

In The Matter Of:
*BEFORE THE CALUMET TOWNSHIP
BOARD OF TRUSTEES*

*March 4, 2019
REGULAR MEETING*

*BOSS REPORTERS
Gary * Merrillville * Valparaiso, Indiana
3893 East Lincoln Highway (Rt. 30)
Merrillville, Indiana 46410
(219) 769-9090*

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1 STATE OF INDIANA)
) SS:
2 COUNTY OF LAKE)

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4 THE CALUMET TOWNSHIP BOARD MEETING
5 GARY, INDIANA
6

7
8 REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS had at the meeting
9 before the Calumet Township Board, reported by
10 Kristen K. Stokes, CSR, Notary Public in and for the
11 County of Lake, State of Indiana, taken at the
12 Griffith City Hall, 111 North Broad Street,
13 Griffith, Indiana, on March 4, 2019, scheduled to
14 begin at 6:00 p.m. in the evening.
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APPEARANCES:

Darren Washington, Board Chairman

James Piggee, Board Member

Kimberly Robinson, Township Trustee

Sherita Smith, Chief Deputy

Romeka Bonds, Executive Secretary

Deidre Monroe, Board Attorney

Clorius Lay, Attorney

Rinzer Williams, III, Township Attorney

Steve Dalton, Township Accountant

Gladys Miller, Finance Manager

and

Members of the Public

* * * * *

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1 CHAIRMAN WASHINGTON: Good evening.
2 Welcome to the Calumet Township Board
3 meeting this evening. Can we stand for the
4 pledge of allegiance.
5 (PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.)
6 CHAIRMAN WASHINGTON: Thank you for
7 coming to the meeting this evening.
8 Mr. Piggee, at this time I would like to
9 make a motion that we amend tonight's agenda
10 and take off new business because we don't
11 have any new business tonight, so we need to
12 take it off the agenda. Can I have a
13 second?
14 MR. PIGGEE: I second.
15 MS. HOLMES: It's been seconded. Can we
16 have a roll call, Ms. Bonds?
17 MS. BONDS: Mr. Piggee?
18 MR. PIGGEE: Yes.
19 MS. BONDS: Mr. Washington?
20 CHAIRMAN WASHINGTON: Yes.
21 With two yes, the motion carries.
22 Item No. 2, annual finance report.
23 Mr. Dalton?
24 MR. DALTON: Madam Trustee, would you
25 like me to --

1 TRUSTEE ROBINSON: Yes, please.

2 MR. DALTON: Mr. Chairman, you had asked
3 that I give a summary of the annual
4 financial report summary of 2018. You'll
5 recall at our previous board meeting in
6 February we acted to adopt and approve the
7 annual report that was submitted by the
8 trustee, which it's required for townships
9 to happen a little earlier than it does for
10 towns and cities and counties. For it to be
11 advertised on time, it has to happen a
12 little earlier in February. So we already
13 took care of that in February.

14 So what I'm going to do is go through a
15 little bit of a review of the annual report.
16 You have an annual report in your packet.
17 For those of you that are joining us for the
18 first time, this township meeting, I thought
19 it might be more interesting than me just
20 reading a bunch of numbers to give a little
21 bit of background on how the township pays
22 its bills and receives its revenues.

23 We have five major funds that we receive
24 property tax revenues, three that we
25 consider as civil funds, civil general fund,

1 civil recreation fund and civil community
2 services fund, and then two township
3 assistance funds.

4 We are one of the only townships --
5 perhaps the only township -- in the state
6 that has two township assistance funds at
7 the demand of special legislation that
8 required us to split our township assistance
9 funds a couple years ago into a township
10 assistance benefits fund and a township
11 assistance administration fund.

12 The only effect that did was it took our
13 property tax levy and split it in half. So
14 property taxes flow to the two funds. It
15 did not double it and the associated
16 revenues that go along with property taxes.
17 So similar to a county or a city or a town,
18 we not only receive property taxes from each
19 of those five funds, but we receive the
20 other state distributions. For example,
21 financial institutions tax, commercial
22 vehicle excise tax, taxes that are collected
23 by the state for various fees and services
24 that are distributed to every fund that also
25 receives property taxes most of the time in

1 a proportion or an allocation similar to the
2 size that the property tax levy.

3 I think it's important to point out for
4 all of us that are a part of Calumet
5 Township to know that although the township
6 could levy a substantially higher property
7 tax, the trustee and this board have for the
8 last 5 years chosen voluntarily to reduce
9 the amount of property tax levy that they
10 are asking the property taxpayers to pay
11 below their maximum amount. So most cities
12 and towns and counties and schools levy
13 their max. And that max goes up by 3, 3 and
14 a half, 4 percent per year based on the
15 state-wide growth factor.

16 And I've worked for many years and
17 worked with about 60 units of government in
18 our firm, and I have not had very many
19 occasions over those years of having a unit
20 not ask for the maximum levy that they're
21 allowed to receive. This township does not
22 and has voluntarily held its property tax
23 request down by more than \$3 million each
24 year for the last 5 years. That's about
25 \$15 million worth of property taxes that

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1 were not levied on property taxpayers at the
2 request and approval of this township board
3 and this township trustee.

4 Those property taxes that were levied
5 were levied because there were expenses, and
6 the cash flow projections and budgets that
7 required this township perform its services
8 and duties and those revenues that floated
9 to those five funds, a grand total about
10 \$5.8 million worth of revenues that flowed
11 into the funds. And we spent about
12 \$5 million. We had -- expenditures have
13 continued to decline over the last 5 years
14 as the trustee and the board have worked at
15 creating efficiencies and stayed as small as
16 possible with staff and doing their job
17 which they're legally required to do for
18 many hundreds, if not thousands, of people
19 who are eligible for township assistance.

20 We can dig into lots of details, and
21 those of you that have spent some time on
22 the Gateway system, which is the state
23 financial system, you'll see on there the
24 annual report for 2018. And that annual
25 report can be downloaded in various formats,

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1 PDF, Excel and lots of details, and you can
2 number-crunch all day, and I will bore you
3 to death if I read you the entire report,
4 but it's worth reading through because it
5 starts out with the fund report which shows
6 you those major funds, the beginning
7 balances, the ending balances, how much was
8 spent, how much was brought in. And then
9 each successive report after that first page
10 shows you the detailed receipts and then the
11 detailed distributions.

