

February 1, 2021

Dear Parents & Caregivers,

At the time of drafting this monthly newsletter article, our high school students are just beginning their second semester classes. Simultaneously, they are going to begin the first week(s) of the semester in a virtual format due to a recent uptick in positive COVID cases. Hopefully, this will be like it was this past fall and allow our high school students to hit the reset button and encounter a good run of in-person learning as we all look ahead to spring. One school calendar item to note is that the District will have a three-day weekend with no classes for students on Friday, February 26, 2021. We hope you enjoy the long weekend to break up some of the winter doldrums we sometimes experience.

Speaking of school calendar items, the District will soon begin planning for the 2021-22 school calendar. Parents who have provided us an email address in the Skyward Student Management System will be sent a survey to weigh in on the development of next year's school calendar. Please take a few moments to complete the survey, and I thank you in advance of your completion of the survey!

At the January 18, 2021 Board of Education meeting, the Board acted to formally move forward with a five-year recurring referendum. This comes after months of discussion and planning for the future to find a balance of being able to adequately meet the needs of our students as outlined in the parameters of our strategic plan as well as being fiscally responsible. The amount requested over the five-year period totals \$4,890,040. Further in this month's edition of the e-newsletter the specific details of the referendum question are provided.

Over the course of the next two months, we will distribute information specific to the operating referendum. Beginning with this communication, I will detail a few of the highlights regarding the projected financial impact heading into the 2021-22 school year. As a reminder, when district residents passed the 2018 referendum to construct the new WDHS, it was indicated that in the fall of 2020 the District would proceed forward with an operating referendum. Due to the pandemic, the District opted to pull back and delay this until April of 2021. Hopefully, beginning this spring we all begin to see the pandemic lessen its impact on the world and restore multiple sectors of our local economy including the ag and tourism economies. The impact of the referendum, while minimal, would not take effect until property owners receive their real estate taxes in December of 2021.

Upon passage of the 2018 referendum, the mill rate landed at \$8.29, and this meant if you owned a home/property valued at \$200,000 a person paid \$1,658 worth of SDWD school taxes. Through careful planning, the projected mill rate, with a successful April 2021 referendum, is anticipated to land at \$7.95, and an owner of a \$200,000 home/property would pay \$1,590 or \$68.00 less than in 2018. However, due to lapse of delaying the referendum in the fall of 2020, it is anticipated there would be a \$65.00 dollar increase for the owner of a \$200,000 property. This equates to just under 18 cents per day to offer the services to our students aligned with our strategic plan. For your background information, this past year the District had the 45th lowest mill rate out of 368 K-12 districts with the state average for mill rate being \$9.22 for the 2020-21 school year. Again, even with passage of the referendum the District is scheduled to be in the lowest quartile for school taxes throughout the state.

To close out this section of my newsletter article, stay tuned for additional information regarding this topic.

Finally, as I typically do, let me close out this newsletter article by saying thank you for the opportunity to serve our communities' children for it is both our highest priority and privilege to do so! Given this challenging and disruptive time, delivering high-quality education has never been so important!

Sincerely,

Terrance R. Slack