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Dear Randolph Community,

August 5th, 2026

Thank you to everyone who participated in this year's school budget votes. Whether you voted yes or no, your vote showed that you care about Randolph's students, schools, and community. We would also like to thank our teachers, staff, administrators, and other employees who have continued serving students throughout this difficult time.

Since the votes, the Board has reflected on what happened, how we reached this point, and what we need to do differently. People voted no for many reasons, but one message has become clear: we owe you better communication.

One of the Board's most important responsibilities is helping the community understand why difficult decisions are being considered. Looking back, we did not do that well enough during this budget process.

The district's financial challenges were discussed at Board meetings and shared through social media and meetings with school and community groups. However, before the first vote, we did not make the information easy enough for the broader community to find and understand. We also did not create enough widely publicized opportunities for public discussion.

After the first proposal was defeated, the district added information to its website and provided more explanation before the second vote. Those efforts were important, but they should have begun earlier. We should have spent more time listening, answering questions, and explaining the district's finances before asking residents to consider an increase of this size.

We recognize that trust has been strained. Some residents opposed any tax increase. Others believed the proposal was too much at one time or felt they did not have enough information before voting. We understand that repeating the same explanations will not rebuild trust. Trust must be earned through our actions.

Many people have asked why the proposed increase was so much larger than increases in previous years. That is a fair question, and one we should have explained more clearly.

For many years, Boards of Education, including the current Board, kept local tax increases as low as possible. These decisions were not made because the Board was unaware of the district's finances. At times, the district had a strong fund balance, and State Comptroller audit findings raised concerns about the amount being held. Temporary federal relief funding during COVID-19 also helped support programs and limit the amount collected from local taxpayers. The Board aimed to avoid unnecessary tax increases while those resources were available.

Those conditions did not last. Temporary funding ended, fund balance could no longer support costs, and administration warned the district's financial position would become harder to maintain. The Board continued a conservative approach to tax increases. While understandable, these choices left the district with less flexibility. We could have done more to prepare the community and address the growing gap sooner.

Several major financial pressures then developed. The district is responsible for approximately \$1.8 million in costs associated with Child Victims Act claims. Those settlements were financed, and the

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borrowed funds must be repaid. Health insurance costs have also increased by 55 percent since the 2021–22 school year, adding approximately \$1 million to the district’s annual costs.

The reassessment of Allegany State Park also changed the district’s financial position. It lowered property tax rates, but it caused the district to appear wealthier under the state’s school aid formula, limiting the amount of aid Randolph receives. At the same time, the state tax cap limits how quickly the district can increase local revenue. In simple terms, one state formula assumes Randolph can raise more money locally, while another restricts how quickly it can do so.

The overall result is straightforward. The district’s costs increased significantly while its ability to generate enough ongoing revenue became more limited.

The proposed increase was an attempt to make a larger correction at one time rather than rely on several years of smaller increases that would not fully address the underlying problem. Residents may disagree with that approach, and we respect that disagreement. However, the proposal was based on the district’s financial condition and the information considered by the Board.

It is also important to explain how responsibilities are shared within the district. The superintendent, business official, and administrative team study issues, identify challenges, make professional recommendations, and carry out Board decisions. The Board asks questions, evaluates those recommendations, considers the effects on students and taxpayers, and makes the final decisions.

We value the experience and professional judgment of our administration. The Board and administration can learn from how parts of this process were handled, but it would not be fair or accurate to place responsibility for the district’s financial position or budget proposal on any one person or group. The final responsibility for the direction of the district belongs to the Board.

Following the defeat of both proposals, state law requires the district to operate under a contingency budget. That budget includes approximately \$836,000 in fund balance as a funding source. Fund balance is money carried forward from prior years. It can help address temporary needs, but it cannot sustainably pay ongoing expenses year after year.

The Board has directed the administration not to expend nearly \$750,000 authorized in the contingency budget. Those funds remain in the budget, but this direction is intended to reduce actual spending and lessen the district’s reliance on fund balance. These restrictions will require difficult choices, and the Board must consider their effects on students, employees, district operations, and long-term financial health.

Moving forward, we will communicate earlier, make financial information easier to find and understand, and provide more opportunities for residents to ask questions before major decisions are made.

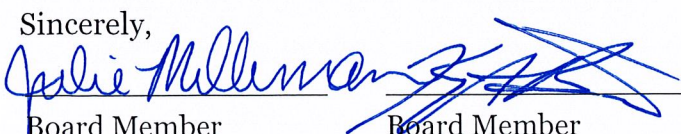
The community will not always agree with every Board decision. However, residents should expect the Board to listen, explain its decisions honestly, and accept responsibility for the results. We owe you openness, honesty, and the opportunity to understand not only what decisions are being made, but why.

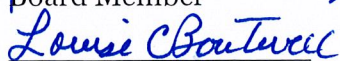
One letter will not rebuild trust. That will require listening, transparency, consistent communication, and following through on our commitments. Rebuilding that trust begins with the Board.

We are committed to learning from this experience and working with our administration, employees, families, and community to provide a strong education while responsibly managing the resources entrusted to us.

Thank you for your continued commitment to our students, schools, and community.

Sincerely,


Board Member


Board Member

Board Member

Board Member

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Board Member

Board Member

Board Member