



BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING MINUTES

John A. Krings, President
John Benbow, Jr.
Troy Bier
Larry Davis
Sandra K. Hett
Katie Medina
Mary Rayome

December 21, 2020

SPECIAL BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING *Workshop on Possible Referendum*

LOCATION: Thomas A. Lenk Educational Services Center, 510 Peach Street Street, Wisc. Rapids, WI 54494
Conference Room A/B

TIME: 6:00 p.m.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: John Benbow, Troy Bier, Larry Davis, Sandra Hett, John Krings

BOARD MEMBER EXCUSED: Katie Medina, Mary Rayome

ADMINISTRATION PRESENT: Craig Broeren

President John Krings called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Roll Call

Mr. Krings stated the purpose of the meeting is for the Board to consider the results of a recent community survey conducted by School Perceptions, and potentially approve of moving forward to pursue both an operational and capital referendum in the near future.

Superintendent Broeren reviewed the results of the Community Survey in more detail. As explained in the survey, there are two types of referenda that school districts may use:

- Funds secured through an operational referendum which would support the day-to-day operations of the district. These operations include staffing, educational programming, student services, and maintenance of district buildings. Funds secured through an operational referendum are typically used within the year they are received.
- A capital referendum is the method a district must use to issue debt to pay for major facility projects and is typically financed over an extended period, often 20 years.

The last referendum held and passed for WRPS was in 2006 to complete critical maintenance projects, update curriculum, and improve classroom technology.

Two questions are currently being considered by the Board for the upcoming Spring election in April 2021:

- 1) A five-year operational referendum to exceed revenue limits by \$2 million each year beginning with the 2021-22 fiscal year for the purpose of funding technology and curriculum updates. Following are examples of identified needs would be funded under this question:
 - ✓ Continued curriculum updates and expansion of digital access to curriculum and academic software
 - ✓ Purchase annual instruction kits to continually update subject areas such as science and technology
 - ✓ Provide professional development for staff to best implement new curriculum
 - ✓ Improve internet speed and reliability
 - ✓ Replace aging audio-visual equipment in classrooms
- 2) A second question involves a capital referendum in the amount of \$34 million to be used for District-wide facility upgrades and renovations as follows:

<u>Description of Project</u>	<u>Estimated Cost</u>
✓ Redesign of main entrances at all schools to better monitor and control visitor access – all visitors would be routed through each school’s main office before gaining access to the remainder of the building.	\$12.74 million
✓ Renovate Lincoln High School science classrooms and labs which were built in 1979 – upgrades would include expanding spaces for flexible small and large group instruction; provide for additional lab storage; create opportunities to conduct more advanced labs; boost electrical systems to better accommodate the use of technology and the latest equipment in science instruction; add course offerings for in-demand science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields.	\$ 9.93 million
✓ Update and renovate the Library Media Center at Lincoln High School to create a flexible learning space conducive to providing academic assistance in math, reading, and writing; conducting research through a variety of resources and mediums; hosting student group project meetings; providing technology access; and provide needed space for staff professional development opportunities.	\$ 6.73 million
<p>A Student Resource Center would be constructed and include relocating the current library to the first floor of the building; create collaborative learning spaces; repurpose the existing library into expanded classrooms and labs as defined above; and design a gathering space for both school and community use.</p>	
✓ The cafeteria and gym at Rudolph Elementary (THINK Academy) share a space which requires daily setup and take-down of tables and chairs and quick deep cleans to prepare the gym for afternoon physical education, and the space is too small for the size of today’s physical education classes. A bigger gym would be built, and the existing space repurposed into a dedicated cafeteria. Creating a separate gym and cafeteria space would alleviate scheduling conflicts and allow greater access for youth sports and community use.	\$ 4.60 million

TOTAL ESTIMATED COST FOR ALL PROJECTS

Update School Security at All Schools	\$12.74 million
Renovate Science Classrooms and Create a Student Resource Center at Lincoln High School	\$16.66 million
Add a Gym to Rudolph Elementary (THINK Academy)	<u>\$ 4.60 million</u>
GRAND TOTAL	\$ 34.0 million

The Board considered how wise financial management decisions have led to local property taxes being the lowest in recent memory. In addition to controlling expenses over the years, a great deal of debt has been paid down in the past decade resulting in the debt portion of the school property tax levy (mill rate) to continue to drop. Loan payment reductions and the ability to take advantage of low interest rates gives the community an opportunity to address identified operating and facility needs with little to no increase over the current mill rate level. The Board agreed that the timing seems appropriate to pursue new referenda questions to make an investment in WRPS facilities and programming.

Community Survey results were reviewed by the Board. With 2,660 responses tallied representing a diverse cross-section of District residents, the survey revealed strong support for the curriculum and technology operational referendum question. Support for the capital referendum varied by project; however overall, survey results indicate that there is potential for the capital referendum to also pass with over 51% of responders stating they would vote “yes,” with a number of undecided voters who may likely support the question once they gain a better understanding about the scope and benefits of each project. The survey revealed some responders are unclear about where the THINK Academy (Rudolph Elementary) school is located, and the population that it serves.

Highlights of the Board’s discussion surrounding the referendum questions included consideration of:

- Survey results
- Needs as outlined by both the operational and capital referendum questions which will not go away and cannot be supported under the current District budget
- Current local economic conditions, including the Verso closure
- Timing being advantageous for the District to ask the referenda questions since tax levels are projected to have little or no increase, and interest rates remain favorable

- Whether it makes sense to “wait and see” what happens locally with the economy, as well as with the District’s budget in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and its potential impact
- Whether all of the capital outlay questions should be asked, or only certain ones
- How an investment in schools can be an attractant for businesses and residents to the community, resulting in a positive impact for the area
- Strategies to engage in which would clearly communicate what and why the referendum questions are being asked, including ways to get the word out during the ongoing pandemic to ensure that all demographics within the population are reached

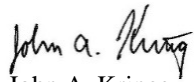
Superintendent Broeren answered a number of questions posed by the Board. In closing discussions, the Board expressed support to move ahead with both the operational and all capital referenda questions as proposed with placement on the upcoming Spring election ballot in April 2021.

Motion by John Benbow, seconded by Larry Davis to approve of moving ahead to adopt a resolution in January 2021 to pursue a \$2 million operational referendum for each of the next five years beginning with the 2021-22 fiscal year to fund technology and curriculum updates. Motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote.

Motion by John Benbow, seconded by Troy Bier to approve of moving ahead to adopt a resolution in January 2021 to pursue a capital referendum to fund: updates to main entrances at all schools to better monitor and control visitor access at an estimated cost of \$12.74 million; updates at Lincoln High School to renovate science classrooms and labs at an estimated cost of \$9.93 million, and to construct a new library/student resource center at an estimated cost of \$6.73 million; and the addition of a gym at THINK Academy (Rudolph Elementary) in Rudolph, Wisconsin at an estimated cost of \$4.6 million. Motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote.

Mr. Broeren will work with legal counsel to develop appropriate Resolutions around the final referenda questions to be asked. These will be brought to the Board for consideration and adoption at the January 2021 Board meeting.

President Krings adjourned the meeting at 6:53 p.m.



John A. Krings – President

Maurine Hodgson – Secretary

Larry Davis – Clerk