



## School District of Menomonee Falls Referendum 2016: What's at Risk & FAQs

**A Tradition of Excellence...  
And A Responsibility for Our Future.**

**Dear Falls Families & Taxpayers,**

We have so much to celebrate. We also know there is hard work ahead if we are to build on our reputation as a community of choice and a district of high achievement. **On April 5th you will have the opportunity to vote on two separate school referendum questions, an operational funding referendum and a facilities improvements referendum.**

The operating referendum question would provide the **dollars needed to increase the state-imposed revenue limit**. This increase would **protect class sizes** for our students and **sustain the range of programs for our students**. **Our community, parents and non-parents alike, have indicated that this is a high priority.**

**The facility referendum question would provide the dollars needed to complete 70 maintenance projects across all of our schools as well as modernize our technology access and revitalize areas to better prepare students for the future.** Both questions have an important impact on our students, our families and our community.

We want to be transparent, and show our community exactly what is at risk, because we want every voter to make an informed decision about the future of their school district.

We are providing this document to share the impact if the referendum is not successful and some of the frequently asked questions.

Sincerely,

Dr. Pat Fagan Greco

Superintendent

**IMPACT OF OPERATING REFERENDUM  
On Student Learning and Class Size**

Passes	Fails	Why it Matters?
Maintain current class size	<b>Increase class size</b>	Parents and our community have indicated they value retaining lower <b>class sizes to support student learning and individual student needs.</b>
Retain elementary teachers certified in the special areas of music, art, physical education, guidance, media and technology education	<b>Eliminate elementary teachers certified in special areas of music, art, physical education, guidance, media and technology education</b>	<b>Student learning opportunities</b> in the special areas of instruction would be taught by classroom teachers instead of teachers specifically trained in the special areas. Student learning opportunities in the specials areas are valued as part of a <b>comprehensive education</b> . Losing teachers specifically trained in those areas would impact the <b>quality of that education</b> . Teachers would lose time dedicated to plan for student instruction in reading, math and the other core areas, and decrease time to design lessons to meet individual student needs.
Keep elementary students in their neighborhood schools	<b>Redistrict elementary schools to decrease number of teaching positions and increase average class size.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Shady Lane 4K-2 will partner with Valley View 3-5</b></li> <li>• <b>Ben Franklin 4K-3 will partner with Riverside 4-5</b></li> </ul>	<b>Neighborhood schools</b> promote relationship building with families, sustain neighborhood connections, and balance school schedules for families by allowing siblings to attend the same schools. The partner schools would sustain our current programs, but would increase class size. This would reduce individualized instruction. It could also result in families having children in two different elementary schools.
Update and Increase technology access elementary, middle and high school level.	<b>Delay or Reduce technology access and replacement of older equipment for students</b>	<b>Technology access</b> and current software programs increase the ability to individualize instruction for at-risk through advanced learners. Technology access increases the ability to prepare students for college and their future careers in the high demand fields.
Retain leadership positions at the elementary schools	<b>Reassign or reduce principal time to include multiple roles and additional responsibilities.</b>	<b>Elementary principals dedicated to a specific school full time increases leadership access</b> for students, parents, and staff. It improves communication, safety and sustains the focus on instructional improvement at each school.
All schools retain professional	<b>Reduce professional</b>	<b>Professional learning for teachers has</b>

learning, instructional coaching and improvement staff	<b>learning, instructional coaching staff, reducing opportunity for improvement</b>	<b>resulted directly in our improved student performance</b> in reading, math, advanced placement results, technology, and student behavior. Reducing the advanced training would reduce the support needed to keep our curriculum current and student results high.
All schools retain staff support for student and family crisis intervention and access to guidance counselors, school psychologists, and school social workers	<b>Reduce guidance counselors, school psychologists, or school social workers.</b>	Our guidance counselors, school psychologists and social workers provide direct support to students, parents and staff. <b>This reduction would reduce support to students and families in crisis, support college and career planning, and respond to emergency school situations.</b>
All schools retain educational assistants	<b>Reduce educational assistants</b>	EA's provide individual student <b>instructional support</b> for at-risk to advanced learners and <b>supervision support</b> for operational effectiveness and safety.
Increase student learning opportunities grades 6-12 aligned to career academies, job shadowing, computer science, high demand job markets and college transitions	<b>In grades 6-12 delay and reduce program updates in career academies and advanced courses</b>	<b>Course updates allow us to provide student learning opportunities aligned to high demand career courses</b> and post secondary preparation. Delaying updates reduces the ability to prepare students for college and careers in the high-demand fields.
Update course options grades 6-12 in the elective area classes available to students	<b>Reduce or delay class options for students in range of elective area classes available to students</b>	Classes in the elective areas <b>provide students access</b> to the arts, music, special and elective area classes. They prepare students to think, design and create in ways core classes cannot do alone. Reducing these classes may <b>reduce interest in</b> attending our schools. Quality schools are a determining factor in the Falls being ranked among the Best Small Towns by Money Magazine.
Sustain extra-curricular and co-curricular opportunities for students grades 6-12	<b>Reduce or increase fees for extra-curricular and co-curricular opportunities for students</b>	<b>These experiences prepare students in ways regular classes do not in leadership, teamwork and competition.</b> Access to well rounded development and career/college prep would be reduced. Increasing fees may limit access for all students.

