

**DATE:** Nov. 13, 2020  
**PRESENTATION:** L. Guggisberg – Interim Supt.  
**SUBJECT:** Post-Election Communication

When I looked at the GMR School Referendum results I was disappointed obviously, but, I respect the results of the election. As a school we have to move forward and work hard to continue to best serve our students in these constantly-changing times.



## Greenbush Middle River School District School Board Election... Nov. 3, 2020 Election Results

Candidate	Totals	Pct.
Brandon Ignaszweski	1,004	27.15%
Laurie Stromsodt	735	19.88%
Brandon Kuznia	952	25.74%
Joseph Melby	944	25.3%
WRITE-IN	63	1.70%

Source: Office of the MN Secretary of State <[sos.state.mn.us](http://sos.state.mn.us)>

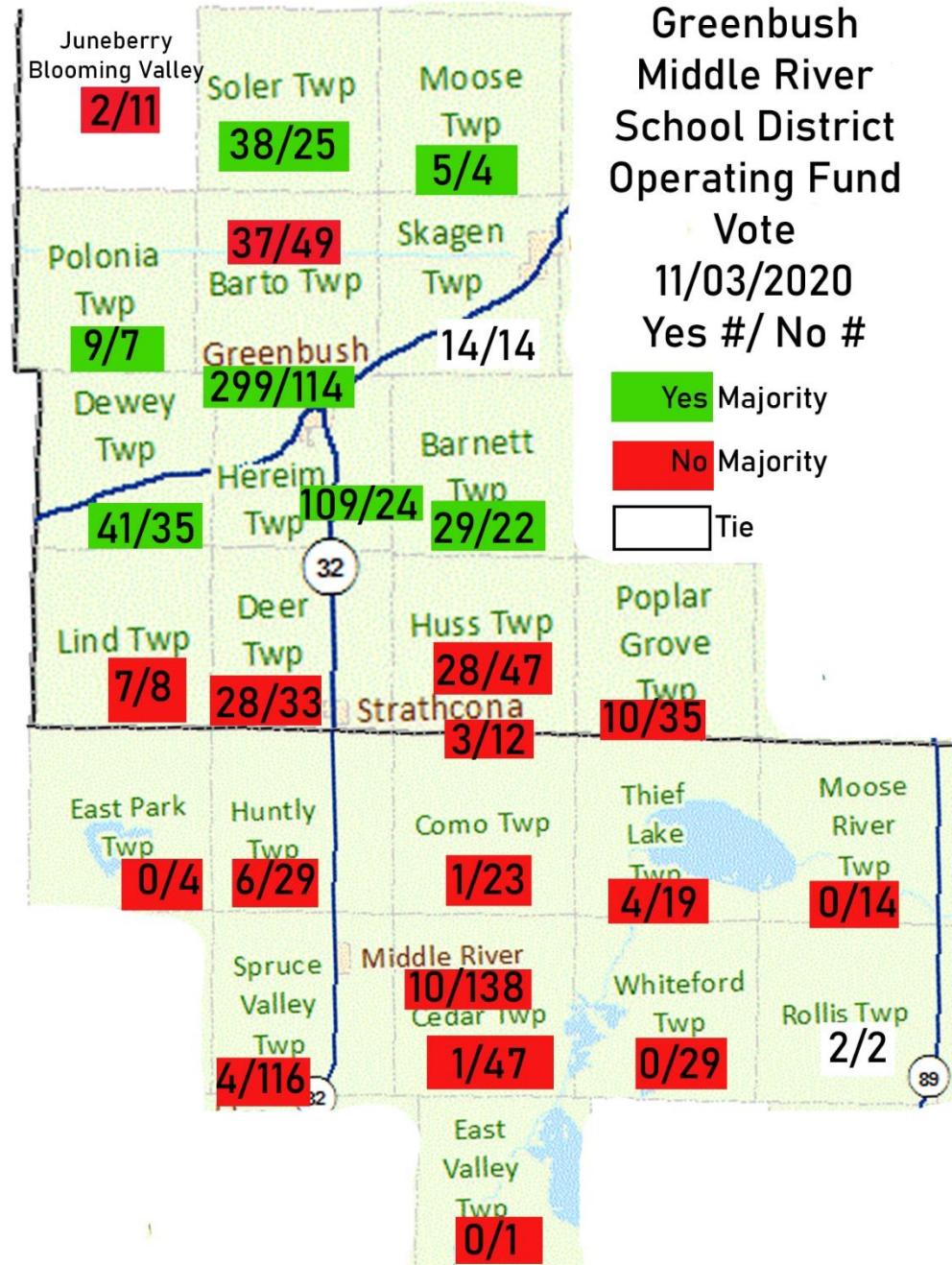
## Greenbush Middle River School District Referendum Election... Nov. 3, 2020 Election Results

