



REFERENDUM INFORMATION



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Q: Why do we need the referendum?

A: An in-depth study was completed in 2019. This study found that likely, during the next ten to fifteen years, a significant investment will be needed to keep major building systems functioning in the District. Projects included: addressing all future infrastructure upgrades/needs, adding capacity to Elementary and Middle School, updating learning environments throughout the District, adding secure entryways at all buildings to better control visitor access. All three buildings have significant capital maintenance needs. The Elementary School building will need to be replaced in the near future. And the Elementary School needs an accessible playground for all children now. The High School parking lot is in need of replacement. *In order to complete all of these projects, along with others identified above, the cost could exceed \$80 million.* Given the cost, we realize doing all of the projects at one time is just not feasible. Therefore, we are asking the community to consider a phased approach which includes updates to the Elementary and High School and a renovation and addition at the Middle School. This referendum identifies and addresses the most critical needs first.

Each year our budget includes dedicated money for facilities maintenance and improvement. However, our needs are significantly more than we can cover in our annual operating budget, set by the state. This is not unusual for Wisconsin school districts. Over the last five years, 410 Wisconsin school districts have had to ask taxpayers for support to invest in facilities through a referendum.

Q: What is the “life expectancy” of the current Elementary School?

A: In 2012, the community supported a new boiler and plumbing system for Winneconne Elementary. With this came the promise of our elementary building structure lasting for 20 more years - into 2032.

The elementary building has “good bones,” and can be expected to reasonably function for another decade or more. Its construction and systems have been renewed much more recently than those at the Middle School. They are conventional systems, able to be repaired and adapted as needed. During these ten years, the District will be saving funds for the possible purchase of land for a future new elementary school. We will continue to maintain the building and involve the community in the decision-making process of what a potential new building could look like, as well as where it should be located.

Q: Why not replace the Elementary School? What’s the future of that building?

A: In 2012, voters supported a referendum to replace building systems at Winneconne Elementary School, adding another 20 years of life to the building. The investment in this referendum will allow the building to continue serving our students and community for at least ten more years and fulfill our promise from 2012.

Q: Why don’t we add the 5th grade to the renovated Middle School to help with capacity at the elementary building?

A: We all have heard people say, “Our kids are growing up too quickly.” Academically and emotionally, we feel our 10-year-old learners are best in a setting with younger learners. These pre-adolescent years often carry insecurities

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and self-doubt. Being “top dog” in a building at a time in their life where they can be the most vulnerable can prove beneficial.

Also, an additional 23,600 square feet would be needed to accommodate 5th grade at the existing Middle School. This additional square footage comes with a price tag of approximately \$6.3 million.

Q: How would the renovations and additions at the Middle School occur?

A: Early in the design phase, our construction manager will work with the architect to discuss and plan project phasing to minimize the impact to learning; the priority is to not hinder educational programming. The new spaces will be built, and we will work to create a phasing plan to move classrooms into the new spaces, and then address renovations in existing spaces.

Q: Why don't you just build a brand-new Middle School versus renovating the current Middle School and adding an addition?

A: It is estimated that a brand-new Middle School would cost more than \$45 million. The proposed renovation and addition project is approximately \$35.5 million. The proposed referendum solution would completely revitalize the existing Middle School, adding another 50 years of life into the building. Additionally, the structure and shell of the building are sound.

Q: So why is the Middle School renovation a priority over a new elementary building?

A: The Middle School is uniquely constructed. Built in 1975, the Middle School utilized a very unique system of construction. Essentially a simple steel-framed box, the shell of the building is very efficient and straightforward. It is, in fact, still solid and will be reused in the new school building. The interior of the building is something entirely different. Interior walls were constructed of factory built, panelized systems that contained all of the electrical components needed to power outlets and control the lights. While this system proved to be very efficient, over time, its proprietary design has left the building very difficult to maintain. Today, as parts wear out, facilities maintenance staff has to routinely turn to internet searches to find salvaged parts from old buildings just to keep the lights on.

Other building components such as the plumbing and mechanical systems are also now in need of replacement. Sections of the sanitary plumbing lines connecting toilet rooms to the sewer system are failing and need to be rebuilt. The building's heating system is functionally obsolete and, like the electrical system, needs to be replaced--a task made very difficult due to the panel system in place.

Taken together, these needs present a more serious challenge to the safe, comfortable, and efficient operation of the Middle School than do the maintenance needs present at the Elementary School.

Examples include:

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	ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	MIDDLE SCHOOL
ELECTRICAL SYSTEM	Replaced in 2013	Original: 1975
HEATING & COOLING	Replaced in 2013	Original: 1975
PLUMBING	Replaced in 2013	Original: 1975
WINDOWS	Replaced late 2000's	Original: 1975

Q:

Why can't we fix what is not working/broken at the Middle School? Why does the entire building need to be renovated?

