

## Winneconne Community School District 2023 Referendum FAQs

### **Q: Why aren't full designs for the new spaces available? How do we know what it cost?**

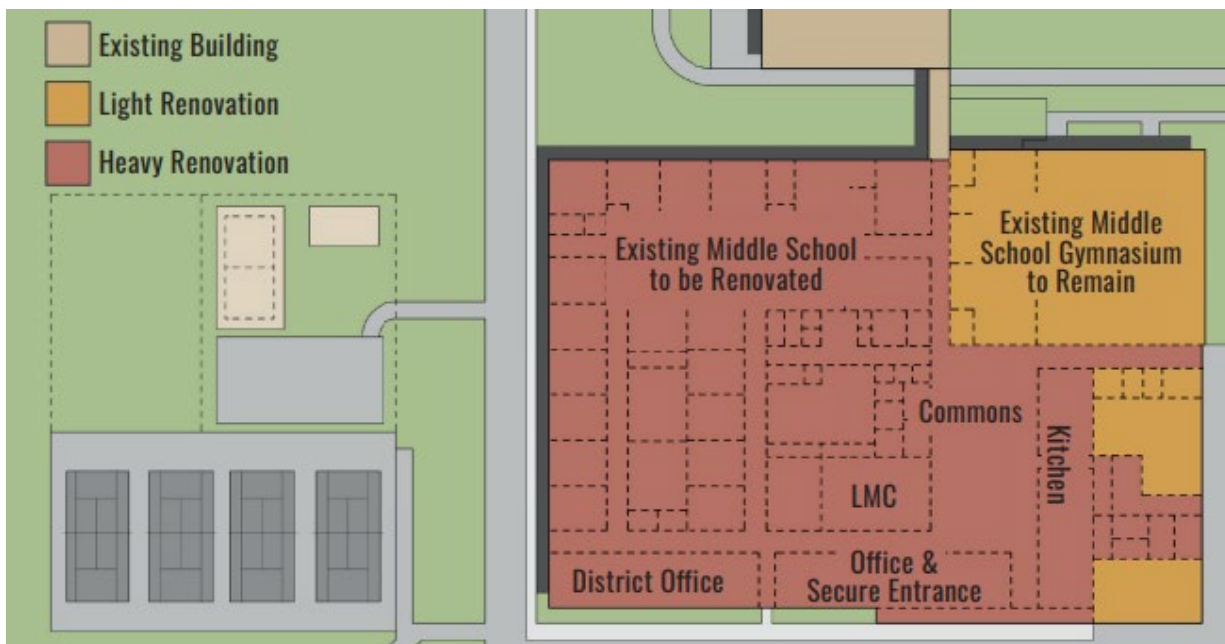
It is rare that full architectural design is started before a school district referendum is passed. Like most school districts, Winneconne can't and won't invest the staff or financial resources needed to begin the design phase for the new spaces until the community has given their approval, through a referendum vote, to move forward with the project. It would be irresponsible of us to invest hundreds of hours of staff time and other District resources before a referendum is passed and the funding is secure. **However, since this process is what almost all school districts follow we are comfortable with the plan to manage scope and budget moving forward.** The estimating process is very similar, the District has been working closely with our construction manager for cost estimating, which includes helping establish the total project cost based on current cost data and forecasting future costing trends. Once a referendum is approved by voters and the project moves into design, potential costs are evaluated consistently throughout the design process. Detailed logs are kept during design which track changes in budget and scope. The district is then able to make decisions and scope adjustments as needed to remain within budget. Both cost control methods occur within the same timeline to ensure that budget is managed efficiently ahead of construction.

