

# Menominee Area Public Schools

Referendum 2020

## Frequently Asked Questions

Remember to Vote!

Tuesday, May 5<sup>th</sup>



# REFERENDUM 2020 - FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## ***If the referendum is approved, what happens next?***

After a successful referendum vote, meetings with all staff will be held to discuss programing and planning needs, other curriculum considerations including 21st Century education. Obviously, the coronavirus and the uncertainty surrounding it will play into this timetable. It is our hope to have bid documents ready for the Winter of 2021.

## ***Why now?***

The Menominee community is strong and the future is bright. Yet, we have significant needs in our schools. We have a slow but steadily declining enrollment; failing infrastructure, some of which is original to the buildings nearly 70 years ago; and we are trying to educate our students for a 21st century world in schools that were designed for the 20th century. We have a perfect opportunity to “right-size” for our current and future enrollment; reduce our long-term operation and maintenance costs; improve the health and safety of our learning environments; and give students and teachers what they need to graduate students that will be successful in the modern world. Construction costs will continue to grow the longer we wait, however, historically low interest rates make now the time to act for our kids and our community.

## ***How will this impact my taxes?***

The project will impact the average (Est. Taxable Value of \$48,350) residential homestead property owner in Menominee Area Public Schools with a \$11.77 monthly (\$141.18 annually) property tax impact. To find the impact on your specific property, please follow this link to a property tax impact estimator provided by the district’s financial advisors, PFM:

<http://www.pfntaxcalc.com/MenomineeAreaPublicSchools/disclaimer.aspx?ReturnUrl=%2fMenomineeAreaPublicSchools%2fdefault.aspx>

Households that pay homestead property taxes greater than 3.2% of their annual income may be eligible for Michigan’s Homestead Property Tax Credit. Eligible households may deduct up to 60% (up to 100% for senior citizens) of the millage increase cost up to a \$1,500 Homestead Tax Credit limit. The eligibility for the credit begins to decrease after household income exceeds \$51,001 and ends completely after the household income exceeds \$60,001.

## ***What will happen to Blesch Intermediate and Central Elementary school buildings?***

Nothing will happen until the new elementary school is ready to open and start serving kids. Once the new school is open, Central Elementary school will be torn down and the new permanent elementary school parking lot and playground will be relocated on its site. Blesch Intermediate School is not planned to be torn down but will rather be repurposed for other use(s) that are yet to be determined.

## ***What will happen with Blesch Stadium?***

The stadium is an important community venue and the school district is committed to continuing the tradition of holding competitions there. Upgrades and enhancements are actively being considered. The funding for these improvements will come from regular operating budgets and/or private funding, but not from the referendum.

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## ***What will happen with Blesch Auditorium?***

The auditorium is an important community venue that serves both the school district and community-at-large; and the school district is committed to continuing entertainment events there. Upgrades and enhancements are actively being considered as part of the repurposing of Blesch Intermediate School after the new elementary school opens. The funding for these improvements will come from regular operating budgets and/or private funding, but not from the referendum.

## ***Where will the new school be constructed?***

The new elementary school will be constructed just north of Central Elementary (between Central and the Jr./Sr. High School). This will allow Central Elementary School to continue to be used during construction and will also allow for a safer and more efficient student drop off/pick up process that is separated from the main parking lot. The current playground will be temporarily relocated during construction.

## ***What is the timing for the new elementary school and projects at the Jr./Sr. High School?***

If the referendum is successful, engineering and architectural work will begin as soon as possible. The new elementary school will likely break ground in May 2021 and the new school will likely open in the Fall of 2022. Capital improvement projects at the Jr./Sr. High School will be scheduled on an ongoing basis over the next several years beginning in late 2020.

## ***When does Absentee Voting take place?***

Absentee voting can take place beginning on March 21, 2020. This election is mail in ballot only. Requests to have an absent voter ballot mailed to you must be received by your clerk no later than 5 p.m. on Friday, May 1st. If you're already registered at your current address, you can request an absent voter ballot in person at your clerk's office anytime up to 4 p.m. on Monday, May 4th. If you're registering to vote or updating your address by appearing at your clerk's office on Election Day, you can request an absent voter ballot at the same time you register.

