

THE SCHOOL DISTRICT REPORT
By
Scott Johnson, District Administrator
August 2021

Greetings to All District Residents!

This school district report is a summary of current events happening in school and a summary of actions taken at the monthly school board meetings. We understand that some residents are not able to attend school board meetings but would still like to stay informed of the great things that are occurring. This report is my attempt to keep you informed and be as transparent as possible with our community and staff.

This report will appear on a regular basis on our school web page and our school Facebook site so that everyone has equal access to finding out what is happening in the New Auburn Schools.

The August school board meeting was held on Monday, August 23, 2021 at 5:00 p.m. Here is a summary of what happened:

- The school board approved a Back to School Plan that highly recommends, but does not require face masks to be worn in school, on school grounds, or at any athletic or extracurricular events.
- Face masks will be required of all students and adults while traveling on school buses. This is required by federal law.
- When our parents and students travel to away athletic contests, we will be required to follow whatever face masking and social distancing policies are in place in other school districts.
- Students and adults will still be asked to socially distance at least three feet apart, whenever possible.
- A new request for a therapy dog to be in a classroom during the school year was tabled until the handler can meet with the school board and answer some safety questions.
- The Annual Notice of Academic Standards was approved. This is a public notice to families that shows which academic standards our school district will be meeting each school year. The New Auburn School District follows the Wisconsin Academic Standards and a link to those standards is listed on the school website.
- Our new secondary principal, Mr. Reif was authorized as the new signer on the activity account fund at the bank.
- The resignations of Mr. Kowalski (school counselor), and Mr. Platteter (middle school special education), and Mrs. Haugestein (Custodian), were accepted.
- A part-time, middle school paraprofessional position was eliminated.

- The following new employees were hired: Lydia Marshall (middle school special education, Carl Rudi (long-term sub, middle school math)

Following the August regular monthly meeting, the school board and district residents participated in the school district Budget Hearing and Annual Meeting. Mr. Johnson provided district residents with a summary report of the annual revenues and expenditures for 2020-2021 and the preliminary budget for 2021-2022.

The 2020-2021 budget finished \$176,000 under budget, so the fund balance increased by that amount. The 2021-2022 preliminary budget early calculations show a shortfall of \$475,000 in revenue compared to expenses. District residents were reminded that early numbers are almost certain to change because the formulas used are based on unknown final numbers.

Mr. Johnson explained that some preliminary open enrollment estimates are based on families who filled out the forms indicating their children will be attending another school this year. Typically, these early numbers change, so there is reason to believe there will be a substantial decrease in the projected budget deficit once the open enrollment numbers are final.

Another substantial reason for the budget deficit can be attributed to added positions in the schools for this year. These include the need to expand our full-time middle school teaching staff and converting to a two-principal model. Most of the increased costs in personnel are in response to feedback from parents who were surveyed on why they were considering enrolling their children in other districts. A concerted effort went into planning positive changes in our staffing, curriculum, supervision of students, parent communications, and staff retention. These changes resulted in some increases to the budget.

The administration explained the need to balance this budget deficit by the end of the current year because the district should not plan on continuing to deficit spend any longer than one year. It was explained that if the school district wanted to keep the positive changes in place in an effort to increase student achievement, there needs to be a plan to increase the revenue through a referendum.

It was further explained that if the district residents want to maintain the quality programs in place right now, by passing a school referendum, the timing to do so could not be any better. The school district will be making the final payment on the long-term building debt this year. If a referendum was passed that was equal to the annual payment that district residents have been making for years, there would be no increased cost to the taxpayers.

The school board will be studying this financial question for the next couple of months. By the October 25th school board meeting, the school board will need to decide whether they want to pass a referendum to sustain the current spending limit, or whether they want to make some pretty drastic cuts to positions or programs. District residents are encouraged to come and listen to the presentations and discussions. All questions related to the budget or potential referendum are encouraged and invited. This is a big decision and our school board leaders want the public to understand the financial state of the school and offer input. The next school board meeting is scheduled for September 20, 2021.

