

**DEPARTMENT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE
100 NORTH SENATE AVENUE
IGC-N, ROOM N1058
INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA 46204**

**IN THE MATTER OF THE REVIEW OF)
PROPOSED LANGUAGE FOR A BALLOT)
QUESTION REGARDING NOBLESVILLE) No. 16-002-REF
SCHOOLS)**

**FINDINGS AND FINAL DETERMINATION ON PROPOSED QUESTION SUBMITTED
JANUARY 14, 2016**

1. Noblesville Schools (“Corporation”) proposes to place an operating referendum on the ballot for the purpose of establishing a referendum tax levy with a tax rate not to exceed eighteen and nine-tenths cents (\$0.189) per one hundred dollars (\$100) of assessed value.
2. Under Indiana law, voters in the area served by the Corporation will vote in a referendum to approve or deny the Corporation’s proposed tax rate.
3. Indiana law governs the format and wording of the ballot question for the referendum.
4. Under Indiana law, the “question to be submitted to the voters in the referendum **must read as follows**”:

“For the __ (insert number) calendar year or years immediately following the holding of the referendum, shall the school corporation impose a property tax rate that does not exceed _____ (insert amount) cents (\$0. __) (insert amount) on each one hundred dollars (\$100) of assessed valuation and that is in addition to all other property taxes imposed by the school corporation for the purpose of funding _____ (insert short description of purposes)?”

Indiana Code 20-46-1-10 (emphasis added).

5. The ballot question then must contain three parts:
 - the number of calendar years for which the tax will be in effect;
 - the amount of the tax rate; and
 - the purpose of the funding.
6. The law requires the Department of Local Government Finance (“Department”) to review the language for compliance with IC 20-46-1-10. The Department may either approve or reject the language.

7. On January 14, 2016, the Department received an e-mail from the Corporation presenting the proposed ballot question for the referendum.
8. The Corporation requested that the Department review this proposed question:

“For the seven (7) calendar years immediately following the holding of the referendum, shall Noblesville Schools impose a property tax rate that does not exceed \$0.189 on each one hundred dollars (\$100) of assessed valuation and that is in addition to all other property tax levies imposed by Noblesville Schools to maintain academic and educationally related programs at current levels which reflect community standards?”

Compliance of Language

9. The Department must review the proposed language for compliance with IC 20-46-1-10. The Department may either approve or reject the language. The Department concludes that the language is not in compliance with IC 20-46-1-10. Specifically, the Corporation’s proposed question includes the phrase “which reflect community standards,” which colors the question and creates a bias in favor of the referendum. Statute requires inclusion of a “short description of purposes” of the funding. The Corporation’s proposed language exceeds a “short description of purposes” by introducing phrasing that qualifies or editorializes the question. In addition, statute requires the tax rate to be spelled out in addition to being stated numerically. Statute also prescribes use of the phrases “property taxes” (rather than “property tax levies”) and “for the purpose of funding” (which is missing here).
10. The Department notes that the Corporation already has an operating referendum in place that will expire in 2017. The Corporation has represented that if this referendum is approved by voters, the Corporation will forego its current referendum in 2017 and impose only the new referendum.

Final Determination

WHEREFORE, based on the above findings and applicable law, the Department finds that the proposed language is not in compliance with IC 20-46-1-10 and disapproves the language as proposed.

Dated this 15th day of January, 2015.

STATE OF INDIANA
DEPARTMENT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE

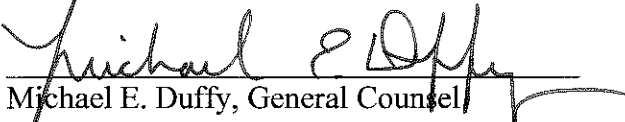


Courtney L. Schaafsma, Commissioner
Department of Local Government Finance

STATE OF INDIANA
DEPARTMENT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE

I, Michael E. Duffy, General Counsel for the Department of Local Government Finance, hereby certify that the above is an order of the Commissioner of the Department of Local Government Finance made this date in the above-entitled matter and that the Commissioner has personally signed the same under her statutory authority.

WITNESS MY HAND AND SEAL of the Commissioner on this the 15th day of January, 2015.



Michael E. Duffy, General Counsel
Department of Local Government Finance