

# ELECTION PREVIEW

## NOVEMBER 8, 2011

### School district asking residents to approve three forms of funding

STILLWATER — The Stillwater Area Public Schools will have three questions on this November's ballot — an operating levy, a capital projects levy and a bond. Polls will be open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 8. The Press asked Carissa Keister, district communications coordinator at Stillwater Area Public Schools, to answer questions about the election.

**Q: How much money does the operating levy (question one on the ballot) currently generate, and how much money will it generate if it is renewed or increased?**

A: The existing operating levy (approved in 2007) generates about \$996 per student. The new operating levy would revoke the existing levy and replace it with a new levy of \$1,465 per student.

**Q: How has that money been used to date, and how will it be used if renewed or increased?**

A: The 2007 levy was designed to decrease class sizes, provide quality educational programs, purchase textbooks and curriculum materials, and maintain transportation service levels. Despite numerous funding challenges, the district has ensured the commitments from the 2007 levy were honored. Our students have made significant gains in achievement, specifically in the areas of elementary math and science. We've also reduced class sizes in targeted areas such as science at the junior highs and high school. The existing operating levy helped us to maintain transportation services and all of our strong academic, arts and athletic programs at the same time other districts across the state have had to make drastic cuts in these areas.

Our district will face a \$10 million budget shortfall at the end of this school year. This is largely a result of state funding not keeping up with inflation, which equates to \$1,161 per student in lost revenue. The new operating levy request ask our community to work together to make up the budget shortfall. We will reduce our budget by \$5 million and ask the community to meet us in the middle to make up the difference. This new operating levy would better help us protect and preserve quality learning for our students by:

- Continuing to provide high-quality instruction in all academic areas.
- Implementing innovation in schools.
- Ensuring appropriate resources are available for students and the programs that have been identified as community priorities in Vision 2014.
- Creating new 21st century learning opportunities in areas such as STEM (science, technology, engineering and math), and elementary visual arts and world language.

**Q: If the operating levy is not renewed, how will it affect the district?**

A: A failed operating levy would result in \$10 million in budget cuts for next year. It is likely budget reductions would impact the following areas:

- Increased class size across all grade levels
- Decreased number of student instructional days on the school calendar
- Reduced transportation services (ie. adjust start and end times, decrease number of bus routes, extend transportation zones and shuttles)
- Consideration of fees for all day kindergarten
- Decreased athletic and co-curricular activities
- Increased student activity fees
- Consideration of alternatives to the current elementary building grade configurations (ie. grades K-3 and 4-6 schools rather than K-6 schools)
- Decreased/elimination of resources for aging and outdated technology

#### Who can vote?

In general you are eligible to vote if you are 18 or older, are a U.S. citizen, are not a convicted felon and are a resident of the precinct in which you wish to vote.

Voters who have not pre-registered may register on Election Day by bringing a Minnesota driver's license, learner's permit or Minnesota identification card

(for other allowable identification, see <http://www.co.ramsey.mn.us/elections>). Questions on voting? Call 651-266-2171 or email [elections@co.ramsey.mn.us](mailto:elections@co.ramsey.mn.us).

#### Absentee voting

Absentee voting ends at 3 p.m. Nov. 8 for Mounds View School Board elections. Voters may cast an absentee ballot in person during business hours at the Ramsey County Auditor's Office, 90 W. Plato Blvd., Suite 160 in St. Paul. The office is also open from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Nov. 5 and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Nov. 7.

Those wishing to send in a ballot must first download a ballot application at [www.sos.state.mn.us](http://www.sos.state.mn.us)

(or attach it to an email as a .pdf). After completion it must then be faxed to 651-266-2177; mailed to Ramsey County Elections at P.O. Box 6409, St. Paul, MN 55164; or emailed to [elections@co.ramsey.mn.us](mailto:elections@co.ramsey.mn.us). A ballot and envelope will be sent back; it must be completed and mailed to the above address.

Absentee ballots are admissible if voters are:

- away from their precinct on Election Day

- have an illness or disability that prevents them from voting at their polling place

- unable to vote on Election Day due to religious observance

- serving as an election judge in a precinct other than their own

- under an eligible emergency declared by the governor or quarantine declared by the federal or state government

More information is available at 651-266-2171.

#### Voting locations

Unsure of your precinct? Access [http://xnet.co.ramsey.mn.us/elections/precinct\\_finder/](http://xnet.co.ramsey.mn.us/elections/precinct_finder/).

