



PRESS RELEASE

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West Bend School Board Asks for Feedback on a Long-Range Facility Plan

West Bend - The West Bend School Board this evening held a work session to review preliminary plans for a Long-Range Facility Plan for the West Bend School District. The plan aims to address aging buildings and grounds, declining enrollment, and the goal of creating schools that are safe, secure, accessible, operationally efficient, and adaptable to meet evolving student needs.

The West Bend School District's long-range facility planning process began in summer 2023. The facility assessment completed in November 2023 showed significant capital maintenance needs in many of the district's buildings. Declining enrollment, an issue facing the majority of school districts throughout the state, also showed that from a student capacity perspective, the West Bend School district no longer needs the number of buildings currently operating. While rightsizing the district could help avoid significant capital maintenance costs, it also means some difficult decisions to close schools or other buildings.

During the work session on April 10, the board explored a first phase of a Long-Range Facility Plan that includes rightsizing and other capital improvements:

- Closing Decorah Elementary, Fair Park Elementary, and Rolfs Education Center and establishing three elementary schools that are grades K-5 utilizing Green Tree, McLane, and Silverbrook schools. The Early Learning Program classrooms previously located in Rolfs would be placed in McLane and Green Tree.
- Building a new K-8 school in Jackson on district-owned land on Jackson Drive and adjacent to the community center. Badger Middle School would also serve grades 6-8.
- Making focused renovations at East/West High School, Green Tree, and McLane to create secure main office entries and provide additional layers of security throughout the schools. Also at Green Tree and McLane, renovations to create a larger nurse's office, and to add bathrooms to accommodate early learning.

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"The decision to close some school buildings is not a reflection on those school communities," explained Superintendent Jen Wimmer. "Rather, it's about positioning the district to responsibly manage our facilities and resources as we adapt to evolving student needs and declining enrollment trends."

As part of the long term facilities planning process, the school board is examining the possibility of a referendum. Should the board decide to hold a referendum in November 2024 and it is approved by the community, closure is expected beginning with the 2027-2028 school year. The district anticipates the reassignment of both students and staff to other schools within the district.

Research points to the fact that reducing transitions to new schools provides students with a stable and consistent learning environment, which can positively influence a student's motivation, engagement, and overall academic success. Therefore, returning to the K-5 and 6-8 grade configuration is recommended.

Final decisions on a potential first phase of the Long-Range Facility Plan have not yet been made. The next step is to present this information, the associated costs, and preliminary tax impacts to community members for additional feedback. Community Conversations on Facilities are scheduled for Tuesday, April 16 at 6 p.m. and Thursday, April 25 at 6 p.m. both in the West High School Cafeteria. After the community conversations are complete, the board will convene a work session for further discussion. Following that, a survey will be sent to all West Bend School District attendance area residents.

"While this planning process includes some potential difficult decisions, it also presents an opportunity to address critical capital maintenance needs while rightsizing the district," says Chris Zwygart, president of the West Bend School Board. "Overall, we hope to work with the community to create safe, secure, accessible facilities that are also welcoming, well-maintained, and operationally efficient."

The West Bend Joint School District #1 is proud to serve nearly 5,800 students and their families from the city of West Bend, villages of Jackson and Newburg, and townships of Barton, Polk, Trenton, Jackson, West Bend, and Addison. We strive to ensure that every student is given the opportunity to reach their potential through academics, the arts, and co-curricular activities. Within our community-based 4K program, Head Start program, five elementary schools (K-4), one intermediate school (5-6), one middle school (7-8), and two high schools (9-12), families can expect a caring, inclusive learning environment that supports the development of the whole child. Visit www.west-bend.k12.wi.us for more information.

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