



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Date: October 9, 2024

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West Bend School District Evaluates Potential Future Property Uses and Contingency Plans Regarding Referendum

WEST BEND— The West Bend School District is actively preparing for significant changes, including school closures and grade reconfigurations, based on the outcome of its November 5, 2024 Facilities Referendum. If approved, the referendum funds will cover critical infrastructure projects, safety and security improvements, and the replacement of Jackson Elementary. However, the school district is also planning contingency strategies should the referendum fail and discussed those with the West Bend School Board during its October 7 meeting.

Long-Term Facilities Planning After Approval

If the November 5 referendum is approved, Decorah Elementary, Fair Park Elementary, Rolfs Education Center, and the Education Service Center (ESC) will be closed to avoid \$51 million in future maintenance costs. The current Jackson Elementary School will also be closed after a replacement is built.

This will provide an improved educational environment for all students, fully use space available in other schools, and optimize operational efficiency. Closure of Fair Park, Decorah, Jackson, and Rolfs will take place in summer 2027. Students will start in their new schools during the 2027-2028 school year. Closure of the ESC will take place in summer 2028. District operations and high school improvements will be completed prior to the 2028-2029 school year.

For the closed buildings, the district is exploring reuse opportunities which may include leasing or sale of the properties. Before this can take place, the district will pursue an appraisal of the buildings, then review legal, environmental, and market considerations to determine the most viable and responsible approach to repurposing or selling the properties.

Plans for Facilities in Event of Referendum Non-Approval

If the November 5 referendum is not approved, Decorah, Fair Park, Rolfs, and the ESC will still close.

The timeline for closure will be adjusted so that Fair Park and Decorah close at the end of the 2025-2026 school year. The district would then close the ESC which hosts district office operations and alternative learning programs as well as Rolfs, which provides a portion of the district's early learning program. The anticipated date of these closures would be at the end of the 2027-2028 school year.

Other Contingencies for Referendum Non-Approval

If the referendum does not pass, the district will also face significant challenges in addressing more than \$200 million in identified capital maintenance needs. Key projects, such as secure entry sequences, HVAC system replacements, and ADA compliance improvements, would be delayed. Operational budgets would need to cover emergency repairs, further straining limited resources. Key contingency actions include:

- Budget Adjustments: Non-essential capital improvements will most likely be frozen and the district would reassess its priorities, focusing only on the most urgent repairs.
- Operational Changes: Academic programs and extracurricular activities may be adjusted to reflect budgetary constraints, with long-term maintenance remaining a high priority. Additionally, a long-term maintenance plan for the current Jackson Elementary School will be developed.

Community Engagement and Financial Planning

The district is committed to maintaining transparency and engaging the community. Residents will have opportunities to provide input on the future use of closed properties. Also, the district will explore using limited reserves to address the most pressing capital needs, though these funds may not cover all necessary expenses .

The West Bend Joint School District #1 is proud to serve more than 5,400 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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