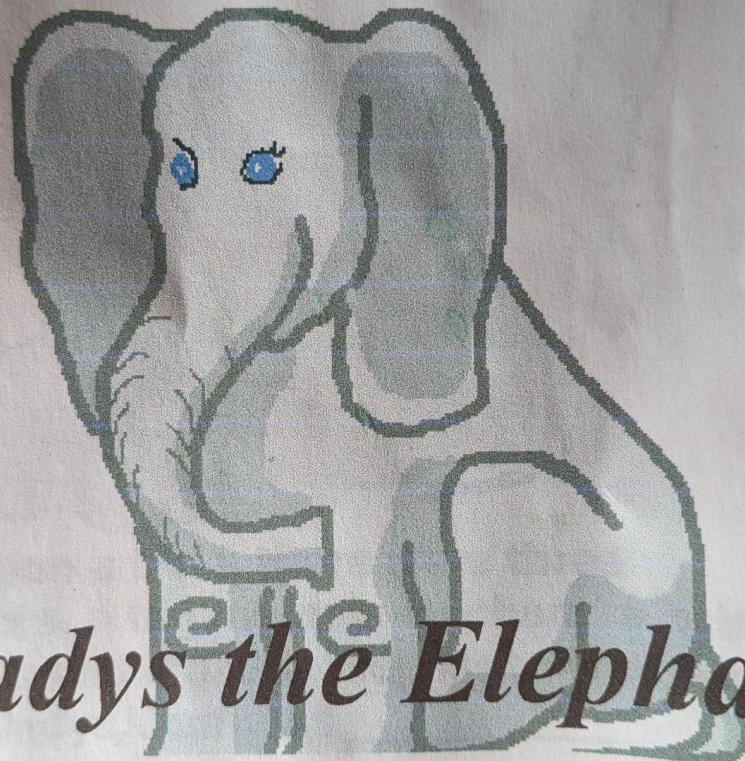


DISCUSSION

- What does a trusting relationship look like?
- What fosters a trusting relationship?
- What gets in the way of a trusting relationship?

DISCUSSION

- In the context of the school corporation and its publics – staff, families, key stakeholders – what are the results of a trusting relationship?



Gladys the Elephant

WL schools will ask voters to renew property tax referendum in November

School board starts process to continue a 37-cent property tax referendum for next eight years, aiming for the ballot in November. Current referendum passed with 94% of vote in 2017.



DAVE BANGERT
JUN 13, 2023 • PAID

“At one point, a member of a dwindling audience in a Happy Hollow Elementary multi-purpose room interrupted the board’s back-and-forth, asking them to knock it off and just move on.”

DISCUSSION

- What is the impact of this behavior on the school corporation's relationship with your publics?
- Can board members disagree and still have a positive impact on public relationships? How?

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West Lafayette SITUATION

What is the situation?

- More than 2,400 students in K-12 programs
- Elementary, intermediate and junior/senior high school
- Recognized as high achieving by Niche, U.S. News & World Report, and the National Association of Music Merchants Foundation

What is the situation?

- Average household adjusted gross income nearly \$20,000 higher than the state median; net assessed value per pupil of nearly \$100,000 greater than the state median at more than \$482,000
- Racial makeup: 20% Asian, 65% White, and 3%-6% Black, Hispanic and two races

What is the situation?

- Of 290 school corps in IN, West Lafayette ranks 288 for total state tuition support per pupil
- Circuit breaker credits reduce the operations fund by 31%
- The referendum levy is 18% of the total budget
- The corporation is expected to seek voter approval to renew the 37 cent levy on November 7

POLITICAL
SITUATION

Political Situation

- Voters approved operating levy referenda in 2010 and 2017 by 65.5% and 94.3%, respectively
- Previous PAC (YES Committee) politically charged
- Voter turnout is not expected to be high – only referendum and municipal elections on the ballot
- County tends to vote Democrat in presidential elections
- Because the levy doesn't expire until next year, a loss would allow WL to seek approval next year without losing revenue

