BUDGET WORK SESSION

CALL TO ORDER-President Paul Gayler called to order the budget work session.

BUDGET WORK SESSION-Mr. Yoder reviewed the entire budget and answered questions from board members. The budget work session ended at 4:00pm.

BOARD MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER-President Paul Gayler called the September 7, 2021 meeting of the Board of School Trustees to order at 4:00 p.m. Board Members present were Mr. Eash, Mr. Miller, Mrs. Hummel, and Mr. Varner. Others in attendance included Dr. Jayson Snyder, Superintendent, Dr. Robby Goodman, Assistant Superintendent, Josh Yoder, Director of Business Services, Jeff Palmer, Director of Buildings and Grounds and Tim Shelly, Board Attorney.

SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT-Dr. Snyder would like to recognize Michelle Jarrett, she is a bus driver for Middlebury Community Schools. Last week Michelle was driving a bus and a second grader was choking on her bus. She stopped and performed the Heimlich maneuver, likely saving the life of the student. I told her we wanted to recognize her here tonight and her reply was, “I was just doing my job and any other driver would do the same.” Our bus drivers have a difficult job and are truly such an important piece of what we do here at the school district. It is important to take a moment to recognize what Mrs. Jarrett did that day as well as all of the drivers for Middlebury Community Schools, what they do to deliver our students to school, home and athletic events safely every day is very appreciated. Michelle Jarrett, who drives Bus 38 is driving a route right now and that is why she can’t be here. When I asked if she would come tonight so we could recognize her, she said the kids need her and she needs to drive her route and anyone would do what I did. I believe when someone has a humble attitude like that, there is even more reason to recognize them. Thank you Michelle, for doing what you did and thank all of our bus drivers for doing what they do.

