



LOBBYISTS FOR CITIZENS

March 20, 2024

Dr. Chris Rateno, Superintendent
Riverside School District
585 Riverside Drive
Painesville, OH 44077

Subject: ESC and Auburn Career Center

Dear Dr. Rateno,

Although we talked briefly about the Educational Service Center and Auburn Career Center at our last meeting, I am still confused with Riverside's involvement with both entities. Upon reading your Superintendent's message online, I noted that you are concerned with "fiscal sensibility". I share your concern because what I see happening at the Auburn Career Center indicates a lack of accountability by their Board and Administration and a complete disregard for financial interests of the Lake County taxpayers.

We have been researching the makeup of the Auburn Career Center's Board, the property taxes paid by the Lake County taxpayers to the Auburn Career Center, and the perpetual lawsuit between CATA and the Auburn Career Center.

In reviewing the Auburn Career Center policy manual titled "Number", we see the Board consists of the following 11 appointed members:

- (5) Berkshire / Cardinal / Chardon / Fairport Harbor / Kenston
- (1) At large school district appointments: Chardon / Fairport Harbor / Cardinal / Kenston / Berkshire
- (5) Members are appointed by the Educational Service Center

From the Lake County Auditor's schedule A detailing the property tax revenue of Auburn Vocational School, we find the following annual contributions from the Lake County school districts:

- Chardon \$2,590 (.06%) / Fairport \$99,875 (2.43%) / Kirtland \$594,320 (14.44%) / Madison \$651,599 (15.84%) / Painesville \$300,882 (7.31%) / Riverside \$1,893,249 (46.01 %) / Perry \$572,101 (13.90%)
Grand Total \$4,114,616

A public records request to the Auburn Career Center told us that Auburn Career Center has spent to date \$1,539,573.25 in legal fees with two law firms to fight the original \$144,000 claim by the teachers back in 2012. In addition, per an Auburn press release they have set aside \$1,486,045.78 to fulfill what they believe is their obligation to the teachers. However, Auburn refuses to pay the required STRS obligation of approximately \$427,000. Although Auburn has lost every legal battle in the courts, including the Ohio Supreme Court, they continue to waste taxpayers' money on legal fees.

I am personally paying annually \$4,698.23 in property taxes to the Riverside School District, and \$226.73 annually to the Auburn Career Center. The estimated 30% increase in property taxes in 2024 to be collected in 2025, will mean that I will be paying an additional \$1,000+ in property taxes annually without even being able to vote on the increase. To know that Auburn is wasting my tax dollars is infuriating and is not acceptable.



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Our conclusions are as follows:

1. The citizens of Lake County are being used and abused by the Auburn Career Center's actions in the lawsuit. In our opinion, Auburn's Board of Directors are guilty of malfeasance.
2. Riverside and Lake County school districts do not have adequate representation on Auburn's Board of Directors.
3. Riverside taxpayers are being taxed without representation on the Auburn Board of Directors. To whom do we petition for redress of our grievances?

The questions that we have for you and the entire Riverside School Board are:

1. Is it acceptable to the Riverside School Board and the Administration that the Auburn Career Center continues to waste taxpayers' funds on their perpetual lawsuit? If it is not acceptable, what are you going to do about it?
2. Is the Riverside School Board and Administration satisfied with Riverside's representation on the Auburn Career Center Board of Directors? Riverside pays \$1,893,249 (46.01%) of the Lake County school districts' taxes to Auburn, but I do not see any representation on the Board. If you are not satisfied with the representation, what are you going to do about it?
3. To whom do taxpayers petition for a redress of our grievances against Auburn Career Center Board and Administration? Who is representing the overburdened taxpayers on the Board?
4. Who will step up to protect the financial interests of the growing, overburdened taxpayers of Lake County? Any tax that, if unpaid, will cause a citizen to become homeless is immoral. Seniors are being priced out of their homes!

Thank you for your time, and we look forward to hearing from you so that we may inform the citizens of Lake County.

Very respectfully,

s/ Brian Massie

Brian Massie

Cc: Riverside School Board
Lake County Commissioners
Lake County Auditor
Concord Township Trustees
State Senator Jerry Cirino
State Representative Jamie Callender
State Representative Daniel Troy
Chad Felton – News-Herald
Geauga County – Maple Leaf
Lake County Tribune