



SCHOOL DISTRICT OF LADYSMITH

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

BOND ELECTION - APRIL 5, 2022

The District's goal is to provide the School District of Ladysmith residents with the information to make an informed decision. Below are responses to questions that you may have. If you have questions that are not answered within this publication, please feel free to contact the District Office at 715-532-5277 or District Administrator, Laura Stunkel at 715-532-5277 with your specific questions. **As of February 28, 2022, an updated question was added to the end of this document.**

Q: WHY DO WE NEED TO GO TO A REFERENDUM NOW?

A: Now is an excellent time because:

- Interest rates are at an all-time low for borrowing money. This will help the District maximize their dollars (assuming rates remain where they are today).
- This provides local stimulus dollars for our community and an opportunity to keep work for the local trade contractors.
- The needs are real and should be addressed sooner than later. The issues are not going away, and if we can maximize our dollars and improve our students' education, now is a good time.
- The commercial industry is slow, and it is a good time to bid.
- When a referendum passes, it provides a school district with its own stimulus package to help create jobs and have trade contractors spend dollars in town.

Q: CAN I VOTE EARLY FOR THE REFERENDUM?

A: Yes! April 5, 2022 Spring Election Voters can register by providing a Proof of Residence document when registering to vote by mail, in-person in the clerk's office, or at the polls on Election Day. For Absentee Voting, deadlines for the April 5, 2022 Spring Election, all voters in Wisconsin can request an absentee ballot be mailed to them for any reason. Voters must be registered before they can request an absentee ballot. Voters may request their absentee ballot in writing. To request an absentee ballot, visit MyVote.wi.gov. You must provide a photo ID with your absentee ballot request. More information on photo ID requirements can be found at <https://myvote.wi.gov/en-us/PhotoIDRequired>.

Q: WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

A: Visit the District's website at: <https://ladysmith.k12.wi.us> or scan the QR code to the right with your phone or tablet's camera.



Scan me to view the district's referendum page.

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Q: WHAT IS THE ROI EXPECTED OF THIS REFERENDUM?

A: The Return on Investment (ROI) of this referendum starts with one of the highest values, the safety of our students, staff, families, and community. The facility improvements outlined in the referendum will allow school and community groups to access significantly improved facilities. With almost every neighboring school district passing a facilities referendum in the past five years, the School District of Ladysmith should continue to strive to offer the best programs and facilities to attract students, staff, and families.

Q: HOW MUCH WILL THIS \$21 MILLION REFERENDUM COST ME IN TAXES?

A: There will be no increase in taxes over the current level.

Q: WHY IS THERE NO TAX IMPACT?

A: We are paying off existing debt in April of 2022. The District will be making the final payment on the 2001 referendum in the spring of 2022. The **no tax impact** results from the new expenses of both the operating question and debt question replacing expenses the District currently has.

Q: WHAT IS THE ASK FOR THE SPRING ELECTION?

A: The bond referendum ask is \$21 million. The operational referendum ask is for \$600,000 for five years.

Q: WHAT HAS THE DISTRICT DONE TO CUT, TRIM, OR FREEZE EXPENSES?

A: The District went from three buildings to two buildings. This saved the District a significant amount of money in operating expenses. The District has also cut staffing positions, cut a bus route, and had a salary freeze.

Q: WHAT IS A REVENUE CAP?

A: Wisconsin school district's revenue limit formula is the maximum amount of revenue that may be raised through state general aid and the property tax for the General, Non-Referendum Debt, and Capital Expansion Funds. The maximum limit is based upon enrollment changes, an inflationary increment, and a district's prior year-controlled revenue. This revenue is to support the operational cost used for the district's educational needs.

Q: WHY IS THE DISTRICT DOING AN OPERATING REFERENDUM ALSO?

A: An operating referendum is for running our facilities. A building bond referendum is for additions or remodeling. The operating levy and building bond dollars cannot be shared or combined per state guidelines. This operating referendum will support our needs in operating our schools, such as staffing to support students, staff costs, student services, and general maintenance.

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Q: WHAT HAPPENS IN 2027-28?

A: The \$600,000 for a non-recurring operating referendum runs through the 2026-27 school year. In the 2027-28 school year, the funding will end. If the District needs continued funding, it would have to go back to the voters for approval.

Q: WILL THE DISTRICT RECEIVE STATE AID ON BOTH THE OPERATING AND DEBT QUESTIONS?

A: The state provides aid to a public school district based on their expenditures per student and the property wealth (tax base) per student. This aid is paid based on the level of expenses in the previous school year and can only be used to reduce the property tax levy of a district.