Special Ballot Question #1	Totals	Pct.
YES	688	44.33%
NO	864	55.67%

Source: Office of the MN Secretary of State <[sos.state.mn.us](http://sos.state.mn.us)>

*The attempt to increase the operating referendum was done in a manner which would put GMR comparable to its NW MN school peer group and yet still be at or below the group average and less than the state average.*

Source: Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State



My Observations: as in many things, perhaps a combination of items can be attributed to a failed election, but,

1) Can't all be Coronavirus pandemic related, in NW MN:

MCC passed a referendum

Badger passed two (2) special election ballot questions (referendum renewal and capital projects)

Lancaster passed a referendum

This past summer, Roseau passed a \$40 million Bond referendum

Local economy (largest employers) not as adversely affected as in other parts of the State or Country

2) Can't all be because of Middle River voter discontent:

In terms of school district population, "the math" 55% "no" and 45% "yes" doesn't *add up*

3) Followed a state-wide trend (voter rejection) for schools with a ballot question seeking an increase in school tax levy

4) Can't be because people didn't have the information when early voting started on Sept. 18 because info was available on school website prior to Sept. 18.

5) Perhaps too much "noise" out there on the Presidential Election and Governor Walz's on-going executive orders relating to the coronavirus pandemic and broad (MN & U.S.) economy issues

**6) Whatever the outcome (in spite of the lack of support from the majority of voters), the GMR teachers and staff will continue to provide quality opportunities for the kids of our school district as well as promote the highest character of our students and positive visibility in the community. The teachers and staff are doing fantastic work on behalf of kids and the community in a really challenging year**

**7) Thank you to everyone who took the time to learn about the proposed levy.**

# Community Conversations

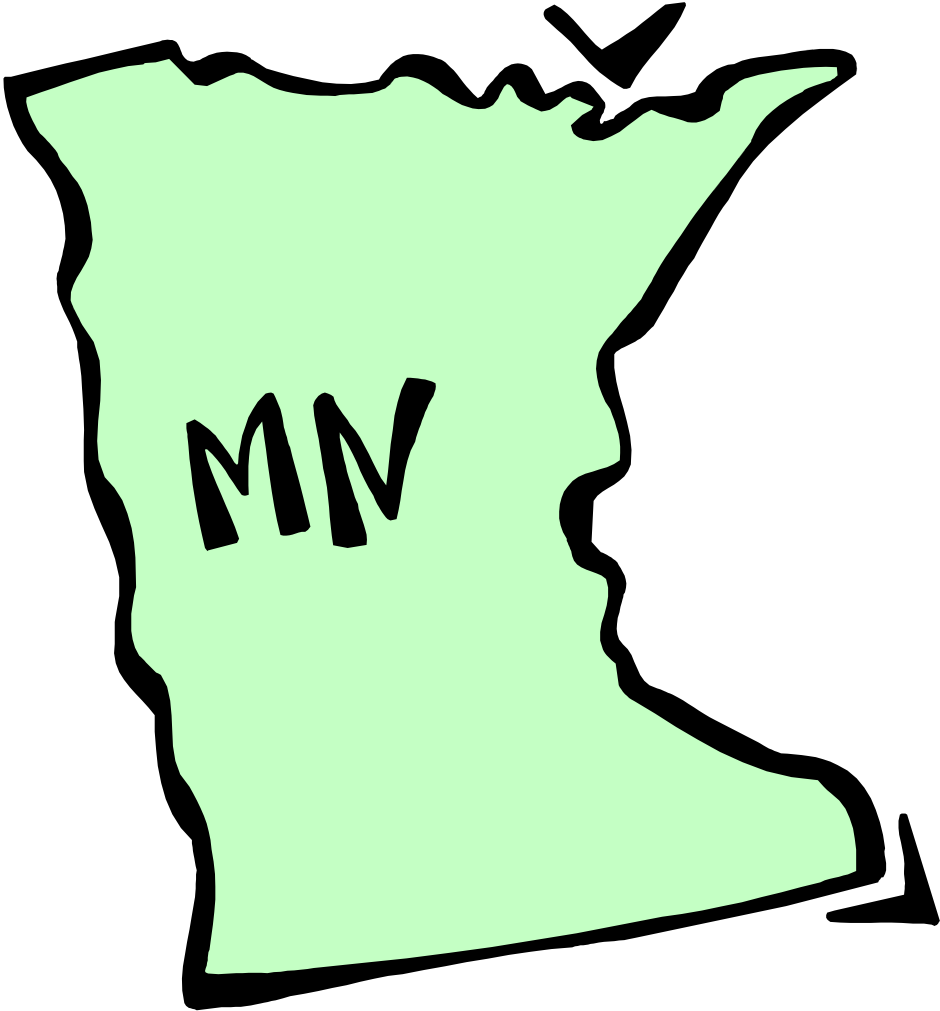
**MENTIONS** of November 3 Special Election Referendum in GMR include (but may not be limited to...)

