

REFERENDUM 2018



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How did the district involve the community in this process?

The Board of Education asked the District to establish an Elementary School Planning Committee in the fall of 2017. The diverse group of 13 individuals held seven meetings from December through May. The co-chairs of the ESPC reported regularly to the Board about the Committee's progress. The Committee toured other school districts that have recently undergone new construction or renovations to view 21st Century learning spaces in action.

Two design workshops were held in March that were open to all stakeholders. Attendees were able to provide feedback on design options considering the elementary, as well as learn about the building's needs.

A community survey took place in the spring of 2018.

The ESPC used the community-wide survey results to establish the scope of work that falls within the tax tolerance the community responded they would support.

How accurate are the enrollment predictions being used by the District?

The Elementary School Planning Committee contracted with UW-Madison's Applied Population Lab to forecast future enrollment. The information provided in the school enrollment projections report suggests steady to slightly declining 4K-12 enrollment in the near term. After five years, the models vary depending on the assumptions made regarding future births and kindergarten enrollment. It should be noted that the "butts in seats" count in September has Mineral Point up 35 students compared to this time last year district wide. This is a significant increase compared to other years.

The elementary school seems fine. What is wrong?

- The original part of the elementary was constructed in the late 1960s with an addition approved by voters in 1991. Although well maintained by our custodial staff, the building

is showing its age. The plan will preserve the original school while creating modern spaces for teaching and learning.

- A majority of the infrastructure is original to the building, past its useful life, some is not compliant with current codes and regulations, and replacement parts are almost impossible to obtain. The long-term investment will create energy efficiencies.
- The lack of Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility in the school limits access and creates equity issues.
- There is ground level settlement, partially due to water infiltration. An update to storm water drainage is needed.
- Many classrooms, including the gym, do not meet national size standards.

The elementary was fine when I, and/or my child, attended school. What's changed?

- Education continues to evolve to best serve our many diverse populations. The number of special education, occupational and physical therapy, and English Language Learners continues to increase. Physical spaces for students to receive these services is very limited in the current building and has been occurring in old locker rooms, closets, and in hallways.
- Today's classrooms require greater flexibility for both large and small group instruction and student collaboration, as well as greater electrical capacity to meet technology demands.
- Special education requirements and needs have increased. Multiple classrooms are now being used for special education instruction.
- Competition for multi-purpose space is fierce. The gym is a classroom during the school day, but also needs to serve as a cafeteria, performance venue for music events, and be accessible to the community for events and athletic practices. It is undersized by national standards for these uses.

Why can't these facility needs be paid by the regular school budget?

Wisconsin school districts have been subject to State imposed revenue limits since 1993. Mineral Point, like most school districts in the State, works hard to balance the budget on an annual basis and keeps spending within these revenue controls. However, it is difficult to fund large-scale capital projects, including renovations and additions to facilities, within the constraints of the normal operating budget. This creates the need for referendum approval by the taxpayers of a school district.

Did the Elementary School Planning Committee consider building a new elementary school?

Yes. Three options were presented to the community in the Spring 2018 survey--renovate the existing building, build a new building at the middle/high school site but detached from the middle/high school building, or build an elementary addition attached to the current middle/high school. Feedback received by the committee through the survey and other means indicated poor support for a new school, and thus, was not part of the committee's recommendation to the school board in May.

When was the last time the District brought a referendum to voters?

The last facility referendum was held and approved 16 years ago in 2002 for the agriculture addition to the middle/high school.

The last operational referendum was held and approved in 2012.

Can I vote on the two ballot questions separately?

Yes. Voters will need to vote on Question 1 and Question 2 separately. The two questions are not tied together. The District does not need the additional \$350,000 recurring to operate a renovated/expanded elementary. The additional money is to maintain and enhance current programming and operations, district wide.

Why isn't the money from the 2012 operational referendum enough?

The money from 2012 only backfilled an existing deficit. It did not provide monies for additional programming or services. Education has changed rapidly in six years, mainly in the areas of technology and school safety. Revenue has been outpaced by inflation.

Due to vulnerability of state funding, the trend of operational referendums across the state due to state funding gaps has been significant. Like many of these communities, we too, must recognize how we can support the operational demands of our educational institution, all in an effort to support student learning and outcomes.

Has the middle/high school building been paid off?

Yes. The middle/high school debt has been paid. Of the state's 422 school districts, only 25% currently do not have referendum debt. Mineral Point is one of those.

The District is not fiscally responsible.

The District has made tough choices in order to balance its budget the past 3 years, including cutting over \$200,000 to balance the budget this year. In addition, fund balance (or the District's contingency fund) has grown and is now over 22%. The District also established a Fund 46, a Capital Maintenance Fund, to help assist with deferred projects. In addition, the mill rate has been decreasing each of the last three years.

How much money does the district lose each year to the Milwaukee Voucher Program?

Mineral Point lost approximately \$63,000 to the Milwaukee Voucher Program in the 2017-18 school year. This is money taken from Mineral Point taxpayers to fund charter schools in Milwaukee. These are real dollars lost out of the classroom for Mineral Point students.

Is referenda a state-wide issue?

School districts across the state are asking for more money than ever before via education referendums this November. This year, 156 referendums have already been held or are planned for November, the largest total since 2001, according to a new study from the Wisconsin Policy Forum. Combined, those 156 votes are asking for more than \$1.4 billion.

Will the elementary project come in over \$11.92 million?

Legally, it cannot. There is an approximate 15% contingency built into the projected costs. If the bids come in under \$11.92 million, the district does not need to borrow all of that money.

If we need money to run the school district, why did staff receive pay raises this year?

The current K-12 landscape finds ever increasing demand for quality educators. The district believes in attracting and retaining top-notch staff members. In a year where the district was the #2 ranked 4k-12th grade district in Wisconsin by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction's State Report Cards, district officials did not deem it an appropriate time to freeze wages.