A: As discussed previously, the major building systems are well past their expected lifespan and are at a point where replacement is needed. In order to make those replacements happen significant work needs to be done to components that are underground, below the floor slab, above ceilings or in many cases, built into the wall panels themselves. Once the floors, ceilings and walls have been opened up to make these changes, so much of the building will have been modified that it now makes sense to consider putting the building components back in a configuration that improves the building's overall function.

Q: Is the Elementary School a solid building?

A: As noted earlier, the Elementary School has "good bones" and can be expected to reasonably function for another decade or more. Its construction and systems have been renewed much more recently than those at the Middle School. They are conventional systems, able to be repaired and adapted as needed.

Q: How much money is being invested in the Elementary School?

A: We are not overlooking the elementary school. Our long-range plan delineates addressing additional elementary needs in Chapter 3. When or how that happens is unknown today. However, to address pressing infrastructure needs and create a secure entrance sequence, this proposed referendum plan invests \$4.75 million into our elementary school.

Elementary School:

Secure Entrance: \$181,317

Playground improvements: \$500,00

Capital Maintenance: \$4,066,589

Q: How has teaching and learning changed since the Middle School was built?

A: In 1975, at the time of its design and construction, the current middle school building was well organized to meet the needs of high school students and teachers. Classrooms were regular and organized efficiently along central

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corridors. At the center of the building were the shared spaces: the library, the cafeteria, and even a large group assembly space. At that time, this layout worked well as a traditional high school and later as a middle school.

However, teaching and learning has changed rapidly in the 21st Century. The way students and teachers (really, all of us) access, evaluate, and utilize information is radically different than when this building was built. Rather than a classroom of students all learning the same material at the same pace, greater emphasis is now placed on reaching each student where he or she is and providing a more individualized learning environment. This results in different space needs.

A learning environment today is much more diverse than those of the past. To be clear, the classroom is still the basic building block of our schools. How those classrooms are organized, connected, and outfitted is different. Teaching styles have evolved but our classrooms have not. Collaborative breakout spaces are indispensable today. We need small and large group learning spaces close to classrooms to allow for more hands-on activities and group thinking in order to sustain emerging, improved teaching and learning.

Q: Why did the District chose to build the WCAC, STEAM area, and business education classroom in 2016 versus renovate the middle school?

A: Chapter 1 of our Journey to the Future asked the community if they would support WCAC, STEAM, and business education to fulfill the master plan, enhance our educational programming as well as help area businesses. This project was financially doable as our high school was being paid off. Since 2016, our enrollment has continued to rise creating capacity challenges. Adding on and renovating our middle school will now allow the building to function for our community for the next 50 years.

Q: Where are the capacity challenges in the District?

A: While capacity is a real issue at the Elementary School, it is also a challenge at the Middle School. While the Winneconne Community School District has continued to see enrollment growth largely at the elementary level, those students will move up into the Middle School, necessitating additional space there as well. As previously discussed, the combination of critical maintenance items, unique construction, and changing space needs for teaching and learning all point to a larger solution: modernize and reposition the Middle School to provide 50 more years of learning.

Q: Why does the District need additional gym space?

A: With the growth of student enrollment, additional gym space is needed to meet the demand of the larger Middle School and growing High School. The new gym will accommodate high school wrestling practice and be an additional space for meets. When not in use for wrestling, the space allows for basketball and volleyball courts.

Q: How many years will we be paying for these proposed projects? How long is the bond for?

A: In the projected tax impacts for the proposed referendum project, the multi-phased borrowings are amortized for 20 years. The final payment on the bond issues related the 2022 referendum is scheduled for 2044.

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Q: What is the interest rate on the money the District would be borrowing?

A: The District works with R.W. Baird as our bond underwriter. Baird is using 3.75-4.00% interest in their planning projects. This is a conservative rate to account for future uncertainty in the market. As of February 2022, districts are borrowing for 20-year bond issues at interest rates around 2.75%-3.00%. If the referendum is successful, the District will work with Baird to lock in the most favorable interest rate and, in-turn, reduce the mill rate impact and interest cost to taxpayers.

Q: What is the cost to taxpayers?

A: If approved, it is estimated that the referendum would increase the mill rate \$1.34. Which equates to \$134/year for \$100,000 fair market property value. See the chart below.

