



The Ashland School District Referendum is on Schedule and on Budget

Guest article by Dr. Keith Hilts, Superintendent

At their February 27 meeting, the Ashland School Board took another step in the journey for Ashland schools to become a premier school district in Northern Wisconsin. The school board approved contractors' bids for work at Marengo Valley Elementary School and Lake Superior Elementary School. The bids were submitted on February 14 and were vetted by the contracting firm Market and Johnson and Ashland School District staff. The bids for the two projects came in just below budget.

This building project will improve some learning spaces and add new learning spaces. At Lake Superior Elementary, there will be an addition to the Kindergarten wing which will create space for the new 4K program. The offices will be remodeled to make spaces for community providers to meet the mental health needs of students by holding appointments right at school. There will also be a new space for the project-based, multi-age charter school.

At Marengo Valley Elementary there is extensive remodeling of existing spaces and the addition of two classroom spaces as well as a new gymnasium. There will also be a remodeled art and music space. The old gymnasium will be remodeled to be a new student commons area.

Another goal for this project was to give local contractors opportunities to bid on the projects; hoping to keep much of the work local. All of the local contractors who submitted bids received some work. The list of local contractors who will be doing work on the elementary schools includes: Anderson Plaster and Drywall, Angelo Luppino Incorporated, Arnie Mackey Construction, Ashland Construction, A to Z Plumbing, Blakeman Plumbing and Heating, Granger Builders, Jolma Electric, KBK Services, Quality Brick and Stone, and Omer Nelson Electric. Of the roughly \$7 million that will be invested into the two elementary schools, just over \$3 million of the work will be completed by these local contractors. Additionally, all the windows in the projects will be H windows which is an Ashland based manufacturer. All the contractors must submit written verification of performance and payment bond before the final contract can be issued.

Not everyone is pleased by this project. At the school board meeting 16 community members signed up to speak about the project. About half asked that project be scaled back and a petition was submitted to the school board making the same request. There is no action that can undo a referendum vote and so a petition has no binding authority. The other half of the

community members in attendance asked the board to continue with the plan that was approved by the community in April. Not following the directive of the April referendum would be disrespectful to the community's voice.

The referendum project will continue as planned. Bids for the work at Ashland Middle School were due Tuesday, February 28. Bids for work at Ashland High School are already open and are due in a couple of weeks. The school district appreciates the investment the community has made into our schools and the future of Ashland. We encourage community members to view all information related to the referendum on our website at www.ashland.k12.wi.us. Click on the OUR DISTRICT tab and then REFERENDUM INFORMATION.

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