### **Q: What is included in the referendum plan?**

A: The District is asking voters to authorize \$28.3 million for a facility improvement project that will address the most immediate needs of Winneconne's facilities master plan:

- Renovations at Winneconne Middle School to revitalize and add another 50 years of life to the building
  - Replace panel wall system with permanent walls to create better building flow and efficiency
  - Renovate kitchen, commons, and library
  - Transition computer labs into large-group collaboration rooms
  - Replace finishes which have exceeded their useful life
  - Improve the learning environment for all students in grades 6-8
- Infrastructure Improvements for aging building systems at the middle school
  - Upgrade all building systems (HVAC, electrical, plumbing, fire alarm, and bell)
  - Replace flooring, ceilings, and doors (as needed)
  - Address Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) non-compliance
- Replacement and reconfiguration of the high school parking lot to improve traffic flow and pedestrian safety

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**Q: How did the District determine that renovating the existing middle school was the best option? What would it have cost to build a brand-new middle school?**

A: Over the last 12 months, the District has sought feedback from a community-wide survey to prioritize its facility needs. The result is a plan that will provide updates to our middle school to address our most pressing infrastructure needs and resurface and reconfigure our high school parking lot as we ***continue our Journey to the Future.***

Again, we listened to your feedback and made changes to the original ask from April 2022. You told us you understood our middle school and high school parking lot needs attention but \$47.8 million was too costly. So, we reduced the ask by \$19.5 million by:

- \*Eliminating the additional gymnasium
- \*Eliminating the additional square footage to the middle school
- \*Completing safety & security projects with dollars that were being saved for future project vs. referendum dollars
- \*Eliminating infrastructure projects at the high school and elementary school

The Winneconne Community School District Board of Education and administration compared more than five ways to address our middle school needs; the cost to build a brand-new middle school for grades 6-8 would be approximately \$49 million, and the community had given feedback that the dollar amount was too high.

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### **Q: How is the District addressing capacity challenges?**

A: While capacity is a real issue at Winneconne Elementary School, it is also a challenge at the middle school. While the Winneconne Community School District has continued to see enrollment growth largely at the elementary level, those students will move up into Winneconne Middle School, necessitating additional space there as well. As previously discussed, the combination of critical maintenance items, unique construction, and changing space needs for teaching and learning all point to a large solution: modernize and reconfigure the middle school to provide 50 more years of learning.

### **Q: What is next for Winneconne Elementary School? What is the “life expectancy” of the current elementary school?**

A: In 2012, voters supported a referendum to replace building systems (new boiler and plumbing system) at Winneconne Elementary School. These improvements brought the promise of our elementary building structure lasting 20 more years, into 2032.

The elementary building has “good bones,” and can be expected to reasonably function for another decade or more. Its construction and systems have been renewed much more recently than those at Winneconne Middle School. They are conventional systems, able to be repaired and adapted as needed. We will continue to maintain the building and involve the community in the decision-making process of what a potential new building could look like, and where it should be located.

The District had been saving funds for the possible purchase of land for a future new elementary school, but the Board of Education elected to use those funds to address safety and security concerns at all school buildings, and build secure entrances during the summer of 2022.

The District is committed to involving the community and welcomes feedback as we continue our Journey to the Future.

### **Q: Why are we including the high school parking lot in the referendum?**

A: The Winneconne High School parking lot has surpassed its useful life, and therefore needs to be replaced and reconfigured. By replacing the parking lot, pedestrian safety and traffic flow at the high school will be greatly improved.

### **Q: Doesn't the district have funds for capital maintenance already?**

A: The district has an annual custodial and maintenance budget. This budget supports the costs of supplies, equipment and services to address routine annual operational needs as well as small, unexpected emergencies.

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In addition to that, the district maintains two capital project funds - Capital Expansion Fund (Fund 41) and Long-Term Capital Improvement Trust Fund (Fund 46). Fund 41 has an annual levy and we have historically used this to address capital needs. The amount that we allocate to this fund is capped as a part of our operational budget. Levied into this fund to date for 2022-23 is approximately \$685,000. If we were to increase the amount allocated here for large capital projects, we would have to reduce our general operating budget by this amount. We want to ensure we are allocating responsibly to address capital needs without reducing educational opportunities for our students. While this allocation has helped us maintain high quality facilities, it isn't enough to address large projects. For example, one roof could use more than an entire year's allocation.