Tax Impact Scenarios



	Referendum Amount
Max Mill Rate Impact <i>(Over Projected 2021-22)* (Per \$1,000 valuation)</i>	\$47,800,000
	\$1.34

Tax Impact on Property with Fair Market Value:	
• \$100,000 Property	
Maximum Annual Impact	\$134.00
Maximum Monthly Impact	\$11.17
• \$200,000 Property	
Maximum Annual Impact	\$268.00
Maximum Monthly Impact	\$22.33
• \$300,000 Property	
Maximum Annual Impact	\$402.00
Maximum Monthly Impact	\$33.50

* Assumes multi-phased borrowings amortized over 20 years at a planning interest rate of 3.75-4.00%.
Prepared by Robert W. Baird & Co. Incorporated

Q: Why is the District considering building now with construction costs on the rise?

A: Our needs are not going away. Our District has infrastructure and space needs that must be addressed. While no one can accurately predict what might happen with construction costs a year or two from now, we do know that interest rates on borrowing remain low.

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Q: I've heard interest rates will increase. What does that mean for our project?

A: Yes, long-term municipal interest rates have moved higher to start 2022 after establishing historically low rate levels in 2020 and 2021. Our planning process anticipated this eventual move to higher interest rates, and our borrowing cost and tax mill rate estimates are based on planning interest rates between 3.75%-4.00%. As of February 2022, 20-year school borrowings are being completed between 2.75%-3.00%. Therefore, current interest rates remain 1.00% below our conservative planning estimates, which could help to lower our interest cost to be repaid over time by approximately \$6 million. A reduction in future interest cost would allow the Board to choose to repay the principal on the debt more quickly or lower the mill rate impact estimate.

Q: Has the District raised my school taxes over the last year?

A: Property taxes consist of several taxing authorities and the District only has control over the mill rate – just one portion of your property tax. The District's current mill rate is \$7.09, a drop of \$0.70 from last year and \$1.50 less than the state mill rate average.

Q: What is open enrollment and its impact on taxpayers and the School District?

A: Open enrollment allows families to apply to attend schools outside their residency boundaries. WCSD has 328 students who reside outside of WCSD and open enroll in our school district. We also have 83 students who reside in our district and open enroll to another public school. Each January the district looks at capacity in each of our grade levels and determines if open enrollment is feasible. At our elementary school we have six sections/classrooms of every grade level. We determine the ideal class size, save 8 spots for new residents, and the remaining spots are then available for open enrollment in that grade level. For example, in our incoming 4th grade we said the ideal number of students in each of the six classrooms is 24. This allows for 144 students in 4th grade. The enrollment in third grade in January was 133 students. We then save 8 spots for new resident students which then equals 141. Therefore, we determined that for this current school year we had 3 open spots available for third grade.

The below chart helps explain more financial details regarding open enrollment and the impact on the district. Financially, open enrollment has helped to keep us from returning to operational referendums. We have 328 students who open enroll to WCSD. We receive \$8161 per student who is open enrolled. This generates \$2,676,808 in revenue. Open enrollment also has its costs. We figure an extra teacher at each grade level for approximately \$640,000. We also have to pay for the 83 students who open enroll out of the district (83 x \$8161= \$677,363.00). With open enrollment the district has a budget surplus of \$56,000. Without open enrollment the district would face a budget deficit of approximately \$2,000,000.

Click here to view [Open Enrollment Details](#)

We have 328 students in 4K-12 who open enroll into the District and 83 resident students who open enroll out of the District.

ES 186 open enroll in and 27 open enroll out

MS 66 open enroll in and 18 open enroll out

HS 76 open enroll in and 38 open enroll out

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Q: Open Enrollment: Are we having to renovate the Middle School due to open enrollment?

A: No. The Middle School situation is such that, despite the number of students in the building, it does not change its maintenance needs. There are 66 current students who open enroll to WMS. We have 340 resident students (a total of 406).

The addition will allow for future resident growth and potential open enrollment growth if the District decides to continue to accept applications.

Q: Why do you not need to renew the \$240,000 operational referendum for STEAM and the WCAC?

A: We are not asking to renew the \$240,000 in operational costs (STEAM and WCAC) from our 2016 referendum at this time. We have been able to use our current budget dollars to support the operation of these spaces. However, as you may know, the state budget runs on a two-year cycle. We know the funds available to us for 2022-23, but not into the future. We MAY need to ask for additional operational dollars in the future.

Q: Will the project be competitively bid?

A: Yes. We have hired a Construction Manager to manage the project on behalf of the District, provide supervision, and hold contracts for the project. All aspects of the project will be competitively bid to encourage local sub-contractor involvement.

Q: What happens if the referendum does not pass? How will buildings be maintained?

A: In the event that the referendum does not pass, we are still committed to maintaining District buildings to the best of our ability. We have recognized the issues for some time now, and our architect, PRA, confirmed what was known and identified some new areas of deficiency. The reality is that Mr. Cady and his team prioritize projects based on risk and affordability. Our budget does not allow for significant progress, and the nature of several of the upgrades are such that they cannot be performed in isolation but are best done simultaneously.

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