



PRESS RELEASE

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West Bend School Board Discusses Feedback on Facilities and Community Survey

West Bend - This afternoon the West Bend School Board held another work session, reviewing feedback on the first phase of a Long-Range Facility plan gathered through community and staff meetings in April and a survey for all district residents. For more information on long-range facility planning by the West Bend School District, go to west-bend.k12.wi.us.

On April 15, 16, and 25, approximately 150 people in total participated in a second round of community conversations to examine a Long-Range Facility Plan. The goal of a plan is to address aging buildings and grounds and declining enrollment through rightsizing or closing buildings, and to ultimately provide schools that are safe, secure, accessible, operationally efficient, and adaptable to meet evolving student needs. The community conversation events also covered the preliminary costs and estimated tax impacts for three different potential projects for additional feedback. The major components being evaluated for the first phase of a long-range plan include:

- Closing Decorah Elementary, Fair Park Elementary, and Rolfs Education Center and converting Green Tree, McLane, and Silverbrook schools to serve as K-5 elementary schools. The Early Learning Program classrooms, previously located in Rolfs, would be relocated to McLane and Green Tree. Badger Middle School would then serve grades 6-8.
- Building a new K-8 school in Jackson on district-owned land on Jackson Drive, adjacent to the community center.
- Renovating limited areas at East/West High School, Green Tree, and McLane to create secure main office entries and provide additional layers of security throughout the schools. Also at Green Tree and McLane, renovations to create a larger nurse's office, and to add bathrooms to accommodate early learning.
- Addressing priority capital maintenance throughout all buildings that would remain open.

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During the work session today, the board reviewed key feedback themes gathered from the attendees of the April community conversations, which include:

- Overall understanding and support for creating a Long-Range Facility Plan that includes rightsizing (closing buildings) and an appreciation for the data-driven approach to the plan.
- General support for rebuilding Jackson with additional questions regarding the K-8 structure.
- General support for changing grade levels at Silverbrook and Badger to reduce transition issues with additional questions regarding programming opportunities.
- Natural concerns and questions associated with the future of closed buildings, loss of neighborhood schools, future attendance boundaries.
- Some “sticker shock” at the potential cost ranges and concern about the community’s willingness to support a future referendum after past attempts.
- Request for continued communication and transparency around potential projects, costs, and survey results.

During the work session today, the board also discussed a developing community survey that will be sent to all district residents and staff in mid-May. The survey is being conducted by an independent, third-party survey firm. It is intended to inform residents regarding the facility needs, costs, and preliminary solutions being considered while gathering additional input to further inform the West Bend School Board on next steps towards a potential facilities referendum in November 2024.

The West Bend Joint School District #1 is proud to serve nearly 5,800 students and their families from the city of West Bend, villages of Jackson and Newburg, and townships of Barton, Polk, Trenton, Jackson, West Bend, and Addison. We strive to ensure that every student is given the opportunity to reach their potential through academics, the arts, and co-curricular activities. Within our community-based 4K program, Head Start program, five elementary schools (K-4), one intermediate school (5-6), one middle school (7-8), and two high schools (9-12), families can expect a caring, inclusive learning environment that supports the development of the whole child. Visit www.west-bend.k12.wi.us for more information.

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