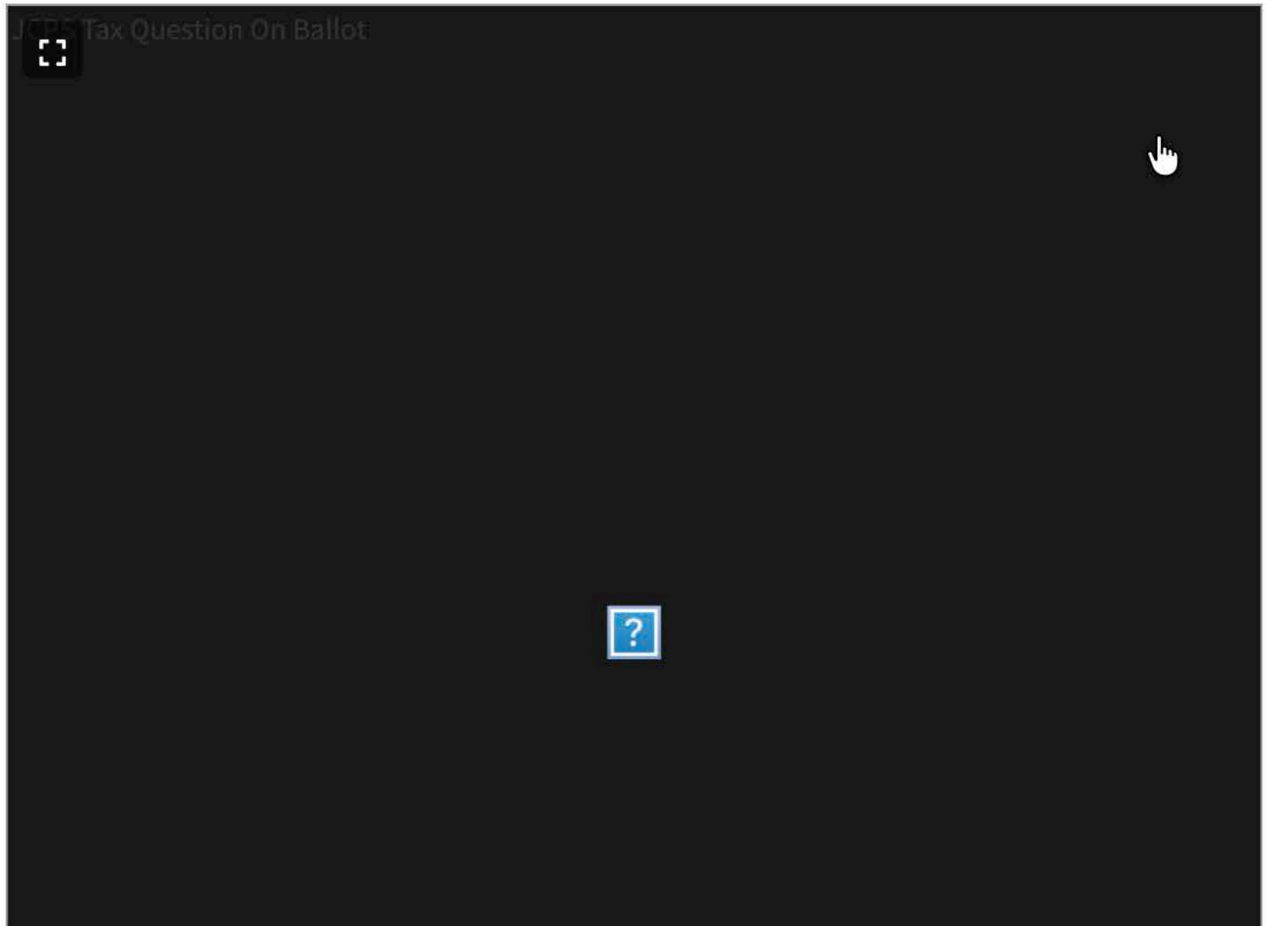
WDRB ELECTION RESULTS

TOP STORY

Former skeptics now backing JCPS tax increase say detailed spending plan sealed support

Kevin Wheatley Nov 2, 2020 Updated 8 hrs ago



MOST POPULAR

Articles

Sorry, there are no recent results for popular articles.

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (WDRB) -- More than two years ago, some of the biggest financial backers of the property tax rate increase sought by Jefferson County Public Schools were at least open to the possibility of the Kentucky Department of Education managing the school district's daily operations.

