



For Immediate Release

January 12, 2021

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WRPS Board of Education Approves Two Referendum Questions for April 6, 2021 Ballot

Wisconsin Rapids - At its regular meeting held on January 11, 2021, the Wisconsin Rapids Public Schools (WRPS) Board of Education authorized two resolutions to include on the upcoming April 6, 2021 election ballot.

The first question will be asking voters to consider approving an operational referendum in an amount of \$2,000,000 each year for the next five years beginning with the 2021-22 school year and ending with the 2025-26 school year, for non-recurring purposes consisting of technology and curriculum updates.

The last referendum passed in 2006 was essential to update curriculum and improve classroom technology, as well as complete critical maintenance projects. To continue meeting the needs of students, the proposed operational funding will allow for ongoing updates to curriculum and expand digital access to both curriculum and academic software, provide professional development for staff as curriculum changes and updates occur, improve internet speed and reliability, provide technology devices for student use, and replace aging audiovisual equipment in classrooms.

The second question will ask voters to approve a \$34,000,000 capital referendum for facility projects that are too expensive to be funded through the District's annual budget. This funding would cover costs to: construct secure entrances at all schools; renovate science classrooms, labs, and other areas at Lincoln High School (LHS) including the construction of an addition for a new library/student resource center and main office; provide a new gymnasium addition at THINK Academy (Rudolph Elementary School); allow for building infrastructure improvements and the affiliated acquisition of furnishings, fixtures, and equipment.

In order to enhance building safety and security, referendum dollars would be used to redesign the main entrances at all schools to better monitor and control visitor access, ensuring that all visitors pass through the main office before gaining access to any other area of the school building.

Science classrooms at LHS were constructed in 1979; instruction has changed greatly since that time and the existing science spaces are undersized by today's educational standards. Upgrades will expand spaces for flexible small and large group instruction; provide additional lab storage; create opportunities to conduct more advanced labs; boost electrical systems to better accommodate the use of technology and modern

science equipment for enhanced instruction; and provide the proper space and equipment needed to add course offerings for in-demand science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields.

Libraries are also utilized differently than in previous generations, and are used for much more than just quiet, independent study. These flexible learning spaces are now used to conduct research; host student group-project meetings; provide academic assistance in math, reading, and writing; provide technology access; and are well suited to meet staff professional development needs. The proposed project would relocate the current library space situated on the second floor at LHS to the first floor, creating a new student resource center as described above and free up the space needed to expand science classrooms. This newly renovated student resource center area also has the potential to be a gathering space for community use.

A final facility upgrade would occur at THINK Academy. THINK Academy was formerly known as Rudolph Elementary School prior to the District pursuing a charter in 2012 which renamed the school to THINK Academy. The charter has since expired; however, the name remains the same. THINK Academy is a community elementary school and serves students residing in the Rudolph and Vesper areas. The cafeteria and gym at the Rudolph location currently share a space, and this layout requires daily setup and takedown of tables and chairs with quick deep cleans to prepare the gym for physical education, which is undersized for today's phy ed activities. A bigger gym would be built, and the existing space repurposed into a dedicated cafeteria. The gym addition would alleviate scheduling conflicts and allow greater access for youth sports and community use.

School Board President John Krings stated, "The Board of Education is hopeful that the referendum questions will be approved by voters, and is excited for the opportunities that passage of these referenda questions have to positively impact students and help WRPS continue offering the educational experience that our community values. Years of careful planning and making sound fiscal decisions have brought us to a point in time where we can enhance and upgrade our programs and facilities with no projected change in taxes over the current school tax levy."

More information about the proposed referendum questions and facilities projects can be found on the District website at www.wrps.org or by contacting the District office at 715-424-6701.

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