12 And in the case of a township, we're
13 also required to file an extra report that
14 no other body -- no other governmental body
15 is required to file, called a TA-7. And the
16 TA-7 details by count and by dollar how much
17 money has provided -- been provided in
18 township assistance. What we used to call
19 poor relief, now we call township
20 assistance, how much money has been provided
21 in various breakouts to the hundreds, if not
22 thousands, of people who do qualify in
23 Calumet Township.

24 Mr. Chairman, I can go into elaborate
25 detail, but I already went a little too far,

1 I'm sure, but I'll be happy to field any
2 questions from this board.

3 CHAIRMAN WASHINGTON: Okay. For that,
4 Madam Trustee, do you have any questions or
5 comments?

6 TRUSTEE ROBINSON: No. Thank you,
7 Steve. I appreciate that.

8 CHAIRMAN WASHINGTON: Mr. Piggee?

9 MR. PIGGEE: No.

10 CHAIRMAN WASHINGTON: Okay. The next
11 thing I want to say -- first of all, I want
12 to thank Griffith Town Council, first of
13 all, to allow us to host our meeting here
14 today. And let me say this, it is long
15 overdue. This is my second term on the
16 board, and we want to make sure that we have
17 an opportunity to host meetings from time to
18 time here. One of the things I want to
19 thank the town council president, Rick Ryfa,
20 for extending his arm in having these
21 meetings here, and we look forward to coming
22 back. And I will provide a schedule that we
23 passed at the last meeting so all Griffith
24 residents will know when those meetings will
25 be here.

1 The next thing regarding the report that
2 Mr. Dalton articulated, I know some of you
3 all have -- may have went on Gateway. So at
4 this time are there any questions about the
5 annual report that Mr. Dalton may be able to
6 answer from anybody in the audience?

7 Yes, Mr. Ryfa.

8 MR. RYFA: Couple questions.

9 MR. DALTON: Yes, sir.

10 MR. RYFA: You had spoken about the max
11 levy.

12 MR. DALTON: Yeah.

13 MR. RYFA: What is -- how far under are
14 you? Because we had looked at it. It was
15 considerably more than 3 million, I thought.

16 MR. DALTON: It's about 3 million a year
17 that we've held underneath the voluntary --
18 the maximum levy cap.

19 MR. RYFA: Yeah, the numbers we had was
20 higher than that, so they are not taxing us
21 as much as they could.

22 MR. DALTON: Absolutely.

23 MR. RYFA: The bad thing is they could
24 tax us a lot more.

25 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Yes, they could.

1 MR. RYFA: So my question is: The board
2 did do, you know, a very good job back in
3 2013, 2014, 2015 to reduce the levy and the
4 rates to get under the 12-time specials. I
5 believe you're right around \$4 million for
6 the combined services for township
7 assistance and township administration.

8 So if we go back as close as 2015, we
9 paid around \$1.1 million to the township.
10 And then for 2019 it looks like we're
11 projected around 2.3 million. Last year we
12 paid around 2.2 million. Can you explain
13 how our levy to Griffith basically doubled
14 over those four years? That's what -- we
15 can't figure that out.

16 MR. DALTON: I will -- I'll do all of us
17 a disfavor by trying to go into the weeds on
18 something that's hard to explain in words,
19 but let me try and say, at any point in
20 time that assessed values go down, the
21 counter-balance is that tax rates go up. So
22 there were a couple years in there where
23 assessed values for the township declined.
24 And so even if the township held its levy at
25 the exact same amount as it had in the

1 previous year, the tax rate would have gone
2 up, and that tax rate then is taxing people
3 even more whose house value didn't go down.
4 Because the overall township did go down,
5 somebody's home that didn't go down would be
6 paying more in that given year. That'd be
7 the easiest summation of how an individual
8 taxpayer or an individual taxing unit might
9 be paying more in even though the levy
10 didn't decrease.

11 MR. RYFA: Okay. You have to understand
12 from our standpoint, this is like a hundred
13 percent increase. That means your assessed
14 value had to come down like 50 percent in
15 Gary. I know it was going down, but I don't
16 think it went that much, so that is one
17 thing that's really concerning. The trend,
18 it's unsustainable for us.

19 MR. DALTON: I would like to defer to
20 the trustee on the strategic decision here
21 because obviously when there's a voluntary
22 decision made to hold their levy below their
23 max, there's a whole lot of numbers between
24 zero and max that they can choose, and there
25 were some periods of time there where we

1 were all very focused on the 12-time
2 multiple. So let me defer to you on the
3 strategy there.

4 TRUSTEE ROBINSON: I would add to
5 whatever Steve is saying is that we have --
6 since we came to office, Steve has been our
7 financial adviser, and he has -- he created
8 or helped us create a budget that each year
9 we would do as minimum as we could because
10 we knew the fight, we knew the outlook, the
11 picture of it. So we are at the best place
12 we can be in helping, and you're probably
13 right about Gary and their low assessments.
14 And what can we do about that besides try
15 and stay under and not putting so much of
16 the pressure and the burden on the Town of
17 Griffith?

18 MR. RYFA: All right. I mean, but
19 that's where we're at right now. You know,
20 our levy's doubled in about four years. The
21 fact that there's a 39 percent property tax
22 collection rate in Gary is basically killing
23 us. We're paying a big disproportionate
24 amount of dollars to the township. I don't
25 know if you've even noticed that yet. We

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1 were 30, 40 percent of whatever the total
2 property taxes were collected, so it's
3 always about money. You know, you didn't
4 hear much from us in 2014, 2015, 2016 when
5 we were well within the threshold and we saw
6 a significant decrease in our contributions,
7 so now it's doubled, so it's caused some
8 alarm.

9 MR. DALTON: If I can say this, and I
10 want to be cautious and tactful. During the
11 period of time that the 12-time multiple was
12 calculated in such a way that we had a
13 fighting chance to be within that 12-time
14 multiple, we fought. There was a point in
15 time when the legislature determined or
16 asked the DLGF to change the calculation
17 method and took away our fighting chance.

