

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What will the impact be on my property taxes and for how long? When will it start?

If voters approve the referendum, district residents will have an estimated tax increase of \$1.62 per \$1,000, or \$162 per \$100,000 of equalized property value per year. This mill rate assumes the District would enter into a two-phased borrowing approach (2020 and 2021), each with a 20-year amortization; and calculated based on 3.5 -3.75% interest. The tax impact will first be noted on tax bills received in December 2020 and payable in 2021.

If the middle school is phased out, what will we do with it?

The Community Facilities Advisory Committee (CFAC) considered many solutions for the middle school in the long-range plan. However, in the end, the CFAC determined the final decision regarding the school, and whether or not it is phased out, belongs to the School Board and a future committee, taking into consideration continued feedback from the community.

When might we see a new high school?

The Community Facilities Advisory Committee (CFAC) proposed a long-range plan to the School Board. The plan outlines several phases, including a new high school; however, no time frame was proposed.

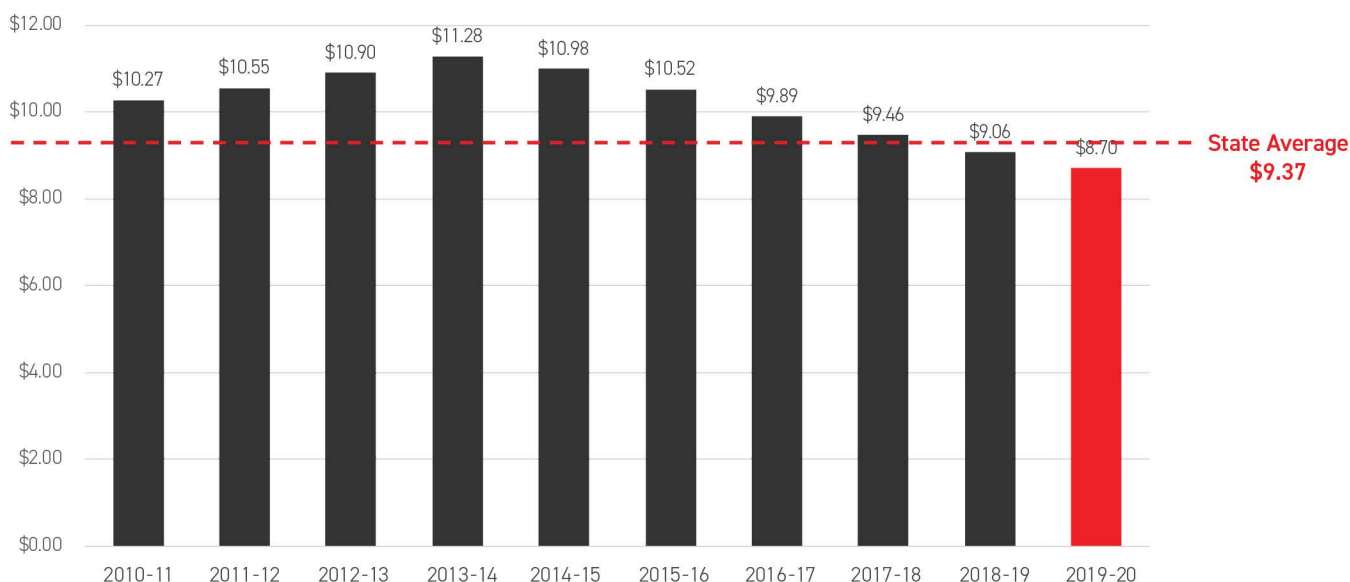
If the referendum passes, when will construction be completed? When will discussion regarding the next phase begin?

If the community approves the April referendum, planning and design will begin immediately. Construction will start in Spring of 2021, with a substantial complete date of December 2021.

Discussion for future phases would continue through our Legacy conversations, which occur in School Board updates every six months. Additionally, through the commitment to keep the community involved in the conversations, we would hold yearly Legacy conversations with the entire community to review the six priorities and actions toward the year 2030.

Why do my taxes keep going up?

The 10-year history of Columbus School District's mill rate is shown below. The current (2019-20) mill rate is \$8.70 per \$1,000 of equalized valuation; the current state average mill rate for K-12 school districts is \$9.37 per \$1,000 of equalized valuation. The mill rate for the Columbus School District has decreased steadily since 2013-14 and is currently below the state average (and has been since 2016-17). The Columbus School District's tax levy is also lower today than it was in 2013-14.



Since 2014, the District's mill rate, which is used to calculate property taxes, has decreased by \$2.58 (\$258.00 per \$100,000 of property value)



Will we be able to utilize any items (playground, parking lots, fence, etc.) from recent improvements to save costs?

Absolutely! The District will utilize many of the capital improvement items we have acquired over the past few years through our regular operating budget, grants and/or donations to maximize referendum dollars and the work that can be done through the project.

Which high school coursework programs will benefit from this referendum, if approved?

