



MONONA GROVE SCHOOL DISTRICT REFERENDUM Frequently Asked Questions

9/25/2018

BACKGROUND & PROCESS

- **What is a referendum?** A referendum is a vote on a policy question referred to the general electorate by a government body, including a school board. Wisconsin school districts are required to get voter approval—via a referendum—to borrow the funds needed for construction and facilities repair or improvement projects.
- **What is the difference between a facilities referendum and an operating referendum?** A facilities referendum question seeks voter authority to take on debt (by selling bonds) for construction and facilities projects. An operating referendum requests voter authority to exceed state spending limits for day-to-day operating expenses. Operating referenda can be recurring (ongoing) or non-recurring (for a specified number of years).
- **What referendum question(s) will be on the November 6, 2018, General Election ballot?** The Monona Grove School District Board of Education has authorized two referendum questions for the November 6, 2018, General Election:
 1. A \$57 million facilities referendum to 1) construct an new elementary school for grades 3-5 on District-owned land in Cottage Grove, designed for future expansion; 2) improve safety & security across the District; 3) address critical maintenance and repairs across the District; 4) update various classrooms and learning spaces; and 5) reconstruct the high school track and athletic field.
 2. A \$930,000 recurring operating referendum to pay the operating expenses associated with the new elementary school.
- **Why is the District going to referendum?** The District has several significant facilities needs:



- Enrollment growth - District enrollment has grown rapidly in recent years and enrollment growth is projected to continue. Three of the District's schools—Taylor Prairie, Cottage Grove, and Glacial Drumlin—are projected to be at capacity within the next five years.
- Capital maintenance - The District has \$14.8 million in deferred, high priority capital maintenance projects.
- Safety & security - MGSD has taken important steps to improve safety and security, including applying for and receiving a school safety grant. But more can be done to keep students safe, including improving the security of the main entrances at Winnequah School and MG21.
- Renovations - The District's existing facilities are in need of updates to classrooms, art & music rooms, and other learning spaces. Renovating our existing facilities will help the District align its facilities with recent changes in teaching & learning, creating more flexible, secure and efficient learning environments.
- Athletics - The high school track is in disrepair. Replacing the existing grass field with artificial turf will increase usability of the athletic field and stadium.

FACILITIES PLAN

- **What is the District's facilities plan?** The Board of Education has authorized a facilities referendum to address the District most significant facilities needs. The referendum proposes:
 - Approximately \$33.5 million to construct a new elementary school for grades 3-5 on District-owned land in Cottage Grove. The school will accommodate 9 classes per grade. Core spaces (e.g. gym, cafeteria) will be sized for potential future expansion.
 - About \$14.8 million for maintenance and repairs across the District.



- Approximately \$7.2 to improve safety & security and renovate select classrooms and other learning spaces in the District's existing facilities.
- Approximately \$1.5 million to reconstruct the high school track and install artificial turf at the high school stadium.
- **Why build a school serving grades 3 thru 5 in Cottage Grove?** The construction of a grades 3 thru 5 elementary in Cottage Grove was proposed for several reasons:
 1. Given projected enrollment growth at the elementary level in Cottage Grove, the Facilities Advisory Committee focused its efforts on exploring facilities options that created long-term 4K-8 capacity. The new grade 3-5 school provides space to accommodate recent and projected future enrollment in Cottage Grove.
 2. The new grade 3-5 school decreases enrollment pressure on Glacial Drumlin School by providing space for the Cottage Grove 5th grade population. Under the plan, Glacial Drumlin will serve only the grade 6-8 middle school population.
 3. Moving 5th graders out of Glacial Drumlin allows the District to serve Cottage Grove 5th graders at the elementary level, aligning with the Monona 5th graders who attend Winnequah School.
- **Does the facilities plan propose to change the District's current grade configuration?** Yes. Should the referendum be approved, Cottage Grove 5th grade students now attending Glacial Drumlin School will attend the new grade 3-5 elementary school in Cottage Grove. Therefore, all 5th graders district-wide will attend an elementary school. Students district-wide will transition to Glacial Drumlin School for middle school beginning in grade 6.
- **Does the facilities plan require attendance boundaries?** Existing elementary attendance boundaries will not change. Elementary attendance boundaries *within* Monona and within Cottage Grove will not be needed. All elementary students in Monona will continue to be served at Winnequah School. All Cottage Grove elementary students will transition together from Taylor Prairie School (4K-K) to Cottage Grove School (grades 1-2) to the new school (grades 3-5).