Fund 46 is managed differently than Fund 41. This fund was created to transfer operational resources if and when they are available into a fund for future capital planning. If we realize savings in a given year due to changes in the initial budget (e.g. a position isn't filled and we have unspent resources for one year) we can transfer those funds and set them aside for future capital needs while also making those savings eligible for state aid. The district has utilized this as a way to start accumulating funds to help address capital needs to minimize referendum impact whenever possible. The combination of all three options are being used to support high quality facilities and minimize tax impact, yet we want to be transparent with the reality that it isn't enough to address all of the needs identified in our long-range plans and facility assessment study.

### **Q: What do Modern Learning Environments look like?**

A: Winneconne Middle School, originally built in 1975, is uniquely constructed. The proprietary system used in construction is no longer manufactured. Aging building systems, a proprietary wall system and an efficient building layout make the building both expensive to operate and difficult to navigate.

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*Current classroom at Winneconne Middle School*

Modern learning environments like West Side Elementary of the School District of Mauston support today's teaching and learning methods. Modern schools are designed with student ownership in mind. A variety of flexible learning environments promote staff and student involvement in the educational process.

Teaching and learning have changed since the middle school was built in 1975; at the time of its design and construction, the current middle school building was well organized to meet the needs of high school students and teachers. Classrooms were regular and organized efficiently along central corridors. At the center of the building were the shared spaces: the library, the cafeteria, and even a large group assembly space. At that time, this layout worked well as a traditional high school and later as a middle school.

However, teaching and learning has changed rapidly in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The way students and teachers (really, all of us) access, evaluate, and utilize information is radically different than when this building was built. Rather than a classroom of students all learning the same material at the same pace, greater emphasis is now placed on reaching each student where he or she is and providing a more individualized learning environment. This results in different space needs.

A learning environment today is much more diverse than those of the past. To be clear, the classroom is still the basic building block of our schools. How those classrooms are organized, connected, and outfitted is different. Teaching styles have evolved but our classrooms have not. Collaborative breakout spaces are indispensable today. We need small and large group learning spaces close to classrooms to allow for more hands-on activities and group thinking in order to sustain emerging, improved teaching and learning.

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*Modern Learning Environment inspiration photo, from a classroom space the School District of Mauston.*

**Q: How did you come up with the project budgets and how will the current market impact them moving forward?**

A: Funds are allotted within the referendum value for both inflation and contingency. Both are evaluated throughout the design process and adjusted as needed based on bid and market conditions. Detailed logs are kept during design which track changes in budget and scope. The district is then able to make decisions and scope adjustments as needed to remain within budget. Both cost control methods occur within the same timeline to ensure that budget is managed efficiently ahead of construction.

**Q: What is the tax impact?**



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A:

<b>PRELIMINARY</b>	
<b>REFERENDUM AMOUNT</b>	<b>\$28,300,000</b>
<b>MAX MILL RATE IMPACT (OVER 2022-23)*</b> (Per \$1,000 valuation)	\$0.29
<b>TAX IMPACT ON PROPERTY WITH FAIR MARKET VALUE:</b>	
<b>\$100,000 Property</b>	
Maximum Annual Impact	\$29.00
Maximum Monthly Impact	\$2.42
<b>\$200,000 Property</b>	
Maximum Annual Impact	\$58.00
Maximum Monthly Impact	\$4.83
<b>\$300,000 Property</b>	
Maximum Annual Impact	\$87.00
Maximum Monthly Impact	\$7.25



### Assumptions:

Multi-phased borrowing approach. Each debt issue amortized over 20 years at a planning interest rate of 4.75% - 5.00%.

Tertiary Aid Impact (2022-23 October Aid Certification): -14.48%

Mill rate based on 2022 Equalized Valuation (TID-OUT) of \$1,541,284,695 with annual growth of 1.00% thereafter.

\*Impact represents the estimated maximum increase in levy over the 2022-23 levy for referendum debt service of \$1.40.

Planning estimates only. Significant changes in market conditions will require adjustments to current financing plan. Rates subject to change.

### Q: Why is the tax impact for this \$28.3 million referendum so different from the tax impact from the \$47.8 million referendum from 2022?

