



Northland Pines School District Referendum Information

Scott Foster - District Administrator

Public Meetings:

Thursday, January 16 @ 6:30 p.m. - Land O' Lakes Elementary School

Thursday, January 23 @ 6:30 p.m. - Northland Pines Middle/High School

Thursday, January 30 @ 6:30 p.m. - St. Germain Elementary School

Tuesday, February 4 @ 2:00 p.m. - Walter E. Olson Memorial Library



The Northland Pines community guarantees rigor, relevance, and relationships to prepare all learners for life.

ALL staff BELIEVE in ALL students





NORTHLAND PINES SCHOOL DISTRICT

The Northland Pines community guarantees rigor,
relevance, and relationships to prepare all learners for life.

TEACHING & LEARNING

All students surpass their annual academic growth and demonstrate social/emotional skills necessary for life.

HUMAN RESOURCES

NPSD will recruit, train and support staff for optimal student outcomes.

FAMILIES & COMMUNITY

NPSD will engage all stakeholders and build relationships with families, community members and businesses to promote positive outcomes for students.

FACILITIES & OPERATIONS

NPSD will use district resources responsibly for the betterment of our students and community.

ALL staff BELIEVE in ALL students



When is our next referendum?

February 18, 2025

Shall the Northland Pines School District be authorized to exceed state revenue limits by \$5,600,000 each year for a period of three years on a non-recurring basis for each of the 2025-26, 2026-27, and 2027-28 school years, in order to maintain School District programs and operations.

**REFERENDUM TO EXCEED STATE
REVENUE LIMITS ON A NON-RECURRING BASIS
NORTHLAND PINES SCHOOL DISTRICT**

Shall the Northland Pines School District be authorized to exceed state revenue limits by \$5,600,000 each year for a period of three years on a non-recurring basis for each of the 2025-26, 2026-27, and 2027-28 school years, in order to maintain School District programs and operations?

YES

NO

Non-recurring

Typically used for operating expenses

- ❖ A non-recurring referendum to exceed the revenue limit allows a school district to levy an additional tax above the allowable limit for any given number of years. The tax has a “sunset” and once it is done, the district will no longer have the authority to levy, unless it goes back to referendum.



**Why do School Districts need
to go to an operational
referendum?**

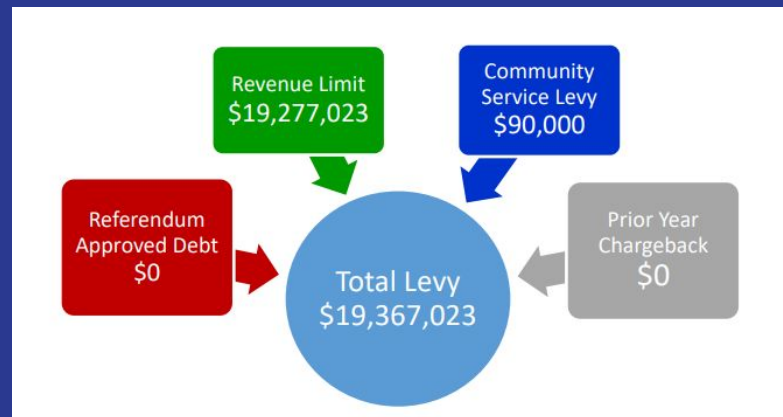
Revenue Limit (Cap) History

Wisconsin Act 16 implemented ***revenue limits*** beginning with the 1993-'94 school year. A district's revenue limit is the maximum amount of revenue it may raise through state general aid and property taxes.

There are four basic steps in calculating a school district's revenue limit:

What is the Revenue Limit and how is it calculated?

A district's revenue limit is the maximum amount of revenue that may be raised through **state general aid** and **property tax** for the General, Non-Referendum Debt, and Capital Expansion Funds, also referred to as Funds 10, 38, and 41 respectively.



**DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION
2018-19 REVENUE LIMIT WORKSHEET**

DISTRICT:	Northland Pines	1526
DATA AS OF 11/15/2018, 8:45 AM		
Line 1 Amount may Not Exceed Line 11 - (Line 7B+Line 10) of Final 17-18 Revenue Limit		
2017-18 General Aid Certification (17-18 Line 12A, src 621)	+	52,500
2017-18 Computer Aid Received (17-18 Line 17, Src 691)	+	6,660
2017-18 Hi Pov Aid (17-18 Line 12B, Src 628)	+	0
2017-18 Fnd 10 Levy Cert (17-18 Line 18, Levy 10 Src 211)	+	16,926,750
2017-18 Fnd 38 Levy Cert (17-18 Line 14B, Levy 38 Src 211)	+	90,937
2017-18 Fnd 41 Levy Cert (17-18 Line 14C, Levy 41 Src 211)	+	0
2017-18 Aid Penalty for Over Levy (17-18 FINAL Rev Limit Wksh't)	-	0
2017-18 Total Levy for All Levied Non-Recurring Exemptions*	-	4,062,677
*NET 2018-19 Base Revenue Built from 17-18 Data (Line 1)	=	13,014,170

*For 2017-18 Non-Recurring Exemptions Levy Amount, enter actual amount for which district levied; (7B Hold Harmless, Non-Recurring Referenda, Declining Enrollment, Energy Efficiency Exemption, Refunded/Rescinded Taxes, Prior Year Open Enrollment Pupils, Reduction for Ineligible Fund 80 Expendts, Environmental Remediation, Private School Voucher Aid Deduction, Private School Special Needs Voucher Aid Deduction)

September & Summer FTE Membership Averages

Count Ch. 220 Inter-District Resident Transfer Pupils @ 75%.

Line 2: Base Avg: ((15+4ss)+(16+4ss)+(17+4ss)) / 3 = **1,280**

	2015	2016	2017
Summer FTE:	0	20	10
% (40,40,40)	0	8	4
Sept FTE:	1,259	1,299	1,269
Special Needs Vouchers FTE	0	0	0
New ICS - Independent Charter Schools FTE	0	0	0
Total FTE	1,259	1,307	1,273

Line 6: Curr Avg: ((16+4ss)+(17+4ss)+(18+4ss)) / 3 = **1,285**

	2016	2017	2018
Summer FTE:	20	10	8
% (40,40,40)	8	4	3
Sept FTE:	1,299	1,269	1,273
Special Needs Vouchers FTE	0	0	0
New ICS - Independent Charter Schools FTE	0	0	0
Total FTE	1,307	1,273	1,276

"Current Average" for use in 18-19 Per-Pupil Aid calc (does not include Special Needs Voucher FTE or New ICS - Independent Charter Schools FTE). Average without SNS/PCS: **1,285**

Line 10B: Declining Enrollment Exemption =
Average FTE Loss (Line 2 - Line 6, if > 0)

X 1.00 =
X (Line 5, Maximum 2018-2019 Revenue per Memb) =
Non-Recurring Exemption Amount:

Fall 2018 Property Values (actuals have been loaded below)
2018 TIF-Out Tax Apportionment Equalized Valuation **3,315,932,288**

State Aid for Exempt Computers (Source 691) is included on Line 12C. It is no longer found on Line 17 as in previous year's Revenue Limit Worksheets.

Line 17 has been removed due to the change with State Aid for Exempt Computers.

Line 18 has been removed due to the change with State Aid for Exempt Computers, the **Fund 10 Levy** is now **Line 14A**.

CELL COLOR KEY: Auto-Calc DPI Data District-Entered
Worksheet is available at: <http://dpi.wi.gov/sfs/limits/worksheets/revenue>

Calculation Revised: 9/26/2018, New ICS - Independent Charter Schools FTE added to Line 2 and Line 6.

**DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION
2018-19 REVENUE LIMIT WORKSHEET**

2018-2019 Revenue Limit Worksheet	
1. 2017-18 Base Revenue (Funds 10, 38, 41)	(from left) 13,014,170
2. Base Sept Membership Avg (2015+4ss, 2016+4ss, 2017+4ss)/3	(from left) 1,280
3. 2017-18 Base Revenue Per Member (Ln 1 / Ln 2)	(with cents) 10,167.32
4. 2018-19 Per Member Change (A+B+C)	0.00
A. Allowed Per-Member Change	0.00
B. Low Rev Incr (Enter DPI Adjustment)	0.00
C. Low Rev Dist in CCDEB (Enter DPI Adjustment)	0.00
5. 2018-19 Maximum Revenue / Member (Ln 3 + Ln 4)	10,167.32
6. Current Membership Avg (2016+4ss, 2017+4ss, 2018+4ss)/3	(from left) 1,285
7. 2018-19 Rev Limit, No Exemptions (Ln 7A + Ln 7B)	(rounded) 13,065,006
A. Max Rev/Memb x Cur Memb Avg (Ln 5 x Ln 6)	13,065,006
B. Hold Harmless Non-Recurring Exemption	0
8. Total 2018-19 Recurring Exemptions (A+B+C+D+E)	(rounded) 0
A. Prior Year Carryover	0
B. Transfer of Service	0
C. Transfer of Territory/Other Reorg (if negative, include sign)	0
D. Federal Impact Aid Loss (2016-17 to 2017-18)	0
E. Recurring Referenda to Exceed (If 2018-19 is first year)	0
9. 2018-19 Limit with Recurring Exemptions (Ln 7 + Ln 8)	13,065,006
10. Total 2018-19 Non-Recurring Exemptions (A+B+C+D+E+F+G+H+I)	3,925,042
A. Non-Recurring Referenda to Exceed 2018-19 Limit	3,900,000
B. Declining Enrollment Exemption for 2018-19 (from left)	0
C. Energy Efficiency Net Exemption for 2018-19 (see pg 4 for details)	0
D. Adjustment for Refunded or Rescinded Taxes, 2018-19	0
E. Prior Year Open Enrollment (uncounted pupil[s])	25,042
F. Reduction for Ineligible Fund 80 Expenditures (enter as negative)	0
G. Environmental Remediation Exemption	0
H. WPCP and RPCP Private School Voucher Aid Deduction	0
I. SNSP Private School Voucher Aid Deduction	0
11. 2018-19 Revenue Limit With All Exemptions (Ln 9 + Ln 10)	16,990,048
12. Total Aid to be Used in Computation (12A + 12B + 12C + 12D)	86,637
A. 2018-19 October 15 Aid Certification - Cell is locked.	44,581
B. State Aid to High Poverty Districts (not all districts)	0
C. State Aid for Exempt Computers (Source 691)	6,822
D. State Aid for Exempt Personal Property (Source 691)	35,234
REMEMBER TO USE THE OCTOBER 15 AID CERTIFICATION WHEN SETTING THE DISTRICT LEVY.	
13. Allowable Limited Revenue: (Line 11 - Line 12) (10, 38, 41 Levies)	16,903,411
EXCEEDS LIMIT !!	
14. Total Limited Revenue To Be Used (A+B+C) Entries Required Below: Enter amnts needed by purpose and fund:	Not >line 13 16,913,579
A. Gen Operations: Fnd 10 Src 211	16,827,610 (Proposed Fund 10)
B. Non-Referendum Debt (inside limit) Fund 38 Src 211	85,969 (to Budget Rpt)
C. Capital Exp, Annual Meeting Approved: Fund 41 Src 211	0 (to Budget Rpt)
15. Total Revenue from Other Levies (A+B+C+D)	2,584,840
A. Referendum Apprvd Debt (Fund 39 Debt-Src 211)	2,479,840
B. Community Services (Fund 80 Src 211)	105,000 (to Budget Rpt)
C. Prior Year Levy Chargeback for Uncollectible Taxes (Src 212)	0 (to Budget Rpt)
D. Other Levy Revenue - Milwaukee & Kenosha Only	0 (to Budget Rpt)
16. Total Fall, 2018 ESTIMATED All Fund Tax Levy (14A + 14B + 14C + 15) <i>Line 16 is the total levy to be apportioned in the PI-401.</i>	19,498,419 Levy Rate = 0.00586622

Districts are responsible for the integrity of their revenue limit data & computation. Data appearing here reflects information submitted to DPI and is unaudited.

What is Mill Rate

The “Mill Rate” is the rate at which property taxes are determined. A property tax bill is comprised of four taxing authorities: City/Township, Vilas County, Nicolet Area Technical College, and the Northland Pines School District.



