

HOWARD LAKE WAVERLY WINSTED PUBLIC SCHOOLS 2023 Referendum Guide

VOTE NOVEMBER 7



We Are All Lakers

“We’re proposing an operating levy that will keep us future ready. Please learn about our referendum question and vote on or before November 7.”

Nate Walbruch, Superintendent

WE'RE PROUD OF OUR SCHOOLS

We Are All Lakers

We have a lot to be proud of at Howard Lake-Waverly-Winsted Public Schools. **Our kids are not just learning – they're thriving!** We have a 93.5% graduation rate (above the state average). Our extracurricular activities, including our award-winning FFA program, are excellent.

Unfortunately, inflation and state funding increases that don't keep pace with inflation, have created budget challenges that we've been talking about for years. We need you to vote on the referendum question on Election Day, Nov. 7, or by absentee ballot through Nov. 6.

The "We Are All Lakers" operating levy referendum is based on these themes:

We are all about growing

We are all about learning

We are all in this together





Dear Howard Lake-Waverly-Winsted Residents:

We are all Lakers. This brochure details what makes our schools great, what's new, what we can do in the future, and what we need from you to keep showing our Laker Pride.

Growing. Learning. Together.

HLWW Schools is known for its academic excellence, extracurricular offerings, and dedicated staff. We are grateful for the supportive communities that share our vision and encourage our district to be an education leader.

What Can You Do to Support HLWW's Focus on the Future?

The HLWW School Board members voted unanimously to hold a referendum this fall. To reach our future potential, we need you to take action. Please read this brochure, educate yourself on the referendum and make an informed decision at the polls. Vote on Nov. 7 or cast an absentee ballot on or before Nov. 6.

Sincerely,

Howard Lake-Waverly-Winsted Public Schools Board of Education

Ben Borrell
Paul Bravinder
Michelle Heuer
Katie Koch

Brian Marketon
Shannah Mulvihill
Kelsey Puncocar



THE NEED

For several reasons, Howard Lake-Waverly-Winsted Public Schools have significant budget issues. We made \$550,000 in budget cuts this year, but the district expects an additional \$345,000 budget deficit next year, with more significant deficits in future years if nothing is done.

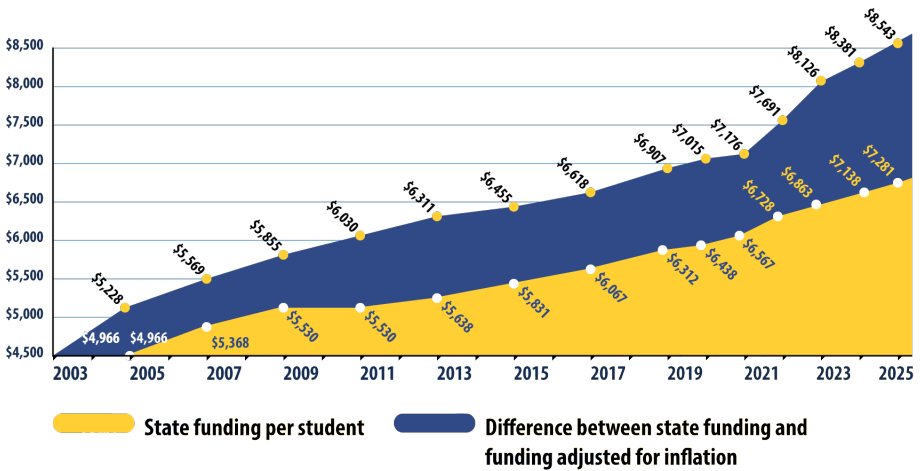
State revenue increases do not keep pace with inflation

HLWW is not the only school district with financial challenges.

Our challenges stem from:

- State education funding increases have not kept pace with inflation
- Previous operating levy expiration
- Increasing costs
- End of Covid/ESSER funds

Had state funding increased by the rate of inflation each year since 2003, 2025 funding would be \$8,543 per student, \$1,262 more than actual



Had funding from the state increased at the rate of inflation, HLWW Schools would receive \$1.6 million more next school year alone. Meanwhile, cost increases, such as in critical special education programs, are expected to cost the district \$377,000 more than it receives this year from the state and federal governments.

