

**May 3, 2024**

Hey all,

Here's this week's report.

Blessings and keep the faith.

Bill

### **Williamson County Schools**

There weren't any meetings this week, but next week the **policy committee is meeting on Monday at 6:00 pm** in the Training Center on the 1st Floor at the Williamson County Administrative Building at 1320 W. Main, Franklin.

This is going to be a very interesting meeting because they will be addressing major changes to their library policy [agenda](#). We are talking about wholesale changes that include detailed depictions with regards to nudity, sexual acts and violence. They have never had a policy that is so explicit. Also, included in the agenda is the "decision tree" (I am **attaching** one that is easier to read) that was discussed a couple of months ago. The definitions used in the proposed policy are taken from [TN code 39-17-901](#) and the current bill just passed and signed into law to enforce this is [SB1060](#).

If you are interested in **contacting** your school board rep about this, Ron Benkert put together a well thought out challenge to his board member **see attached**.

There has been a lot of discussion about the gun bill recently passed by the general assembly and the subsequent response from superintendent Golden. He flatly stated that Williamson County Schools have plenty of SROs and don't need armed teachers, consequently, he will not allow teachers to conceal carry in our schools. This is a contentious issue and there is a lot of emotion on both sides. If you have an opinion on this, you need to contact your school board rep and let them know your thoughts.

I do have a **correction**. Last week I said, incorrectly, that implementing the teacher conceal carry law was solely at the discretion of the superintendent; that is wrong. The superintendent, principal and sheriff all have the power to say no. If the superintendent or the sheriff says no, it goes for the entire school district, if the principal says no, it goes for his/her school.

For the record, here are the **basics** of the new law. At teacher needs to:

Get the approval of the superintendent, principal of his/her school and local law enforcement which, in our case, is the sheriff. Any one of the three can prevent a teacher from carrying in the classroom.

Attending **40 hours** of training with his/her school and local law enforcement.

Acquire an **enhanced** conceal carry permit. A person can apply for a concealed carry online in Tennessee by answering a bunch of questions. An enhanced permit requires 8 hrs of training at a shooting range.

Undergo a psychological evaluation by a licensed psychologist.

Be fingerprinted; twice.

**Pay for** all training, as well as his/her gun and ammunition.

Here is the original [bill](#) with [amendment three](#) that was added prior to final passage.

As you can see, this whole process is quite involved, and my guess is that not many teachers are going to want to do this. It is a real commitment and most people don't want the responsibility. If someone is willing to go through all of this and pass every test, then I'm good with them carrying a gun in a school.

The next **work session** is May 16<sup>th</sup> and the next **board meeting** is May 20<sup>th</sup>.

### **Williamson County Commission**

There were three meetings of note this week. On Monday, the education and budget committees met, and the budget committee met again on Tuesday. My notes from the **budget committee**:

TISA funds for the 24-25 school year are down \$2.5m and there are \$37m+ in capital improvement requests.

The Sheriff's dept. is looking for about six new cruisers at \$73K a piece but can make do for another year if necessary.

The EMS is looking to purchase several new ambulances at anywhere from \$200k-\$300K. Our county EMS is managed by Williamson County Health and they only get 30% of what they bill for service, which is in line with the national average which means that we are losing money on our ambulances.

Fire trucks cost approx. \$3m and take five years from time of order to delivery. They are going up in price every year. The cost has doubled in the last three years.

I had to leave early to attend the county education committee, but costs are going up for everything.

My notes from the **Monday education** committee are:

According to Superintendent Golden, without the 6% raise mandated by the governor, WCS budget would be in the black.

WCS is in the 39<sup>th</sup> percentile for cost per student in the state at \$574,287,035/ 42,000 students = \$13,673

Franklin special school district is \$18,000 per student.

Our tax rate is at 1.83 per \$100 of assessed value down from 2.87 in 2016.

It was pointed out that there are 1,700 spaces available in the Nolensville elementary schools combined.

WCS is looking to build a new elementary school in Nolensville and Southern Land Developers may donate the land. The piece they are looking at has wetlands on it.

Student growth for school year 2024-45 is expected at .049 which equals less than ½%

WCS has rezoned districts in order to avoid building new schools.

Hunters Bend is an example of a school that is underpopulated.

Houses are not selling right now so the growth of new families with kids has slowed.

We have had SROs in our schools for years and there is no need for a teacher to carry a firearm.

The decision to allow a teacher to carry is between the superintendent and the principal.

In the last three years, teacher pay has increased 25% for lowest paid and 18% for experienced.

The governor has mandated that every teacher in the state should make a minimum of \$50,000 per year.

There are three factors impacting the increase of the WCS budget: state requirements, the market and inflation.

It was pointed out the Rutherford County Schools budget is about the same as WCS' and they have 8,000 more students.

The cafeteria budget passed at last meeting at \$19,949,969 is now 19,668,669 and passed again unanimously.

The extended school budget at 7,097,489 passed unanimously.

The general fund vote at \$574,287,035 split three for and three against

The question of the impact fees at \$65 million came up. Can we use that?