- **Why isn't a new high school part of the District's facilities plan?** There are two significant reasons why a new high school is not part of the District's current facilities plan:

1. Needs - Enrollment projections show the District's most significant and immediate space needs are at the 4K-8 level. Three of the District's schools—Taylor Prairie (elementary), Cottage Grove (elementary), and Glacial Drumlin (middle)—are projected to be over capacity in the next five years. The high school is currently under capacity.

Enrollment at the high school is projected to increase. However, enrollment at the high school is well under the building's capacity.

2. Costs - A facilities plan that includes a new high school is estimated to cost at least \$133 million:

- \$110 million for the new high school
- \$14.8 million for districtwide capital maintenance
- \$8.0 million for renovations at existing schools
- This does not include the cost of additional land, which may need to be secured or the cost of renovations that may be necessary to convert existing buildings to serve their new population.

The community survey completed by more than 1,800 district residents and staff indicated strong support for a referendum of \$57 million.

COSTS

- **If passed, how will the referendum impact my taxes?** Together, the estimated annual maximum mill rate increase of both the debt and operating referendums is \$75 per \$100,000 of fair market value.



Fair Market Value	Estimated Annual Tax Impact above existing level		
	Question 1 (Debt)	Question 2 (Operating)	Total
\$100,000	\$29	\$46	\$75
\$200,000	\$58	\$92	\$150
\$300,000	\$87	\$138	\$225

District assumes 4% interest rate, 2% equalized valuation growth.

Borrowing term of debt question is 20 years.

Operational question is recurring.

- **When will the facilities referendum debt be paid off?** The borrowing term is 20 years.
- **What are the District's interest rate assumptions?** The District assumes an interest rate of 4.0%. Traditionally, the District and the District's financial analyst have taken a conservative approach in projecting future interest rates.

PROCESS

- **How has the District involved the community in facilities planning?** The District created a Facilities Advisory Committee, a representative group of community leaders and parents, evenly split between Monona and Cottage Grove, to study the District's facilities needs and develop recommendations for the Board of Education. This is the District's second such committee since 2015.

The District has held three Community Updates for community members, two in February 2018 and one in July 2018.

The District also sent out a facilities planning community survey to every household in the district. The purpose of the survey was to gather community feedback on the Facilities Advisory Committee's preliminary recommendations, which focused on the 4K-8 level. More than 1,800 responses were received.



[Facilities planning](#) materials and resources are available on the District website.

The District will continue to provide opportunities to learn more about the referendum and the District's facilities plan. Visit [the website](#) to find events or sign up for the newsletter.

- **What is the Facilities Advisory Committee (FAC)?** The 20-member FAC was formed on August 23, 2017, by the Monona Grove School District's Board of Education. The FAC's membership was split evenly between Monona and Cottage Grove residents. The FAC was charged with developing facilities options that address the District's capacity, capital maintenance and learning environment needs.

The FAC met 8 times over 10 months. After substantial discussion, deliberation and analysis, the committee issued advisory recommendations for the Board in June 2018.

[FAC Charge](#)

[FAC Final Recommendations](#)

- **Who was on the FAC and how were members selected?** FAC members were appointed by the MGSD Board President. Equal geographic representation between Cottage Grove and Monona was an important factor in the selection process, as was representation from various constituent groups (parents, seniors, community leadership, etc.).
- **What is the Long Range Facilities Planning Committee?** Significant facilities planning was done prior to the formation of the Facilities Advisory Committee (FAC). The District's Long Range Facilities Planning Committee (LRFPC) was formed in early 2015 and completed an extensive review of District enrollment projections, capital maintenance needs, building capacities, grade configurations and other facilities needs. The LRFPC recommendations were adopted by the Board on July 22, 2015. These recommendations shaped the FAC's subsequent scope of work.



The Board charged the FAC to complete the second phase of the facilities planning process utilizing the LRFPC phase one finding regarding long-term needs and potential areas of focus. This included the Board-approved LRFPC recommendation to focus on 4k-8 solutions, with grade 9-12 remaining on the high school campus.