WE'VE PROACTIVELY MANAGED OUR FINANCES

As you know, we have been seeking assistance from the community with referendum requests over the last several years, each of which was rejected. Without increased revenue we were forced to:

- Consistently adjust our budget - we made \$550,000 in budget reductions this year
- Make adjustments by not refilling positions after retirements or resignations

Even though cuts were made, the district is expecting a \$345,000 deficit budget in school year 2024-2025 and will use fund balance (the district's savings account) to address the issue. If nothing is done, the fund balance will be gone by 2026.

"The School District is being very conservative and is only asking for half of the shortfall from our State Government not keeping school funding up with inflation."

Dick Borrell, Former State Representative

Budget Adjustment List for School Year 2023-2024

Reductions from SY 23-24

| | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|
| RN Position | \$72,903 |
| 3rd Grade | \$88,902 |
| 4th Grade | \$87,965 |
| Middle School/High School Tech Ed | \$27,452 |
| Middle School/High School 0.2 FTE Art | \$3,700 |
| Middle School Reading | \$53,877 |
| Technology | \$30,000 |
| Curriculum | \$96,000 |
| STARRS Online | \$40,000 |
| Business Office Software | \$20,000 |
| Library Books/Instructional Supplies | \$33,700 |
| Memberships/Subscriptions | \$2,407 |
| Total Reductions | \$556,906 |

WHAT IS THE PLAN?

The HLWW School Board will be asking voters to approve an Operating Levy of \$600 per pupil, tied to the rate of inflation, for the next 10 years.

What if the referendum is not approved?

If the operating levy is not approved, we will be forced to undertake further, more drastic budget cuts. Even with those cuts, we do not believe we can make enough budget reductions to solve our financial challenges: **the size and scope of our unfunded and underfunded mandated programs won't allow us to balance our budget using cuts alone.** The budget cuts we would make this year would result in larger class sizes, reduced aid for students needing additional support and elimination of some in-school and out-of-school opportunities for students.



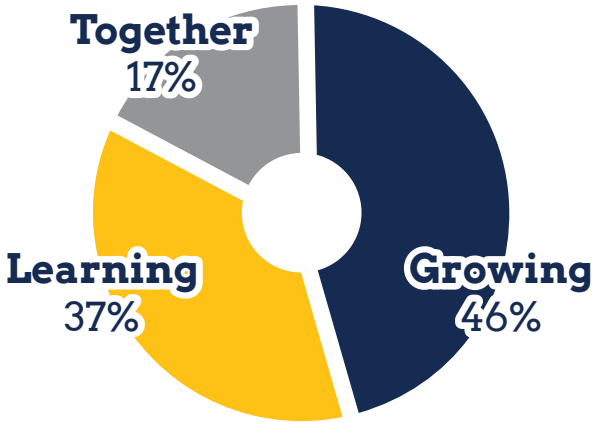
Example: Cutting ALL extracurricular activities would not solve the problem

Our projected deficit in 2026-27 is \$611,000. If we eliminated all extracurricular activities - football, volleyball, Knowledge Bowl, FFA, plays, speech, and 25 other activities, plus support staff like coaches and the activities director - we would save \$694,000. But it wouldn't eliminate the deficit because we would no longer have the \$203,000 in revenue generated through activities fees and ticket sales.

HOW WILL REFERENDUM FUNDING BE SPENT? PRUDENTLY.

The HLWW School Board will be asking voters to approve an Operating Levy of \$600 per pupil, tied to the rate of inflation, for the next 10 years.

Funds will be used to maintain/sustain district operations



We are all about **growing** a school district that can compete with any other.

- Attract and retain quality staff
- Attract and retain students/families
- Facility maintenance and upkeep
- Stabilizing finances

We are all about **learning** by providing a strong future for our students.

- Keep class sizes low
- Potentially restore teaching positions
- Update and enhance classroom resources and curriculum used for learning
- Enhance career training pathways to better prepare students for post-graduation

We are all in this **together** to improve our communities through education.

- Community-based strategic planning process
- Long-term opportunities with new leadership, a new approach, and new possibilities

WHAT WILL IT COST ME?

Less Than a Large Pizza

The cost for a residential home, valued at \$300,000, would be \$17 per month.

The tax impact for the referendum is less than the cost of a large pizza each month.



Did You Know?

Farm families pay school operating levy taxes on just one acre of property, including the house and garage, not on your agricultural acreage.



ONE ACRE

Including house, garage: Amount of property on which a farm pays operating levy taxes.

Tax impact on three home values:

Home Market Value

\$250,000

\$300,000

\$400,000

Monthly Tax Impact

\$14

\$17

\$23

How does Howard Lake-Waverly-Winsted compare to our neighbors?