The four — all members of the group Impetus, formerly known as the Steering Committee for Action on Louisville's Agenda — have since donated $25,000 each to Yes 4 JCPS, a 501(c)(4) nonprofit campaigning for the district's 7-cent property tax rate increase that is expected to generate $54 million more in annual revenue.

Their combined $100,000 represents nearly a third of the $311,250 collected by Yes 4 JCPS as of 15 days before Tuesday's election, according to the group's latest filing with the Kentucky Registry of Election Finance.

Ballots cast for and against the proposed property tax rate of 80.6 cents per $100 of assessed property value may not count after Jefferson Circuit Judge Brian Edwards ruled Friday that the recall petition actually failed to get enough valid signatures to successfully challenge the rate increase. Members of the recall petition committee have said they will appeal the ruling.

The petition committee's group, No JCPS Tax Hike, has not kept pace with Yes 4 JCPS as Tuesday's election nears. KREF records show No JCPS Tax Hike has collected $6,028 and spent $4,989 against the district's rate increase as of Oct. 19.

Despite the legal uncertainty, the unification of JCPS and former skeptics within Louisville's business community behind higher taxes reflects a warming relationship that those interviewed attribute to Superintendent Marty Pollio's leadership and planning since taking the reins of Kentucky's largest school district in February 2018.

Pollio believes his administration's "Future State" plan resonates with Louisville's business community because it provides a clear vision for how JCPS can provide a better education for its nearly 100,000 students.

"We need fundamental change to many things, from facilities to student assignment to instructional time to racial equity programs to funding our lowest-performing schools, all of those areas," Pollio said. "We need to do things differently if we expect different outcomes."

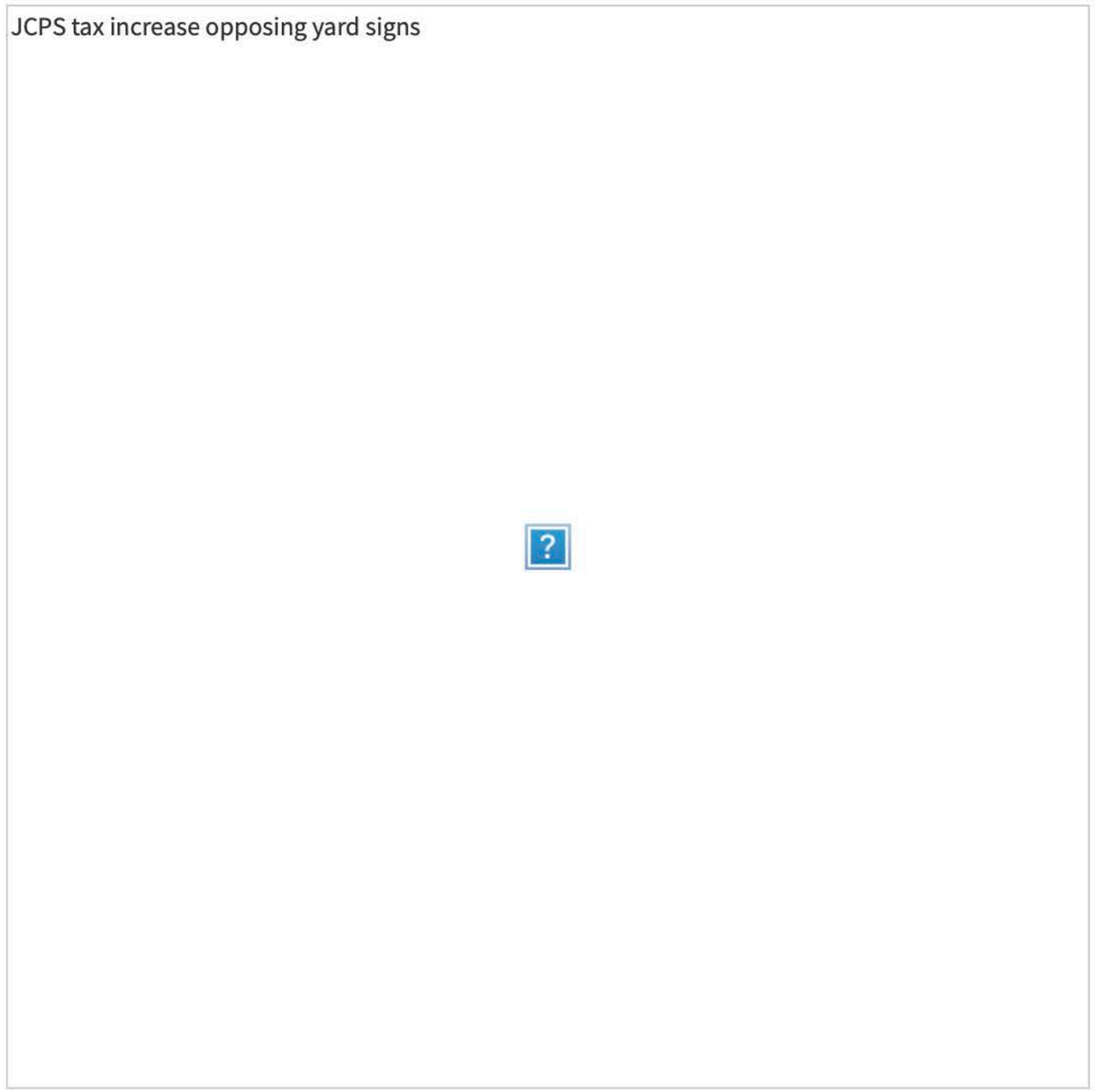
Jim Lancaster, chief executive of Lantech, and others interviewed by WDRB News said Pollio's "Future State" plan impressed them and that the board's resolution detailing exactly how the extra $54 million in tax revenue would be spent helped seal their support for the rate increase. They also back Pollio's proposal for a public dashboard showing exactly how the new property tax revenue is spent, they said.

