

For Immediate Release

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Looking Ahead: Potential Outcomes of the Facilities Referendum

Ripon, WI – As Election Day approaches, Ripon voters have an important decision to make. The School Board and District Administration have worked hard throughout the entire facility planning process to keep the community informed. The next step in this planning process is to discuss the events to occur after all the votes have been counted. The public is entitled to be aware of all potential outcomes.

With a successful facilities referendum, there will be an impact on the community. Detailed planning and finalization of design will begin immediately for the projects approved by voters. Plunkett Raysich Architects and CG Schmidt (Construction Management) will seek final input from the District and community to ensure the best and most efficient layout is used for the combined facility. Construction will begin quickly. The construction of the additions to the high school building is expected to begin spring of 2015. During the summer of 2015 and the summer of 2016, remodeling and renovating the existing portions of the high school building will occur. In August 2016, the middle school will begin instruction in the combined facility. The abatement process and demolition of the existing middle school would occur in the fall of 2016. Finally, the remaining lot will be converted for its new purposes with all work expected to be finished by May 2017.

The phasing of the project work is planned heavily for the summer months to minimize disruptions to class time, school events, and normal operations. The work areas will be separated from the student areas to maximize safety and security for the students and staff. Project updates will be posted to the district website and shared with staff, parents, and the community on a regular basis. With a principal repayment & borrowing of funds over 20 years at a 4.5% interest rate, taxes will increase \$119.00 per \$100,000 property value annually. If the interest rate is less, this value would be lower.

With a failed facilities referendum, the community will still be impacted. The facilities question has been brought to a referendum because Ripon needs to address its aging facilities. The Board believes now is the right time to bring this question to a vote because the current facilities debt is retiring in the district. If the debt retiring in the district is not replaced by new debt, the overall spending in the district will decrease. Based on the current state school funding formula, a decrease in district spending will cause a decrease in state aid. Financially, taxes could increase \$56.00 per \$100,000 property value annually despite the decision not to modify any Ripon Area School District buildings.

The District has a responsibility to provide safe, affordable, and accessible schools for all students and staff. Additionally, the Board of Education cannot let the buildings fall into disrepair. If any portion of a building were to need immediate repair, action would be taken to allow school operations to run normally. Unplanned and unscheduled maintenance can be more costly than planned, routine maintenance. The funds for repairs would need to be taken out of the District current operational budget, impacting other programs, or out of the district's existing fund balance. Decreasing the district's fund balance could change the district's bond rating, which in turn would create higher interest rates on any future borrowing. Furthermore, each year the needed repairs and renovations are delayed, construction costs could increase significantly.

Both outcomes will affect the community, and the final decision is in the hands of the voters in the Ripon Area. The School Board and District Administration encourage the community to use this information, in addition to the many resources available on the Ripon Area School District website, to make an informed decision when voting. Most importantly, they encourage all eligible citizens to vote on November 4th.

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