18 Now, I think it was at that point in
19 time that we no longer felt like we could
20 cut services. We were below the belt at
21 that point in time, below the quick. I'll
22 use all the cliches. We lost our fighting
23 chance because the calculation method had
24 changed in such a way that it was not
25 possible any longer.

1 MR. RYFA: Okay.

2 MR. DALTON: I hope that was tactful
3 enough.

4 MR. RYFA: Yep. Thank you.

5 CHAIRMAN WASHINGTON: Any more comments?

6 MR. PIGGEE: No, Mr. Chairman.

7 CHAIRMAN WASHINGTON: Council? Anyone?

8 AUDIENCE MEMBER: I'm good. Thank you,
9 Darren.

10 AUDIENCE MEMBER: I just have one quick
11 question.

12 CHAIRMAN WASHINGTON: Go ahead.

13 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Tim Diamond, 406
14 Canterbury Road in Griffith. As all this
15 process was going on, I've been looking for
16 annual reports and obtaining budgets. You
17 have a very nice website, but it just didn't
18 have that type of information on it. So if
19 I go to North Township, they have like the
20 last 3, 4, 5 years of annual budgets and
21 annual reports as opposed to going to the
22 internet and searching, trying to find the
23 Gateway to get all this stuff in there.

24 Is there any access or could there be an
25 access for budgets and annual reports from

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1 the website so it's a little bit more
2 transparent.

3 TRUSTEE ROBINSON: The budgets are
4 prepared and placed in Gateway. As to
5 that's the only place we are totally
6 authorized to do it. I mean, we could
7 probably put it to our page. That would be
8 a very expensive cost that we try to cut.

9 AUDIENCE MEMBER (MR. DIAMOND): It's a
10 minimal cost.

11 TRUSTEE ROBINSON: And if you ask for
12 it, we have forms for your request tonight.
13 If you'd like me to send you every copy,
14 sir, I'd be happy to do it.

15 AUDIENCE MEMBER (MR. DIAMOND): Yeah,
16 adding a link to a website is not expensive.
17 It's like five bucks.

18 TRUSTEE ROBINSON: Okay. That's what
19 you say.

20 CHAIRMAN WASHINGTON: All right. Let me
21 say this, I've had this conversation with
22 Mr. Ryfa, and I've also said this to the
23 board. Let me say this, this is not the
24 board. This is Darren Washington as a
25 taxpayer. I've looked at the issues that

1 we're facing, and Steve and Kim is right.
2 We have done everything that we can to cut
3 as much as we can. But I do understand the
4 problem with what you're paying.

5 Now, there's a conversation that should
6 be had that -- there are some folks that
7 don't want to have that conversation. Okay.
8 We got to look at why you are paying so
9 much. We got to look at why the assessed
10 value is so low. That has nothing to do
11 with Steve Dalton and Trustee trying to work
12 the budget. It has everything to do, in my
13 opinion, number one, there's a lot of
14 abandoned property in Gary, Indiana --

15 MR. PIGGEE: A lot.

16 CHAIRMAN WASHINGTON: -- that needs to
17 be torn down. I've talked to one of our
18 legislators, and this is something that
19 should have been done a long time ago. And
20 Rick, with your convictions on the
21 Republican side, we need to have legislation
22 that will allow vacant homes that are owned
23 by people who have not been living in Gary
24 for years, and that property stays there
25 while they live in California or Dallas.

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1 And if we try to tear it down, then the city
2 gets sued. But that vacant, burnt-down
3 property or whatever, it stays there. That
4 causes us a problem.

5 No. 2, one issue I have is TIFs, tax
6 increment financing districts. My belief is
7 one of the reason why our assessed value is
8 low is that the City of Gary has between 12
9 and 14 TIF districts. And if you know about
10 TIFs, you take the money from the property
11 taxes and you invest to make sure that
12 businesses can come. But again, we haven't
13 seen development with those TIFs, and some
14 of those TIFs have been there for a very
15 long time. And so that's something that I
16 believe that the city and the township and
17 all of us can sit down and try to figure out
18 what can be done to get the assessed value
19 higher.

20 This is the thing, and I know folks may
21 not like it, and I'm going to say it. I
22 don't know if legislation will pass to allow
23 you to go to another township or if it will
24 allow you to stay. My concern right now is
25 that you, as Griffith residents, are members

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1 and residents of Cal Township. So until
2 that happens -- and I don't have anything to
3 do with that -- my goal is to work to find a
4 solution that everybody can work together
5 on, that while you are still in this
6 township, we need to find a way to see how
7 your payments can be reduced.

8 And I believe with all of us working
9 together we can talk to our legislators and
10 do something to do that. We can handle this
11 situation. Because until that happens,
12 unfairly, as you stated, the numbers
13 increase. It's not the trustee's fault.
14 It's not Steve Dalton's fault. It's not the
15 board's fault, but I believe there are other
16 independent variables, like the City of
17 Gary, other areas that can be talked about
18 to see how we can increase the assessed
19 value for the City of Gary.

20 And I'm going to be honest, until some
21 of those things are taken care of -- Trustee
22 has balanced the budget. Steve has done a
23 great job. But those things are beyond our
24 control, but there should be conversations
25 with dealing with that, and we've had those

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1 conversations Mr. Ryfa on that. And I'm
2 committed as a member of the board to do
3 what I can to try to get that assessed value
4 higher so you can pay something lower, so
5 I'm always willing to sit down and look at
6 what solutions that we can bring to the
7 table so you won't have to pay so much
8 because of the services -- the lack of
9 services that -- or the little services that
10 you say you receive.

11 So that's basically, again, my opinion.
12 I can't speak for Mr. Piggee or anybody
13 else. That's my opinion of the research
14 that I've done, the conversations that I've
15 had. And when I've talked to certain
16 legislators and I've talked to certain
17 people, everybody is trying to blame
18 somebody else. Everybody is saying it's
19 that problem, it's their problem, but the
20 problem doesn't get fixed. And we talk
21 about transparency. If we're looking at
22 making sure that that value goes up and your
23 bill goes down, there's a lot of different
24 players that can be here, the Mayor of Gary,
25 our county assessor, legislators to look at

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1 legislation that can help that assessed
2 value go up.