The District is positively aided and will receive State aid on expenses related to both questions. The District is currently aided at approximately 47% of expenditures on the tertiary level, and that aid is reflected in the **no tax impact** of the April 5, 2022 referendum. If the referendum questions do not pass, the District's expenses will be reduced, and the District's state aid will also be reduced.

Q: ARE INTEREST RATES ON THE BONDS FIXED?

A: Yes, once the bonds sell, the interest rate is fixed.

Q: CAN THE PROJECT GO OVER BUDGET? WHAT HAPPENS IF THE PROJECT GOES OVER BUDGET?

A: The project cannot go over budget. Once the referendum passes, that is the budget. The project team will ensure competitive bids come in under budget. However, if the economy says otherwise and bids come in higher than expected, the project team will do appropriate value engineering to get the project back on budget. Please note, the referendum does include an industry-standard contingency to help protect the District.

Q: WHAT HAPPENS IF WE DO NOT GET THE FEMA GRANT FOR THE STORM SHELTER?

A: We have budgeted dollars to build a standard-size gym if we do not receive the grant. Please note, this gym will be smaller than the varsity gym but large enough to hold middle school games. The grant pays for significant upgrades in walls, roofs, and mechanical and life safety systems.

Q: AT THE END OF OUR NEW 20-YEAR BUILDING BOND, WILL WE BE ABLE TO AFFORD A NEW SCHOOL AT THAT TIME?

A: It is difficult to say because the District's borrowing authority will likely grow, but construction costs are also likely to increase.

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Q: WHY CAN'T LADYSMITH BUILD A NEW SCHOOL?

A: Wisconsin State Statutes limit the amount of debt (outstanding principal) public school districts can incur. For Ladysmith, it is 10% of its equalized valuation. With a valuation (TID-IN) of \$311,400,602, the District can have approximately \$31,140,000 of principal outstanding in 2022. After the spring 2022 payments, the District will have approximately \$27,600,000 in borrowing capacity. A new building would cost around \$51 million to build.

Q: WHAT IS THE COST IMPACT FOR THE DISTRICT?

A: Because Ladysmith is paying off existing debt, a \$21 million project would be a zero-cost impact to a resident taxpayer.

Q: HOW LONG WILL THIS BOND BE IN EFFECT?

A: The bond will be in effect for 20 years (2022 - 2043).

Q: WHO CAN I CONTACT WITH QUESTIONS REGARDING THE REFERENDUM?

A: Please contact Laura Stunkel, District Administrator, at 715-532-5277 for questions.

Q: WHY DO WE NEED A REFERENDUM IF THE DISTRICT IS SHRINKING?

A: Doing nothing and not improving our schools or educational spaces is not an option. A community is only as strong as the school that educates future generations. Great schools promote new families and staff. Our students and staff deserve a safe school that encourages creativity and student engagement. It all starts with a great learning environment!

Q: WHEN IS THE REFERENDUM VOTE?

A: The referendum vote will be April 5, 2022.

Q: I AM A RESIDENT OF THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF LADYSMITH, BUT I HAVE NO CHILDREN IN THE SCHOOLS; WHY SHOULD I VOTE?

A: Strong schools promote a strong community. Nobody knows what the future will bring; however, we are hopeful our community will grow, our businesses will thrive, and our enrollment will continue to increase. Every new family looks first at the quality of the school before deciding to relocate. Everyone wants to be part of a community that takes pride in their schools! We need a school we can be proud of in order to attract new families and businesses.

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Q: WHEN DOES THE BOARD OF EDUCATION EXPECT CONSTRUCTION TO BEGIN?

A: If the referendum passes in April 2022, the design will take place over the next six months, public bidding of all projects in the Winter of 2023, and construction starting in the Spring of 2023. There would be a phased completion of all projects from the Fall of 2023 to the Summer of 2024.

Q: WHY HASN'T THE DISTRICT KEPT UP WITH DEFERRED MAINTENANCE?

A: We have done the best we could with dollars allocated by the state. However, the allotted dollars in our maintenance budget are nowhere near enough to keep up with a building that is around 50 years old. Almost half of our referendum is dedicated to deferred maintenance.

Q: WILL THE DISTRICT DO A BETTER JOB WITH KEEPING UP WITH MAINTENANCE AND THEIR PROPERTY IF THIS REFERENDUM PASSES?

A: Yes. The new administration and School Board are dedicated to the School District of Ladysmith and are not only planning the April 5, 2022 referendum but also putting together a 10-year plan (long-range plan) to make sure the buildings are maintained.

Q: HOW IS THE REFERENDUM PLAN ADDRESSING SAFETY AND SECURITY FOR OUR CHILDREN?