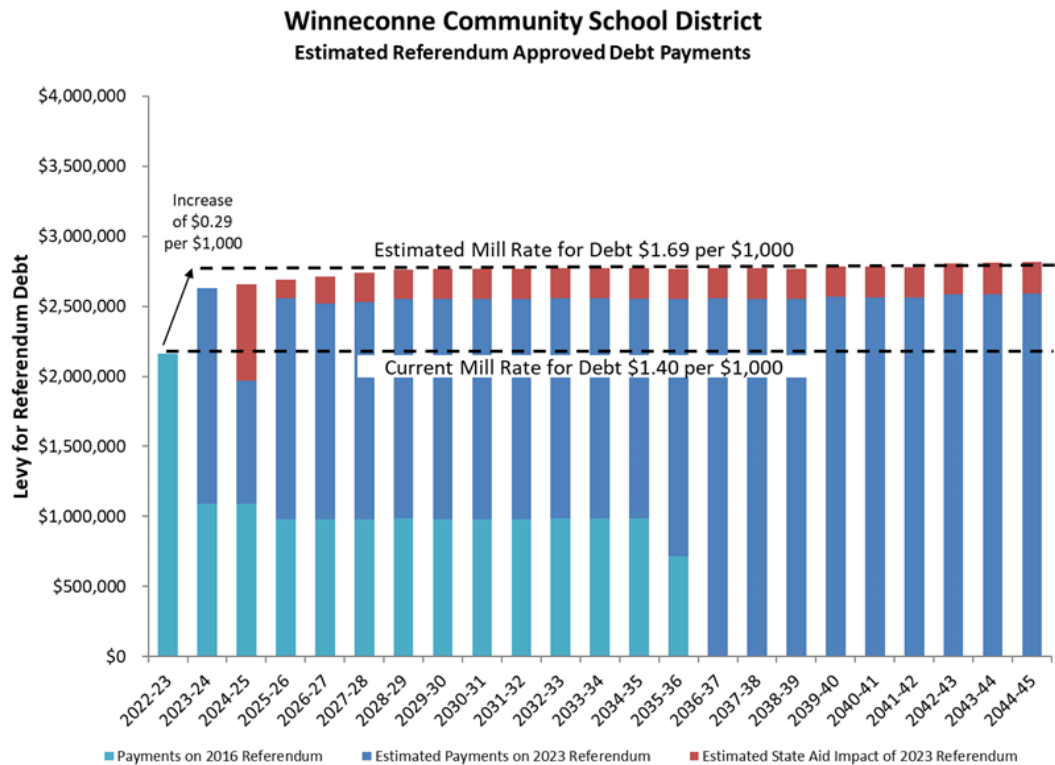
A: The current portion of the 2022-23 school district mill rate that is used to repay prior debt from the 2016 Referendum is \$1.40 for each \$1,000 of fair market property value.

Debt repayment assumptions:

- The current levy for debt payments in 2022-23 is \$2,163,000
- If no new debt is authorized in the coming years, that levy will eventually step down to \$1 million and then \$0 after 2036
- The new 2023 Referendum debt is planned to be repaid around the reduction in the 2016 Referendum payments to minimize the additional tax levy that would be paid by taxpayers.
  - The new debt will be borrowed between 2023 and 2025 and have a maximum term of 20 years from closing date.
  - By planning the new payments around the remaining payments on the 2016 Referendum, the first approximately \$21 million can be repaid without increasing the mill rate over the current 2022-23 mill rate for debt.