PRESIDENT GAYLER AMMENDED THE ORIGINAL AGENDA BASED ON PREVIOUS EXECUTIVE SESSION- TO DISCUSS COVID POLICY UPDATES-
Dr. Snyder stated that last week Governor Holcomb issued an executive order. Within that executive order he gave all rights to the Indiana department of health when it comes to Covid mitigation and quarantine status in K-12 Indiana educational institutions in the state of Indiana. After legal representation giving us guidance, what we understand, is that we are required to pick one of two paths as a school district. One path is having masks be optional in schools. If you choose for masks to be optional, every close contact, regardless of whether that student is wearing a mask, but because your school is mask optional, must quarantine at home for 10-14 days. Every single one, regardless of if they are symptomatic. The other path is to require masks in schools, temporarily. If that path is chosen, no one has to quarantine at home when they are
exposed as a close contact. Whether or not each person up here agrees with us or thinks that there are inconsistencies and hypocrisy within those two options, the reality is that the school district has to pick one of those two, period. Trying to continue with what we are doing now, where masks are optional and close contacts can attend school with a mask, is considered a new Class B misdemeanor every day at every school. That is not our interpretation that is the legal interpretation. We have to pick one of those paths. This was a discussion earlier today, and I am happy to answer questions about either of those two paths. Mr. Gayler asked if we did not mask, what number of students would currently be sent home to quarantine. Dr. Snyder stated we have had 211 students identify as close contacts thus far this school year, our cases are lower than several other school districts. Low numbers are why we were attempting to let local data control the decision making process but the governor’s executive order takes that completely out of our hands and says pick one of the paths. 211 close contacts at a minimum of 10-14 days quarantined would have been 2,110 educational days missed by our students. Mrs. Hummel questioned if the teachers and or staff been contacted as to what their thoughts are if we were optional. Dr. Snyder stated he has spoken to numerous staff and administrators. I can’t say it is 100 percent one way or the other. Just since the executive order came out last Thursday is when we started to get some guidance on it. We have had numerous staff members say they are not pro mask, but my students cannot recover if they are out two weeks every time they are a close contact. I am not a doctor, I do not know if masks are effective. I have been sent research that supports both ways. I know if our students are out of school they will struggle to recover if they miss two weeks, if they miss four weeks because they are twice a close contact, they might not recover. That is the overwhelming voice I have heard from our employees since late last week. Mrs. Hummel asked if we were to mask mandate will we require social distancing or can students do group projects, sit together at lunch and play outside at recess and have socialization. Dr. Snyder stated he did not see anything in the current terms from the Indiana department of health that we would have to abide by that references specifics about social distancing. Even if there was some type of temporary mask requirement in the classroom, there is some language in the order that students are allowed to have breaks for band, choir, outdoor activities, recess and outdoor PE. You can see that there are things that seem at the least inconsistent. The reality is, we have two choices, two paths to choose from. Mr. Eash questioned if we were to stay mask optional, and say for example Mr. Gayler tested positive and I was a close contact but I wore a mask. Would I still have to quarantine because not everyone is masked? Dr. Snyder said that was correct and again that seems inconsistent with the plan that you look at from the Indiana department of health. They have said there are two paths, if you mandate masks, no one quarantines unless they become symptomatic or their exposure happens when unmasked. If you choose masks to be optional and a person is a close contact, that person will have to quarantine even if they were wearing a mask because everyone isn’t wearing a mask. Mr. Eash asked if that was regardless of vaccination status and Dr. Snyder answered yes. Mr. Eash asked about extra-curricular activities. Dr. Snyder answered that his understanding is if the activity is outside, masks would be optional in the stands as well as for all of the student athletes. Mrs. Hummel asked about inside PE class, Dr. Snyder said masks would be optional. Mr. Miller stated that when the governor issues an executive order, it feels like you are dealt a hand from a stacked deck. How long does an executive order last? Dr. Snyder stated that our understanding is that this executive order is through the end of September and then the governor would have the option to extend it after that. Mr. Miller stated that there is no guarantee that this will be over at the end of September. Dr. Snyder said the governor could extend the order. Mrs. Hummel asked if the board could meet to discuss if the order changes? Dr. Snyder agrees that if the governor’s order expires and the governor elects not to extend the order, it makes sense for the board to come back because then the situation has
changed. The board might want to have a conversation at that point about a different path. Mr. Gayler asked if we don’t choose either path and make no changes what are some of the legal ramifications. Obviously the school corporation is insured, are there any issues with the school corporation being sued if we don’t make a change? Dr. Snyder stated that USI through Liberty Mutual is our property casualty insurance and today they told us they will not commit to covering us through any type of civil lawsuit if we ignore the governor’s order and someone files a lawsuit after an injury or sickness. They will not commit to covering us. I know that technically not following the governor’s executive order is considered a Class B misdemeanor, punishable by fining up to $1,000 per day per school as well as up to 180 days of incarceration for any administrator and possibly board member not choosing one of the two paths. I do not know if the local prosecutor would actually prosecute that, but that is what the law is. Mr. Gayler wanted to clarify that in the mask option, students would not be quarantined. Dr. Snyder stated that is correct unless their exposé happened when unmasked or with someone they live with. At this time out of the 211 close contacts a large majority, over 80%, are happening in school buses and classrooms and because those are both areas where a student would be wearing a mask, they would not have to quarantine. If someone at their house is Covid positive, then they would have to quarantine at home. That has been the difference all along. That goes back to the counties data from last year, approximately 2% of students from last year were becoming positive from contacts at school, but it was over 35% that were exposed at home. Mr. Varner stated that in prior meetings we have talked about this issue a little bit and we have certainly had patron comments about it and Dr. Snyder in your superintendent report you said that our local data would drive our decision making processes. I guess as I understand it, that approach is being taken away from us from the state with the two paths that you mentioned. I guess my question is to the entire board, not just Dr. Snyder, if this executive order would expire September 30 I would assume we would re-evaluate things, perhaps go back to our local data and have some flexibility whereas today we only have 2 choices. It has nothing to do what we think about masks, we have two paths and we have to pick one. Dr. Snyder does think it would be wise for the board to come back together and talk if the executive order is ended September 30 and talk about the numbers in our schools. Before the executive order that is where we were. Now there are two options and unfortunately neither option is great. Mr. Miller stated that regardless what we feel personally, the choice really comes down to how we keep kids in school or how do we send kids and staff home and not have them in school. That is really what we are talking about. Mrs. Hummel stated that we have heard from so many people over the summer that virtual was not good for their kids, online learning had mental repercussions, not to mention we saw test scores go down. Dr. Snyder said I believe our goal should be to keep kids in school. I was not here last year but have heard a lot of positive reports about our teachers trying to balance virtual and in person but it is not something we want to revisit. I also think it goes back to what Mr. Miller said, regardless of what any of us believe about vaccines or masks or Covid or any of this, the question is do we temporarily ask for masks in the classrooms so that students can stay in school or do we stay optional and send home many students and employees every day. I have received many emails from many of you about this being some type of governmental over reach and that the government is involved in these decisions. If this is your belief, please reach out to the Indiana Department of Health and Governor Holcomb’s office directly. We do not make these policies, we didn’t pick these two paths, but they are our paths. Mr. Eash questioned if they voted on this tonight and it was in favor to go to a mask mandate, when that would go into effect. Dr. Snyder stated that if the vote happened tonight, it would go into effect tomorrow. Understanding that the majority of our students ride a bus and have a mask with them. We would have extra as well. There would be grace. We are not looking to punish people. We are trying to do what is best for
as many kids as we can and follow a mandate that is being put in place from the people in Indianapolis. Mr. Gayler stated how tough this is. We really hoped we could get through a school year with no masks, we were excited to start school and our numbers look great. We are seeing numbers creep up where we are seeing kids starting to quarantine. None of us want to go back to e-learning. These kids did not thrive, it was very hard on teachers and staff and everyone involved. There is not a great answer here, it is not about whether masks work or not, that is not the argument. I am sure we have a lot of different views in this room and on this board even. This is about the governor and the Indiana department of health has given us 2 options. I would support the option that keeps kids in school. I think that is the most important thing. I weigh the option of my kids wearing masks, I don't want my kids to wear a mask, I really don't. Weighing those risks, I would proceed with a temporary mask mandate in place. Dr. Snyder said he knows there is no easy option to be made tonight, this room wouldn't be full if there was an easy option.