Many programs will be positively impacted through the proposed work to be completed at the high school. A large portion of the renovations will be in the Career Technical Education area, which houses the art, technical education, engineering, automotive, welding, and robotics courses. These courses are also known as STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Agri-Science, Arts, and Mathematics) and will benefit from student collaboration spaces, as well as clean and working laboratory spaces with appropriate space and technology to support hands-on learning.

In addition, music areas will be renovated, including ADA accessibility upgrades, windows for natural lighting, and flooring replacement.

Where do I go to vote?

The health and safety of our students, staff, families, and community has been and will continue to be the District's top priority. Our transition to a digital learning environment has been successful thanks to our committed families, outstanding staff, and supportive community. In normal times, or those like today, we are always taking our most immediate challenges head-on while not losing focus on our needs for the future.

Based on the Governor's announcement, the state will be holding the election on April 7 as planned.

Absentee voting is open! Please visit myvote.wi.gov by April 2 to request an absentee ballot. If you prefer to vote in person, please do so carefully.

City of Columbus

Columbus Area Senior Center
125 North Dickason Blvd.
Columbus, WI 53925
920-623-5900
Polling Place hours: 7:00 AM – 8:00 PM

Town of Bristol

7747 County Road N
Sun Prairie, WI 53590
608-837-6494
Polling Place hours: 7:00 AM - 8:00 PM

Town of Calamus

W9820 County Road D
Beaver Dam, WI 53916-9165
920-623-3692
Polling Place hours: 7:00 AM – 8:00 PM

Town of Columbus

Columbus Town Hall
N1120 Schaefer Road
Columbus, WI 53925
920-623-9006
Polling Place hours: 7:00 AM - 8:00 PM

Town of Elba

N3799 County Road T
Columbus, WI 53925
920-782-0269
Polling Place hours: 7:00 AM - 8:00 PM

Town of Fountain Prairie

W1514 CTH Z
Fall River, WI 53932
920-484-3396
Polling Place hours: 7:00 AM - 8:00 PM

Town of Hampden

N1291 County Rd N
Columbus, WI 53925
920-210-5165
Polling Place hours: 7:00 AM - 8:00 PM

Town of Lowell

W8906 O'Sixteen Road
Reeseville WI 53589
920-927-3737
Polling Place hours: 7:00 AM – 8:00 PM

Town of Otsego

W3199 Highway 16
Columbus, WI 53925
920- 992-3256
Polling Place hours: 7:00 AM - 8:00 PM

Town of Portland

W11720 Taylor Street
Waterloo, WI 53594
920-478-3724
Polling Place hours: 7:00 AM – 8:00 PM

Town of York

398 Sun Prairie Road
Waterloo, WI 53594
608-516-0828
Polling Place hours: 7:00 AM – 8:00 PM

Go to <https://myvote.wi.gov/en-us/> to register to vote or to request an absentee ballot. Online voter registration has been extended until March 30th for the April 7th election only.



If we are out of space, why do we take students on in open enrollment?

Columbus Elementary School has limited capacity and space needs. Prior to moving three, 3rd grade classrooms from the elementary school to the current intermediate school, the School Board placed caps limiting the number of K-3rd grade open enrollment students into the district. After moving the 3rd graders, the School Board placed caps limiting the number of K-8th grade open enrollment students.

Educational capacity is determined by many factors including class size (number of students in a classroom), the physical size of the classroom, the type of teaching/learning occurring in the classroom, etc. In general the existing elementary school classrooms are of adequate size to serve the number of students in the rooms. The challenge the District is facing is that we do not have enough classrooms to support the increases in enrollment that have been steadily occurring in recent years.

What is the current referendum debt?

The District currently does not have any Fund 39 (referendum approved) debt outstanding.

The District has Fund 38 debt outstanding, totaling \$3,965,000. This includes the 2014-15 Energy Efficiency financing for projects at all district buildings; the amount outstanding for that purpose is \$2,945,000 with annual payments of approximately \$770,000 through 2024. Other outstanding Fund 38 debt is primarily the refinancing of the District's Unfunded Pension Liability with the Wisconsin Retirement System

What if the District can't buy or find suitable land to acquire?

If the referendum passes, the District has five years to acquire a piece of land that would meet the needs of a future building site. The District will be seeking parcels of land that are about 45 to 60 acres, are located in the geographic areas preferred by the community survey respondents, have reasonable access to utilities (water, sewer, etc.), have (or are planned to have) public roadways to support high school traffic, and have topography (i.e. are reasonably flat) that would allow future construction of a school and outdoor athletic/recreation facilities. The specific process to seek parcels of land will be determined if the referendum is approved.

School districts must have authority to acquire and improve the land.

- For a common school district, the school board must be authorized to acquire the land for school purposes through approval at the annual meeting or a special meeting of district electors. Wis. Stat. §§120.10(5m), 120.08(2)(c).
- A common school district must also designate the land as a school building site at the annual meeting or a special meeting of district electors. Wis. Stat. §§120.10(5), 120.08(2)(c).

School districts may acquire land either by negotiated purchase or through condemnation. Wis. Stat. §120.10(5m). (To preserve the possibility of condemnation, additional initial steps should be taken before negotiations begin).