## ***How do I get an Absentee ballot?***

Absentee Voting begins on March 21, 2020 and ballots can be requested by registered voters for any reason. You can request an Absentee Voting ballot from your local clerk. The ballot will be mailed to you, then you will vote and mail it back. That ballot will then be tabulated on Election Day, May 5<sup>th</sup>.

***\*\*THIS ELECTION IS MAIL-IN BALLOT ONLY\*\****

## ***Why is this election mail in ballot only?***

According to the Michigan Secretary of State, due to the coronavirus outbreak, the May election will be carried out by mail only. All registered voters in the school district will be sent an application to vote by mail (absentee). This is the optimal and safest way to participate in our democracy at this time. The application will come with a postage-paid return envelope. If the voter applies for a vote by mail/absent voter ballot, that will also arrive with a postage-paid return envelope.

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## **Who is Eligible for an Absent Voter Ballot?**

Due to the passage of the statewide ballot proposal 18-3, all eligible and registered voters in Michigan may now request an absentee voter ballot without providing a reason.

## **How will voting change due to Coronavirus?**

While we are still awaiting final determination from state, we can tell you that all voting will be done by mail in ballots. Public health and safety are our utmost concern and we feel that the mail in ballots will protect individuals and still allow individuals the right to vote. More information will be provided soon.

## **How do I get more information?**

There will be more information coming out via the school district website, the referendum website ([www.menomineestrong.com](http://www.menomineestrong.com)), social media (i.e. Facebook), and a district mailing. Due to the coronavirus outbreak, the district will not be holding any public meetings/open houses at this time. If you have any questions, please contact the district directly.

## **How much will the bond cost me?**

The bond will levy approximately 4.40 mills in 2020, for a net increase of 2.92 mills over the 2019 debt millage or 1.48 mills). Based on an estimated median Menominee County home value of \$96,700, the estimated increase cost to the median MAPS homeowner would be \$11.77 per month (2.92 mills \* (\$48,350 / 1000) / 12 = \$11.77).

Home Market Value	Home Taxable Value	Cost to MAPS Homeowner			
		Annual	Monthly	Weekly	Daily
\$50,000	\$25,000	\$73.00	\$6.08	\$1.40	\$0.20
\$80,000	\$40,000	\$116.80	\$9.73	\$2.25	\$0.32
\$96,700	\$48,350	\$141.18	\$11.77	\$2.72	\$0.39
\$150,000	\$75,000	\$219.00	\$18.25	\$4.21	\$0.60
\$200,000	\$100,000	\$292.00	\$24.33	\$5.62	\$0.80

## **Why is the estimated annual debt millage of 5.66 mills higher than the anticipated debt millage to be levied in 2020?**

The total capital related millage anticipated to be levied in 2020 is 6.60 mills (4.40 mills for debt and 2.00 mills for the existing sinking fund). Once the existing sinking fund millage is no longer levied the debt millage is anticipated to increase to 6.60 mills in an effort to keep the overall capital related millage (debt and sinking fund) at 6.60 mills into the future.

## **Why is the bond proposal over 30 year?**

The District's current plan is to issue a first issue of debt in the amount of \$22 million in 2020 and a second issue in the amount of \$22 million in 2022. Each series will be paid off within 30 years, for a total estimated 32 annual levies.

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## ***If my home value goes up or down with the economy, how is my individual bond contribution impacted?***

The individual's bond contribution would fluctuate with the taxable value of their home. However, to the extent that the district's overall taxable value grows more than projected, the millage rate would be reduced, and the impact on taxpayers would decrease accordingly.

## ***If MAPS has a big taxpayer move in (or out) of the district, how does it impact the amount I pay for the bond?***

All of the calculations are based on total taxable value for the school district. If a large taxpayer moves into the district, resulting in a higher taxable value of the district than projected, the millage rate would be reduced. On the other hand, if a large taxpayer moves out of the district, resulting in the lower taxable value of the district than projected, the millage rate may need to be increased.

## ***Can money from the bond program be used to pay for salaries?***

No, that is against state law. Bond proceeds may NOT be spent on operating expenses. Bond proceeds may NOT be used for the following items: salaries, wages, retirement, health care, benefits, retirement, general operating expenses, facility maintenance, classroom supplies, and textbooks.