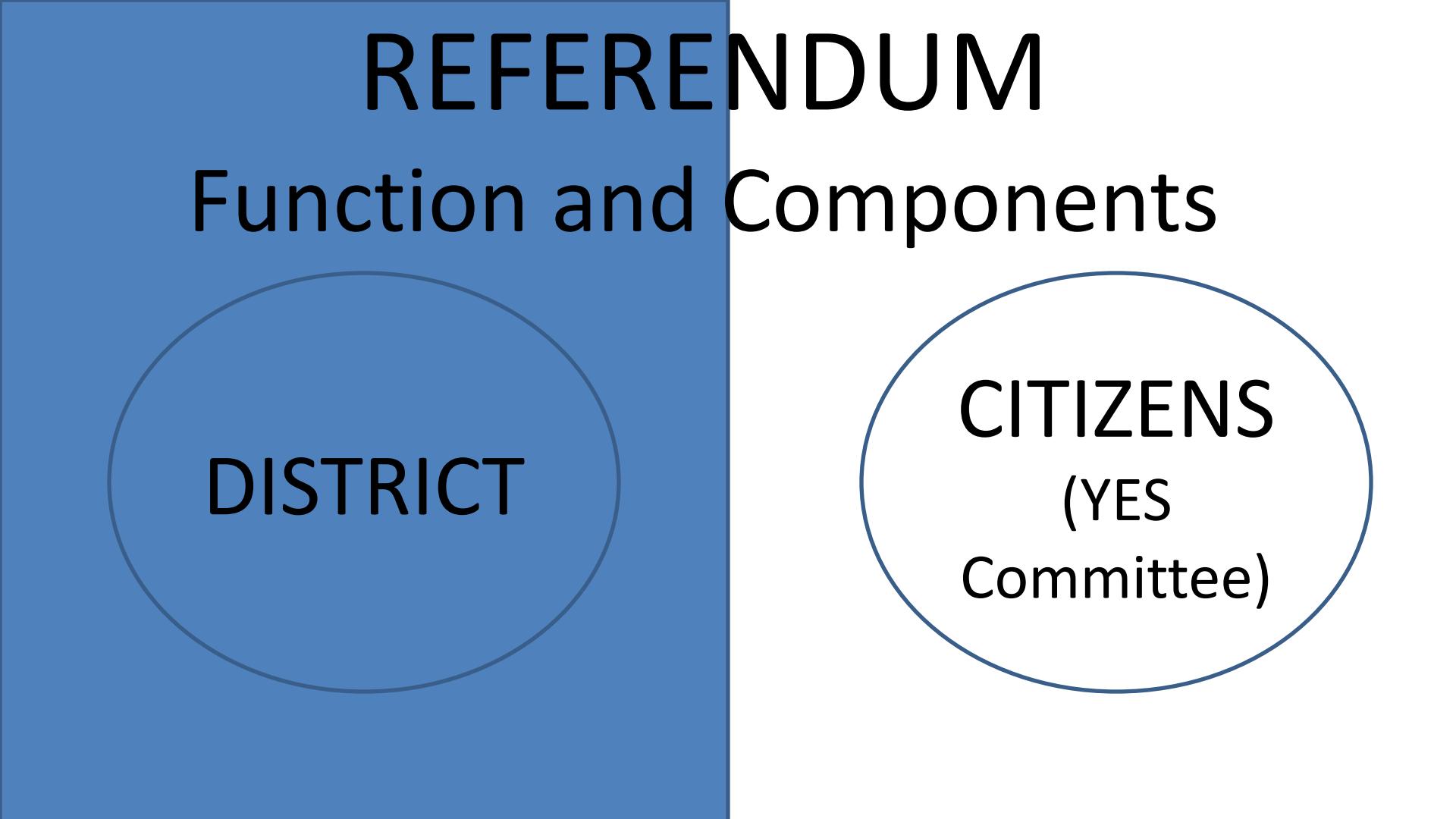
DISCUSSION

- SWOT Analysis

REFERENDUM COMMUNICATION

REFERENDUM

Function and Components



DISTRICT

CITIZENS
(YES
Committee)

IC 20-46-1-20

A school corporation can only provide factual information beginning on the date the school board approves a resolution to place a referendum on the ballot.

It cannot advocate for or against the ballot question.

Prior to that date, it can advocate for or against the question.



Indiana Statehouse Photograph by Vinnie Oliveri

IC 20-46-1-20

School board members,
the superintendent,
an assistant superintendent,
and the business manager
may personally advocate
for or against a referendum,
so long as it is not done by
using public funds.



Indiana Statehouse Photograph by Vinnie Oliveri

District informational campaign

- The goal is an informed citizenry.
- The district must provide information about the campaign in a neutral manner.
- District funds must not be used to promote the election's outcome.
- Districts may use funds for a neutral informational campaign.



Political Action Committee (the “Vote Yes” group)

- The YES Committee operates independently of the district.
- The goal is to pass the referendum.
- The individuals who work on the promotional campaign have a great deal of latitude in their promotional work.
- The promotional campaign raises and spends private funds.



STRATEGY

4 Steps to Success

1. Community Engagement
2. Good Project
3. Good District Story
4. Committed Advocates



District Information

- Research, comprehensive plan
- Website, social media, email
- Direct mail
- District newsletter
- Presentations and meetings