3 We need to sit down and have that
4 conversation because until then, everybody
5 is looking to help their own cause and to
6 say, hey, it's not me, it's not them, but I
7 believe if we can get everybody to the table
8 and sit down, we can come to a solution.

9 And also, let me say the Department
10 Local Government Finance, because let's be
11 honest, this is who started it all. Okay.
12 I'm just going to be honest with you all.
13 It was one issue. It was one area. Then it
14 was changed. I'm not disagreeing or
15 agreeing that it shouldn't have been
16 changed, but the Department of Local
17 Government and Finance in Indianapolis made
18 the decision to make the decisions that they
19 made. So we're right now stuck with the
20 decision that they made, but I still believe
21 deep in my heart that all of us can get
22 together to make sure that we can do
23 something to reduce the payments that you
24 have to make while also increasing the
25 assessed value of Gary, Indiana.

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1 Mr. Piggee, do you got any comments?

2 MR. PIGGEE: Yes, Mr. Chair.

3 I wanted to come to Griffith tonight
4 because I wanted Griffith to be a part of
5 the Calumet Township, and we want you to
6 speak out. And I so agree with the
7 president and what he just said. I'm
8 really, really trying to get a satellite
9 office for Griffith so you don't have to
10 come to Gary to complain or to do the things
11 that you think the township could do for
12 you.

13 So I would like to hear some of you, the
14 residents here, about a satellite here in
15 Griffith. If you have any suggestions, we
16 are here to listen to you. Okay. So I
17 would hope that some of you will come to the
18 microphone and help us make this decision
19 about a satellite. Thank you.

20 CHAIRMAN WASHINGTON: So at this time if
21 there are no comments regarding the annual
22 report, I want to open it up for public
23 comments from you to come and express your
24 concerns, your solutions of what we can do
25 to try to work together. So if you would

1 like anything to say --

2 Yes, ma'am.

3 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Well, I'm not going to
4 go up to that microphone. It's a small room
5 here, and my voice is --

6 CHAIRMAN WASHINGTON: Can you give us
7 your name for the record.

8 AUDIENCE MEMBER: My name is Kathy
9 Ruskin, and I'm a resident here in the Town
10 of Griffith, and I certainly can feel your
11 frustration and your passion. I have to ask
12 why it took so long. It seems like when the
13 ship started to sink, that's when you
14 started taking action. Prior to that, this
15 has been going on for 10 years. It's gone
16 through different trustees and nothing. And
17 so when you talk about reduction, if we were
18 to go into North Township, we're looking at
19 \$500,000 roughly. That's the kind of
20 reduction we taxpayers are looking for, not
21 1.5 million dollars or 1 million dollars.
22 And I don't know what the solution is for --
23 it's not Griffith. It's -- we don't know
24 the solution.

25 And that -- and again, Mr. Washington,

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1 I -- yeah, I think there are a lot of people
2 who would like to see that ship starting
3 to -- or the water starting to raise that
4 ship that is known as Gary. Truly. But
5 that could be decades. It's not going to
6 happen in a year. It's not going to happen
7 in 10 years. So I don't know a solution.
8 These things should have been talked about
9 years ago. So that's one thing I want to
10 comment on. I have something else, but that
11 will be at the end.

12 CHAIRMAN WASHINGTON: Any other comments
13 by the public? And if you have any -- this
14 is the time for public comments because what
15 we'll do is no one will interrupt, and then
16 when the board makes their comments, they'll
17 respond to whatever.

18 AUDIENCE MEMBER (MS. RUSKIN): Well,
19 this isn't necessarily about our
20 participation in the township, but it does
21 come from a -- as taxpayers in the Town of
22 Griffith, I think the question has to be
23 raised. Currently there's a lawsuit that
24 encompasses the Calumet Township and
25 individually the trustee versus, let's see,

1 Marsha Moore. And I'd like to know as a
2 taxpayer if my taxpayer money is funding the
3 attorneys that represent the trustee,
4 Ms. Robinson and the township. I'd like to
5 know who the attorneys are. I'd like to
6 know today what kind of -- my taxpayer money
7 that's being spent on that lawsuit.

8 CHAIRMAN WASHINGTON: Okay. Well,
9 because we don't respond to legal action,
10 she can put that out there, and we can note
11 that on the record. Yeah, because we can't
12 speak on pending legal issues.

13 Thank you for your comments though.

14 Any more comments from the public?

15 Yes, sir. Were you going to say
16 something?

17 AUDIENCE MEMBER (MR. DIAMOND): Yes.
18 Tim Diamond again. Just a couple things.
19 Throughout this process, we've heard over
20 the last few years about, you know, money
21 we're putting in and then the little money
22 that we're getting out. But my question has
23 been, where do I find the data as far as how
24 many people ask for the money but then were
25 denied and what that reason code was.

1 Because it's not like you're looking on --
2 knocking on doors, saying, hey, do you need
3 some money kind of thing. People need to
4 fill out a form and request that.

5 So that's kind of the data I was looking
6 for. What was the data when we had the
7 flood? What was the data when we had the
8 tornado? How much help was given at those
9 times?

10 So if you had a satellite office, I'm
11 sure that's easily accommodatible through
12 our Franklin Center. I'm sure there's an
13 office we could set up. I'm sure that's not
14 a big deal. But I guess, I don't want
15 people sitting there twiddling their thumbs
16 either until there's people that come see
17 you. So I would be curious to see where
18 that data was.

19 So I talked to Frank Mrvan about that.
20 We had talked about, yeah, that information
21 should be accessible. I'm not sure if in
22 the Gateway system there's a document of
23 some kind, but that would be helpful.
24 Because it all comes back to the
25 transparency that I mentioned earlier.

