



July 8, 2026

Dr. Joey Page, Superintendent
Austin Public School District, ISD #0492-01
401 NW 3rd Avenue
Austin, MN 55912-2378

Dear Dr. Page:

Minnesota Statutes, section 123B.71, requires a review and comment statement on the educational and economic advisability of your proposed school construction project. Information supplied by your school district and from Minnesota Department of Education sources is the basis of this review and comment. With this positive review and comment, voter and school board approval are required for Austin Public School District, Independent School District #0492-01, to proceed with the proposed projects.

The district shall publish a summary of the review and comment statement (the final two pages) in the legal newspaper of the district at least 48 days, but not more than 70 days, prior to holding a referendum for bonds or soliciting any bids for the construction, expansion, or remodeling of an educational facility. The department may request a statement certifying the publication, and require the submission, review, and approval of preliminary and final construction plans.

Minnesota Statutes, section 123B.71, requires the commissioner to include comments from residents of the school district in the review and comment. As of the date of this letter, no public comments have been received. In addition, Minnesota Statutes, section 123B.71, ***requires the school board hold a public meeting to discuss the review and comment prior to the date of the bond referendum election.***

Minnesota Statutes, section 123B.71, ***requires that a school district, prior to occupying a new or renovated facility after July 1, 2002, must submit a certification prepared by a system inspector to the commissioner and the building code official that will provide an occupancy permit.*** The certification must verify that the facility's installed or modified heating, ventilation, and air conditioning system operates according to design specifications and code, a system for monitoring outdoor airflow and total airflow of ventilation systems has been installed, and any installed or modified heating, ventilation, or air conditioning system provides an indoor air quality filtration system that meets ASHRAE (American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers) Standard 52.1.

If you have any questions, please contact Chris Kubesh, Education Finance specialist, at 651-582-8319 or chris.kubesh@state.mn.us. Thank you for working with us to improve school facilities for Minnesota students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Willie L. Jett II'.

Willie L. Jett II
Commissioner

cc: Carolyn Dube, School Board Chair

Enclosure

**The Commissioner of the Department of Education
Review and Comment on the School Construction
Proposal of Austin Public School District, ISD #0492-01**

A review and comment must be provided on a school district construction project proposal before the district conducts a referendum, solicits bids, or issues bonds for the project. A project proposal has been submitted for review and comment according to requirements set forth in Minnesota Statutes, section 123B.71, subdivisions 9 and 10, and Minnesota Statutes, section 123B.72. The district provides the following information:

1. The geographic area and population to be served:
 - a. preschool through grade 12 student enrollment for the past five years, and
 - b. student enrollment projections for the next five years.
2. A list of existing school facilities:
 - a. by year constructed,
 - b. their uses, and
 - c. an assessment of the extent to which alternate facilities are available within school district boundaries and in adjacent school districts.
3. A list of specific deficiencies of the facility:
 - a. demonstrating the need for a new or renovated facility to be provided,
 - b. the process used to determine the deficiencies,
 - c. a list of those deficiencies that will and will not be addressed by the proposed projects,
 - d. a list of specific benefits that the new or renovated facility will provide to students, teachers, and community users served by the facility.
4. A description of the project, including:
 - a. specifications of site and outdoor space acreage,
 - b. square footage allocations for classrooms, laboratories and support spaces,
 - c. estimated expenditures for major portions of the project,
 - d. estimated changes in facility operating costs, and
 - e. dates the project will begin and be completed.
5. A specification of the source of project financing, including:
 - a. applicable statutory citations,
 - b. the scheduled date for a bond issue or school board action,
 - c. a schedule of payments, including debt service equalization aid, and
 - d. the effect of a bond issue on local property taxes by property class and valuation.
6. Documentation obligating the school district and contractors to comply with the following items:
 - a. Minnesota Statutes, section 471.345 governing municipal contracts,
 - b. sustainable design,
 - c. school facility commissioning under Minnesota Statutes, section 123B.72, certifying the plans and designs for heating, ventilating, air conditioning and air filtration for an extensively renovated or new facility meet or exceed current code standards, including ASHRAE air filtration Standard 52.1,
 - d. American National Standards Institute (ANSI) acoustical performance criteria, design requirements and guidelines for schools on maximum background noise levels and reverberation times,
 - e. state fire code,
 - f. chapter 326B governing building codes, and
 - g. consultation with affected government units about the impact of the project on utilities, roads, sewers, sidewalks, retention ponds, school bus and automobile traffic, access to mass transit and safe access for pedestrians and cyclists.