Communicate facts with all

YES Committee

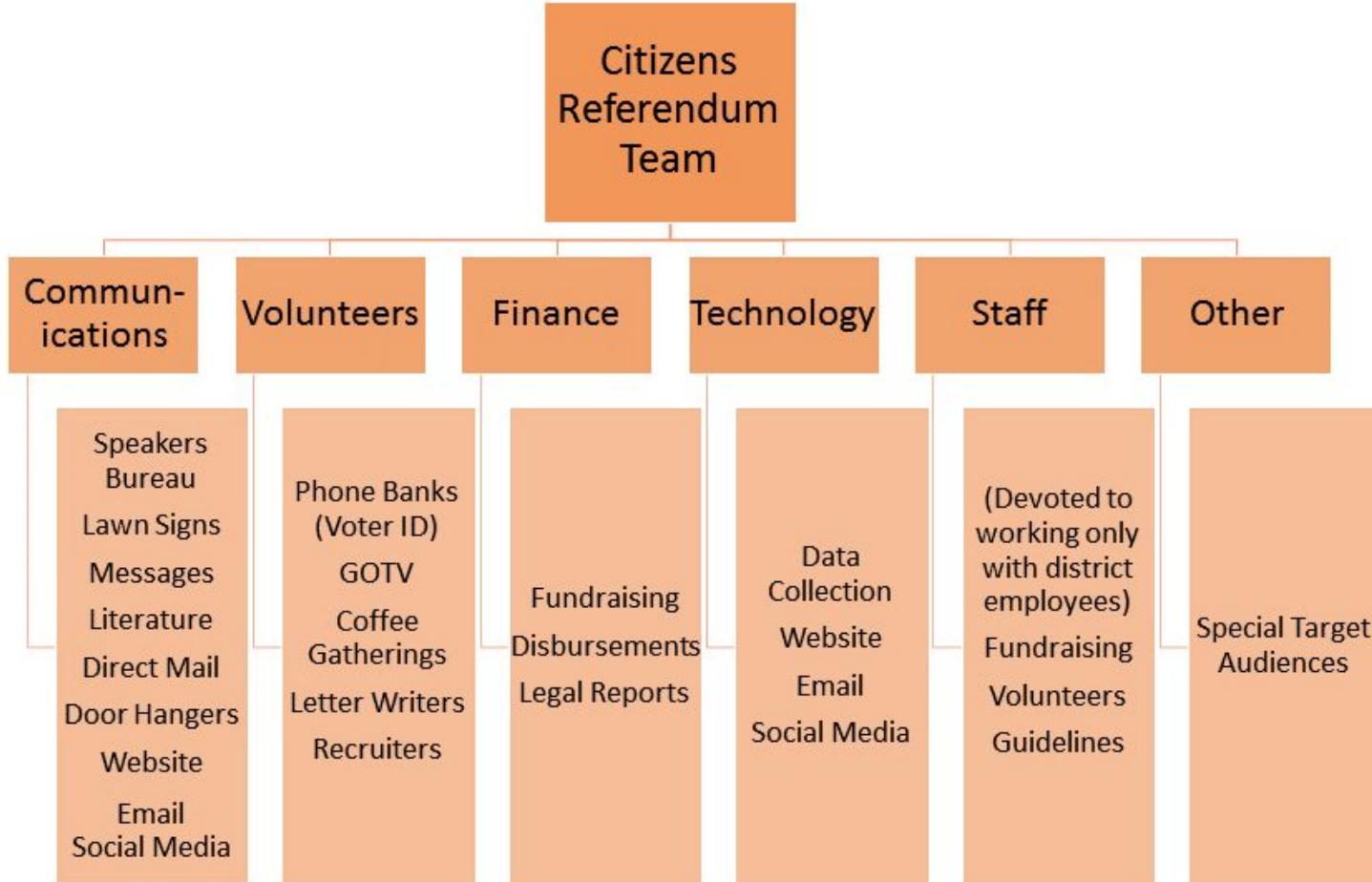
- Political campaign approach
- Persuasion – Meetings, displays, TARGETED marketing
- Concentrate on Yes voters
- GOTV

Identify YES voters and get them to the polls

ROLES & NEXT STEPS

YES Committee: Getting started

1. Committee leadership
2. Review election law, get a bank account
3. Recruit volunteers (staff home contact info)
4. Plan strategy and budget
5. Fundraise
6. Obtain voter file, determine number of votes needed



Admin Team

STAFF

- Educate, answer questions
- Recruit staff for committee

PARENTS

- Answer questions
- Info displays in parent trafficked spaces
- Committee tables at events
- Site teams systematic parent engagement

School Board Members

- Be visible in your support
- Serve as community “eyes and ears”
- Share district informational messages – concise and consistent
- Can take any role on citizen’s committee
- Lead by example
- Keep superintendent informed
- Attend open houses, presentations
- Network

DISCUSSION

- What scenarios can you expect when interacting with community members?

Referendum Communications Timeline - DRAFT

July	August	September	October	November
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kick-off meetings• Research• Communications Plan and Timeline• Committee organization• Theme• Key Messages	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Campaign brand• Website phase 1• Fact Sheet Mailing• Yes voter identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Website phase 2• Ongoing communication• Meetings with key stakeholder groups• Yes voter identification• Get out the early vote activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ongoing communication (enews, social, etc.)• Meetings with key stakeholder groups• Yes voter identification• Get out the early vote activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Get out the vote• Post referendum communication

DISCUSSION

- What can you do or say prior to when materials are made available?

It's about...



If you don't speak
for kids, who will?