A: An enhanced secure and safe entrance for our students, staff, and community is part of the project. The new entrance will have a controlled entry point where visitors will be buzzed into the new office area then buzzed into the building once proper identification is completed. Classroom walls and doors will be replaced with industry-standard materials rather than our current hollow, flimsy material, which poses a safety concern to our students and staff.

Q: WHAT IS WRONG WITH OUR EXISTING CLASSROOMS?

A: Many classrooms are undersized for the number of students, and therefore the classrooms need to be upsized. The acoustics are also very poor (because of the poor existing wall construction). Dollars have been allocated for remodeling these classrooms to improve the size, acoustics, and safety and security.

Q: IS THERE MAINTENANCE AT THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL?

A: A roofing project is planned at the Elementary School.

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Q: I HEARD THE GYM ROOF WAS LEAKING ON THE NEW WOOD FLOOR. WHY WAS THE WOOD FLOOR INSTALLED WITH A LEAKY ROOF?

A: The roof was not leaking. There was a mechanical unit that was not working correctly. With the very high humidity, a dehumidifier was brought in to control the moisture. Over a weekend, the dehumidifier broke and leaked on the new wood floor.

Q: WHY DO WE NEED A GYM? ARE WE PUTTING ATHLETICS BEFORE ACADEMICS?

A: Academics are very important. However, when Ladysmith High School absorbed the Middle School students years ago, we were instantly short gym or physical education space. A healthy body is as important as a healthy brain. The lack of gym space requires putting more students in one space (especially during early spring training). This is not safe. Coaches and students are more prone to accidents. There are also community basketball and volleyball teams that lack sufficient gym space, and their practice times are not ideal hours. The community at large would also benefit from the added spaces. Some examples could be pickleball, pick-up games, weekend community events/gatherings, etc.

Q: WHY DO WE NEED BETTER LOCKER ROOMS?

A: We have included minor dollars for the locker rooms. The lockers are old and outdated, do not work properly, and the space is poorly lit.

Q: WHAT DO YOU SPEND ON MAINTENANCE ANNUALLY? HOW MUCH OF THAT BUDGET GOES TO MECHANICAL REPAIRS DUE TO POOR AND OUTDATED EQUIPMENT?

A: The District spends approximately \$250,000 on general maintenance per year. The past few years, much of the dollars went towards replacing our boiler, roof leaks, replacing pumps/motors in the ventilation systems, and fixing numerous heating univents. The referendum will allow the District to tackle far more of these mechanical maintenance needs. The District is also in the process of developing a 10-year facility maintenance plan to help the District keep up with our maintenance in the future.

Q: WHAT HAPPENS IF THE REFERENDUM FAILS?

A: If the operating referendum fails, the District will need to make hard and significant cuts. Our current funding parameters are not sufficient to keep up and provide an excellent education for our students. If the building bond fails, the needs are not going away, and the District will have to regroup and consider a future referendum to address building needs.

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Q: WHAT IS BEING DONE UNDER THE FOUNDATION TO ADDRESS THE WETLAND AND SUBSEQUENT SINKING OF THE STRUCTURE?

A: The existing building has settlement from the original builders not properly stabilizing the sub-grades. Stabilizing the building can be done in a number of ways, such as soil stabilization with a cementitious product, geo or helical piers, yet, the most common practice is the removal of poor soils and backfilled with an approved granular material with drain tile to move water away from the building. Please note a professional inspector (per code) will be hired to review and approve sub-soil conditions before building.

Q: WHY DO WE NEED A NEW GYM?

A: We only have one gym and have middle school and high school students in this building. The new gym would be a middle school gym. When we closed the old Elementary School, we lost a gym. Our District used to have three gyms, and now we only have two gyms. Middle School and High School teams practice and compete at the Elementary School. This prevents our elementary school students from having gym access after school and during our after-school program.

The new gym construction is not another competition gym. It is a gym that will be used for Middle School physical education, Middle School athletics, youth sports, and community purposes. The new Middle School gym would also help with safety issues in the spring of the year. Our spring sports need access to gym space when the weather does not permit an outdoor practice. Track, golf, baseball, and softball all need occasional gym space. The Middle School gym would help spread the athletes into two spaces. This would cut down on noise, congestion, and safety issues.

The new gym will also serve as a storm shelter for the community. We applied for a FEMA grant to make the gym into a storm shelter. We will find out if that grant was awarded to Ladysmith in early June of 2022. FEMA would cover half the cost of the gym construction. However, there are sufficient dollars to construct a standard gym if we are not awarded the grant.

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