



NEWS RELEASE

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West Bend School Board Approves \$106.25 Million Facilities Referendum for November 5, 2024 General Election

WEST BEND – After more than 13 months of long-range facility planning, the West Bend School Board voted at its August 12 meeting to authorize a facilities referendum question to be placed on the November 5, 2024 General Election ballot.

The referendum question requests voters' permission to borrow a not-to-exceed amount of \$106.25 million to fund integral security improvements, address critical capital maintenance improvements, improve operational efficiency by closing several buildings, realign grade levels to maximize the remaining buildings, and replace Jackson Elementary School.

"Thank you to the community for providing feedback that was essential to the West Bend School Board making this decision," said Chris Zwygart, president of the West Bend School Board. "To address extensive facility needs, the district created a strategic and fiscally responsible proposal, which includes closing buildings to meet our facilities goals, avoids spending millions on capital maintenance needs in aging facilities, and reduces long-term operating costs. We've done thorough research and hope residents will carefully review this plan, which balances our educational goals with fiscal responsibility, before making their informed decision at the polls."

The district-wide facility improvement projects consist of:

- Closing Decorah Elementary, Fair Park Elementary, Rolfs Education Center, and the Education Service Center
- Construction of a new Jackson Elementary building on district-owned land on Jackson Drive, adjacent to the community center

- Targeted renovations and construction of additions including for safe and secure entrances at East/West High School, Green Tree, and McLane to provide additional layers of security throughout the schools
- Targeted renovations to the high schools building to integrate the Education Service Center
- Targeted renovations to Green Tree, McLane, Silverbrook (K-5), and Badger (6-8) schools to support grade level reconfiguration
- Relocating Early Learning Program classrooms from Rolfs to McLane and Green Tree and adding bathrooms to accommodate early learning and renovating to create a larger health room in each school
- Addressing high priority district-wide capital improvements at the remaining buildings in the following categories: safety and security, building systems, building envelope, building interiors, and site

If approved by voters, the \$106.25 million referendum will have an estimated tax impact of \$102 per \$100,000 of fair market property value for approximately 20 years.

Preliminary tax impact estimates are based on the following financial assumptions:

- 20-year repayment for Tax-Exempt General Obligation Bonds/Notes (AA rated)
- 4.75% interest rate
- 2% annual fair market property value growth
- Approximately \$59.2 million in estimated interest costs at 4.75%, inclusive of financing costs, for a total of \$165.45 million
 - Note: August 2024 market rates are at 4.25%. If rates remain the same, interest costs could reduce by an estimated \$8 million.

The last facilities referenda to be approved in the West Bend School District were in 2009 and 2012 and addressed needed improvements and additions at Silverbrook, Badger, and Green Tree. The West Bend School board actively managed these debt obligations by paying debt off faster than originally planned, reducing overall interest costs and saving taxpayers more than \$1 million. This proactive financial strategy also resulted in a total school levy tax rate of \$5.20 for 2023-2024, more than \$2.00 lower than the state average.

Further, closing Decorah Elementary, Fair Park Elementary, Rolfs Education Center, and the Education Service Center allows the district to avoid more than \$51 million in identified capital maintenance costs while also adjusting the footprint to better match current and projected enrollment.

In the coming weeks leading up to the General Election, the West Bend School District and School Board will provide opportunities for residents to learn more about the facilities referendum details, including informational community meetings, school tours, and mailings. Dates for meetings will be announced soon.

The West Bend Joint School District #1 is proud to serve about 5,700 students and their families from the city of West Bend, villages of Jackson and Newburg, and townships of Barton, Polk, Trenton, Jackson, West Bend, and Addison. We strive to ensure that every student is given the opportunity to reach their potential through academics, the arts, and co-curricular activities. Within our community-based 4K program, Head Start program, five elementary schools (K-4), one intermediate school (5-6), one middle school (7-8), and two high schools (9-12), families can expect a high-performing learning environment. Visit west-bend.k12.wi.us for more information.

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