

# April 6, 2010 Referendum

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Waunakee Community School District

#### Past Referendums and Current Growth

1. The Waunakee Community School District held referendums in 2004 and 2005 to build Arboretum Elementary, remodel the Intermediate/Heritage school, remodel and expand the middle school, and remodel and expand the high school. Why is the district back in only five years to add to our school facilities?

*The Waunakee Community School District has experienced faster than anticipated growth over the last five years. This growth is partially related to a higher than anticipated rate of new home building. These new homes also included a higher number of young children than can be expected in higher end new construction.*

2. How does the school district predict student growth?

*The Waunakee Community School District continually tracks its student enrollment trends. Each year the students enrolled in the district are moved forward to the next grade level, and local census data is used to predict the number of incoming kindergarten students. Each class also has an escalator number added to each class to account for recent growth trends and the movement of students from the parochial school system to the public school district. This method of predicting growth works well for short-term or year-to-year projections.*

*To address longer term growth projections, the school district contracts with the University of Wisconsin Applied Population Lab to conduct a comprehensive growth analysis. The school district contracted for this service in 2003 and again in 2009. The Applied Population Lab analyzes the past growth trends, housing starts, economic conditions, and other local factors to compile their reports.*

3. What parameters is the school district taking into consideration when projecting student growth?

*The Waunakee Community School District required that the most recent enrollment projections include:*

- *Variables to account for the downturn in the economy and housing market.*
- *Consideration of families moving into existing housing.*
- *Analysis of new/existing housing developments in the area and the projected impact over the next ten years.*

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- *Accounting for families moving to Waunakee with more and younger children.*

4. What are the 10-year student growth projections for the Waunakee Community School District?

*The Waunakee Community School District is anticipating approximately 1,000 additional students over the next ten years. The current facilities will reach maximum capacity by the 2012-2013 school year. Currently Arboretum School is over capacity by 80 students and the Intermediate School (grades 5-6) is in need of additional classroom space after the 2010-2011 school year. The middle school and high school are anticipated to reach their maximum levels by 2012.*

*Please see [www.waunakee.k12.wi.us](http://www.waunakee.k12.wi.us) for the full report from the Applied Population Lab study.*

5. What is the impact of the Bishop's Bay development on the District's enrollment projections?

*The Bishop's Bay expansion project is estimated to begin construction in 2013. The ten year forecast for this development is for approximately 200 students added to the Waunakee Community School District by 2018. The referendum that is being brought before the community on April 6, 2010, would be necessary with or without the Bishop's Bay development.*

### **Planning Process**

6. When did the School Board begin discussing a referendum?

*The Waunakee Community School District Board of Education and Administration began compiling data on our student growth in the fall of 2008. The Board of Education has met once per month since October 2008 to specifically address the growth trends and to devise a plan to address the space needs for our students and our programs. Final decisions on the referendum questions were made on February 8, 2010.*

7. What has the school district done to gather input from the community?

*The Board of Education has held each of its planning meetings since October 2008 in open session and the meetings were advertised to the public. A community survey was conducted in August/September of 2009 to obtain feedback on the facility planning process.*

*Also, two public forums have been held in the High School Performing Art Center on September 15<sup>th</sup> and November 16<sup>th</sup>, 2009. These forums served as a time to share information from the planning process and to get feedback from community*

*members. The Board of Education also invited all past Board of Education members to a meeting this fall to get their perspective and gain their insight into this planning process and community sentiment. Several past members attended.*

8. Why does the school district believe this referendum is necessary at this time?

*The Waunakee Community School District is facing continued student enrollment growth at a rate which exceeds facility capacity by 2012. In order to maintain high quality programs and to keep class sizes within the parameters set by the Board of Education, it is imperative that additional space be created to serve the student population. The availability of Federal Stimulus Funds to assist with the overall cost of the project is also a reason to bring this issue forward at this time.*

9. Who is working with the school district on the options for creating more student space?

*The Waunakee Community School District has hired Bray Architects and J.P. Cullen and Sons to work with the administration and the Board of Education on the design options and costs for creating additional space at each school.*

10. What options have been considered during the planning process?

*The Waunakee Board of Education has considered many options for how to address the growing student population. Options have included:*

- *Changing grade configurations at the elementary, intermediate, and middle school levels.*
- *Consideration of schools that house K-5 students, 6-8 students, and 5-8 students, and 7-9 students.*
- *Adding on/remodeling all buildings K-12.*
- *Building a new middle school.*
- *Building a new intermediate school.*
- *Building a new elementary school.*
- *Many combined options with the above stated components.*