The board's spending resolution calls for $15 million for new and renovated facilities, $15 million for

The board's spending resolution calls for $15 million for new and renovated facilities, $15 million for schools with the highest needs, $12 million for racial equity work and $12 million for more learning time for students from higher property tax receipts during the 2021-22 school year.

"This is not, 'Here's the money, you guys figure out how to spend it,'" Lancaster said. "No, they've been very clear: This is exactly where the money is going to go."

"The reason I'm so supportive of the tax increase is not really that I'm for a tax increase," he said. "What I'm for is change in outcomes at JCPS."



Louisville voters are asked whether they support a 9.5% property tax increase for Jefferson County Public Schools on the ballot for the Nov. 3, 2020 election.

Chris Otts, WDRB

Lancaster, who also lauded Pollio for his work expanding the district's Academies of Louisville program, co-authored a Courier Journal opinion piece on Feb. 1, 2018, that said Jefferson County should "welcome that help with open arms" if the state's education commissioner recommended taking over JCPS at the conclusion of its extensive audit of the school district.

Former Education Commissioner Wayne Lewis, who served as interim at the time, ultimately recommended state management of JCPS, but a deal was brokered to give the district two years to correct deficiencies identified by KDE's audit before reconsidering the matter.

The joint editorial, based on an analysis of other state takeovers commissioned by Impetus at the time, concluded that changing the district's governance model was "essential" for success at JCPS.

Lancaster now serves on the Yes 4 JCPS board chaired by HJI Supply Chain Solutions owner Alice Houston, who also co-authored the piece.

Houston, whom Pollio has frequently praised at recent events, said she approached the potential takeover of JCPS as an opportunity to learn more about possible outcomes of state-managed school districts. She would not have supported state management of JCPS, she said.

Both she and Lancaster, who said he would not have backed a long-term state intervention at JCPS, said the Bellwether Education Partners report confirmed for them that the district's governance model needed reform.

"I think that for me it was an exploration of alternatives and the affirmation that we can't keep doing the same things," Houston said.

At its core, her support for the tax initiative boils down to improving outcomes throughout Jefferson County in areas like economic growth and crime, she said.

"Nobody wants a tax and nobody really wants a tax in the middle of everything that was going on in Jefferson County, but from many perspectives this is exactly the time that one makes an investment," Houston said. "One buys stocks when they're down, you know what I mean? You make the investment at a time in which you believe that the potential impact is going to be possible."

"I don't look at it as a tax," she said. "I look at this as an investment in our kids and our families but as much so as in our community."

David Jones Jr., chairman of Chrysalis Ventures and former chairman of the Jefferson County Board of Education, was among those who endorsed state management of JCPS at the time, saying he viewed such intervention at the time as "required in order to make any change."

His father, the late Humana co-founder David Jones Sr., was a vocal supporter of putting the district under state management. He was SCALA's inaugural chairman.

David Jones Jr. has since given $25,000 to Yes 4 JCPS in hopes of boosting outcomes for disadvantaged students, “especially poor Black and brown kids,” through Pollio’s ambitious plan for the district, he said.

“Louisville is not going to prosper because Frankfort or the federal government or somebody else comes in and saves us,” Jones said. “We’re just going to have to build our own, and that includes paying for more education because we need more education.”