1 That's why I started looking for the data
2 probably a year ago, as far as, okay, where
3 is the money going? So I'm looking for
4 annual reports. I'm looking for budgets,
5 those kind of things. And it's just, you
6 know, kind of the aggregate comments about,
7 oh, it cost too much money to put that on
8 the website. That's just silly. It's not
9 that big of a deal. So it should be easy
10 for people to find that information and
11 keeping the transparency. Okay.

12 I work in Gary. Okay. I'm the Chief
13 Information Officer at Methodist Hospitals,
14 so I really have a foot in both camps.
15 Okay. We serve the poor as well.

16 And when I talked to my case manager, my
17 director of case management, I said, yeah,
18 how much interaction do you have with the
19 township?

20 She says, well, really, no one. I think
21 there is now because I directed them to make
22 that connection. But prior to that, we had
23 to make a phone call and ask for help for
24 someone who might need funeral services or
25 can't pay for medication or things like

1 that, things that the townships are supposed
2 to be doing. And usually it's an answer of,
3 well, we don't have any money. So there's
4 never really that connection.

5 So I asked Frank Mrvan the same
6 question. How do you handle that? North
7 Township has three hospitals in their
8 township, so they kind of have a liaison for
9 all these different areas. So there seems
10 to be a disconnect of two organizations that
11 are really serving the same people and
12 serving the poor.

13 So for me, as a taxpayer, I'm not
14 worried about the money so much because
15 we're pretty much capped at the one percent.
16 It's how those monies and dollars are being
17 spent is where our frustration came in. And
18 that's how this bill thing came about in the
19 first place is you're following a culture of
20 corruption for the last 50 years. So you
21 get new people in office. So you had a
22 chance. How do you react to that? How do
23 you change that culture of corruption?
24 Because you have that stigma over that, and
25 to change that is a challenge.

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1 So all we really wanted to see is that
2 transparency, to make sure that those funds
3 are going to the right people at the right
4 time and then make sure that we're not taken
5 advantage of.

6 So from a taxpayer's standpoint, yes, it
7 sounds like a lot of money we're putting
8 into this, but as a personal taxpayer, we're
9 pretty much capped, so there's more money
10 for the town to do more services and things,
11 but that's where that frustration lies.

12 CHAIRMAN WASHINGTON: Thank you, sir.

13 Any more comments from the public?
14 Councilman? No?

15 Anybody else, Mr. Ryfa?

16 MR. RYFA: Yep, okay. First of all, I'd
17 like to thank Darren and Mr. Piggee and
18 Trustee for coming here. We have had good
19 communication with everybody. I haven't met
20 Mr. Piggee yet, but we've had some good
21 dialogue over the years. It's certainly
22 nothing that's ever been a personal issue.
23 It's just dollars and cents.

24 I hope you truly understand that at
25 least the town -- a lot of people in

1 Griffith, I know the town council, is very
2 committed that a better Gary is going to be
3 a better Griffith. A better Gary is going
4 to be a better Lake County.

5 So we would -- I said before, we'd
6 rather just stand on the street corner
7 giving out hundred-dollar bills to somebody
8 who needs it to make a bigger impact in
9 their life than just we get the money and we
10 never -- we don't know if anything good
11 comes with it. We'd love to work with you
12 as far as trying to either get legislation
13 or help promote some type of cause to help
14 Gary in certain areas. If there's anything
15 we can do as a town, we'd love to partner
16 with you. I would say this from the bottom
17 of my heart, we want to see Gary move
18 forward and get up. So if there's anything
19 that we can do, please let us know.

20 CHAIRMAN WASHINGTON: Thank you.

21 MR. PIGGEE: Thank you.

22 CHAIRMAN WASHINGTON: Any more comments
23 from the public?

24 Madam Trustee?

25 TRUSTEE ROBINSON: I would like to say

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1 thank you, Councilperson Ryfa and all the
2 residents, all the employees that came out
3 today, but comments are duly noted. There
4 are things that we still have to work on,
5 and we can work and we will work towards in
6 any way possible, either getting a better
7 connection if we're able to get an office,
8 if we're able to download everything you're
9 looking for.

10 Frank Mrvan happens to be a mentor of
11 mine. So I understand your conversations
12 with Mr. Mrvan. I have the same ones daily.
13 I try to keep up with him very -- as quickly
14 and much as I can because he's doing a lot
15 of great things for North Township, and I
16 would like to do the same things. But what
17 I cannot compete with is what happened
18 before I got here in '15. We can't keep
19 holding onto your 10 years and 10 more
20 years. I'm trying my hardest. That's why I
21 took the job. I said that at the beginning,
22 I'm going to do better and not until it's my
23 best, and I'm not at my best yet. I'm still
24 doing better every day in this position.
25 And so it'd be great if we worked together,

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1 get it all worked out. I'm all for that.

2 Thank you.

3 CHAIRMAN WASHINGTON: Board comments?

4 Mr. Piggee?

5 MR. PIGGEE: Yes. I want to elaborate
6 on two things that were said.

7 Ms. Robinson, I like what you just had
8 to say because you can't keep holding onto
9 things that have passed and passed and
10 passed. We got to look to the future. We
11 have to look to the future.

12 Mr. Washington, you made a good comment
13 on your evaluation. If we can come together
14 with those legislators and the officials
15 here in Griffith and officials in Gary,
16 maybe we can solve some of this money
17 problem because everybody is having these
18 money problems because of the taxes and
19 these types of things.

20 So I really wish you would think about
21 it, and our next meeting we come together we
22 can talk about it, but we have to get these
23 legislators on top. We got to get these
24 legislators to understand where the
25 residents are coming from. The residents of

1 Gary and the residents of Griffith, we need
2 to know where they are coming. Okay.

3 And the other thing, about this
4 satellite office, it bothers me that
5 Griffith does not have anybody out here
6 servicing them here in their city and they
7 got to come all the way to Gary to apply for
8 this and apply for that. That person
9 doesn't have to be here every day. They can
10 be here half a day three times a week or two
11 times a week. So we need to work on that.
12 You need a satellite office here in
13 Griffith.