11. What did the Board of Education determine to be the highest areas of need?

- *The highest area of need is additional space at the Intermediate School. The Heritage population has been stable for the last few years, but the student enrollment numbers in grades 5-6 continue to grow which has resulted in the Intermediate School needing to expand into the Heritage space more each year. The Intermediate School has staff sharing classrooms and the school will be experimenting with mobile computer labs to open up instruction space. Additional space for our 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade students is needed by 2012.*

- *Additional space is also needed at the elementary level (K-4). Arboretum Elementary was opened in 2006 and is currently 80 students over capacity. This school has special education programs sharing space and class sizes that are at the maximum capacity allowable by Board of Education policy. Additional space for our K-4<sup>th</sup> grade students is needed by 2012.*
- *Finally, increased student enrollment projections are a concern at the secondary level (7-12). The middle school and high school buildings will both be over capacity by 2013.*

*The Board of Education determined that space needs exist in all grade levels (K-12) by at least 2013.*

### **Referendum Components**

12. How many questions will be on the ballot in April?

*There will be four referendum questions on the April 6, 2010 ballot.*

- 1. Construct a new elementary school with additions to Prairie Elementary and remodeling at the Heritage/Intermediate School site.*
- 2. Additions and remodeling at the High School.*
- 3. Exceed the revenue cap by \$750,000 for operating the additional school space, starting with \$375,000 in 2011-2012.*
- 4. Exceed the revenue cap by \$375,000 for ongoing maintenance of district facilities starting in 2010-2011.*

13. What are the questions that will be included on the ballot in April, and what are the specific components of each question?

*Question 1:*

**INITIAL RESOLUTION  
AUTHORIZING GENERAL OBLIGATION BONDS  
IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$24,950,000  
FOR A K-6 SCHOOL BUILDING PROGRAM**

*BE IT RESOLVED by the School Board of Waunakee Community School District, Dane County, Wisconsin that there shall be issued pursuant to Chapter 67 of the Wisconsin Statutes, general obligation bonds in an amount not to exceed \$24,950,000 for the public purpose of paying the cost of a school building program, consisting of the construction, furnishing and equipping of a new elementary school; and the construction of additions to and remodeling, furnishing and equipping of Prairie Elementary School and Heritage/Intermediate School.*

*Question 2:*

**INITIAL RESOLUTION  
AUTHORIZING GENERAL OBLIGATION BONDS  
IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$8,450,000  
FOR A 9-12 SCHOOL BUILDING PROGRAM**

*BE IT RESOLVED by the School Board of Waunakee Community School District, Dane County, Wisconsin that there shall be issued pursuant to Chapter 67 of the Wisconsin Statutes, general obligation bonds in an amount not to exceed \$8,450,000 for the public purpose of paying the cost of a school building program, consisting of the construction of additions to, roof replacement at and remodeling, furnishing and equipping of Waunakee High School.*

*Question 3:*

**RESOLUTION  
AUTHORIZING THE SCHOOL DISTRICT BUDGET TO  
EXCEED REVENUE LIMIT  
FOR RECURRING OPERATIONAL COSTS**

*BE IT RESOLVED by the School Board of Waunakee Community School District, Dane County, Wisconsin, that the revenues included in the School District budget be authorized to exceed the revenue limit specified in Section 121.91, Wisconsin Statutes, by \$375,000 for the 2011-2012 school year and thereafter and by an additional \$375,000 (for a total of \$750,000) for the 2012-2013 school year and thereafter, for recurring purposes, consisting of paying operational costs of the District.*

*Question 4:*

**RESOLUTION  
AUTHORIZING THE SCHOOL DISTRICT BUDGET TO  
EXCEED REVENUE LIMIT  
FOR RECURRING MAINTENANCE COSTS**

*BE IT RESOLVED by the School Board of Waunakee Community School District, Dane County, Wisconsin, that the revenues included in the School District budget be authorized to exceed the revenue limit specified in Section 121.91, Wisconsin Statutes, by \$375,000 for the 2010-2011 school year and thereafter, for recurring purposes, consisting of paying maintenance costs of the District.*

14. What happens if some of the referendum questions are approved, and others are denied?

*If the referendum questions pertaining to building a new school or remodeling an existing facility do not pass, there will be both short-term and long-term impacts. First, the facility plans will be reviewed and a revised referendum will be back in front of the community in the near future to address our growing student population. A revised referendum will most likely not be smaller in scope or cost because beyond April 2010, the school district will no longer have the ability to apply for loans under the Federal Stimulus Program, the need for space at all levels will be escalated because of the later timeline, and building costs will most likely increase.*

