

Frequently Asked Questions

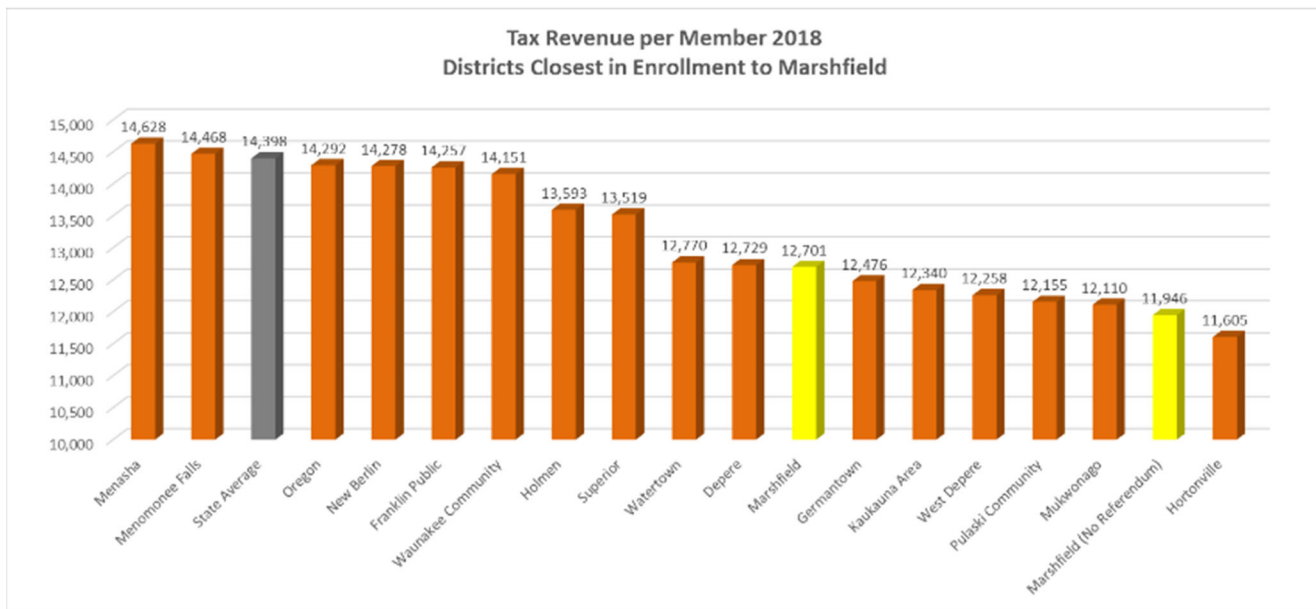
1. How much is the District requesting in this referendum and what will the money be used for?

The District is seeking \$3.5 million each year on a recurring basis. The funds will be used to retain the programs and services that have been identified for reduction/elimination should the referendum fail. A current list of these programs and services is available at

<https://www.marshfieldschools.org/cms/lib/WI01919828/Centricity/Domain/131/List%20of%20Reductions%202020-21%20with%20Descriptions.pdf>.

2. Why does the Marshfield School District always need additional funding to operate?

The answer to this question relates to a law change back in 1993 by the state legislature which restricted the amount of money a school district could receive from general state aid and local property tax levies. "Revenue Limits", as they have come to be known, restrict the amount a school district may receive in tax dollars and prohibits school boards from having the authority to raise taxes without voter approval. The baseline for this amount for each school district was calculated using that District's previous year expenditures. Marshfield at the time was a comparatively low spending District. As such, its initial funding level was established well below many other school districts of similar size. As revenue limits remain in place 27 years later, the school district still receives comparatively lower funds and would continue to do so without the aid of referendum dollars. The chart below illustrates how much Marshfield receives in funding per student compared to other Districts of similar size.