[LRFPC recommendations](#)

- **How have staff been involved in the facilities planning process?** District Administrators have kept the staff informed through facilities updates at in-service meetings and building meetings. Staff have had opportunities to provide input through the community survey, forums with building principals and a staff feedback survey in June 2018 related to the issue of grade configuration. All staff responses were (anonymously) provided to the Board of Education. If the referendum passes, teachers and staff will continue to have a significant role to play, specifically advising on design of the new building.
- **Why were there only two options to choose from on the community survey?** The Long-Range Facilities Planning Committee and the Facilities Advisory Committee each studied District facilities for many months. The Long-Range Facilities Planning Committee recommended the District focus on 4K-8 solutions. The FAC studied cost and long-term impact of seven different 4K-8 solutions before narrowing to two preliminary options in February 2018. The purpose of the community survey was to provide community feedback on the preliminary recommendations of the FAC.

ENROLLMENT GROWTH

- **By how much is District enrollment projected to grow?** Independent enrollment projections estimate that the district will grow by 700 students over the next 10 years. This is on top of growth of 525 students over the previous 10 years. It is important to remember that enrollment projections are based on the best available data at the time they are developed. The District recognizes this and monitors enrollment closely.
- **What impact will this growth have on District facilities?** It is difficult to say exactly how enrollment growth will impact Monona Grove. Prolonged enrollment



growth often results in a school's enrollment exceeding the school's capacity. An independent enrollment study projects that three District schools will exceed their capacities within the next five years: Taylor Prairie (in 2019-20); Glacial Drumlin (in 2020-21); and Cottage Grove (in 2022-23).

- **Can the District solve its 4K-8 space concerns by limiting open enrollment?**
No. The District is already limiting the admission of open enrollment students at the 4K-8 level, to the extent possible under Wisconsin law. Resident student enrollment is projected to grow significantly.
- **Are the enrollment projections accurately capturing the potential growth in Monona?** The independent firm that conducted the District's enrollment projections is confident that it accounted for population and enrollment changes in Monona. Enrollment projections are useful planning data. However, it is important to remember that enrollment projections are based on the best available data at the time they are developed. The District recognizes this and monitors enrollment closely.

CAPITAL MAINTENANCE

- **What is capital maintenance?** Capital maintenance are the basic infrastructure improvements required to ensure a school runs operates safely and efficiently.
- **What are the District's capital maintenance needs?** The District has \$14.8 million in high priority capital maintenance needs. Needs vary by building but include heating and cooling system improvements, plumbing upgrades, electrical system updates, and window replacement.
- **Why are there so many capital maintenance needs?** Budget constraints due to state spending limits has resulted in the deferral of routine maintenance. In our own homes, we often have to make choices between, for example, installing a new water heater or putting on new gutters, or replacing the windows. It is the same in our schools. The \$14.8 million in high priority capital maintenance represents years of accumulated deferred maintenance projects.
- **The 2016 operating referendum was partially to fund capital maintenance. Why is there a need for so much additional capital maintenance spending?**



The 2016 operating referendum did permit the District to increase its capital maintenance budget to approximately \$600,000 per year. However, the annual operating budget is sufficient to address the District's ongoing capital maintenance needs, not the backlog of deferred maintenance projects.

RENOVATIONS

- **Where will the renovation projects occur?** Winnequah School, Cottage Grove School, Taylor Prairie School, Glacial Drumlin School, MG21 Charter School and Monona Grove High School will be partially renovated.
- **How were renovation projects selected for inclusion in the referendum?** The Board of Education, with input from staff, have identified the highest priority renovation projects within each building.
- **Will the referendum include safety and security renovations?** Yes. The referendum includes funding for safety and security upgrades at each building, including the construction of controlled, more secure main entrances at Winnequah School and MG21.

ATHLETICS

- **Why was reconstruction of the high school track and installation of artificial turf the only athletics items included in the referendum?** Difficult decisions had to be made when prioritizing which project were to be included in the referendum. The Board determined—with input from the FAC and administration—that the reconstruction of the high school track and the installation of artificial turf represented the District's most significant athletics needs.