Board Budget Meeting in Dec. 2019  
May 11, 2020 Special School Board meeting  
May 18, 2020 Regular School Board meeting  
July 20, 2020 Regular School Board meeting  
July 29, 2020 Special School Board meeting  
August 6, 2020 Special School Board meeting  
August 17, 2020 Regular School Board meeting - Resolution Approved  
August 18, 2020 Teacher ZOOM meeting  
August ECFE Parent Advisory Council Meeting  
Sept. 1 Teacher / Staff Back-to-School meeting in gym  
Sept. 1 KQ 92 Morning Radio program  
Sept. 29 KQ 92 Morning Radio program  
August... Instagram postings  
August.... Facebook postings  
October 6... mentioned on KQ 92 Morning Radio program by Principal Schultz  
Early-Week of October 5.... Notice on school social media of mailing to GMR residents  
mid-Week of October 5... Required mailing NOTICE OF ELECTION to GMR residents  
October 8 ... Parent hand-out(s): (a.) Referendum Fact Sheet and (b.) FAQs  
October 12... GMR EA post card mailing to GMR School District residents  
October 13... L. Guggisberg on KQ 92 Morning Radio program  
Week of October 12.. Required NEWSPAPER NOTICE (#1 of 2) OF ELECTION to GMR Residents  
October 18.... Article (front page) in TRF *The Times* about area school elections  
October 19.... Virtual Public Information Meeting  
October 19... Regular School Board meeting  
October.... H.S. Social Studies "Election" instructional unit  
Week of October 19...Required NEWSPAPER NOTICE (#2 of 2) OF ELECTION to GMR Residents  
October 21... KTRF Radio interview  
Week of October 26...CHOMPER student newspaper delivered to district residents  
October 28.... Board and Staff Communication regarding 2021-2022 State-wide Budget Article  
Oct. 28-Nov. 3.... Social Media "snip its" about the election  
Nov. 3.....L. Guggisberg on KQ 92 Morning Radio program; and finally... all of the above was intended to foster Community conversations (in favor or and in opposition of) the school election.





# Summary of Elections “state-wide”



**SPECIAL EDITION: Nov. 5, 2020**

The Nov. 3 general election drew record voter turnout. While the results continue to come in on local, state and national levels, here's a look at the outcomes of the races and referendums so far and they impact on Greater Minnesota education.

## **2020 Election Results: Impact on Schools**

As we wait for several states to finish counting ballots, the results for Minnesota became clearer Wednesday night. While President Trump secured the highest number of votes a Republican has ever received in Minnesota, nearly 1.48 million votes, the same is true for Joe Biden on the Democrat side of the equation, eclipsing 1.7 million votes.

- Minnesota's 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Congressional Districts comprised of St. Paul and Minneapolis, respectively, continue to hold a fortress of DFL voters and have created a "blue wall" in Minnesota that has prevented the GOP from winning a statewide office since 2006.
- GOP appear to retain control of the state Senate, albeit with a net loss of 1 seat and back to the thinnest of majorities, 34-33, heading into January.
- The House GOP surprised many with their election week success, picking up 6 seats and reducing the DFL's 75-59 majority to 69-65.

Managing our way through the pandemic and economic crisis will take bi-partisan work. As much as we need the President-elect to bring the country together, we as citizens need to be willing to stop the incessant partisan fighting and help our leaders find common ground and make the tough decisions to get us back on track.