14 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

15 CHAIRMAN WASHINGTON: Thank you,
16 Mr. Piggee.

17 My comments, first thing, to this nice
18 young lady, I heard your comments, and I
19 want to respond to something that you said
20 that was so true. You made the comment
21 about this has been going on for a long time
22 and why now. As Mr. Ryfa articulated, at a
23 particular year, there was about a million
24 coming out, and eventually it began to rise.
25 So up until that time came, I would assume

1 that nobody really looked at the issue
2 because you wasn't paying as much. But now
3 that it has become an issue, let me say this
4 first. There is no excuse why we should
5 have never had meetings in Griffith since
6 I've been on the board. This is my second
7 term. And I take full responsibility for
8 that. Okay. And it's better late than
9 never, in my opinion. And we want to do
10 better by having meetings here.

11 The next thing, transparency. Sir, you
12 are correct. We're trying to do better as
13 Miss -- our trustee said. Frank Mrvan is
14 the standard. He's an excellent trustee,
15 and we're moving towards that. What I will
16 tell you what I've done, as far as
17 transparency as a board member, one thing
18 that we've done is we make sure that Boss
19 Reporters, this nice young lady that is here
20 taking these transcriptions, we make sure we
21 have court-reported minutes of our meetings.
22 And you can go to my website, which is DW4,
23 the number 4, DW4townshipboard.com. And at
24 the very least, when we approve our meeting
25 minutes, I place them on my website. Okay.

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1 So you can pull down those minutes of the
2 meetings.

3 Now, I'm not going to get involved in
4 budgets and all that other kind of stuff
5 because I jut got a little simple website.
6 Okay. But when it comes to the minutes of
7 the meetings that the board is responsible
8 for, I want to make sure that the board can
9 be transparent to a certain extent. And I
10 make sure that we can have those minutes and
11 you can pull those down if you got the ink
12 to print those. Okay.

13 The next thing, I appreciate what you
14 said about Gary, Rick. You're absolutely
15 right. But again, as you said, how long is
16 it going to take? I personally believe that
17 it doesn't take 10 years or 5 years. I
18 personally believe that the right people at
19 the table, we can take care of some things
20 as soon as possible.

21 MR. PIGGEE: That's right.

22 CHAIRMAN WASHINGTON: And unfortunately,
23 sometimes you have to say things, you have
24 to call things out, you have to be
25 transparent. You say things. And when you

1 say certain things and when you call certain
2 things out, you become not liked. You
3 become a person that's -- oh, he's
4 grandstanding. No. I know that Griffith
5 pays a lot into Cal Township. But I do know
6 that the trustee and this board and
7 especially -- I can't give the board the
8 credit. The trustee has done everything she
9 can by cutting hours. She's done everything
10 that she can as far as making sure that the
11 budget is intact. Unfortunately, due to
12 circumstances that we have no control over,
13 that assessed value is extremely low.

14 Folks are going to be mad at me, but I
15 don't care. There is some people that can
16 help that assessed value go higher?

17 AUDIENCE MEMBER (MS. RUSKIN): And who
18 are they?

19 CHAIRMAN WASHINGTON: And they need to
20 be accountable to help that go higher. My
21 opinion, the redevelopment commission in
22 Gary needs to review the TIFs. And the TIFs
23 that's not working, they need to cut those
24 TIFs down. We need to work with our city
25 council and our legislators to create

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1 legislation to quit allowing people all over
2 the country who haven't been in Gary for
3 20 years to own property in that city while
4 they don't do any type of maintenance. And
5 I know when you go to East Chicago, you go
6 to Hammond, you're not going to -- and I'm
7 pretty sure in Griffith, you're not going to
8 see a burnt-down house on the corner for so
9 long without there being some fines or
10 somebody being held accountable for that,
11 but that has happened in Gary for far too
12 long, and yes, that is on the administration,
13 and we need to have those conversations
14 because what happens in Gary affects Cal
15 Township. You may not like what I have to
16 say, but at the end of the day I got elected
17 by the people to be for the residents, not
18 only for Cal Township. That includes Gary
19 but also Griffith.

20 We're asking -- humbly asking, let's
21 work together. We know a solution won't be
22 made overnight, but I know I and others here
23 are willing to do what we can within our
24 power to try to remedy this situation or
25 either lessen the amount that you have to

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1 pay every year. And I just think with the
2 people sitting down and shooting different
3 ideas with the Department of Local
4 Government and Finance, we can get it done.

5 And again, I'm just a little old board
6 member that's the board president, and I
7 don't want to step outside the
8 responsibilities of my position as a policy
9 person. But we need people that are at the
10 table that have a responsibility, that have
11 executive responsibilities, legislative
12 responsibilities, that can do things to get
13 that assessed value up, to do things.

14 Because, again, yes, if you go to North
15 Township, that's what you're going to pay.
16 But there's a strong possibility that you
17 won't be there for a while or you may not
18 even get there. So what I want to see
19 happen, if that doesn't happen, we need to
20 do what we can to lessen this pain that
21 you're feeling right now in case that
22 doesn't happen.

23 AUDIENCE MEMBER (MS. RUSKIN): Yeah, but
24 can -- do you see our predicament?

25 CHAIRMAN WASHINGTON: I see your

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1 predicament.

2 AUDIENCE MEMBER (MS. RUSKIN): Do you
3 see that --

4 CHAIRMAN WASHINGTON: Wait a minute,
5 wait a minute, wait, wait. I let you say
6 what you needed to say.

7 AUDIENCE MEMBER (MS. RUSKIN): Okay.

8 CHAIRMAN WASHINGTON: And we can talk
9 after. And I understand. And if we didn't
10 understand, we wouldn't be here now. We
11 would just say, hey, they're on their own,
12 but I'm here so you can beat me up, and I
13 don't have a problem with that.

14 AUDIENCE MEMBER (MS. RUSKIN): I don't
15 want to do that.

16 CHAIRMAN WASHINGTON: Well, I know. Not
17 beat me up, but hear what you have to say
18 because this board since I've been on
19 here -- and I can't talk about past
20 boards -- we haven't had meetings here. As
21 a matter of fact, people get on us because
22 we don't have enough meetings.