\$13+ million for capital expenditures passed with one no vote.

TISA money was down for this year and comes in at \$5,496,232.

\$12,881,249 was passed for information, technology and security needs with one no

\$11,405,000 was passed for asphalt, roofs and HVAC unanimously.

Project five-year capital plan for \$961,352,277 passed with two no's.

My notes from the **Tuesday budget committee**:

It was all about the WCS school budget. Here is where we are for the 24-25 WCS budget.

Total operational budget	\$557,560,228	Up from \$466,633,379 in 22-23
Projected revenue	\$493,112,433	
Est fund balance	\$62,888,396	
Total resources	\$566,000,829	
3% mandatory retention	\$16,726,807	
Budget shortfall	<b>(\$18,286,206)</b>	

On top of the \$18m shortfall are three requests for capital improvements which are not part of the operational budget and they are:

Information, technology and security needs for \$12,881,249

Major asphalt, roofs and HVAC needs for \$11,405,000

Maintenance, technology, and general for \$13,155,596

For a total of **\$37,441,845**

Capital improvements are normally paid via bond issues and do not come from taxes.

WCS is saying that they may be able to find **another \$5m** in cuts to the operational budget. The budget committee asked if there were any cuts in the capital requests and were told that they were all necessary and that not addressing them now could cause additional damage and costs later on. As an example, if a leaky roof is not fixed the water damage that could accumulate over a year's time would only exacerbate the problem and cost more in the long run.

There are two items on the overall budget that normally make money each year. One is the **cafeteria fund** and is projected to have a positive balance of \$8,144,629 for 24-25. The other is the **extended school** program which is projected to have a positive balance of \$1,190,582 for 24-25. For some reason, neither of these balances are allowed to be used to offset the shortfall. I think it is because they get government money.

One way to guess how well our school district is doing with costs is to compare us to another relatively equal school district. Below is a brief comparison of WCS to Rutherford Schools:

Rutherford County schools have 49,000 students compared to our 41,000 and yet for the school year 23-24 their original budget was \$518m compared to our \$517m.

Rutherford County pays their teachers more than we do.

In 2022, Rutherford County superintendent was making \$215,000 per year with a \$5,000 increase each year. In that same year, Jason Golden was making \$270,504. I am told, by a trusted source, that Golden is now making over \$300,000 but have not been able to verify it myself.

There is a County **Budget committee meeting** scheduled for this Monday at 4:30 pm. If you want to see how they work their way through this process, I highly recommend that you attend. [Here](#) are the details.

### **Williamson County Election Commission**

Nothing to report for this week, but I do have an interesting article about voting fraud by John Eastman that is worth the read. Go [here](#).

### **Board of Mayor and Aldermen (BOMA)**

There were three meetings this week and there are three scheduled for next week. You can go [here](#) to access the full information on them.

### **School Board Race**

The school board races are gearing up and should be in full swing in the next few weeks. I currently have a list of 37 people who are willing to volunteer for the various candidates. If you would like to get on that list, please reply and I will happily put you on it.

Or, if you prefer, contact any of the candidates and let them know you want to volunteer. We need to get every one of them elected if we want to make any significant changes to the direction that Williamson County Schools is currently heading.

**The election is on August 1st. and early voting runs from July 12-27.** We need folks who are willing to do the following:

**Knock on doors for the candidates.** Face to face, person to person is very powerful. It lets people know that the election is important and why. It also allows the homeowner to ask questions and get clarification on the issues. As we get schedules from the candidates, we will be sending out a **signup genius for each candidate.**

**Put up yard signs.** First, you can put a yard sign at your home (if you live in an odd district). Secondly, we may have a need for a few of us to put out signs for some of the candidates and finally, you can encourage friends and neighbors who live in an odd district to take a sign.

**Hold signs at voting places.** During early voting and on election day, we need people to hold signs at voting locations. It may be hard to believe, but many people who come to vote don't know much about any of the candidates. At the last election, I was holding a sign for a candidate and several people stopped to ask about her and some of them were very favorable after talking with us.

**Attend and encourage others to attend any event put on by the candidate(s).** Meet and greets, campaign kickoffs, debates and forums are great places for potential voters to size up the candidates. The more we get people out to see our candidates the better.

**Talk to people at your church, service organization, Bible study, bridge club etc.** We all need to be talking about the candidates and recruiting everyone we know to get informed and get involved. This is a group effort and we all need to pitch in to ensure that our candidates become school board members and not also rans.

**Write them a check.** Campaigns aren't free. Flyers, yard signs, text messages, videos all cost money.

Here are the candidates:

District 1  
Republican Tony Bostic. [website](#)

District 3  
Republican Dr. Dennis Driggers [website](#)

District 5  
Republican Dr. Margie Johnson. [website](#)

District 7  
Republican Angela Beaton [website](#)

District 9  
Republican Claire Reeves [website](#)

District 11  
Republican Tonja Hibma [website](#)

Finally, these two things keep ringing in my head:

**If not me, who?  
If not now, when?**

***“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen (Heb. 11:1)***