

ITASCA SCHOOL DISTRICT 10

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ITASCA DISTRICT 10 SUPERINTENDENT PROVIDES TESTIMONY ON PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

On April 7th, 2021, District 10 Superintendent Craig Benes will provide testimony on the economic impact of proposed development at 860 W. Irving Park, Itasca. The district is testifying to the Village of Itasca Plan Commission which will determine the use of the former Holiday Inn location. The proposal would establish in Itasca one of the largest substance abuse treatment facilities in the region. The economic impact of such a large facility on a small school district and the community is significant and adverse. The school district has a duty to share this information to the Itasca Plan Commission.

Benes will first share the District 10 Goals and Mission which call for us to serve all children and hi-light our strong commitment to students with disabilities. This is our culture as a school community and is reflected in the ISBE School Report Card. It is also evident in our commitment to provide both in-person and remote instruction during the pandemic.

Benes' testimony will also focus on the potential economic impacts on the school district, which serves Pre-K through 8th grade students in its three schools. Under varying circumstances, the children of patients at the facility may be eligible to attend Itasca District 10 schools as governed by several laws including residency guidelines, IDEA and the McKinney-Vento homeless law. Increases in enrollment with no tax revenue will adversely impact the school district. The per pupil cost in District 10 is just over \$11,000 and that cost may increase to nearly \$28,000 if a student has special needs.

Also, under the previous use of the land as a hotel, property taxes were paid by Holiday Inn to the school district. On May 21, 2020, the current owner of the property filed for tax exempt status for the land. The school district opposed the tax exempt application. Prior to a final determination, the petitioner withdrew the application. However, during the current Itasca Plan Commission process, the petitioner has indicated an intent to refile for tax exempt status. If that is approved, the tax rate in District 10 may increase. Homeowners and business owners in the school district would experience a relative tax

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increase to make up for the reduction in tax revenue from this site. Both lost tax revenue and potential new student costs would place an economic hardship on one of the smallest school districts in DuPage County.

In addition to the economic impacts, Benes will share potential safety implications of the facility. “We have a strong connection and relationship with the Itasca Police Department and the Itasca Fire Department,” Benes says. “This includes response to emergency situations at any of our three schools. In addition, we benefit from both departments being highly involved in our education programs for students through classroom and school-wide presentations and other connections. As has been shared by others testifying, we have concerns that the proposed facility will have an impact on the police and fire resources, potentially meaning a reduction in the services provided to our students.”

The focus of Benes’ testimony will be to ensure the plan commission understands the potential economic impact and safety implications of the proposed substance abuse treatment facility on the district. It is common for the school district to provide information related to the economic impact of proposed developments including recent housing proposals and future proposed development of the Itasca Country Club.

“This testimony is about transparency and facts related to the proposed facility and the potential economic impact and potential safety impact,” Benes says. “Our mission states, in part, that we are dedicated to academic excellence and support of individual differences. We have a strong commitment to students with disability and inclusivity of all students. We believe strongly in this mission and district goals and use both to guide our efforts each and every day. However, our district goals also call for fiscal responsibility as our commitment to this directly impacts the quality of education for both current and future students. The existing proposal is economically adverse to our students and the district.”



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