I came to this district in large part because I met with the school board and everything about our conversations were do what is best for kids all the time, it doesn't matter what is popular, do what is best for kids. What's best for kids in the opinion of the administration is not to miss 2110 instructional days in 3 1/2 weeks. Personal feelings about masks can be put aside. The administration would be willing to entertain a board vote on this. Mr. Gayler asked Dr. Snyder what his recommendation would be. Dr. Snyder answered the administration would recommend a temporary requirement that would be re-evaluated when the governor's executive order expires.

Mrs. Hummel feels like the board has been put into a corner and the decision has been taken out of their hands. Elsewhere didn't have the courage to make the decisions themselves so it put the school board in a bad spot. I think it is so important for our kids that as a community we unify and take away any distraction we have from the classroom, regardless of our personal opinions. If you want to use it for a civics lesson, have your kids write letters to Indianapolis. As far as our community, I hope we can unify and get through this together and know that we are always going to do what is best for our kids. If we get to a point where we can re-evaluate and make them optional again, we can do that but I think in our kids best interest we get through this and try to stay as positive as we can. Mr. Miller echoes what Mrs. Hummel just said. I think that what Governor Holcomb has done is a low maneuver to force decisions that you don't want to make because the governor wouldn't make the decision. However, he set up the parameters so the choices that are there doesn't appear to be choices at all. Whether you are in favor or not in favor, realize it came from the governor's office. Mrs. Hummel moved to instill and vote on a temporary requirement for masks in school would be re-evaluated when the executive order expires, Mr. Miller seconded the motion. Motion carries 4-1.

EXPRESSIONS FROM PATRONS — The following patrons expressed concerns as noted:

Jim Bontrager—Would like to commend the board for fighting the fight and not succumbing to political pressures. Urged patrons to contact Governor Holcomb with mask concerns.

Kirk Hertsel—Understands the board is in a tough spot with these two paths. Concerns about masks and vaccinations.

Dr. Irs von Holzen—Dr. von Holzen is a physician at Goshen Health and is treating these Covid patients. Spoke about the shortages of beds and that hospitals are at capacity with Covid cases. Urged people to wear masks to stop the spread of Covid.
Julia Obendorf—Understands the board has been dealt a tough hand, thanked the board for doing their best. Concerns about the mask mandate.