*Second, additional elementary space is needed since Arboretum is over capacity, Prairie has limited space, and many new/existing students would need to be moved to Heritage. Moving students to schools outside of their existing elementary attendance lines is a very short-term fix (only a year or two before every elementary is full) and is disruptive to students and families.*

*Finally, the revenue cap exemption questions will continue to be brought back before the community because with additional facility space the district will incur increased costs which need to be accounted for in the budget. If the cap exemption for operations does not pass, eventually funds will need to be found within the existing budget and instructional programs will be impacted.*

*The Waunakee Community School District has beautiful facilities and the current budget cannot keep pace under revenue caps with increasing costs for ongoing facility maintenance. If the cap exemption for facility maintenance projects does not pass eventually funds will need to be found within the existing budget and instructional programs will be impacted.*

15. How does this referendum impact the school district's ability to address the projected student enrollment growth over the next ten years?

*The projects at the K-6 level (new elementary school, remodeling at Heritage/Intermediate, and the addition to Prairie Elementary) will address the projected student growth needs through 2018.*

*The projects at the high school (addition of 2<sup>nd</sup> level for instruction space, creation of additional science rooms, and the remodeling of the high school office/commons areas) will address the projected student growth needs for grades 7-12 through 2015. As the middle school's enrollment increases, the high school addition will accommodate this growth in the short-term. A*

*comprehensive/longer term grade 7-12 plan will be forthcoming to meet the needs of these grade levels beyond 2015.*

16. Where will the new K-4 school be located?

*The new K-4 elementary school is planned to be built on the north east portion of the school district's property located on West Woodland. This 40 acre parcel would have room for an additional school or other use in the future.*

*The West Woodland site is not currently included in the Urban Service Area (area within which development can occur based on access and approval of utilities and water runoff provisions). The Waunakee Community School District will be working with the Town of Westport and the Village of Waunakee to put forth an application to the Capital Area Regional Planning Commission for inclusion in the urban service area. This application process will take approximately 9 months, so construction on this school cannot begin on this site until this process and approval is complete.*

17. How large will the new K-4 school be and which students will attend this school?

*The new K-4 elementary school will be a 6-track school. This means that there will be six classrooms of each grade level.*

*The precise determination of which students in the community will attend the new school is yet to be determined, but it is predicted that most of the students from Heritage Elementary will attend the new school. Also, since Arboretum Elementary is currently 80 students over capacity, a number of students who currently attend Arboretum will also attend the new school.*

*The elementary school boundaries will be redrawn to accommodate existing student numbers and projected growth trends.*

18. What is happening at the Heritage and Intermediate School and why?

*The Intermediate School (grades 5-6) will take over the entire Heritage/Intermediate School complex, and the Heritage Elementary School students will most likely be reassigned to the new K-4 school.*

*The project at the Heritage/Intermediate facility includes remodeling the space of the existing Heritage gymnasium and cafeteria into one large commons area. This space will then be able to accommodate all students in grades 5-6 beyond the ten year student enrollment projections.*

*The additional remodeling at the Heritage/Intermediate facility includes renovations of restrooms around the new commons area, and remodeling of a room to accommodate specific needs for students with disabilities.*

19. Where will the Heritage Elementary School students attend school once the new school is built?

*It is anticipated that most of the students from Heritage Elementary will attend the new school. Also, since Arboretum Elementary is currently 80 students over capacity, a number of students who currently attend Arboretum will also attend the new school.*

*The elementary school boundaries will be redrawn to accommodate existing student numbers and projected growth trends.*

20. Why does Prairie Elementary School need additional classroom space?

*When Prairie Elementary was built thirteen years ago, it was designed to accommodate six classrooms per grade level, however, at that time; the district only had a half-day kindergarten program. Since the district currently has full-day kindergarten, additional kindergarten space is needed to fully utilize Prairie Elementary School as it was designed.*

*In recent years, the music room and the large group instruction room have been utilized for kindergarten space. This reconfiguration of use of space has impacted the music program and greatly limited the ability for staff to pull larger groups of students together for instruction and programs.*

21. When will the new school and the remodeling projects begin and be completed?

*With an approved referendum in April 2010:*

*The construction at the high school will begin in 2010 and will be completed for the beginning of the 2011 school year.*

*The construction of the addition to Prairie Elementary School will begin in early 2011 and will be complete for the beginning of the 2011 school year.*

*The construction of the new K-4 elementary school will begin in early 2011 and will be completed for the beginning of the school year 2012.*

*The remodeling at Heritage/Intermediate School will begin in 2012 and will be finished for the beginning of the 2012 school year.*

22. The high school underwent a significant addition as a result of a 2004 referendum. What is proposed at the high school? Why?

