

## Brenda Wheeler

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**Subject:** FW: TIF

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**From:** Schoby, Bob <[bob.schoby@blairschools.org](mailto:bob.schoby@blairschools.org)>

**Sent:** Sunday, 21 June 2026 14:40:54

**To:** Mindy Rump <[mrump@blairne.gov](mailto:mrump@blairne.gov)>; Rick Paulsen <[rpaulsen@blairne.gov](mailto:rpaulsen@blairne.gov)>; [klong@blairgov.ne](mailto:klong@blairgov.ne) <[klong@blairgov.ne](mailto:klong@blairgov.ne)>; Frank Wolff <[fwolff@blairne.gov](mailto:fwolff@blairne.gov)>; Brent Clark <[bclark@blairne.gov](mailto:bclark@blairne.gov)>; Kevin Willis <[kwillis@blairne.gov](mailto:kwillis@blairne.gov)>; Kirk Highfill <[khighfill@blairne.gov](mailto:khighfill@blairne.gov)>; James Letcher <[jletcher@blairne.gov](mailto:jletcher@blairne.gov)>; Gary Banner <[gbanner@blairne.gov](mailto:gbanner@blairne.gov)>

**Subject:** TIF

June 19, 2026

To: Mayor Rump

City Council Members - Paulsen, Wolff, Banner, Letcher, Long, Willis, Clark, Highfill

I moved my family to Nebraska over 30 years ago for a job opportunity. It was a leap of faith moving out of our home state of Iowa to an area with no family, no friends, knowing absolutely anybody. I told my wife that where we landed was up to her. As a lifelong educator and 2 small children I knew she was best suited to find THE BEST school district for raising our children. She spent days looking at all the nearby communities – Gretna, Elkhorn, Bennington, OPS, even Catholic schools in Omaha which I knew we likely couldn't afford. I returned to our temporary apartment one day and she greeted me with the statements: "I found our new town – it's Blair. I found a builder. I found a lot. And I put a deposit on the lot". At the time Cargill had newly opened for operation and there was little of anything in the way of housing and even open building lots in Blair When I questioned why Blair she was steadfast in her reply - "They have the very best schools by far". Not for the shopping, not for the vibrant nightlife, not for anything other than "the very best schools". The population of Blair in 1995 was slightly more than 7500.

My wife spent the first year of our relocation, helping our girls transition to their new environment, meeting new teachers, new friends, and new parents of classmates. She then found opportunities to begin substituting in the school district, landed a long-term sub position with the SPED program, and eventually obtained a full-time position as one of Blair's elementary art teachers. A position she held for 23 years in addition to her 10 years in Iowa, and she continues to sub to this day, 4 years after retirement. She loves the district and the amazing staff. Our daughters thrived in the Blair system, met new friends, attained good grades, and participated in numerous extracurricular activities. Both were fortunate that their athletic careers in high school led to scholarships to play soccer at the next level. I became involved with the school system around 2005 during the campaign that led to the construction of Deerfield and gave numerous presentations to local civic organizations alongside Steve Shanahan. I attended board meetings regularly for almost 10 years before deciding I wanted to contribute more to the system. I've now served on the school board for almost 10 years. The population of Blair is now a tad more than 8100 – a gain of 600 in 30 plus years.

I tell you all this because, despite not being born and raised in Blair, we are Blair. Like any small town in America, the schools have been the center of our life for over 30 years. Now we fear the potential erosion of that excellence due to tax incentives, specifically TIF funding, for development targeted to bring additional families to Blair. I'm for development but not when the primary draw to Blair – educational excellence - will be negatively impacted with a loss of property tax revenue while still being required to educate additional students. We can all argue about school finances but having been knee deep in the issue and closely following legislative action the best I can say is state financial support for public schools is tenuous at best. Every year brings new surprises that the school district has to accommodate in the budget. TIF results in a very simple mathematical calculation. Every dollar provided with TIF and withheld from the school district will have to be covered by the actual tax paying citizens of Blair. The district has worked very hard to lower the school tax levy, which has dropped by 30+ percent in the last 3 years. We now have one of the lowest levies in the Omaha metro and the lowest in Washington County. While still providing superior educational and activity experiences for our students. We can go only so low without impacting programs, class size, and teacher workload.

I ask that you think very hard as you contemplate approving TIF financing for this proposed project. Look around Blair and think about what will happen if our schools have to absorb additional enrollment and costs without the additional funding provided by the requisite property tax support. What changes will be required within the district? What will the district look like at the end of those 15 years TIF is in place? Is growth at any cost really worth it?

Thank you for your consideration.

Bob Schoby