



Superintendent's Corner...

Please Vote on April 2nd

MAPS has an important referendum question on the ballot on April 2nd that will have a significant impact on our buildings, students and budget for many years. In preparation for that day, we have held informational sessions, coffee talks, used traditional and social media, sent mailers, and used a variety of other methods to provide accurate information to the voters. People have called with questions and stopped by to meet with me in person to get their questions answered. I have appreciated the engagement of our community on this subject and it's been great to meet with so many people.

Through our meetings in the townships and with service groups and other organizations, we have been able to answer questions and address misconceptions that people have shared. I know that people are busy and may not have been able to attend those sessions so I thought it would be helpful to put together a clean, easy to read bullet list of the things you need to know going into this important election.

Here's our story:

- In 2021, due to declining enrollment, MAPS went through a school consolidation process that left Jefferson Elementary vacant.
- Soon after, a community survey indicated that our community wanted something to be done with that vacant building.
- A facility study was conducted to see how Jefferson fit into our overall facility needs and plan.
- As part of the process, an outside firm was hired to provide objective information regarding the condition of all of our buildings, the future repair and maintenance needs, future costs, etc.
- Three community focus groups (about 30 people each) met over the summer of 2023 to take all of that information into consideration and to come up with a plan to make the best use of our best buildings.
- The plan included moving the Northern Achievement Center (NAC), Bridges Virtual School and our Head Start program (PRYSL) into a renovated Jefferson Elementary,

move Central Office operations into available renovated space at Merrill High School and replace the old maintenance shop.

- Once completed MAPS would dispose of (demolish, sell, etc.) the current central office building, the NAC and related storage buildings, the old maintenance shop and the Pine River school. Taking these buildings- and their upcoming maintenance needs-- offline will save MAPS millions of dollars over the next 10 years alone.
- A survey sent to every resident in the community this fall showed strong support for this plan and for the referendum needed to make it happen.
- The referendum asks for \$16 million over the next 21 years. This will add an estimated \$.32 to the mil rate or \$32 annually on a \$100,000 house. On a \$200,000 house the total cost would be \$1344 over the 21 years.
- Like a fixed rate mortgage, this tax increase is fixed and the levy impact to local taxpayers remains fixed throughout the length of the referendum.
- This plan will not add any new staff to our operations. Rather, it affords us a chance to become more efficient and move things around into our best spaces (and get rid of our worst and unused buildings).
- MAPS has the lowest revenue limit in Wisconsin--meaning the amount the State says we can spend on our schools is the lowest in Wisconsin.
- MAPS does not have the authority to exceed the State revenue limits or borrow significant funds without a referendum.
- MAPS has one of the lowest mil rates in Wisconsin. We are at \$5.84 and the State average is \$7.22.
- MAPS has no debt.
- MAPS has experienced declining enrollment over the years and has reduced staff, programming and other costs in response to those declines each and every year. While our declining enrollment trend appears to be slowing, we will continue to make budgetary reductions that align to student counts. That's simple fiscal responsibility.
- We went to the community to help us address this facility issue and residents helped us develop an excellent plan that will serve our district for many years to come. Next, we surveyed the entire community and support for the plan and the referendum was high.
- This is the best facility plan for our district. It makes best use of our best facilities and will save millions in operations dollars--money that can be spent on running our schools and helping students achieve.

Please remember to vote and if you have any questions, feel free to call me at 715-536-4581.
Go Bluejays!

Shannon Murray