Sandra Frazier, head of Tandem Public Relations and chairwoman of Impetus, is quick to point out the that the group never voted to push for a state takeover of JCPS just as it did not vote to back the district’s tax proposal.

Only two members of the group, David Jones Sr. and David Jones Jr., were interested in a state takeover of JCPS, she said, noting her belief that Impetus was unfairly portrayed as an advocate for a state-managed school district.

“It was brought up by those two individuals in a meeting, and the organization has never advocated for that,” Frazier said. “Unfortunately, there were a number of people in the community who latched onto that and really vilified the group for going in that direction.”

Frazier previously served as treasurer for and donated to the Bluegrass Fund, a group that often butted heads with the Jefferson County Teachers Association’s political action committee in school board races in recent election cycles. The group was last active in 2016, KREF records show.

Like Houston, she sees the district’s tax increase and corresponding improvement plan as a chance to help the broader Jefferson County community.

“If we don’t have strong schools, we don’t have strong students coming out of the schools,” Frazier said. “I think that by supporting this it’s really getting behind JCPS, allowing them to succeed and to thrive and to muse us a more competitive community so that we can attract business and maintain a stronger quality of life.”

JCPS - MARTY POLLIO NEW CONFERENCE -10-19-2020.jpg

JCPS Supt. Marty Pollio, along with former JCPS students and NFL athletes Keenan Burton and Michael Bush, and Bellarmine basketball coach Scottie Davenport, pushing for a “Yes” vote on tax increase. Oct. 19, 2020

Those interviewed by WDRB News say governance reform is still needed at Kentucky’s largest school district, but they have shifted their focus from Louisville to Frankfort for change on that front.

In particular, they point to Senate Bill 250 as an early success in their burgeoning lobbying efforts. That bills, passed during the 2019 legislative session and backed by Pollio, gave JCPS superintendents final say in principal hires, authorized them to demote administrators and allowed them to sign contracts worth up to $20,000 without school board approval.

“I don’t think I was a lobbyist, but I talked to anyone who would listen about the ridiculousness of having a state law that, among other things, doesn’t allow the district to have a human resources capability to place principals, who are the most important management, the most important leaders in actually delivering education to the kids,” Jones Jr. said.

There’s more work to be done legislatively to give Pollio and future superintendents greater authority in JCPS operations, Lancaster said.

“The board has to approve any organizational change,” he said. “There’s just a tremendous amount of bureaucracy that blocks change from happening, and that needs to change.”

Pollio hopes the district’s relationship with Louisville’s business community continues to grow even after the district’s tax proposal meets its fate, specifically mentioning expanding the Academies of Louisville program to include middle schools.

He also wants to continue meeting with members of the Yes 4 JCPS board so he can provide regular updates on the district’s “Future State” plans.

“We want them to hold us accountable and then definitely to celebrate with us in the years to come as well,” Pollio said.

Business leaders, too, expect to see their relationship with JCPS flourish in the future.

“We’re not where we were in 2018, and hopefully we won’t be where we are in 2022,” Houston said. “But I think that this is one thing that I do know: If this does not pass on Tuesday, we will not stop in the process of trying to make some of the changes and do something of the things that are outlined.”

Copyright 2020 WDRB Media. All Rights Reserved.

DONATE
INTERNET ARCHIVE WayBackMachine
Explore more than 1 trillion web pages saved over time
https://www.wdrb.com/in-depth/former-
From the Labs

Calendar · Collections · Changes · Summary · Site Map · URLs

Saved **2 times** between November 2, 2020 and November 3, 2020.

03 2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018 2019 **2020** 2021 2022 2023 2024 2025 2026

JAN

			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

FEB

						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29

MAR

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

APR

			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

MAY

			1	2		
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

JUN

	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

JUL

	1	2	3	4		
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

AUG

						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

SEP

		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

OCT

				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

NOV

1	**2**	**3**	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

DEC

		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

Note

This calendar view maps the number of times **https://www.wdrb.com/in-depth/former-skeptics-now-backing-jcps-tax-increase-say-detailed-spending-plan-sealed-support/article_3bf43b52-1d5b-11eb-9825-df30c332db80.html** was crawled by the Wayback Machine, *not* how many times the site was actually updated. More info in the FAQ.

FAQ | Contact Us | Terms of Service (Dec 31, 2014)

The Wayback Machine is an initiative of the Internet Archive, a 501(c)(3) non-profit, building a digital library of Internet sites and other cultural artifacts in digital form. Other projects include Open Library & archive-it.org.

Your use of the Wayback Machine is subject to