Tracy Martin—Spoke about the busy day the students in her 1st grade class at Jefferson Elementary had, filled water bottles, went to the learning lab where they were able to blow up a balloon with baking soda and vinegar, went to PE, did a new phonics program, a scavenger hunt in math and it didn’t matter if the students had masks on or not. We were going to have a great day if we had masks on or not. Spoke about the negatives of students having to stay home last year, being isolated from their peers. Let’s do what we need to so these kids can stay in school and have these amazing experiences. Thank you for keeping us in school.

Lane Detweiler—Concerns about the mask mandate and vaccinations. Concerned about the definition of a close contact.

Aaron Scholl—Concerns about mask mandate on young children and isolating if sick.

Jason Bontrager—Understands that this is a tough choice that the board was forced to make. Keeping kids in the classroom is great. Not in favor of masking, vaccines or quarantine. Business owner that is not requiring masking, vaccines or quarantining.

Chris May—Thank you for your hard work. Concerned about mask mandate and take a stand on the mandates.

Rob Zook—Thank you to the school board for all of your hard work and making the tough decisions. I appreciate the way this school and community has welcomed me back in after being gone for 20 years. It is great to be back.

Beth Gleim—Concerns about students quarantining and not being in school. Please keep these students in school. As the nurse at Middlebury Elementary I have seen the effects of social emotional health that quarantining causes.

Kelly Rumfelt—A middle school teacher at Northridge Middlebury Community School. We have witnessed the huge, negative effects that quarantining has had in the classroom to these kids. The students who were quarantined multiple times and left to stay home alone were sometimes not able to come back from that and as a result had very bad grades. It is so important to keep our kids in school. I am not a fan of masks, but I will let go of my opinion because the most important thing is for kids to be in school. Thank you for doing making hard decisions so our kids can stay in school.

Dan Lyles—The board is caught between a rock and a hard place. Concerned about the mental health effects of masking and children.

Christy Smith—Concerned about the mental health of the kids due to masking.

Kari Patel—Art teacher at Northridge Middle School. Thank you to Dr. Snyder and the board for all of the work you put into making a safe and positive environment for our children and for keeping our kids in schools. Thank you for providing a space where teachers and educators have a voice. It was a very hard year last year, almost so tough that I questioned coming back as a
teacher this year. However, the support of the community and strength and resilience of students and staff gives me something to fight for. There is so much talent in these students. Abbigail Chris submitted one of her art pieces into the Elkhart County Fair and that piece ended up winning the highest honor at the state fair. Congratulations to Abbigail! Art is a great opportunity for students to express themselves. My class does a project called the I Am project. The middle school students take one positive word and make a beautiful picture about themselves. These kids are the true heroes.

Robby Hernandez-Speaking for the Middlebury Community School nurses. We have been given a difficult choice to either mask students or send them home for quarantine. Last year we faced the weight of quarantining our students, we are forced to send home vast amounts of children as close contacts, dealt with and helped our students through their anxiety and fear, the uncertainty of whether their friends and teachers are going to be there the next day and what happens if they are next. We have felt helpless. We worry about these young students being home alone all day, if they will receive a hot meal, worry about if they will understand their schoolwork without staff intervention. We have all taken turns taking students supplies to their homes because nobody is at home during the day to retrieve them. The isolation and exclusion from school and the toll on their mental health has been so awful for these kids. Please keep these kids in school.
The board thanked all of the nurses for the hard, difficult work that they do and for their dedication to our students.

Joseph Bair-You have not been put in a good position by the governor. Concerned about forcing students to wear masks. Concerned it will become a disciplinary issue. Appreciates all of your hard work and dedication to our kids.

Desiree Beauchamp-Commended the board for their calm dispositions up here tonight. Appreciated that the board has probably spent the past days, nights, last night thinking and praying about all of your decisions on these paths. You didn’t come in to this meeting unprepared or swayed by anyone else’s opinions. Spoke about words in the Bible. Concerned about teaching our kids to rebel against authority. Thank you for keeping our kids in school.

Amanda Yoder-Prayed about board members, students and staff.

Barb Hertsel- Differed her time to her husband Kirk Hertsel. Spoke again about the concerns of masks. Spoke about the ease of spacing our students 6 feet apart and keeping kids in school with no masks.

Kathryn Dimos-Questioned what would be done to help students with speech and language impairment like her kindergarten son. What could we implement that doesn’t include masking? He has made so much improvement and she is concerned masking will set all of that back. Mrs. Hummel expressed that Kathryn was very brave to talk about her son and that the board is trying their best to figuring out how to help young kids in this situation.

