

THE SCHOOL DISTRICT REPORT
By
Scott Johnson, District Administrator
October 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 October school board meeting was held on Monday, October 25, 2021 at 5:30 p.m. Here is a summary of what happened:

SCHOOL REFERENDUM

The New Auburn Board of Education took special action to approve a resolution authorizing the school district to move forward with a school referendum to be voted upon by the district electors on February 15, 2022. The referendum will be asking the voters permission to exceed the allowable revenue limit by \$400,000.00 each year, for the next three years. The reason for the referendum is because the school district is currently operating with a budget deficit.

Ultimately, the school board has the choice of making significant budget cuts or asking the public to support this referendum. This year, the school board made a commitment to keep everything in place within the budget, in spite of being over budget. After this year, that decision will be left in the hands of the voters because we cannot continue to spend down the fund balance at that rate.

Over the past couple of years, the school board has been trying to add various programs and staffing to make our school district a stronger and more competitive school district. This effort was in response to parents who had expressed their reasons for wanting to enroll their students in other school districts. We believe recent efforts our school board has taken are making a concerted effort to address better communications with families, improving how student misconduct is being addressed, and a dedicated effort to provide our teachers with the staffing and professional development they need to improve student instruction and raise achievement.

We are all very excited to see these positive changes going on, so our school board has decided not to make drastic budget cuts, rather put the budget deficit to vote for the next three

years. They are convinced they have put some excellent decisions in motion to improve our school district. They are asking the voters to help make the decision whether to approve this extra funding for the next three years, or require the school board to make significant budget cuts for the years ahead.

It is very important for our taxpayers to understand the tax levy impact for this additional funding. For the past several years, New Auburn taxpayers have been paying approximately \$330,000 per year for the newest addition to the school building. This year is the final year for that payment on that debt. If the taxpayers pass this \$400,000.00 referendum, the impact to the taxpayers will be \$70,000 per year, over the amount that has been collected for the past debt. Simply based on the timing of one debt ending and another debt potentially starting, the average taxpayer would feel a small impact to the usual school tax bill.

The increased tax levy on \$70,000 per year, would compute to less than \$20.00 per year on a \$100,000.00 property value. If the referendum is not approved, taxpayers would see the \$330,000.00 annual payment drop off their property taxes next year. So, the real decision that our voters will be facing with this upcoming referendum is whether or not they see this time as the perfect opportunity to keep their local school district thriving by increasing their annual school tax contributions by a small margin from the amount they have been paying for years, or if they prefer to save those dollars on their taxes knowing some significant budget cuts will have to be made in the school programs.

School referendums can be a very challenging time in any community. In order to make this school referendum as simple as possible, we intend to make every bit of information available to everyone. We will put information on social media and we will make plenty of information available in print. We will also conduct public forums and invite the public to attend and bring any questions that need answers. We want every eligible voter to feel welcome to talk to us about the referendum and become well informed before casting his/her vote. District residents can look forward to information coming out in the weeks and months to come regarding this upcoming school referendum on February 15, 2022.

In other school board news:

1. The COVID update indicated we are at an all-time low with students and staff currently missing school due to the virus.
2. A donation of a park bench to the school entrance was approved.
3. The school board approved the original annual budget with the deficit that was discussed above.
4. The school board also set the levy at \$3,154,078.00. That results in a mill rate of .89167. The mill rate actually went down since our Annual meeting in August because the district property valuation increased this year by 8%.
5. Dwain Trowbridge's snow plowing bid was approved for the winter seasons in 2022 and 2023.
6. Tom Bischel's lawn mowing bid was also approved for the summers of 2022 and 2023.

7. Mr. Reif's therapy dog was approved to come to work with him to help students in need.
8. Mr. Braxton Thompson, Spanish teacher, requested and was granted permission to plan a student international trip for July 2023. This will be a guided trip to the Dominican Republic where students will be able to learn about foreign cultures and languages.
9. The school board accepted the resignation of Mrs. Holly Brekken, Student Services Specialist, effective December 7th.
10. The school board approved the new hire of Amber Curavo, New Auburn, and the transfer of Crystal Galetka, to fulfill the duties of Student Services Secretary.
11. The school board also hired Dalton Hinke, New Auburn, as the new Building and Grounds Director. He will begin his training period on January 3, 2022.

As always, any district resident is welcome to call, write, or come and visit with me in person if you have any questions or concerns you would like to discuss.

I wish you all a safe and successful hunting season and a Happy Thanksgiving!