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- Each additional \$1 million over \$21 million will add approximately \$0.04-\$0.05 per \$1,000
  - \$28.3 Million Example (April 2023): \$ 7.3 x \$0.04 = \$0.29 per \$1000
  - \$47.8 Million Example (April 2022): \$26.8 x \$0.05 = \$1.34 per \$1000

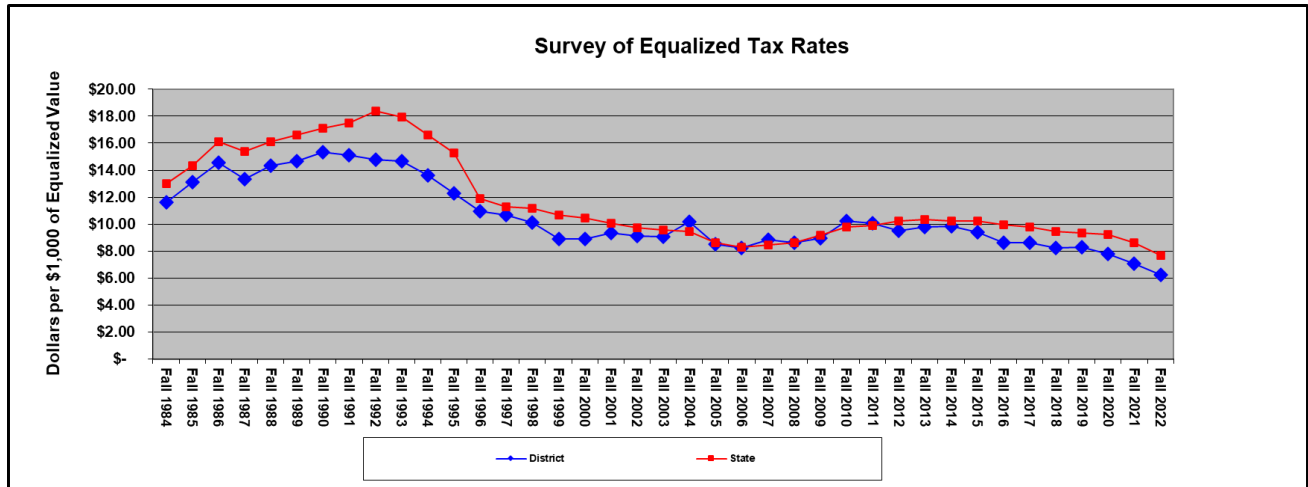


Q: What is the mill rate history of the district?

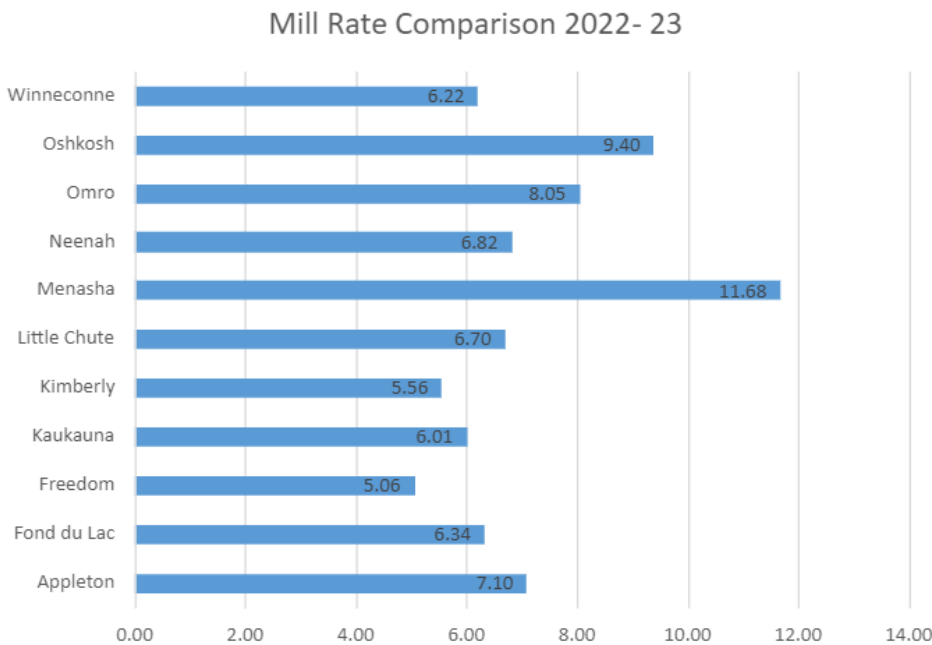


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A:



**Q: How does our mill rate compare to neighboring districts?**



A:

**Q: How many years will we be paying for these proposed projects? How long is the bond for?**

A: The new debt will be borrowed between 2023 and 2025 and have a maximum term of 20 years from the closing date. The District will continue to work with R.W. Baird to create the most efficient referendum financing plan.