- Oak Park Heights P1: Assemblies of God Calvary Church, 5805 Osgood Ave. N., Stillwater
- Oak Park Heights P2: Oak Park Heights City Hall, 14168 57th St. N., Stillwater
- Stillwater W1 P1 & P2, Oak Park Elementary School, 6355

- Osman Ave. N., Stillwater
- Stillwater W2 P3 & P4, First United Methodist Church, 813 Myrtle St. W., Stillwater
- Stillwater W2 P5, Ascension Episcopal Church, 214 N. 3rd St., Stillwater
- Stillwater W3 P6, Stonebridge Elementary School, 900 Owens St. N., Stillwater
- Stillwater W3 P7, Our Saviors

- Lutheran Church, 1616 Olive St. W., Stillwater
- Stillwater W4 P8, Lily Lake School, 2003 Willard St. W., Stillwater
- Stillwater W4 P9, Rutherford Elementary, 115 Rutherford Rd., Stillwater
- Stillwater Township, Stillwater Town Hall, 13636 90th St. N. Stillwater

- Delayed implementation of Vision 2014 priorities

- Reduced opportunities to personalize learning for students.

- Delayed expansion of STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) programs for students in grades K-12.

- Delayed implementation of new elementary world language and visual art opportunities.

- Inability to provide adequate science spaces to meet the demands of new state standards.

- New levy request in the near future

- Our needs will not go away, and in fact will most likely become greater when the existing levy expires in 2013-2014.

**Q: What will the tax impact be for the average property owner?**

A: If all three questions pass, residents of the district would see a tax increase of about \$83/year or less than \$7/month on each \$100,000 a home is valued. More specific tax impact information (including a tax impact calculator) is available online, [www.stillwater.k12.mn.us/Tax\\_Impact2.html](http://www.stillwater.k12.mn.us/Tax_Impact2.html).

**Q: Please summarize the other two questions on the ballot.**

A: Question 2: The capital projects levy would provide a designated and continuous source of funding for ongoing technology needs. It would allow teachers to better infuse technology into students' learning by:

- Ensuring all students have equal access to technology.
- Expanding opportunities to personalize learn-

ing for students.

- Providing students with increased access to online textbooks and other digital resources to support learning whenever and wherever they need it.

- Providing students with experiences they will encounter in real-world work environments.

- Training teachers to make more effective use of technology with students in the classroom.

- Replace aging equipment.

Question 3: Funding from the bond would provide adequate and effective learning spaces for all of our students by allowing us to:

- Renovate and expand existing science spaces at Stillwater Area High School and Oak-Land Junior High.

- Add additional science labs at the high school to meet the demand of changing state requirements.

- Add new science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) labs at the high school and Oak-Land (note: Stillwater Junior High's science facilities were renovated in 2006).

- Update heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems at Afton-Lakeland, Lake Elmo, Lily Lake, Oak Park, Oak-Land and Stillwater Junior High.

**Q: Where can voters find additional information?**

A: Video clips, informational fliers, community presentations, and pages of specific information about all three levy questions can be found on the district's website, [www.stillwater.k12.mn.us/Levy\\_2011.html](http://www.stillwater.k12.mn.us/Levy_2011.html).

# ELECTION PREVIEW

## NOVEMBER 8, 2011

**Q: What is the wording of the actual ballot questions?**

**Question 1:**

The board of Independent School District No. 834 (Stillwater Area Public Schools) has proposed to revoke the school district's existing referendum revenue authorization of \$996.57 per pupil and to replace that authorization with a new authorization of \$1,465 per pupil. The proposed new referendum revenue authorization would increase each year by the rate of inflation and be applicable for seven years unless otherwise revoked or reduced as provided by law. Shall the increase in the revenue proposed by the board of Independent School District No. 834 be approved?

**Question 2:**

The board of Independent School District No. 834

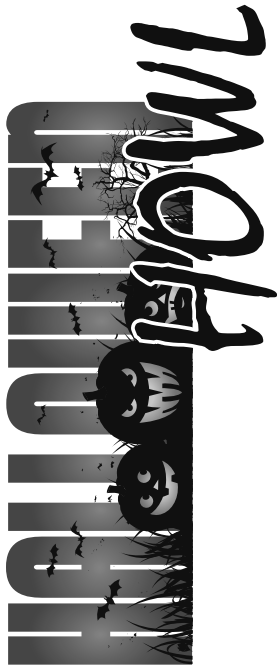
(Stillwater Area Public Schools) has proposed a capital project levy authorization of 1.25495% times the net tax capacity of the school district. The money raised by this authorization will provide funds for the purchase and installation of computers, printers, classroom audiovisual equipment and peripherals, interactive whiteboards, learning management systems, productivity and curriculum software, and staff development. The proposed capital project levy authorization will raise approximately \$982,300 for taxes payable in 2012, the first year it is to be levied, and would be authorized for seven years. The estimated total cost of the projects to be funded over that time period is approximately \$6,876,100. The projects to be funded have received a positive review and comment from the Commissioner of Education.