Description of Proposed School Construction Project

Austin Public School District, ISD #0492-01, is proposing a single question bond referendum on November 3, 2026, that would authorize \$24.9 million in bonding authority to finance facility upgrades at many of the district's attendance centers. Proposed projects include: interior renovations, mechanical/electrical system upgrades, interior renovations, building envelope repairs, restroom upgrades, door replacement and parking lot/sidewalk repairs. Other proposed projects at select schools include secure entrance renovations, security and accessibility improvements.

The proposed projects would be scheduled for completion in calendar years 2028 and 2029. Project cost estimates by building/project component are as follows:

Woodson Education Center		Banfield Elementary		Nevein Elementary	
Gym Restroom Renovations	\$639,000	Interior Renovations	\$1,581,400	Electrical Upgrades	\$147,000
Building Envelope Repairs	\$186,700	Restroom Renovations	\$891,900	Interior Renovations	\$339,600
Door Replacement	\$93,100	Building Envelope Repairs	\$100,500	Building Envelope Repairs	\$111,600
Mechanical / Electrical Upgrades	\$34,800	Electrical Upgrades	\$30,000	Secure Entrance Improvements	\$30,000
Parking Lot / Sidewalk Repairs	\$7,300	Parking Lot / Sidewalk Repairs	\$6,900	Plumbing Upgrades	\$1,126,600
	\$960,900		\$2,610,700	Door Replacement	\$471,000
Sumner Elementary		Southgate Elementary			\$2,225,800
Interior Renovations	\$630,700	Building Envelope Repairs	\$961,400	Ellis Middle School	
Plumbing Upgrades	\$33,300	Interior Renovations	\$248,800	Interior Renovations	\$174,200
Secure Entry / Admin Office	\$995,000	Electrical Upgrades	\$25,300	Building Envelope Repairs	\$671,400
Roof Access Improvements	\$2,000	Door Replacement	\$611,600	Electrical Upgrades	\$10,700
Elevator Addition	\$599,000	Parking Lot / Sidewalk Repairs	\$13,900	Parking Lot / Sidewalk Repairs	\$39,200
Door Replacement	\$270,000		\$1,861,000		\$895,500
Parking Lot / Sidewalk Repairs	\$1,200	High School & Annex		Districtwide	
	\$2,531,200	Mechanical / Electrical Upgrades	\$135,890	Bond Issuance Costs	\$378,269
Ellis Pool		Interior Renovations	\$2,170,400		
Locker Room Renovations		Plumbing Upgrades	\$113,100	Total Project Costs	\$25,278,269
Mechanical / Electrical Upgrades	\$23,410	Handrail Upgrades	\$139,300		
Interior Renovations	\$1,589,400	Restroom Upgrades	\$2,400,000		
Diving Well Renovations	\$900,000	Locker Room Upgrades	\$2,000,000		
Building Envelope Repairs	\$550,000	Door Replacement	\$692,800		
Building Addition - Mechanicals	\$660,000	Building Envelope Repairs	\$785,500		
Pool Equipment Replacement	\$400,000	Parking Lot / Sidewalk Repairs	\$52,600		
Door Replacement	\$10,600	Accessibility Entrance Upgrades	\$191,900		
HVAC Upgrades	\$1,000,000		\$8,681,490		
	\$5,133,410				

The district currently has just under 5,200 students enrolled in K-12 programming and is projecting a slight decline in enrollment, to around 5,100 students over the next five years. The district is not proposing an increase in building space and, with the proposed building system improvements, anticipates a slight reduction in operational costs. The proposed projects appear to be in the long-term interest of the district.

If the referendum is successful and bonds are sold, the debt service on the bonds will be eligible for debt service equalization under Minnesota Statutes, section 123B.53, subdivision 3, if the bond schedule is approved. The amount of debt service equalization aid, if any, the district receives is determined annually and is dependent upon property wealth, student population, and other statutory requirements.

Review and Comment Statement

Based on the department's analysis of the school district's required documentation and other pertinent information from sources of the Minnesota Department of Education, the Commissioner of Education provides a positive review and comment.

Additional Information is Available

Persons desiring additional information regarding this proposal should contact the school district superintendent's office.



Willie L. Jett II
Commissioner

July 8, 2026