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### **Q: Will the project discussed go to bid, or has Miron already been awarded the work?**

A: Our construction manager, Miron Construction, Inc., was hired to assist the District with preconstruction work including budgeting and capital maintenance planning. They will also manage any projects should the referendum be successful, and there will be opportunities for local businesses to be part of any projects. Miron has a long track record of using local companies, vendors, and subcontractors on their projects. They understand the value local businesses who employ local people would bring to any projects.

All aspects of the project will be competitively bid.

### **Q: When would the project be complete?**

*A: Information to follow.*

### **Q: What will I see on the ballot?**

A: Official Language: Question: Shall the Winneconne Community School District, Winnebago and Waushara Counties, Wisconsin be authorized to issue pursuant to Chapter 67 of the Wisconsin Statutes, general obligation bonds in an amount not to exceed \$28,300,000 for the public purpose of paying the cost of a school facility improvement project consisting of: renovations, infrastructure and capital maintenance replacement, safety and security improvements, accessibility updates and site improvements at Winneconne Middle School, and acquisition of furnishings, fixtures and equipment; and reconstruction of the Winneconne High School parking lot?

### **Q: How do I learn more about voting?**

A: Visit the [myvote.wi.gov](https://myvote.wi.gov) website to learn more about your voting options.

- Find your polling place
- Register to vote
- Request an absentee ballot
- Gather information about early in-person voting
- Find your local municipal clerk... and more!

Early in-person voting starts in Wisconsin on Tuesday, March 21 and closes Sunday, April 2. However, in-person voting hours vary for each municipality, so please contact your municipality directly to confirm your options.

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### **Q: What is open enrollment and its impact on taxpayers and the School District?**

A: Open enrollment allows families to apply to attend schools outside their residency boundaries. WCSD has 370 students who reside outside of WCSD and open enroll in our school district. We also have 78 students who reside in our district and open enroll to another public school. Each January the district looks at capacity in each of our grade levels and determines if open enrollment is feasible. For next year, open enrollment spaces are only available in 4K and in 4th grade.

The data below helps explain more financial details regarding open enrollment and the impact on the district. Financially, open enrollment has helped to keep us from returning to operational referendums. We have 370 students who open enroll to WCSD. We receive \$8,224 per student who is open enrolled. This generates \$3,042,880 in revenue. Open enrollment also has its costs. We figure an extra teacher at each grade level for approximately \$640,000. We also have to pay for the 85 students who open enroll out of the district ( $85 \times \$8,224 = \$699,040$ ). With open enrollment the district has a budget deficit of \$31,972. Without open enrollment the district would face a budget deficit of approximately \$2,400,00.

We have 370 students in 4K-12 who open enroll into the District and 78 resident students who open enroll out of the District.

ES 207 open enroll in and 29 open enroll out  
MS 67 open enroll in and 13 open enroll out  
HS 96 open enroll in and 36 open enroll out

### **Q: What money is being spent on the secure entrance project?**

A: Recognizing the importance of secure entrances for all our schools, the Winneconne School Board approved the use of our Long-Term Capital Improvement Trust Fund (Fund 46) fund balance to accomplish these tasks. This money, although previously set aside for long-range capital improvements and/or land purchase, will be redirected to accomplish this goal. Of the approximate \$1.7 million saved to date, approximately \$1.3 million will be spent on the secure entrances and locker room updates.

### **Q: How is Equalized of Fair Market Value of farmland calculated?**

A: Farmland, or agricultural land, is assessed differently than the value of a typical home. For agricultural land, the value is determined by the use value instead of the market value.

In a use value assessment system, the use of the land is the most important factor in determining its assessed value. The district will levy its school tax on the total Equalized/Fair Market Value of all properties within the district boundaries.