



School Board Playbook - May 11, 2021 Referendum



SITUATIONAL SUMMARY

- On January 4, the Becker School Board voted to move forward on a plan that would address space and program needs, capacity needs, a new transportation facility, various deferred maintenance and infrastructure needs, and other District-wide improvements, to be put before voters in a May 11, 2021 bond referendum.
- The proposed plan best represents the most critical needs of our District to serve our students, staff, and community members for future generations to come - all for a \$0 net tax increase to District residents above the current tax rate.

HOW WE GOT HERE (THE PROCESS)

- For several years, our District has worked diligently to identify, quantify, and prioritize our facility and educational-related needs. The District was very intentional about gathering accurate and relevant data before the long-range planning process began including physical condition assessments, educational adequacy reviews, enrollment history review and projections, and more.
- The long-range planning process continued with a diverse group of internal and external stakeholders including community members, parents, staff, teachers, and administration. This group met several times between 2019 and 2020 and focused on making data-driven decisions.
- The main priority drivers included 1) safety and security, 2) aging infrastructure, 3) educational updates, and 4) capacity needs.
- 90% of all residents that took the survey said they are either satisfied or very satisfied with Becker Public Schools. 56% of all residents (staff, parents, and non-parents) that took the survey said they would support the District exploring a bond referendum and over 70% said they would support a \$37.5 million bond referendum that does not increase tax rates above the current tax rate.
- Once the recommendations were received from the planning group, the School Board began evaluating facility options and decided that the proposed plan will result in direct benefits to our students, staff, and District communities.
- At the School Board meeting on January 4, 2021, the School Board approved the final scope and project costs of the proposed referendum and set an Election Day of Tuesday, May 11, 2021.

THE PLAN

- On Tuesday, May 11, voters will consider a \$37.5 million bond referendum to address our most critical needs with a \$0 net tax increase to District residents above the current tax rate.



- This plan will address space, program, and capacity needs, build a new transportation facility, address various deferred maintenance and infrastructure needs, and implement other District-wide improvements.
- This plan will focus on reinvesting in our existing facilities to improve our educational spaces, implement critical facility needs, ensure safe and secure facilities for our students, and staff, and address increasing capacity.

BENEFITS OF THE PLAN

- If the referendum passes, our District will be able to effectively address the majority of our major deferred maintenance needs currently identified within our 10-year capital improvements plan.
- Shifting 2nd grade to the Intermediate School and 5th grade to the Middle School resolves capacity issues for all District students without having to add additional core space to those facilities (cafeteria, Media Center, etc.)
- Enhanced and improved education spaces, such as our Industrial Tech Education at the High School, will allow us to better serve our students and prepare them for life beyond the walls of our buildings for both career and/or college.
- Safety and security, something our communities expect of their schools, will be greatly improved and our staff and students will be safe.

COVID-19'S IMPACT ON EDUCATION

- The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has taught us how important in-person instruction and daily contact between teachers and students is if we are going to reach every student and best prepare them for the future.
- Having properly equipped facilities will continue to play a critical role in education, facilitating the relationships between educators and their students.
- Our District is proud of our students, staff, administration, and community members' response to the COVID-19 pandemic and our resilience to continue to provide quality education.

THE COST (TAX IMPACT)

- Our School Board has worked hard to use taxpayer money well through the refinancing of our existing debt. We worked alongside our community members to take our long-range financial plan into consideration during this process.
- The referendum requests a total of \$37.5 million for these improvements with a \$0 net tax increase to District residents above the current tax rate. This cost includes bonding and issuance costs.



- Due to expiring debt, this is a net-zero tax impact and District residents and property owners would not see an estimated increase in property taxes (\$0.00).
- A tax calculator will be available at BulldogsStrong.com/cost so community members will be able to confirm their net-zero tax impact above the current tax rate.

IF VOTERS DON'T APPROVE THE PLAN

- What we know for certain is that our District's needs will not go away, both facilities related and education programming related.
- We do know the costs for making these proposed improvements will only continue to increase over time.
- If the referendum fails, Becker Public Schools will have to find different ways to address our District's physical facility and educational programming needs.
- In the short term, however, the District would need to ask the voters to approve the same, and potentially more costly, solution in the near future.

COMMUNITY RESPONSE

- The District recognizes that a building referendum at this time may cause community members to voice support or opposition to the plan.
- We're focused on providing accurate and detailed information to the public with increased attention dedicated to ensuring community questions are answered fully.
- This plan makes sense because we're addressing our most critical needs, investing in our existing facilities while creating new space, and making investments that will last for decades into the future.

WHY PURSUE A REFERENDUM ON MAY 11?

- The District carefully considered the right time to propose a plan to community voters, even more so understanding the challenges that COVID-19 has presented.
- Our needs must be addressed to ensure students and staff have safe and adequate facilities that help them thrive beyond the walls of our facilities.
- Due to the state of the economy, with project labor more widely available, low-interest rates, and a competitive construction economy, now is a great time to pursue this plan.
- In addition, due to our District's expiring debt, our residents would experience a net-zero estimated tax impact if the proposed referendum passes.



- If approved by voters, this plan would be a significant investment for generations of learners to come.

OTHER QUESTIONS AND NEXT STEPS

- Providing accurate and transparent information as a School Board member is critical. If you receive questions you don't know how to answer, please let the community member(s) know that you will get them an answer in a timely fashion.
 - Please reach out to Superintendent Jeremy Schmidt at jschmidt@isd726.org.
- Please remind community members that they can reach out to the District at any time to have their questions answered or to submit their feedback and questions at BulldogsStrong.com/connect.
- BulldogsStrong.com is a very helpful tool for community members and will have information about the proposed referendum including the need, the plan, the cost, voting information, and more. Please remind them regularly to visit the site.