23 MR. PIGGEE: Right.

24 CHAIRMAN WASHINGTON: Just to let you
25 know, for the audience, by state law, we are

1 mandated to only have at least four meetings
2 per year. And that is to balance the
3 budget, get the annual report and other
4 things. And you know, a lot of times there
5 is no need to have meetings if there's
6 nothing to talk about. And so people
7 criticize, saying, you don't guys don't meet
8 enough.

9 Well, today I'm going to provide this
10 information, and we have a set schedule now.
11 The next meeting here in Griffith will be
12 July 1st, Monday, July 1st. Also, we have a
13 meeting Monday, May 20th, in Gary.

14 What I also ask Griffith residents who
15 can make that trek, we'd love to see you in
16 Gary, at township, at some of our meetings
17 too. You can let your voices be heard in
18 Gary also. Remember, if Gary goes, the
19 whole region goes. So there's no problem in
20 coming to Gary and letting your voices be
21 heard, but I also believe you don't need to
22 also have to go to Gary all the time. There
23 should also be opportunities for us to come
24 to Griffith to do that.

25 MR. PIGGEE: Right.

1 CHAIRMAN WASHINGTON: So with that being
2 said, the Chair would like to entertain a
3 motion for adjournment.

4 MR. LAY: Mr. Chair?

5 CHAIRMAN WASHINGTON: Yes.

6 MR. LAY: Thank you.

7 My name is Clorius Lay. I'm an
8 attorney. There's an elephant in the room
9 no one is mentioning, and that is Bill 1177
10 is still operational. So I don't disagree
11 with any idea that has been expressed here
12 today, but until that issue is settled,
13 comes to an end, I'm not sure that many of
14 the things that have been discussed -- I
15 don't think the state legislature is going
16 to be able to do anything before the year on
17 1177, whether you're going into St. John or
18 North Township. So everything that has been
19 suggested, I agree with, but no one has
20 mentioned 1177. I know Mr. Ryfa --

21 CHAIRMAN WASHINGTON: And Attorney Lay,
22 I don't want to just leave them out there
23 with 1177, so would you or Madam Trustee
24 give a brief synopsis of what 1177 includes.

25 MR. LAY: Okay. There were two bills.

1 The initial bill after there was a
2 failure -- I'm not going to argue who was
3 right or wrong between St. John and North
4 Township or they did it officially or not.
5 It was found by, I think, Mr. Young
6 (phonetic). I think that's how you
7 pronounce his name.

8 TRUSTEE ROBINSON: Chyung.

9 MR. LAY: Chyung. I'm sorry. And that
10 bill is now dead and only received first
11 reading so it -- where you were going to set
12 up your independent township. They then
13 extended you for an additional year to go
14 back to North Township and to St. John
15 Township, which I'm sure Mr. Ryfa and I'm
16 sure other people in the room are aware.

17 Until that is settled, I think it would
18 be somewhat irresponsible for certain things
19 that have been discussed, which I think
20 they're all great ideas to be done. That
21 has to be settled. Are you in this township
22 or not? And I don't believe the state
23 legislature is going to propose anything
24 unless they kill off 1177 and say -- because
25 they initially said you couldn't do anything

1 before July 1. Now -- you know, I assume
2 you've started before now to go back to
3 St. John and North Township.

4 So until that is done, I don't see how
5 anyone can have satellite and things of that
6 nature. Because if you're gone, meaning
7 you're in a different township, then there
8 would be no need for that to exist. And you
9 have a relatively short time period. You
10 can -- the state legislature is going to
11 probably come out, I would assume, in April.
12 I'm not sure what day in April it's going to
13 come out. So I think this is their longest
14 session, but it's going to end, I'm sure,
15 before election of May 7th. So until that
16 is settled, I don't see how anything can be
17 done that would be realistic to do because
18 you don't know if you're going to be here.

19 CHAIRMAN WASHINGTON: You know, let me
20 say this before you make a comment to that.
21 And I understand what Attorney Lay is
22 saying, but I do know if that opportunity
23 does happen where you are extended more
24 time, you still have to get those two
25 potential townships to accept you. Even if

1 that happens, there's still going to be a
2 period of time before you can actually move
3 over. Okay. And there's a possibility that
4 you won't.

5 In my opinion, I don't believe waiting
6 on legislation to pass or not pass because
7 there are residents in Griffith that can use
8 services. And if there's a possibility that
9 there could be a person from Cal Township
10 that come here maybe once or twice a week
11 and provide some help to make it easier for
12 a person to get those benefits, I would love
13 to see that happen.

14 Again, that's something that the trustee
15 can work on because that's her purview, but
16 again, Mr. Lay is right. But on the other
17 onset, if everything is approved, it's going
18 to take time. So until that time, you're
19 not automatically going to just get those
20 services. You're still part of Cal
21 Township. So in my opinion, until you're
22 actually no longer a part of Cal Township,
23 you're still a part of Cal Township.

24 Madam Trustee.

25 TRUSTEE ROBINSON: I would like to also

1 just add to that, because there's so much
2 conversation in the difference in coming
3 here, coming to Gary, that we also have an
4 office in the Calumet Township area at 1900
5 West 41st Avenue. It's our multi-purpose
6 center. It's our shelter, and we have case
7 managers on staff that can see anyone from
8 Gary, Griffith, Cal Township and everything.
9 And I don't know. I'm going to err on the
10 side of caution, too, about this whole big
11 thing of coming to Gary, but it's sort of in
12 between. So maybe if we even had meetings
13 there, that place is set up as well as a
14 meeting place. I know they have done that
15 in the past. When I was on the township
16 board, we had meetings out there, so it's
17 kind of a conduit to both. So that's always
18 open, so I just wanted to add that to
19 everything else.

20 CHAIRMAN WASHINGTON: Thank you.

21 MR. RYFA: Just a couple things just to
22 address the 1177 bill. So essentially, that
23 was another township bill altogether. There
24 was an amendment put on there that would
25 allow us to get to November of 2020,

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1 basically. So realistically, unless
2 something happens this year, we're going to
3 be here for a year. I think we should make
4 the best of it. I'd like to sit down with
5 you guys. I think the council would, too,
6 about -- maybe discuss -- I don't know what
7 kind of office space, but let's see if we
8 can do one day a week.