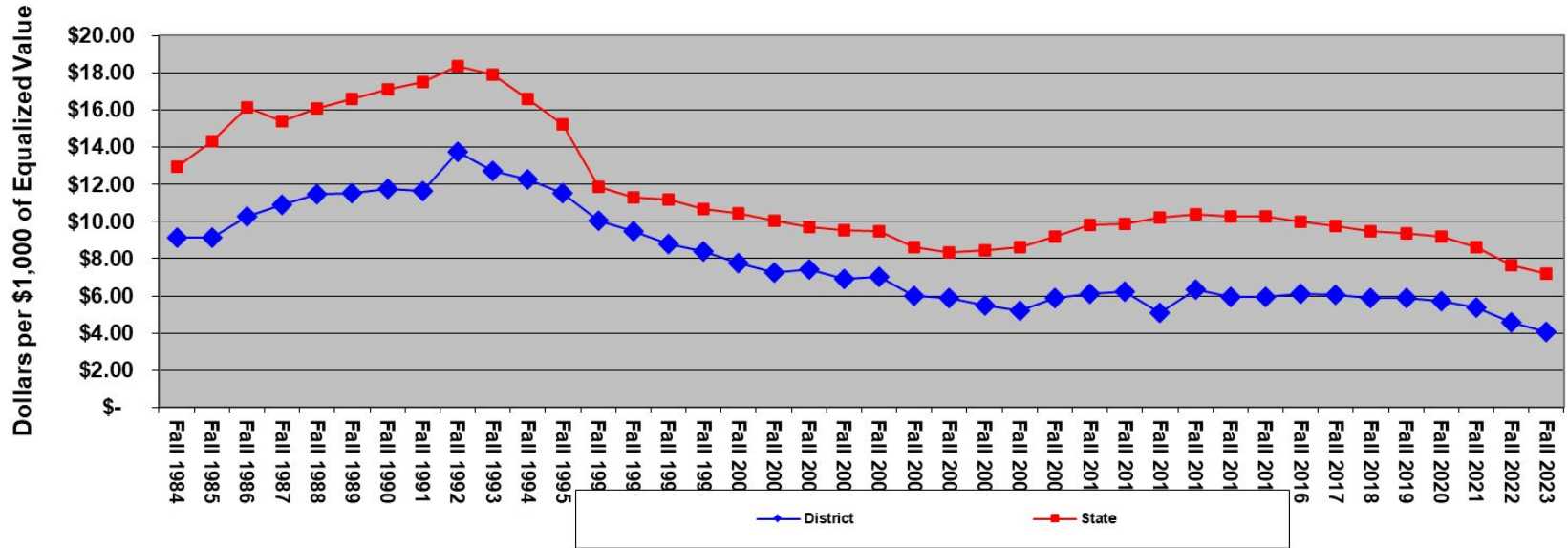
Effect on Property Taxes



In 2010-11, the mill rate for NPSD was \$6.09 per thousand. 2024-25 mill rate is \$3.33 per thousand. This includes the current \$4.6 million referendum, which is set to expire in June 2025. Projected new mill rate for 2025-26 with passed referendum would be \$3.49.