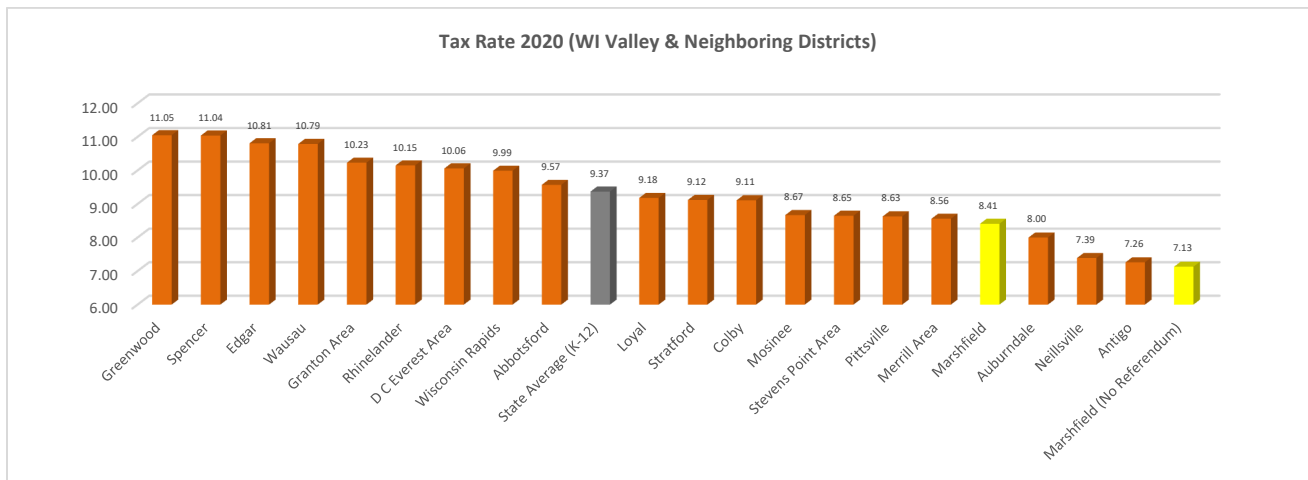


SOURCE: Compiled from Dept. of Public Instruction Website (DPI.WI.GOV)

Frequently Asked Questions

3. Is Marshfield a high taxing school district? How does the referendum impact the tax rate?

The School District of Marshfield remains one of the lowest tax rate Districts in the area and well below the state average even with the current referendum funding. The chart below, taken from data provided by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, shows where Marshfield ranks among other area school districts with and without referendum support. The tax rate for Marshfield with the current referendum stands at \$8.41. This means for every \$1,000 of assessed value on a homeowner's property, the District can levy \$8.41. This rate is fourth lowest among the 20 school districts shown and well below the state average of \$9.37. Without referendum support, Marshfield's tax rate drops to \$7.13, the lowest in the area.



SOURCE: Compiled from Dept. of Public Instruction Website (DPI.WI.GOV)

4. What is a recurring referendum and how is it different from a non-recurring referendum?

School districts are permitted under the law to run two different kinds of operational referenda, either recurring or nonrecurring. A successful recurring referendum means a school district will be able to levy that additional amount every year thereafter, without having to go back to the community through additional referenda to exceed the revenue limit by the approved amount. A successful non-recurring referendum means a school district can levy an additional amount, but only for a time specified in the referendum. Once the term of the referendum has ended, the revenue limit reverts back to what was set by the state. Marshfield school's previous referendum was for four years and will expire at the end of the 2020-21 school year.

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5. Why did the school district decide this time to go for a recurring referendum?

Over the past 18 years, the school district has held five referenda and has asked the same basic question: "Will the community support additional funds to sustain the current programs offered to Marshfield students?". With each referendum, the resounding response has been "Yes". With 18 years of community support for its programs, it appears sustaining what the District offers is valued by the majority of the community. As such, it seemed the next logical question to ask was, "Will the community always want to support the existing programs?", which is in effect what a recurring referendum is asking. The District has not been requesting funds for new programs but to ensure the opportunities available today are the same or similar opportunities will be available to future classes of students. This appears to be what the community expects and wants based on past referendum results.

6. If a recurring referendum means additional money will be provided every year, what happens if something changes down the road that impacts Marshfield's funding? What if the District receives more than it needs? What will happen if the District feels they need additional funds at some point?

These are all excellent questions. It is obviously very difficult to predict what the future may hold. However, in terms of possibly being over-funded in future years, the school district is not compelled to set its levy to the maximum each year. However, due to how Marshfield schools have been funded in the past, this has been the practice. It is conceivable that the school board may receive an increase in state funding large enough that they would not levy all available tax dollars. Should this ever happen, it would be a decision of the school board at that time as to how they may want to reduce the local levy.

Regarding the prospect of being underfunded and having to seek additional tax dollars through future referenda, this possibility also exists. Funding Wisconsin schools has always been a challenge and many feel the system is fundamentally broken. There has been a great deal of discussion by legislators over the years about fixing Wisconsin's school funding program, but little legislation with meaningful impact has resulted. Although it is difficult to determine what may be available for future school funding, the District is confident the funds being requested through the current referendum process will meet the needs for the foreseeable future and many years to come.

Frequently Asked Questions

7. The District is asking for \$3.5 million annually. How was this amount determined?

The dollar amount that was established for the recurring referendum of \$3.5 million was calculated based on anticipated shortfalls and what the District felt it may need to sustain programs for the foreseeable future. In other words, it is our best estimate based on the information we currently have available. It isn't intended to be too large or too conservative. Rather, it is an estimated amount intended to do precisely what is stated in the referendum, to sustain current programs.