9 Part of our issue is we don't know what
10 our residents' needs are. We simply don't.
11 And until that is decided, you know, it
12 makes it difficult for an accepting township
13 to say, well, we want them or we don't want
14 them. So that's one end of it.

15 But I would suggest, though, if we were
16 to get out of the township in two weeks, I
17 would still like to sit down with you guys
18 and girls on a regular basis, if needed to,
19 to see what we can do to help legislatively
20 down state to help anything that -- we're on
21 board. We want to meet with you guys.

22 And Darren is exactly right that a lot
23 of people don't understand the TIFs and how
24 they work. So when there's a TIF area
25 declared, all that money stays in the

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1 economic development area, the allocation
2 area. So none of that flows to the township
3 or to the city or to the schools. Any new
4 development in Gary is going to be TIF'ed.
5 So that's why we're stuck with that as well.
6 And you know, Griffith would do the same
7 thing.

8 But our biggest concern, like I said, is
9 these increasing -- exponentially increasing
10 levies that we're paying every year. And
11 when we hit 2020 with the tax caps, we've
12 done our job as a town.

13 Starting in 2014, we've reduced our
14 tax -- corporate tax rate every single year.
15 Our general fund has gone down, the tax
16 rate, every single year by about 30 percent
17 last year. So we're in pretty good shape as
18 a town as it comes to the tax caps, but what
19 the township is going to do to us is -- it's
20 going to hurt. It's going to -- I mean, it's
21 going to affect Griffith's town operations.
22 It's going to affect our departments, the
23 money that we have available.

24 So that's -- like I said, it's nothing
25 personal. It's just dollars and cents. And

1 now we need to protect the dollars of our
2 citizens, so -- thanks.

3 MR. PIGGEE: Mr. Chair.

4 CHAIRMAN WASHINGTON: Yes, Mr. Piggee.

5 MR. PIGGEE: First of all, this is my
6 first year on this board, and it's a very
7 interesting board because I've been in this
8 area just about all my life, and I was
9 wondering and I'm wondering now for the
10 persons that need help from Griffith, where
11 do they go? I mean, is there a place? You
12 have the Mansards, and I'm sure there's
13 people over there that need some assistance,
14 these types of things. And I'm very
15 concerned because I want to be there for
16 those people who need that help.

17 TRUSTEE ROBINSON: They come to the
18 township?

19 MR. PIGGEE: They do come to the
20 township.

21 TRUSTEE ROBINSON: Uh-huh.

22 MR. PIGGEE: But they come all the way
23 to Gary; right?

24 CHAIRMAN WASHINGTON: Or they can -- as
25 Ms. Robinson said, they could go to the Cal

1 Township, or we are going to work on getting
2 a person at least once a week to come to the
3 area.

4 MR. PIGGEE: Okay. All right. You've
5 answered my question.

6 CHAIRMAN WASHINGTON: Attorney Monroe,
7 do you have anything?

8 MS. MONROE: No.

9 CHAIRMAN WASHINGTON: Madam Trustee,
10 anything else?

11 TRUSTEE ROBINSON: No.

12 CHAIRMAN WASHINGTON: Attorney Lay?

13 MR. LAY: No.

14 CHAIRMAN WASHINGTON: Mr. Dalton?

15 MR. DALTON: No.

16 CHAIRMAN WASHINGTON: The Chair would
17 like to entertain a motion for adjournment,
18 Mr. Piggee.

19 MR. PIGGEE: So moved.

20 CHAIRMAN WASHINGTON: All in favor
21 signify by saying, "Aye."

22 MR. PIGGEE: Aye.

23 CHAIRMAN WASHINGTON: No opposed. The
24 ayes have it. Motion is adjourned. Thank you.

25 (TOWNSHIP MEETING CONCLUDED AT 6:55 P.M.)

1 STATE OF INDIANA)
2) SS:
3 COUNTY OF LAKE)

4 THE CALUMET TOWNSHIP BOARD MEETING
5 GARY, INDIANA

6
7 REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE
8

9 I, KRISTEN K. STOKES, CSR, Notary Public in
10 and for the County of Lake, State of Indiana, do
11 hereby certify that I reported in machine shorthand
12 the foregoing proceedings had in the above-entitled
13 matter, at the time and place herein set forth; and
14 I do further certify that the foregoing transcript,
15 is a true and correct transcript of my said
16 stenographic notes.

17
18 18th day of March, 2019.

19 

20 /s/ Kristen K. Stokes
21 KRISTEN K. STOKES, CSR
22 CSR# 084-003723
23 My Commission Expires: 8/27/23
24 Notary Public: Lake County, Indiana
25

1 STATE OF INDIANA)
2) SS:
3 COUNTY OF LAKE)

4 THE CALUMET TOWNSHIP BOARD MEETING
5 GARY, INDIANA

6
7 These minutes of the Calumet Township Board
8 meeting held on March 4, 2019, were approved by the
9 Board of Trustees on the 23rd day of
10 April, 2019.

11
12 Darren Washington
13 Darren Washington, Board Chairman

14
15 _____
16 James Piggee, Board Member

17
18 Jacqueline Holmes
19 Jacqueline Holmes, Board Secretary
20
21
22
23
24
25

				4:15,21;16:1
				blame (1)
				20:17
				Board (26)
				3:2;4:5;6:7;7:2,14;
				9:2,16;11:1;16:23;
				24;20:2;24:16;32:3;
				34:6,17;35:7,8;36:6;
				7:38;5,6;39:18;
				45:16;46:21;48:6,7
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				39:20
				board's (1)
				19:15
				body (2)
				8:14,14
				Bonds (3)
				3:16,17,19
				bore (1)
				8:2
				Boss (1)
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				both (2)
				27:14;45:17
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				33:4
				bottom (1)
				30:16
				breakouts (1)
				8:21
				brief (1)
				41:24
				bring (1)
				20:6
				brought (1)
				8:8
				bucks (1)
				16:17
				budget (5)
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				36:11;40:3
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				16:3;27:4;35:4
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				4:20
				burden (1)
				13:16
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				18:12
				C
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				18;44:9,20,22,23;
				45:8;48:25
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