*Three areas of the high school will be remodeled as part of the April 6<sup>th</sup> referendum:*

- *Four additional science labs will be created in the science hallway to accommodate the increasing number of students enrolling in innovative and higher level science courses.*
- *The high school office area will be moved to the front of the building to create a more safe and secure building during school hours.*
- *The location of the current high school office will be remodeled to provide for an expanded commons area to accommodate seating for a growing high school student population.*

23. Why are the commons area and offices being remodeled at this time?

*The high school office space is being relocated to the front of the building to create a more safe and secure entrance to the building during school hours. Visitors will need to go through the office prior to being allowed in the building.*

*The commons area is being expanded to encompass the area currently occupied by the high school office. The expanded commons seating area will create capacity to serve the growing student population up to 1,500 students.*

*The original design for the commons area in 2004 included space for up to 1,500 students. Modifications to the design provided for the addition of the food serving area, inclusion of the concessions area, and required modifications to the stairs, which yielded reduced seating capacity in this area.*

24. Why is there a need for teacher work space in the renovations to the high school?

*A thirty station teacher planning area is included in the plans for the April, 2010 Referendum. This space is needed because several departments are already in a position where there are more teachers than classrooms.*

*The current planning areas for World Language and Social Studies are not located in close proximity to the World Language and Social Studies Classrooms. These planning areas were initially built to hold six teachers. Over the years desks have been placed in the small conference rooms housed in the planning areas to allow for eight teachers to work in these areas. The Social Studies Department already has nine teachers in the department, so they have outgrown their planning area. We are also using the World Language Planning Area to house the Alternative Learning Program and Health Occupations instructors as they are also sharing classrooms. Science is also being taught out of a shared classroom with Social Studies and Reading is being taught out of shared classrooms with Math and Health.*

*We wish that each teacher still had their own classroom but that is not the case. Each teacher did have their own classroom for approximately 2-3 years after the last referendum but as enrollment and staffing have increased we are once again in a position where classrooms are being shared. Therefore, in looking ahead to the future, if we are fortunate for the referendum to pass teachers may have their own classrooms again for a few years. However, as enrollment and staffing increase in the future it is essential to provide planning space in close proximity to classrooms.*

25. What is the plan for the middle school as its population continues to grow?

*As the middle school's enrollment increases, in the short-term, space will be shared with the high school. This option has been utilized in the past for programs such as foreign language, when space has been tight.*

*A comprehensive/longer term grade 7-12 plan will be forthcoming to meet the needs of these grade levels beyond 2015.*

26. What does it mean to hold a referendum to exceed revenue caps?

*In 1993 the State of Wisconsin implemented a cap on the amount of revenue a school district can receive from state aid and from local property tax payers. The amount of this cap is determined each year based on many factors, but is heavily driven by student enrollment. In Waunakee, the increase in student enrollment has provided the necessary revenues to maintain and grow our instructional programs.*

*However, the construction of a new school and added instructional space creates the need for additional funds to heat, cool, maintain, and operate these facilities. These costs cannot be absorbed within the budget under the revenue caps. The revenue cap law requires that if a school district wants to exceed the revenue caps, that approval is necessary through a referendum process. Any amount that is approved through referendum above the revenue cap limit, is then applied to the local tax levy.*

27. What type of operational costs are anticipated?

*The operational costs of this referendum are associated with two of the referendum questions. The question related to exceeding the revenue limit for recurring operational costs includes funds for heating, cooling, utilities, additional custodial and maintenance staff, and technology department needs.*

*The question related to exceeding the revenue limit for recurring maintenance costs includes funds to maintain all of the buildings across the school district. The school district has \$180,000 in the general budget for facility maintenance*

*projects, and to allocate additional dollars to this budget falls within the revenue caps and would negatively impact funding for instructional programs. The referendum question related to facility maintenance will provide a base dollar amount of \$375,000 that can be used on an annual basis to plan for and address larger maintenance projects in all schools. The current estimated cost of the prioritized list of facility maintenance projects equals \$1.9 million. This referendum question will allow us to address the list of facility needs and other projects over time.*