8. How did the District decide on what would be cut if the referendum fails?

The list of cuts is the culmination of several months and many hours of staff and school board work. The process began back in February when District administration were asked to prioritize areas of the budget based on student need. Once this was established, staff were invited to offer recommendations on areas of possible budget reductions, or areas of possible added revenue. These ideas were categorized, evaluated, and prioritized by school administration. Once complete, the proposed recommendations were presented to the school board's Finance Committee. After months of discussion among the Finance Committee and school board's executive committee, a final draft of this list will be presented to the school board for action on October 14, 2020. It should be noted that from the perspective of the District, all the items on the cuts list are extremely important to support student instruction and sustain the current offerings that are available to students. However, tasked with the duty to present a balanced budget, concessions needed to be made and the cuts list is a reflection of those concessions.

9. Do other school districts in Wisconsin ask taxpayers for more money to operate?

Referenda are not unique to the Marshfield Community. Since 2018, Wisconsin school districts have held 200 referenda to exceed revenue limits. In November of this year, 45 more referenda will be held by Wisconsin school districts (including Marshfield) to exceed revenue limits. You can find more information regarding school referenda on the Department of Public Instruction website at <https://dpi.wi.gov/sfs/reporting/safr/referendum/overview> or you can search specific school referenda data at: <https://sfs.dpi.wi.gov/Referenda/CustomReporting.aspx>.

10. Is the \$3.5 million in addition to the current \$3 million referendum the community passed back in 2016?

No, the \$3 million expires at the end of the current 2020-21 school year and will not be renewed. The \$3.5 million referendum would take effect in the 2021-22 school year.

Frequently Asked Questions

11. What happens if the voters do not support this referendum?

If the community does not pass the upcoming operational referendum, the Board of Education would need to reduce the district's operating budget by approximately \$3.5 million. A list of specific reductions has been identified and is scheduled for voting at a future school board meeting. It is likely the District will need to reduce staffing levels, which will mean increased class sizes, and also reduce the number of academic, co-curricular and athletic program offerings at all levels. General building maintenance, technology and curriculum budgets will also be reduced. You can view a list of the proposed reductions at <https://www.marshfieldschools.org/cms/lib/WI01919828/Centricity/Domain/131/List%20of%20Reductions%202020-21%20with%20Descriptions.pdf>. If the referendum passes, all items on the reductions list will be preserved.

12. What happens to taxes if the referendum passes?

If the District is permitted to increase taxes through a successful referendum, taxes will increase around 21 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value. If you own a \$100,000 home, your taxes would go up by approximately \$21. The median house value in the Marshfield area is \$163,597. The taxes on this home would increase by \$34.36. Other variables influence tax rate as well, such as student membership numbers and property value, so keep in mind these estimated tax rate changes only reflect the impact of referenda.

13. What happens to taxes if the referendum fails?

If the referendum fails, the reductions list which is scheduled for school board vote during the October 14, 2020 school board meeting would be implemented. This means the items on the list would no longer be part of the proposed 2021-22 budget. It would also mean that the tax rate would decrease by an estimated \$1.25 (as opposed to a 21 cent increase if the referendum passed). This decrease is due to the fact that, currently, taxpayers are paying on a previously approved \$3 Million referendum for the 2020-21 school year. If you own a \$100,000 home, your taxes would go down by approximately \$125. The median house value in the Marshfield area is \$163,597. The taxes on this home would decrease by \$204.50. Other variables influence tax rate as well, such as student membership numbers and property value, so keep in mind these estimated tax rate changes only reflect the impact of referenda.

14. Where can we vote on November 3, 2020?

Information on voting can be found on our website at <https://www.marshfieldschools.org/Page/992>.

Frequently Asked Questions

15. The cuts list states clubs and organizations will be cut. What clubs are you referring to? Aren't some clubs covered by other funding sources and not by the District such as Student Government and Ocean Sciences Bowl.

A great number of club activities occur during non-school hours that are supervised by teachers. These include clubs such as FBLA, HOSA, FCCLA, Skills USA, Student Government, & Madrigals to name a few. The funding for the Teachers and Advisors for these clubs would be eliminated. The student council advisor contract is covered by the District. This is what would be cut. Concerning the Ocean Sciences Bowl, if students become eligible for national competition, travel is covered by Ocean Sciences Bowl funding. However, the District pays for the club advisor contract.

16. Is the District planning on cutting school dances as part of the clubs and activities being removed from the budget?

No, school dances are not on the cuts list. The District pays for some minimal costs related to custodial clean-up, but other possible expenses, such as the DJ or chaperones, are covered through activity funds raised by the school.