Financial Comparisons to Other School Districts

The HLWW School District has among the lowest of all taxing rates within neighboring schools. Even if the proposed referendum passes, the school tax bill would remain in the lower half of neighboring schools.

Operating Referendum Comparison



* Authorities with voter approved annual inflationary adjustment
Source: ACRB, May 2023 Levy Reports

HOW DO OUR COMMUNITIES BENEFIT FROM STRONG SCHOOLS?

Good schools are important to our neighbors who own a business or work at area companies, as well as to families considering a move to our community. Strong schools help support a strong and vibrant community.

Ensure continued LOCAL educational, enrichment and athletic opportunities for all children and families who live and learn in Howard Lake, Waverly and Winsted.

DOES THE QUALITY OF SCHOOLS REALLY AFFECT PROPERTY VALUES?

Yes. According to a National Alliance of Business report, “The second most often cited reason for a business selecting a particular location is the quality of the schools.” Good schools are also shown to attract and retain families. A community that attracts families and businesses tends to have a stronger tax base, higher home values, and a tax burden that is spread more widely.



“I’m impressed with HLWW. As an employer, getting good recruits is critical. When you have a school that is promoting good academic performance, it’s good for the community.”

Dave Sherman, Founder, Flagship Insurance

WHERE AND WHEN DO I VOTE? VOTE TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 7. POLLS ARE OPEN 7 A.M. - 8 P.M.

Voters can participate in the election through absentee ballot, voting early in-person and on election day, Tuesday, Nov. 7 from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.

How Do I Vote Early and/or Vote from Home (Absentee Ballot)?

VOTE EARLY BY MAIL

You can vote early through an absentee ballot starting Friday, Sep. 22, 2023, through Monday, Nov. 6, 2023. Fill out an absentee ballot request form located on the HLWW School website under the District tab, in the school election information section and submit it in one of the ways indicated on the form or you can complete the absentee ballot application via the Minnesota Secretary of State's website and follow the instructions.

How Do I Vote Early In-Person?

Early in-person voting starts Sept. 22 through Nov. 6, in the HLWW District Office, 8700 County Road 6 SW, Howard Lake, Minnesota, from 8 a.m. through 4 p.m. (CLOSED Fri., Oct. 20, 2023) You will seal your absentee ballot into an envelope to be processed and tabulated.

How Do I Vote on Election Day?

Election Day is November 7, 2023. There will be three (3) combined polling places for this special election that will be open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. Find out where you vote on our website: <https://hlww.k12.mn.us/referendum/electioninfo>.




Special Election Ballot

Independent School District No. 2687 (Howard Lake-Waverly-Winsted Public Schools)

November 7, 2023

Instructions to Voters:

To vote, completely fill in the oval(s) next to your choice(s) like this: .

To vote for a question, fill in the oval next to the word "Yes" on that question.
To vote against a question, fill in the oval next to the word "No" on that question.

School District Question 1 Approval of School District Referendum Revenue Authorization

**Lower than the state
average of \$874**

The school board of Independent School District No. 2687 (Howard Lake-Waverly-Winsted Public Schools) has proposed to increase its general education revenue by \$600 per pupil. The proposed referendum revenue authorization would be applicable for ten years beginning with taxes payable in 2024, and increase each year by the rate of inflation beginning with taxes payable in 2025, unless otherwise revoked or reduced as provided by law.

| | | |
|-----------------------|------------|---|
| <input type="radio"/> | Yes | Shall the increase in the revenue proposed by the school board of Independent School District No. 2687 be approved? |
| <input type="radio"/> | No | |

BY VOTING "YES" ON THIS BALLOT QUESTION, YOU ARE VOTING FOR A PROPERTY TAX INCREASE.

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE 2023 REFERENDUM

Website: <https://hlww.k12.mn.us/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/HLWWHS/>

Email: Superintendent Nate Walbruch, nwalbruch@hlww.k12.mn.us

Phone: (320) 543-4646



Howard Lake-Waverly-Winsted Public Schools
PO Box 708
Howard Lake, MN 55349

HOWARD LAKE-WAVERLY-WINSTED PUBLIC SCHOOLS

2023 Referendum Guide VOTE NOVEMBER 7

“We have a history of being strong supporters of our school district. Investing in our schools is an investment in our children’s future, as well as our communities.”

Peter Zimmerman, Mayor, Howard Lake

Conny Holmes, Mayor, Waverly

Steve Stotko, Mayor, Winsted