Dr. Snyder stated that we are investigating the transparent masks for the primary students so they can see mouth movement with language development. That is very important.
Ashlyn Brinks-A Northridge High School student who voiced concerns, as a student, being forced into wearing masks. Covid has made school very boring and very hard because nobody wants to wear a mask.

Kathy Kensworthy-2nd grade teacher at York elementary. Spoke about the resiliency of these students and that last year was a great year despite the masks. I do not have the room in my class room to separate our students 3 feet apart. The payoff of wearing off is much more than the inconvenience of wearing a mask. Thank you for making a tough decision.

Rebecca Yeater-Spoke about her concerns about masking. Asked about funding in schools with the September count day and why the governor put this decisions on school boards. Concerned with proficiency ratings in schools.

CONSENT AGENDA –
- Minutes from the August 24, 2021 School Board Meeting
- Claims
- Donations
- Personnel

EMPLOYMENT:

Northridge High School
- CERTIFIED: Jason Harrison, Business Teacher
  Start Date: August 30, 2021
- CERTIFIED: Sandra Manglos, Musical – 70%
  (Split 70/30 with Angela Black)
  Start Date: September 8, 2021
- CERTIFIED: Angela Black, Musical – 30%
  (Split 70/30 with Sandra Manglos)
  Start Date: September 8, 2021
- CERTIFIED: Sandra Manglos, Vocal Director
  Start Date: September 8, 2021
- CERTIFIED: Angela Black, Assistant Choir Director
  Start Date: September 8, 2021
- CLASSIFIED: Tracei Lehman, Autism Paraprofessional, 6.5 hrs/day
  Replacing: Amy Adkins
  Start Date: September 8, 2021
- CLASSIFIED: Sarah Burton, Counseling Receptionist
  Replacing: Traci Lehman
  Start Date: September 8, 2021

Northridge Middle School
- CLASSIFIED: Lisa Cortes, Special Education Assistant, 7 hrs/day
  Replacing: Casey Middleton
  Start Date: September 8, 2021

Middlebury Elementary School
- CLASSIFIED: Patrizia Robinson-Felder, Sign Language Interpreter
  Start Date: September 8, 2021
Orchard View Elementary School
CLASSIFIED: Laura Pletcher, Instructional Assistant, 6 hrs/day
Replacing: Shari Haarer
Start Date: September 16, 2021

RESIGNATION:
Northridge High School
CERTIFIED: Sandra Manglos, 50% Assistant Choir Director
Effective Date: August 31, 2021

CERTIFIED: Andrew Brabender, Head Baseball Coach
Effective Date: September 10, 2021
CLASSIFIED: Samantha Baker, Assistant Softball Coach
Effective Date: August 20, 2021
CLASSIFIED: Tracei Lehman, Counseling Receptionist
Effective Date: September 7, 2021

Middlebury Elementary School
CLASSIFIED: Jolinda Dodson, Cafeteria Worker, 3.5 hrs/day
Effective Date: September 17, 2021

Orchard View Elementary School
CLASSIFIED: Laura Pletcher, Mixed Abilities Paraprofessional, 6.5 hrs/day
Effective Date: September 16, 2021

Administration
CLASSIFIED: Brian Wyatt, Bus Driver
Effective Date: September 3, 2021

EMERGENCY LEAVE:
Heritage Intermediate School
CERTIFIED: Stephen Hamilton, 5th Grade Teacher
August 24, 2021 – ½ day

Orchard View Elementary School
CERTIFIED: Matt Burridge, Teacher
September 2, 2021 – 1 day
September 3, 2021 – 1 day

Middlebury Elementary School
CLASSIFIED: Angella Frederick, Building Assistant
October 25, 2021 – 7 hours
CLASSIFIED: Amy Powers, Bookkeeper
October 25, 2021 – 8 hours
Mr. Eash moved to approve the consent agenda as presented, and Mrs. Hummel seconded the motion. Motion approved 5-0.

CONSIDER APPROVAL OF ELKHART CAREER CENTER AGREEMENT-
Dr. Snyder explained that we annually approve this agreement that allows Northridge High School students attend the Elkhart Career Center. We are happy to continue this partnership. Mrs. Hummel moved to approve the Elkhart Career Center Agreement as presented, Mr. Varner seconded the motion. Motion approved 5-0.