### **Cost of this Referendum**

28. What is the financial impact on property taxes for the average homeowner in the Waunakee area?

*The average value of a home in the Village of Waunakee is \$285,000. If all four referendum questions are approved, the tax impact on a home valued at \$285,000 is initially \$296 spread out over 3 years.*

*Stated another way, for every \$100,000 of assessed value, the impact of the four referendum questions is initially \$104 spread out over 3 years.*

*The school district hires a financial advisor to assist with the planning and issuance of debt for referendum projects. The financial advisor hired by the school district is Robert W. Baird. Robert W. Baird has created a sample financial plan for this referendum (for questions 1 and 2). This sample plan is available at the following location:*

<http://www.waunakee.k12.wi.us/financeplan.cfm>

*The sample financial plan provides an estimate of what the referendum might cost for questions 1 and 2. This plan is only an estimate because factors such as interest rates, property values, etc. must be estimated over the life of the borrowing. The term initial impact refers to the increased mill rate if the referendum questions were to pass. You are able to see the projected mill rate over the life of the borrowing by looking at the "combined mill rate" column of the example financial plan. Because this referendum (if approved) is just one of the several borrowings the district needs to repay, the combined mill rate initially increases, and then decreases over time as the property values increase and other district borrowings are paid for.*

*In addition to the referendum questions that include borrowing (questions 1 and 2), there are 2 questions (questions 3 and 4) that increase the district's annual budget to pay for maintenance costs and operational costs.*

*The costs of the borrowing questions and the annual budget questions are added together to identify the \$296 impact over three years for the average home in the*

*Village of Waunakee. After the three year period of time, the district combined mill rate for debt service stays the same and then declines and the mill rate for the annual budget begins to decline as additional property also pays for the costs of the referendum.*

29. Is Waunakee eligible to receive any funds from the Federal Stimulus Program? If so, how much?

*The Federal Stimulus Program has allowed for low/no interest loans to school districts that have referendum approved building projects. Based on values applied to projects last year, school districts that had approved referendums for building projects received approximately 36% of their bonds at a low interest rate. For the referendum in Waunakee, this could mean a savings of just under \$9 million over the course of 20 years.*

30. Will the Federal Stimulus funds be available in the future?

*The future of the Federal Stimulus Program is uncertain. This year is the second year of a two year program. There is no indication that there will be another opportunity beyond this summer for school districts to access these funds. Also, April is the last opportunity the district will have for a referendum prior to the end of this program, and an approved referendum is required to access any of these low/no interest loan opportunities.*

### **Next Steps**

31. What should the community expect with regard to future referendums and facility needs?

*The Waunakee Community should expect the school district to present a second phase to this referendum effort to address the longer term grade 7-12 facility needs. This will most likely come in the form of a referendum within the next few years for additional middle school/high school space.*

32. Will the community get an opportunity to provide input on the next steps?

*Yes, the community will get the opportunity to provide input into the next steps for grades 7-12. Part of the reason the Board of Education did not fully address the long-term plan for grades 7-12 in this referendum effort is because more input from the community is needed on this issue.*

### **Information**

33. Where can I find additional information on the referendum?

*Factual information on the referendum will be sent to homes via the mail beginning with the first week in March through the referendum in April.*

*The Waunakee Community School District's website has information about the referendum at [www.waunakee.k12.wi.us](http://www.waunakee.k12.wi.us)*

34. How do I vote by absentee ballot if I am going to be gone during the referendum vote on April 6<sup>th</sup>?

*If you are going to be gone on April 6<sup>th</sup> or will not be able to make it to the polls, please consider casting your vote via absentee ballot. You will need to contact your City Clerk for details:*

*Town of Dane (608) 592-3021*

*City of Madison (608) 266-4601*

*City of Middleton (608) 827-1046*

*Town of Springfield (608) 849-7887*

*Town of Vienna (608) 846-3800*

*Town of Westport (608) 849-4372*

*Village of Waunakee (608) 850-2827*

*The Waunakee Community School District's website has more information about the absentee ballot process at [www.waunakee.k12.wi.us](http://www.waunakee.k12.wi.us).*

35. Who do I contact if I have questions?

*If you have specific questions, please e-mail Randy Guttenberg, District Administrator, at [referendum@waunakee.k12.wi.us](mailto:referendum@waunakee.k12.wi.us) or you can call the district office at 849-2000. Randy Guttenberg, District Administrator, or Steve Summers, Business Manager, will be happy to help you.*