## ***How can I be assured the funds will be spent as promised?***

The district's bond proceeds will need to be spent pursuant to state law. Bond projects are presented and approved by the Board of Education in an open meeting.

## ***Where can I get information about voter registration?***

The Michigan Voter Information Center is online at [michigan.gov/vote](http://michigan.gov/vote) You can find out if you are registered to vote, register to vote online, find your voting location, and request and track your absentee ballot.

## ***Are any cost savings anticipated from the facility upgrades?***

There are several ways that the School District will likely see savings, including:

- By constructing a new elementary school and replacing our two oldest schools, we will not require the investment in ongoing maintenance of the two older buildings. These funds can then be redirected toward student programming and/or maintenance needs at the Jr./Sr. High School.
- Several of the projects that are planned to be completed with the referendum funds are energy savings projects (e.g. replacement of the heating & ventilation systems; installation of new energy efficient LED lighting; sealing the building envelope like doors & windows). These will reduce the amount of money spent on energy bills and can be used for other things.

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## ***Will my child's school benefit?***

The referendum will benefit both our current and future students. Elementary students will be impacted by having a new school with modern learning environments and our middle and high school students will have a building that continues to offer a wide range of programming options with many new amenities and safe, clean and engaging learning environments.

## ***What is the time frame for building and opening the new school?***

If the referendum is successful, engineering and architectural work will begin as soon as possible and include much input from teachers & staff. The new elementary school will hopefully break ground in spring 2021 and open in the fall of 2022. Capital improvement projects at the Jr./Sr. High School will be scheduled on an ongoing basis over the next several years beginning in late 2020. (These schedules could require adjustment as a result of the effects of the COVID-19 virus outbreak.)

## ***What are the projects that are being planned for the Jr./Sr. High School?***

There are many needs at the Jr./Sr. High School that are planned to be addressed with this referendum. Some of the capital improvement projects includes:

- Secure main entrance addition/remodeling
- Electronic access control system and door alarms
- Replacing/upgrade HVAC & ventilation system to central ducted system and replace controls
- Upgrading lighting to LED
- Roof replacements
- Exterior door replacements where needed
- Replacement of parking lots and sidewalks
- Upgrading gym bleachers to meet ADA standards
- Replace gym floor
- Upgrading track and tennis courts
- Elevator replacement
- Various plumbing and fixture replacements/improvements
- Asbestos abatement

## ***What can't we continue to use Central Elementary School?***

Central Elementary School was built in 1952 and had an addition in 1967. There are many concerns that relate to the current condition of the building that are challenging and costly to resolve thus making a new school a better long-term investment of taxpayer dollars. Some of these challenges include:

Most of the building systems (HVAC, electrical, plumbing) are original, have never been updated and are now well beyond their life expectancy. This leads to the following concerns:

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- Poor ventilation, that among other things, causes elevated CO2 levels that exceed recommended amounts. This has proven to lower cognitive performance and affect decision making performance in students.
- Electrical distribution needs upgrading. We use far more technology in our classrooms today and there is not the electrical outlets or power needed. Circuit breakers are blown on a regular basis when too many student computers are plugged in for re-charging.
- Much of the school contains asbestos tile that is deteriorating and will require abatement and replacement.
- The roof has several leak issues and requires replacement due to deterioration from normal wear and tear.
- Building control systems are original to the building and require replacement.

The educational environment of the building also requires many changes, including:

- The school exceeds the recommended capacity for an elementary school. Students at Central have 50% less space on average than a typical elementary school built in the Midwest in the last 10 years.
- There is no real library media center in the school. We have been able to designate a small space in the front entryway of the school; however, this is woefully inadequate for our students.
- The gym space doubles as the cafeteria and is undersized to accommodate both functions for the number of students attending the school.
- Classroom spaces are undersized for the needs of modern programming and curriculum and lacks any storage space for materials and supplies.

There are also significant safety and security concerns with the building:

- The main entrance to the building lacks a secure entry design. Best practice would require a visitor to check in at the main office prior to entering the main portion of the building. Reconfiguration or remodeling of the entryway would be very expensive to complete based on the current building layout and design.
- The fire alarm system is original to the building is considerably out of date and requires replacement.
- There are significant ADA compliance issues with the building including having no ADA accessible restrooms, and the playground, and emergency exits are non-compliant and would require significant investment to upgrade.
- Lack of a dedicated student drop-off & pick-up areas puts many students at a safety risk before and after school.

