



[Ver en Espanol](#)

February 12, 2024

Parents:

The School District of River Falls (SDRF) is presenting two referendum questions to the community on Tuesday, February 20, 2024. Below is a summary of the details related to each question:

**Question #1: Operational Referendum** – Increase revenue limit authority in a “3-year step-up” approach including \$1M (2024-25), \$2M (2025-26), \$3M (2026-27), capped at \$3M recurring (2027-beyond) for operational expenses (including to maintain programs and services, to hire and retain staff, to purchase instructional materials/supplies, etc.).

State-imposed revenue limits have not allowed revenue to keep up with inflation. Without additional revenue or a significant reduction in expenditures, the SDRF budget will include deficits that are not sustainable in the future. Therefore, the District seeks voter support for a *levy override* to increase our revenue.

We are not alone in this problem. Over 80% of districts statewide have been forced to seek operational referendum support from their communities.

Property Tax Impact of Operational Referendum Question #1

YEAR	Revenue Generated	Estimated Yearly Property Tax Impact <i>(per \$100,000 property value)</i>
<b>2024-25</b>	\$1M	<b>\$5</b>
<b>2025-26</b>	\$2M	<b>\$11</b> <i>(previous \$5+\$6=\$11)</i>
<b>2026-27</b>	\$3M	<b>\$19</b> <i>(previous \$11+\$8=\$19)</i>
<b>2027-beyond</b>	\$3M Recurring	<i>No additional increase tax (stabilizes at \$19)</i>

**Question #2: Bond (Facilities) Referendum** – Seeks voter approval for a \$28 million bond (facilities) set of projects that involve three categories of facility improvements:

1. **Security, Building Systems and Grounds (\$20M Approx.)** – Facility improvements include electronic door security system, surveillance cameras, heating/ventilation upgrades, air quality improvements, restroom remodels, boiler replacements, back-up electrical generators, fire suppression sprinklers, kitchen exhaust, and tennis court and sidewalks improvements.
2. **Transportation Center (\$4M Approx.)** – Built in 1966, our existing transportation center is a fifty-seven year-old building therefore, we would build a new transportation building while using the existing maintenance bay and office space for storage of a few buses or vehicles and supplies.
3. **Multi-Purpose Space (\$4M Approx.)** – A new indoor multipurpose addition will be constructed at River Falls High School. The multipurpose addition will be a flexible space that will be used to provide the following:
  - Create appropriate space for the high school wrestling program that is currently forced to practice in the middle school basement.
  - Improve district space options for youth athletic programming.
  - Support and enhance space for physical education courses.
  - Improve flexible space for speed and conditioning programming.
  - Create space for physically active Community Education courses.
  - Upgrade co-curricular practice area including baseball/softball batting and pitching cages, soccer drills, dance, yoga, and cheerleading.

Estimated Property Tax Impact of Bond Referendum Question #2\*

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>Revenue Generated</b>	<b>Estimated Yearly Property Tax Impact</b> <i>(per \$100,000 property value)</i>
<b>2024-25</b>	\$28M	<b>\$58.50</b> <i>(per year)</i>

\*Assumes borrowing repaid over 20 years at 5.25% interest rate

## **Questions + Answers**

### **Q#1: What will result from the outcome of the operational referendum question?**

If it passes, the district will preserve existing services, programs, and resources while continuing to be good stewards of the community's investment in public education.

If it fails, the district will reduce expenses moving forward. With 77% of district expenses tied to staff compensation, cuts would likely include a reduction in programming, services, and staff; increased class sizes; a freeze or reduction of the purchases of textbooks; the deferral of technology projects; compensation limitations; and the consideration of other budget reductions.

### **Q#2: What will result from the outcome of the Bond (facility) referendum question?**

If this question passes, we are able to add all the desired safety and security upgrades, add the multi-purpose space, and upgrade the bus garage. If it fails the district will still try to prioritize some safety improvements with limited dollars; we will defer maintenance improvements to our 50+ year-old buildings (repairs will be completed at a later date - and at higher costs); and we will have less space flexibility for our youth, community, and school-based co-curricular programs.

### **Q#3: Why didn't the district either ask three questions or combine everything into one question?**

By law, there must be two *separate* questions – “operational” must be separate from “facility” – questions cannot be combined into one. Also, by law, no more than two total referendum questions can be asked over a 12-month period. Citizens will be asked to vote on each of the two questions.

### **Q#4: When is the vote?**

In-person voting is on **Tuesday, February 20th**.

## **Additional Information**

LINK: [Question #1 Video](#)

LINK: [Question #2 Video](#)

LINK: Referendum WEBSITE: [rfsd.k12.wi.us/referendum2024](https://rfsd.k12.wi.us/referendum2024)

Please feel free to contact me with any questions and please remember to vote Tuesday, February 20th. Thank you.

Jamie Benson

Superintendent

[jamie.benson@rfsd.k12.wi.us](mailto:jamie.benson@rfsd.k12.wi.us) -or- 715-425-1800