## IMPACT OF OPERATING REFERENDUM

### On Staffing, Facility & Operations

Passes	Fails	Why it Matters?
Sustain salaries and benefits that are competitive in the Southeastern Wisconsin employment market to attract and retain staff	<b>Staff salary increases and benefits will be limited and could fall below the local competitive market</b>	Attracting and retaining strong staff directly impacts the quality of our instruction and programming for students. Menomonee Falls is located in the most competitive education market in the state. Reducing compensation would lower our ability to attract and retain strong staff, losing our teachers to the surrounding districts.
Sustain dedicated custodial maintenance staff for safety, cleaning and responsiveness needs	<b>Reduce cleaning schedules, resources available for facility maintenance, examine outsourcing facility grounds, and cleaning services</b>	<b>Reducing support staff would impact school cleanliness, ongoing maintenance impacting safety, and reduce the effectiveness of our daily operations.</b> Our support staff members are well trained, know our students, and respect our families. Outsourcing reduces relationships, commitment to our community, and may increase the risks to security.
Sustain technology system updates district wide	<b>Delay technology system updates</b>	<b>Technology system</b> security and back up capacity directly impacts the reliability of district operations for students, staff and families.
Sustain annual investment in facility maintenance	<b>Reduce annual budget for facility maintenance</b>	<b>Facilities maintenance</b> safeguards the community investment in our school buildings. The maintenance needs go beyond the capacity of the annual budget. Any reductions would further delay needed repairs. Delays and reductions create a compounding financial demand on our taxpayers in the future.

# Frequently Asked Questions

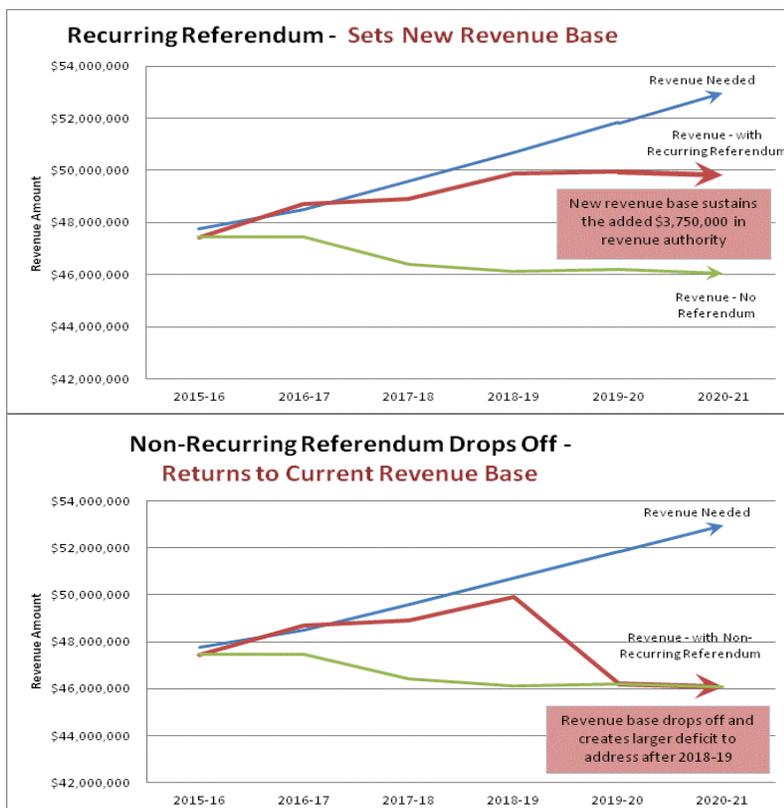
## Why did the District choose to put a ‘recurring’ operating referendum request on the ballot versus a ‘non-recurring’ request?