## ***What can't we continue to use Blesch Intermediate School?***

Blesch Intermediate School was built in 1952 and had an addition in 1991. There are many concerns that relate to the current condition of the building that are challenging and costly to resolve thus making a new school a better long-term investment of taxpayer dollars. Some of these challenges include:

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Most of the building systems (HVAC, electrical, plumbing) are original to 1952, have never been updated and are now well beyond their life expectancy. This leads to the following concerns:

- Poor ventilation, that among other things, causes elevated CO2 levels that exceed recommended amounts. This has proven to lower cognitive performance and affect decision making performance in students.
- Electrical distribution needs upgrading. We use far more technology in our classrooms today and there is not the electrical outlets or power needed. Circuit breakers are blown on a regular basis when too many student computers are plugged in for re-charging.
- Building control systems are original to the building and require replacement.
- The elevator requires replacement.

The educational environment of the building also requires many changes, including:

- The school building was originally designed and built to be used as a high school. The layout and design of the school and classrooms are not appropriate for elementary aged students and causes issues with bathroom fixtures that are too large, doors that are too heavy, and a sprawling layout.
- Classroom spaces are designed for the needs of elementary/intermediate modern programming and curriculum and lacks adequate storage space for materials and supplies.

There are also significant safety and security concerns with the building:

- The main entrance to the building enters directly into high student concentration areas including the cafeteria and library/media center and lacks a secure entry design. Best practice would require a visitor to check in at the main office prior to entering the main portion of the building. Reconfiguration or remodeling of the entryway would be very expensive to complete based on the current building layout and design.
- There are significant ADA compliance issues with the building including ADA accessible restrooms, and the playground, and several emergency exits are non-compliant and would require significant investment to upgrade.

## ***Why is there not an architectural plan/rendering?***

The design of the new school will take some time to complete. The school district will go through a process of design/ideation meetings with a broad spectrum of people in this process including teachers, support staff, and community members as well as the Board and administration to make sure we “get it right” and the features and amenities of the school serve our kids, our staff and our community best now and into the future. This will take some time to do and the design and engineering process will be an investment – an investment the district does not feel is the best use of funds unless the referendum passes and we know for certain that the school will be built.

We have looked at site planning so that we are sure that the new school can be placed on the current Central Elementary & JR/SR High school site and will be able to be constructed while continuing to use Central Elementary in a safe manner. Additionally, we have done some preliminary planning with the site design to be sure that we can address the need for a dedicated and safe student pick-up/drop-off area for both the elementary and Jr./Sr. High school. Please see the site plan diagram for more information on

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that. Understand these are concept drawings at this point and more detailed engineering and layout work will be completed once we know the referendum is successful.

## ***We shouldn't be asking for money from people right now.***

With regard to the timing of the referendum, there are a few reasons why it is taking place now:

1. The process to study what is needed for the future of our district began nearly two years ago with facility, engineering and learning environment assessments. In October of 2019 we began working with a community taskforce to study this information over 6 meetings that included tours of the buildings, reviews of the assessments, studying what modern learning environments look like and how space is best used, and understanding school district operations and costs. The group also looked at financing options and tax impacts on the community. The process was completed in January with a recommendation to the School Board.
2. The School Board was required by State law to make a determination if there was going to be a referendum and what it would be for by February 10th in order for it to be on the ballot in May. Back in early February we were not anticipating the events we are living through right now.
3. Part of the reason that both the community taskforce and the school board believed now was the time to place the referendum on the ballot is that we are seeing historically low interest rates for the financing of this project. These are very favorable and dramatically impact the cost to the community of doing this project. (These rates were historically low even prior to the COVID-19 virus being a factor.) Additionally, waiting an additional year or two would have driven the project costs higher due to the construction inflation we are seeing each year.
4. We were at a point with some of the work that is needed to be done in our schools that we needed to make an investment now – either in the repairs of what we have or the investment in something new. Both the taskforce and the School Board recognized that the smartest investment long-term was the value in something new and not another “band-aid” that wouldn't move us forward in providing the facilities our kids need for modern learning.