The high school track is in disrepair and suffers from recurring maintenance issues. It is in need of full reconstruction. Installation of artificial turf at the high school stadium increases the usability of the athletic field—for both extracurricular activities and for regular school day physical education.

MAYWOOD / NICHOLS



- **Why not repurpose Maywood instead of building a new school?** Maywood's limited capacity (300 students) is insufficient to accommodate the District's long-term projected enrollment. If Maywood is utilized as a District school, the District would still need to construct a new school to accommodate projected enrollment growth. Operating two additional schools (Maywood & the new school) would significantly increase operating costs.

In addition, Maywood's small size, primary school configuration and lack of a gymnasium limits the District's ability to deliver comprehensive programming at the facility. This is inconsistent with the District's commitment to equity in its curriculum offerings.

- **Why not repurpose Nichols instead of building a new school?** The vast majority of the Nichols building is being used by the District Office and by MG21, the District's project-based charter school for grades 9-12. In addition, MG21 recently received an expansion grant from DPI and will be expanding offerings to grades 6-12 in 2019.
- **What is the long-term plan for Maywood?** Maywood has been leased to the Madison Metropolitan School District for a 5-year term, thru June 2023.
- **Can the District bus children from Cottage Grove to Monona?** It has been the long-standing practice of the District to educate elementary students in their home communities. In addition, the options reviewed by the FAC that involved busing Cottage Grove students to Monona were more costly. These options were more costly because of additional:
 - Construction costs (added renovation costs at Maywood)
 - Operational costs (added transportation costs)

MISCELLANEOUS

- **Voters approved an operating referendum in 2016. Why has the District planned a facilities referendum and another operating referendum so soon?** In 2016, District residents approved an operating referendum to address a budget shortfall due to years under state spending limits. The referendum is being used to pay for teaching positions, updated course material, upgraded



technology infrastructure, building maintenance and other important operating expenses. More detail on the 2016 operating referendum can be found [here](#).

The November 2018 referendum addresses the District's most pressing facilities needs. The 2018 referendum does have an operational component. The operational question funds the day-to-day expenses involved in operating a new school.

- **Why not construct additions at existing schools instead of building a brand new school?** Constructing classroom additions at existing schools provides additional instructional space. However, when considering a school addition, it is also important to expand core spaces (gym, cafeteria, library, corridors) to accommodate the increased student population. These additions can be difficult and costly, especially on small sites.
- **Is the design for the new school available?** No. If the referendum is approved, the design for the new school will be developed over a months-long period of time. Substantial input will be sought from District leaders, teachers, and staff during the design process.
- **When will the new school be completed?** Estimated completion is Summer 2021, with students in the building that fall.

LEARNING MORE

- **How can I learn more about the November 6, 2018 referendum?** The District is committed to ensuring voters have the information they need to make an informed decision. There will be numerous opportunities to learn more about the referendum:
 - [Sign up for our e-newsletter updates](#)
 - Watch your mail for more information
 - Call: 608-268-6920
 - Email: mgreferendum@mgschools.net
 - Schedule an informational presentation for your community organization
 - Call Katy Byrnes Kaiser at 608-316-1960
 - Attend an upcoming referendum information night
 - October 8, 6 pm at Winnequah School



- October 9, 6 pm at Cottage Grove School
- Drop By Donuts with Dan (visit our [website](#) for a list of dates and locations)
- Visit the [Referendum 2018](#) section of MGSD's website

VOTING

- **Where is my polling place?** Locate your polling place by visiting the link below:
<https://myvote.wi.gov/en-US/FindMyPollingPlace>
- **How do I register to vote?** You can register to vote up to 20 days prior to an election either by mail or online. You can register to vote in person at your municipal clerk's office until the Friday before Election Day. Proof of residence is required to register to vote.

Learn more about registering to vote here:

https://elections.wi.gov/sites/default/files/publication/154/voter_registration_guide_pdf_21165.pdf

Acceptable proof of residence documents are listed here:

<https://elections.wi.gov/publications/voter-guides/proof-of-residence>

- **Do I need a photo ID to vote?** Yes. More information about acceptable photo IDs is available here: <https://myvote.wi.gov/en-us/PhotoIDRequired>