# School Referendum Results

Going out for both operating referendums and capital support was almost exclusively a rural endeavor in Minnesota in this general election. Few school districts in Minnesota gained the support they needed with passage rates under 50 percent for operating referendums and under 40 percent for capital requests.

## Here are some other takeaways:

- Operating referendums far outweighed bond or capital levies on the ballot with 33 school districts seeking operating support and 13 requesting approval of capital projects.
- Renewals of operating referendums overwhelmingly passed (13 to 1) while those school districts that asked for increases had a much tougher time of passing the ballot question (4 to 18).
- Minnesota voters approved \$21.4 million in bond and capital levy requests with almost half of that supporting Fridley Public Schools. About \$150 million in requests did not receive enough support.

[See Results](#)

 <http://www.mreavoice.org/minnesota-school-referendums-lack-needed-support/>

“Minnesota voters this week signed off on just half of school districts’ requests for getting more money into classrooms, marking the lowest approval rate for operating levies in over two decades. Out of the 34 districts that had put the question to voters, only 17 requests passed in this week’s election. That’s the lowest approval rate since 1996. The vast majority of approvals — 13 out of 17 — were renewals.” Source: MN Public Radio [During the Pandemic, MN School Levy Requests hit a 24 year low.](#) Published Nov. 6, 2020



# GATOR PROUD



Suggested Next Steps after  
a failed referendum election

# Voting results have consequences Next Steps

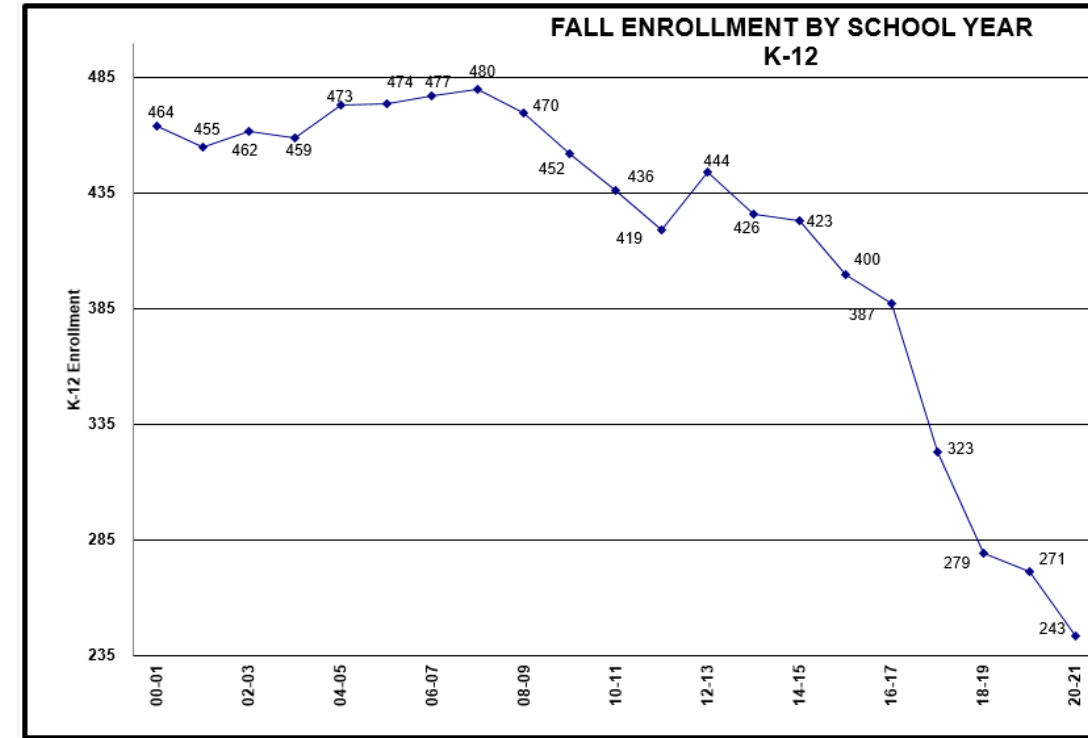
Due largely to a declining enrollment trend and lack of state funding, the district's finances were not in the best shape prior to the pandemic. It was mentioned during more than one public [referendum] meeting, passage of a referendum was not the panacea for the District's finances - even if the referendum were to pass, the District would need to trim its budget. Added to this, with the pandemic the newly elected MN Legislature is expected to make cuts to its overall budget in the spring, cuts that would likely trickle down to school districts.

