



For Immediate Release

January 3, 2023

Berlin Area School District Releases

Community Survey Results

Residents of the Berlin Area School District would likely support referendums to help fund the District's operations and address facility needs, according to the results of a recent community survey. Survey results were discussed at a special Board of Education work meeting on January 3.

Two primary agenda items for Tuesday's meeting included taking a close look at the survey results and aligning possible referendum questions to the community's response.

In early December, the District sent the survey to all residents in order to gather public input as it develops a plan to address significant facility needs that are too large to be funded through its annual budget. It is also considering an operational referendum that would allow it to exceed its state-set revenue limits in order to pay for increasing costs in utilities, transportation, technology and other areas, and also attract quality staff.

Almost 65% of those responding said they would support an operating referendum that would allow the District to exceed its state-set revenue limits by \$2.5 million for each of the next five years, with no tax mill rate increase projected.

The additional funds would be used to sustain most of the District's academic programming for students, while paying for increased costs in utilities, transportation, technology, safety and supporting students with quality staff.

The District has received no increase in state funding for the past two years. Federal ESSER funds for COVID-19 relief have helped balance previous year budgets but these

funds are ending. Without any increase of state funding, the District is projecting a budget deficit that would grow to more than \$14 million over the next five years.

QUOTE

The survey also asked residents whether they would support a capital referendum to address facility needs. This spring, the District used a competitive process to select a firm to conduct a facility assessment. Performance Services, Inc, a design/build firm, was hired to conduct an assessment of each building's physical condition and educational adequacy. Based on that assessment, the District used the plan to narrow down its facility needs and develop a proposal to address the highest priority needs.

The plan identified several projects at Clay Lamberton Elementary School, the District's oldest school, as well as district-wide projects. Projects such as repairing the heating and cooling systems, modernizing electrical systems, roofs, repairing an elevator, and replacing worn finishes and equipment made the high priority list.

Fifty eight percent of those responding to the survey said they would support a \$20 million capital referendum to address those highest priority needs.

The survey also asked residents if they would support a \$30 million capital referendum that would include the highest priority facility needs as well as additional building projects. Less than half of those responding said they would support the larger capital referendum.

QUOTE

Results of the survey were tabulated by School Perceptions, an independent research firm in Slinger.

As a result of Tuesday's meeting, the Board is moving forward with drafting ____ referendum question(s) for _____. The process involved in proposing a referendum requires that the Board make its final decision by the end of January. It is expected that the referendum questions will be reviewed _____.

After the Board decides on referendum questions, it places the questions on the April 4, 2023 general election ballot. All district resident voters may vote on the questions to determine if the measures pass or fail.