CONSIDER APPROVAL OF DONATIONS TO SCHOOLS-
Dr. Snyder presented the donations. Two donations to Northridge Athletics, one from Pepsi for $1640.00 and one from Slam Dunk Sports Marketing for $2138.75, both are from sales and marketing rebates. A donation from Mantra to Northridge Boys Tennis Boosters for $614.25 to purchase team wear. A donation from a family at York Elementary has donated $23,250.00 who would like to remain anonymous. The donation would help the York staff provide continuation of an already existing program where students use real world problem solving and for staff development on Indiana academic standards. A final donation of $8,700.00 to Middlebury Elementary from Middlebury Tree Board that will allow for tree trimming, removal of limbs and beautification of the grounds done by Michiana Tree Works. We appreciate all of these people and companies for their generous donations. Mr. Eash moved to approve the donations as presented, Mrs. Hummel seconded the motion. Motion approved 5-0.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS-None

ANNOUNCEMENT OF FIELD TRIPS-Dr. Goodman reviewed the list of field trips with board members.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND CORRESPONDENCE-Dr. Snyder announced the school board will be visiting all 7 schools on Thursday, September 9. October 11 and 12 is the Indiana School Board Association annual fall conference in Indianapolis.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF TRAVEL – Dr. Goodman reviewed the list of travel with board members.

EXPRESSIONS FROM BOARD MEMBERS –
Mrs. Hummel-I am excited to tour the schools on Thursday, that is going to be pretty awesome since we didn’t have that opportunity last year. I want to re-iterate that I am a former teacher and coach and have 3 kids in this district, one who will struggle not being able to see mouths. We did
not come to tonight’s decision lightly. We sought legal advice, we spoke to doctors, we have talked to patrons, some of which haven’t come because they are too afraid to speak and fear they will be bullied. I think that is sad. This is a community and in the end we want what is best for our kids. I hope in the end we can be civil and courteous as we go through the next few weeks. Hopefully numbers will come down and this will be very temporary. None of us feel this is an ideal learning environment but I don’t think virtual is the best answer by any means either. Looking at our student demographics, not a lot of our students have the kind of families that can help them or that can even be home if they are quarantined. That is a great concern and I want to remind everybody that this decision is not us giving in. This does not have to do with funding. This is about the kids and I hope moving forward we can stick together through this.

Mr. Eash- I don’t know exactly what to say. The decision that we had to make tonight was something that we have had the information coming in from the public for several months now. We have listened, we did our research and no matter what we did tonight we were going to have a lot of people unhappy with us. That is part of being in a political position. I was the one who voted against it. That doesn’t mean I don’t support the kids and want healthy kids. Obviously that is our number one priority. I did a lot of praying and thinking about it and that is why I voted the way I did. I support the rest of the board and Dr. Snyder in the decision. Hopefully in a few weeks we can look at a different outcome. Hopefully we can get past this. I appreciate the doctor’s opinions tonight and I hope this comes to an end.

Mr. Miller-Pass
Mr. Varner-Pass

Mr. Gayler- I would like to thank a few people. It is clear that the board and the administrators have been stressing, working, analyzing and researching. Mr. Shelly and his associates have been outstanding legal counsel, they have given us absolutely phenomenal legal advice. I also thank Dr. Snyder for jumping in to this wonderful school community that we have here in Middlebury. To have multiple things going on right now and to be able to manage that in your personal life and here, you are doing a phenomenal job. The way you communicate to the board members and how you communicate has been outstanding. Thank you. There is a lot to be thankful for tonight. Mrs. Hummel hopes the community can rally around the two students who lost their mom tonight. I hope in tragedy we can unify.

OTHER BUSINESS—None

ADJOURNMENT –
Mr. Miller moved to adjourn the September 7, 2021 school board meeting and move to executive session, Mr. Eash seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved with a vote of 5-0 at 6:25p.m. The next scheduled school board meeting will be on September 21, 2021 at 4:00 p.m. at the Administration Center.

_______________________  ____________________________
Paul Gayler, President               Gregg Eash, Vice President

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Mitch Miller, Secretary              Kate Hummel, Member

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Michael Varner, Member