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MTSD Board of Education Approves Operating Referendum Question for November 5 Ballot

Action follows community-driven process to evaluate the district's needs, find potential solutions

Mequon, WI — At its August 19 meeting, the Mequon-Thiensville School District Board of Education approved an operating referendum question that will appear on the ballot Tuesday, November 5, 2024. The measure was approved by a vote of 6-1 and marks the first proposed MTSD operating referendum since 2006.

The ballot question will ask Mequon and Thiensville residents to approve a resolution authorizing the district budget to exceed the revenue limit by a total of \$26.4 million over four years for non-recurring purposes. The tax impact of an approved referendum would be an increase of \$0.73 for every \$1,000 of assessed property value in our community. For a home with a fair market value of \$400,000 the total tax impact over four years is estimated to at \$948.

"Throughout the past year, the Board of Education has engaged deeply with our community, holding thoughtful conversations and carefully considering all voices and options," said Jason Levash, Board President. "Through these discussions, it became clear that an operational referendum will be necessary. This decision reflects our commitment to addressing the financial needs of our district and ensuring that we can continue to provide the high-quality educational programming that our students and families expect and deserve, while balancing sensitivity to our taxpayers."

The Board's action comes after more than a year of consideration of the district's financial needs and projected budget shortfalls, along with the impacts of historic inflation and stagnant state funding. The district assembled a Community Task Force in October 2023 to review the current and projected budget shortfalls, consider the board's highest-ranked alternatives from a decision analysis, and make prioritized recommendations to the administration and board.

In May 2024, the board invited all community members to participate in a survey to evaluate MTSD's needs and consider possible solutions, including an operational referendum. A total of 1,117 survey responses were collected, with 57% indicating that they would be likely to support an operating referendum at a potential amount of \$30 million over four years.

If voters approve the referendum, the additional revenue would immediately ensure the District's budget can be balanced without tapping into reserves. This would also protect the district's Aaa bond rating and prevent higher borrowing costs in the future.

An approved referendum would allow MTSD to move forward with delayed maintenance projects and manage healthcare costs. The district also plans to develop a competitive compensation system—including higher starting wages for support staff—to aid in the recruitment and retention of high-quality educators and staff.

"I want to extend my gratitude to our community for their active participation and invaluable feedback, especially those who participated in the Community Task Force and Community Survey," said Dr. Matthew Joynt, Superintendent of Schools. "Your engagement has played a crucial role in helping the Board reach this important decision. I am looking forward to the opportunity to continue to inform and engage our community around this process in support of our students and staff members. Our collective dedication to our public schools adds immense value to our community as a whole."

For more information on the district's needs, the proposed operational referendum, and the property tax impact, please visit: www.mtsd.k12.wi.us/referendum.

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