

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION PROJECT

The Minnesota Department of Education has given a positive review and comment to a proposed school construction project for Big Lake Schools. The project, described in the excerpt from the Department Commissioner below, will be subject to voter approval during a referendum on Tuesday, Nov. 4. Full information about the referendum can be found at biglakeschools.org.

Big Lake Public School District, ISD #0727-01 is proposing a two-question referendum on November 4, 2025. The first ballot question would seek an increase of \$640 per pupil to the district's operating levy. The second ballot question would authorize \$36.23 million in bonding authority to finance a field house of approximately 65,000 square feet to be located between the middle and high school. Other proposed projects include field/track improvements, including artificial turf, and interior renovations at the middle and high school. Passage of the second ballot question is contingent upon passage of the first ballot question.

The projects proposed would be scheduled for completion in calendar years 2026 thru 2028. Cost estimates by project component are as follows::

Project Cost Estimates			
Building Additions:		Outdoor Athletic Improvements:	
Fieldhouse (4 Courts & Track)	\$20,200,000	Demo Existing Track / Football Field	\$275,000
Weight & Fitness Rooms / Flex Space	\$2,065,000	Artificial Turf	\$675,000
Vestibule / Commons / Concessions	\$805,000	Drainage / Earthwork	\$1,700,000
Locker / Changing Rooms	\$280,000	Landscaping	\$500,000
Storage Area	\$340,000	Track Surface	\$550,000
Elevated Walking Track	\$775,000		\$3,700,000
Offices	\$85,000	Other Project Costs:	
	\$24,550,000	Interior Renovations - Middle & High School	\$1,600,000
		FF&E / Technology	\$345,000
		Fees, Permits & Testing	\$3,675,000
		Contingencies	\$2,360,000
		Bond Issuance	\$178,741
			\$8,158,741
Total - All Project Costs	\$36,408,741		

The district last went to the voters in November 2024 with a three-question referendum. The first ballot question, a capital projects levy of roughly \$900,000 per year was approved by voters. The other two ballot questions, an operating levy increase of \$400 per pupil and a \$29 million bond referendum for a field house and special education facility addition were not approved by voters.

The operational cost increase associated with the proposed fieldhouse is estimated to be around \$435,000 annually. However, passage of the \$36.23 million bond authorization is contingent upon passage of the proposed operating levy increase. The proposed projects appear to be in the long-term interest of the school district.

If the bond 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

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