The Board knows the projected budget gap is approximately \$7 million dollars by 2020-21. The recommendation is to adjust the revenue limit baseline for the \$3.75 million knowing the legislature may at some point change the funding parameters for schools. However, our legislators are stating we should project no new dollars for schools for at least the next 3 years (which is the basis for the three-year phase-in for the request). A recurring referendum is needed as operating costs are still expected to increase each year even though the District has taken steps under Act 10 to reduce costs including staff benefits. The operating referendum addresses most of the projected budget deficits for the next three years. This will allow time to assess how the District will be funded in the state’s next budget cycle.

The concept of a *recurring* operating referendum can be difficult to communicate. The first chart below shows revenue projections for a recurring operating referendum (where the referendum amount is permanently added to make a new revenue base). The middle line reflects the new base revenue with the permanent addition the \$3.75 million question that is on the ballot on April 5, 2016. As you can see, the operating referendum request reduces, but does not eliminate, the projected budget gaps (area between the red and blue lines).

The second chart below shows revenue projections for a non-recurring referendum (where the added revenue is not permanent and drops off to the existing revenue base after 2018-19). This revenue drop-off results in a budget gap in excess of \$5.6 million in 2019-20 and the full \$7 million in 2020-21. The middle line on the second chart illustrates this drop-off in revenue and the resulting budget gaps (again, the area between the red and blue lines).

The ‘Revenue Needed’ (blue line on both charts) is based on the revenue needed to achieve a balanced budget where district costs are projected to increase at approximately 2% per year.



### **If the operating referendum does not pass, what are the annual budget reductions projected in the next 5 years?**

The total of \$7 million in reductions is based on the following:

- 2016-17 - \$1.1 million dollar reduction
- 2017-18 - \$2.1 million dollar reduction
- 2018-19 - \$1.4 million dollar reduction
- 2019-20 - \$1.1 million dollar reduction
- 2020-21 - \$1.3 million dollar reduction

### **What does it mean to reconfigure the elementary schools?**

Should the operating referendum question not pass, we are planning to gain staffing efficiencies by redistricting the elementary schools for the 2017-18 school year. The neighborhood school concept that is currently in place would not continue. Ben Franklin and Riverside would combine; BF would provide 4K-3<sup>rd</sup> grade and the students would transition to Riverside for 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>. Shady Lane and Valley View would combine: SL would provide 4K-2 and the students would transition to Valley View for 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup>. The staffing efficiencies would result in consistency in class sizes closer to district guidelines and generate estimated budget savings of \$500,000.

### **Why is the Field House not on the referendum?**

Feedback from the community surveys indicated there was not strong community support for a field house, and the cost went beyond the tax threshold for our community. Although field houses are becoming the “new normal” in the Milwaukee Metro area, the cost of one cannot be done through fund balance alone.

### **What is happening to the land TJ & Hiawatha sits on?**

If the referendum passes, the buildings will be demolished and the land will be cleaned up and grass seed will be put in. The baseball diamond will stay and the space will be available for community activities and CE&Rec classes. There are currently no plans for any type of new structure. The land that TJ & Hiawatha are on has been determined to be the best possible location for a new elementary school years from now due to the neighborhood being walkable.

We are currently working on relocating all of these things regardless of whether or not the referendum passes as the buildings are not energy efficient for the district to run. Space for senior walking will be made at our existing buildings and AP testing could be relocated potentially to the community room at the Lilly Rd firehouse or at Community Memorial Hospital. Currently there are no spaces at the high school large enough to accommodate AP test takers for 3 hours without disruption.

### **What has the district done to reduce costs?**

General Fund salary and benefits totaled \$35.6 million in 2010-2011 (Before act 10) and were reduced to \$33.2 million in 2011-2012 (the year after act 10). Since then, salary and benefit costs have continued to decline to \$32.7 million (2015-2016 budget). The lower costs have been achieved through a combination of a lower number of employees as well as through benefit plan design changes.

We've reduced administrative and staffing costs across the District by \$4.6 million; reduction to overall retirement liability by \$16.9 million; and reduction to health insurance costs by \$3.1 million (annually). In the last four years alone, reductions in operating expenses have totaled over \$9.3 million.