## ☐ Financial Planning:

- The district's current referendum is set to expire at the end of the 2021-2022 school year.
- Propose to the [newly elected board] to attempt [another] referendum in Calendar Year 2021. *Current law allows for Operating referendum elections to be held on only one day, November 2, 2021. Passage of the referendum would assure continued funding going into the 2022-2023 school year.*

Between Nov. 2020 and December 31, 2020

- Recommend to the [existing] Board to pass [an annual] resolution to Combine Polling Places on or before Dec. 31, 2020 [for school elections in calendar year 2021].
- Seek [existing] Board approval to maximize revenue. Eg: *As per up-coming 2019-2020 Financial Audit...* Although students received Free Meals in part of 2019-2020 and all of 2020-2021, the school "has on the books" nearly \$21,000 in lunch accounts that are in arrears.
- Determine a process to understand and/or determine a method to accept public input on the budget reduction process.
- Eg: Community Listening sessions and/or seek Public Input similar and like what was done in 2019-2020.





# Next Steps *(continued)*

January 2021 and beyond

- January 2021... Recommend to the Board to pass a *Resolution directing the Administration to make recommendation for reduction in programs and position and reasons therefor*
- January & Feb. 2021 Implement Community Listening Sessions and/or public input similar and like what was done in the 2019-2020 school year.
- March 2021 Recommendation to the Board of *proposed* reductions for 2021-2022 school year
- April 2021 Seek Board approval of *Final* reductions for 2021-2022 school year
- Mid-August 2021 Propose to the Board to pass a resolution in mid-August to hold an election on Nov. 2, 2021.  
*If the strategy is to request additional revenue the District may want to change to a two (2) question ballot hopefully providing a better chance of securing the renewal before it expires.*

## Careful budgeting

- Although we continue looking for ways to save money through day-to-day efficiencies. Some program areas will be difficult to reduce eg: Food Service (we still have to feed kids), Buildings & Grounds (facility care is still necessary), Bussing (although we may look at the number of bus routes, kids need transportation to school).

# Next Steps *(continued)*

The job “the school and its supporters” have in 2021 is educating the public on the reality of the school’s financial situation. It is an important step if the district is to ask voters to approve a referendum. School districts receive multiple sources of revenue, and a referendum would increase the amount of funding it receives from local taxpayers.

If the board can communicate to the public what some initial cuts would look like in the first year, it might be easier to convince voters to support a referendum before larger cuts would likely have to be made in the following years due to a lack of referendum funds.

I am convinced we need to give the GMR community the opportunity to save themselves from the impacts of these budget adjustments that could be coming. I just I don't think they realize the impact how deep budget cuts will change the landscape significantly of public education in GMR.

# Next Steps *(continued)*

- ❑ How is GMR using its Coronavirus Aid Relief Act (CARES Act) funds to avoid using General Fund dollars?
  - As of now... through the federal CARES Act, schools will receive funding to help offset increased costs due to COVID-19.
  - Can we leverage *one-time* COVID-19 dollars to support the costs associated with COVID-19 as well as provide on-going beneficial results to school programming? The answer is *YES*.
  - CARES Act funding is based on the number of students in a school district. For GMR that equates to just shy of \$125,000. The District will use these funds for qualifying expenditures related to purchasing Personal Protective Equipment, Cleaning supplies & equipment, extra expense for para salaries putting in additional cleaning hours, additional transportation costs, costs for substitutes of staff in quarantine, Food Service supplies (meals for distance learners) and Tech Supplies (for distance learners)
  - Remaining funds will be used for the following COVID-19 qualifying expenditures:
    - MN State High School League COVID-19 surcharge, Upgrade the wireless network (new access points and switches), Upgrade radio communications in buses, Employee Assistance Program (*The Village*) and [if funds don't run out] replacement of Teacher computers (for on-going distance learning instruction).
  - In addition, *Region 1* (the district's Student Records and School Finance software vendor) provided grant funds (~\$1,200) which the District used to purchase four iPads for the Special Education Dept.



- What happens to State funding if the pandemic continues? *To-be-determined*

Perhaps financial help from [newly elected] State Legislature scheduled to convene in January 2021

Composition of MN Government

*Governor – DFL Party*

*House of Representatives – DFL Party Majority*

*Senate – Republican Party Majority*

- ***Be safe, take care of yourself and family.***