Shall the capital project levy authorization pro-

posed by the board of Independent School District No. 834 be approved?

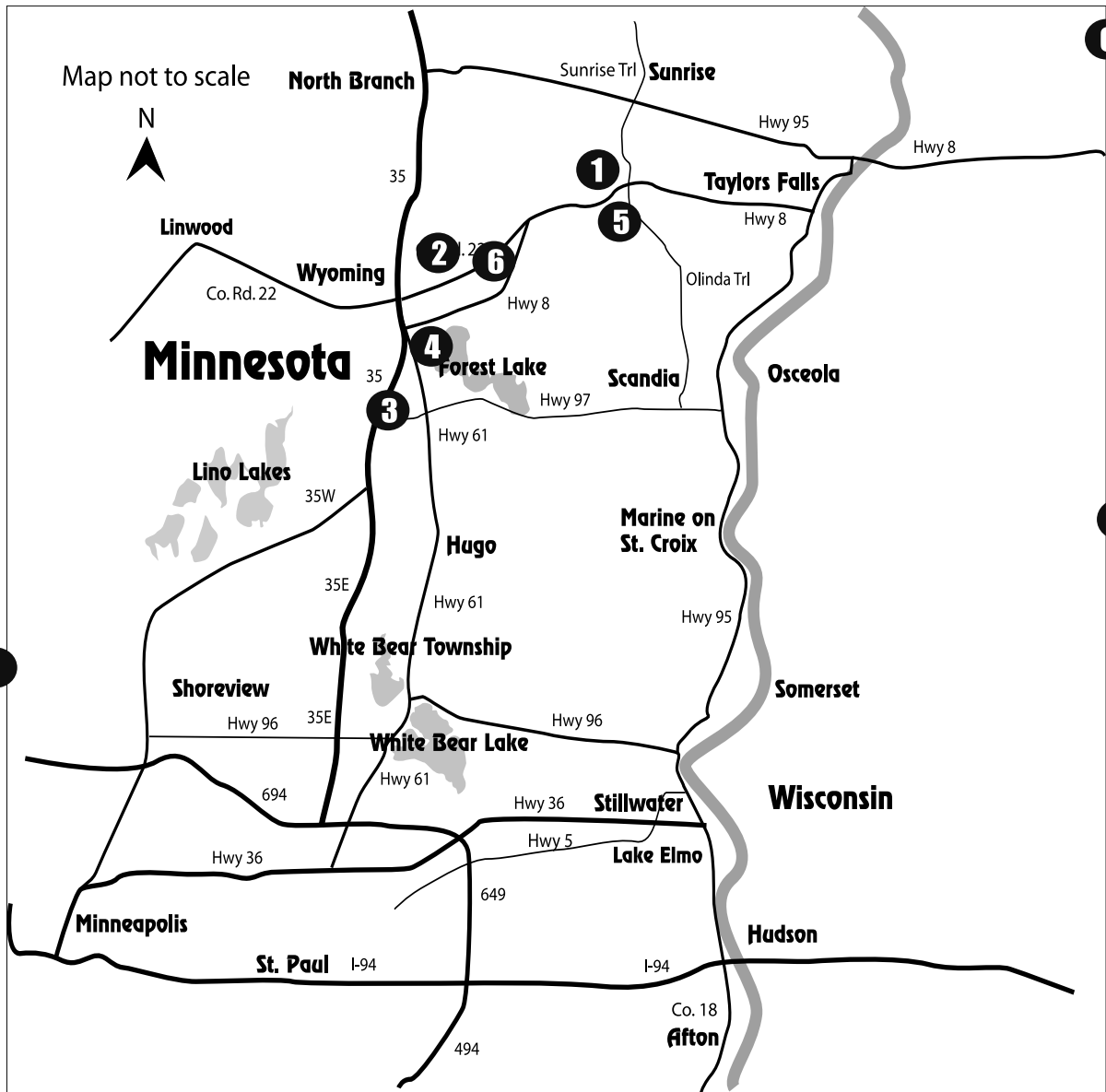
**Question 3:**

Shall the board of Independent School District No. 834 (Stillwater Area Public Schools) be authorized to issue its general obligation school building bonds in an amount not to exceed \$18,375,000 to provide funds for the acquisition and betterment of school sites and facilities, including the renovation of existing and construction of new science labs at the Stillwater Area High School and the Oak-Land Junior High School facilities; the construction of new Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics (STEM) labs at the Stillwater Area High School and the Oak-Land Junior High School facilities; and the updating of the Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning (HVAC) systems at various school facilities?



**1**

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