Equalized Tax Rate History

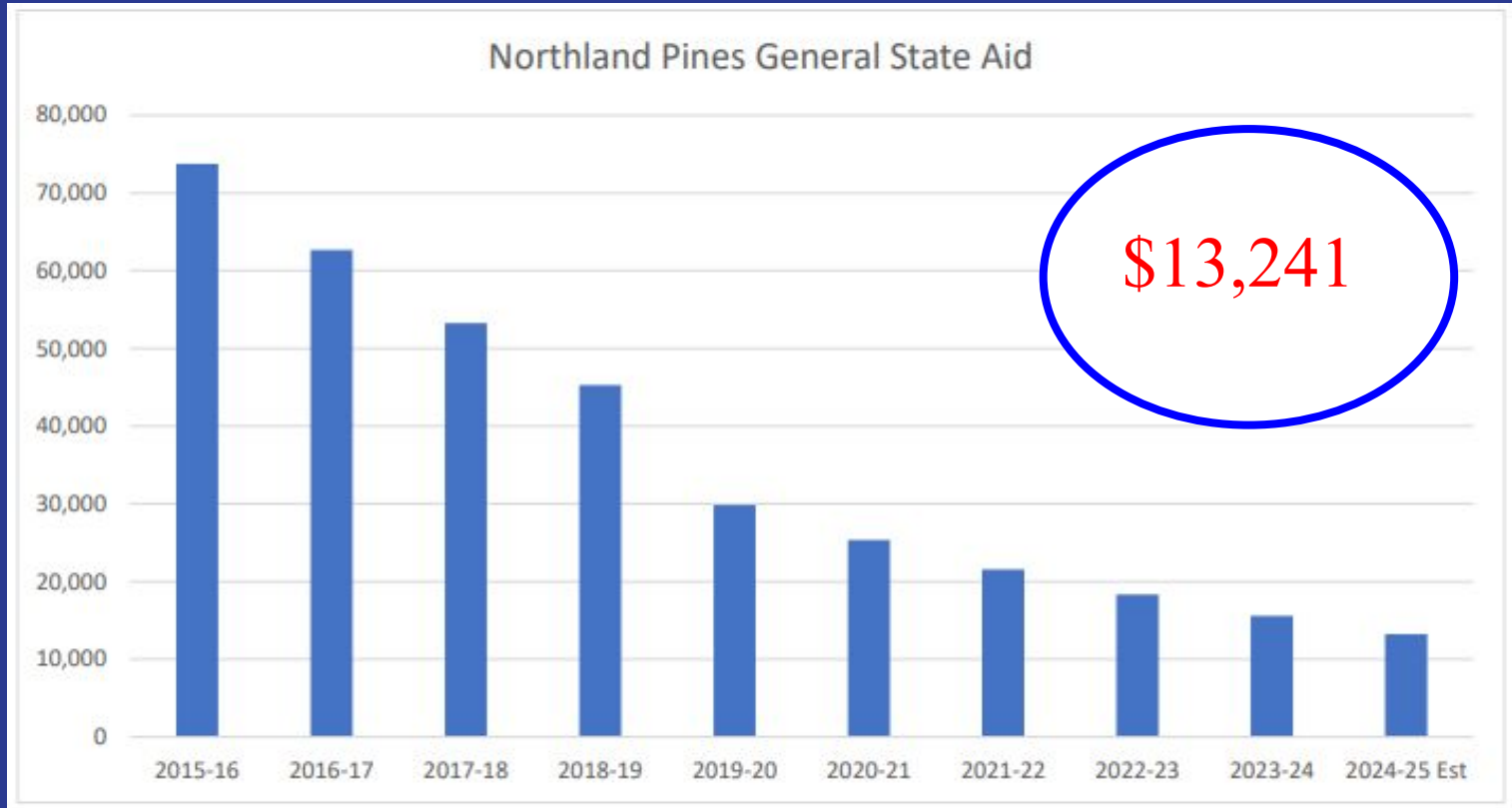
Survey of Equalized Tax Rates



General Aid

General state aid is distributed to school districts based on a formula that takes into consideration each individual district's equalized valuation, membership and costs.

Northland Pines general aid from the state continues to decrease.



Why does Northland Pines need to continue going to an operating referendum?

Wisconsin Act 16 implemented revenue limits beginning with the 1993-94 school year. A district's revenue limit is the maximum amount of revenue it may raise through state general aid and property taxes. Once a district begins an operational referendum cycle, it must continue as long as the state has the same funding formula. At the end of each three/four year cycle, the previous referendum dollars must be removed from the budget and a new referendum may be placed on the ballot, asking for the revenues for the next three/four years. As fixed costs and expenses continue to increase and state funding and revenue limits continue to decrease, the Northland Pines School District will have a projected budget shortfall of over \$7 million per year. Pursuant to WI state law, we must go to a referendum to exceed the revenue limit.

Budget Shortfall 2025-2026

2025-26:	\$6,079,392
2026-27:	\$6,786,686
2027-28:	<u>\$7,547,201</u>
Total Shortfall 2025-2026	\$20,613,279
Proposed Referendum	<u>\$16,800,000</u>
Remaining Budget Shortfall	(\$3,813,279)*

**Average of
\$6,871,093**

Referendum Dollar Amount:

**\$5.6 million per year
for three years.**

The 2022 operating referendum money (\$4.6 million) expires on June 30, 2025.

** Differences will be made up through cost saving measures, use of fund balance, and finding new revenue sources*

Why does it cost more to operate the NPSD than other districts our size?

- ❖ Demographics
- ❖ Building locations/Size/Structure of the district
- ❖ Transportation
 - The school district is 474 square miles and the cost is approximately \$1,600,000 annually for transportation; bussing costs increase annually. It costs more to operate and maintain three small elementary schools than it would one large elementary school. NPSD operates five schools whereas most districts our size would have three or less schools. The current **structure is best for our district**; however, in order to maintain the district as it is, it will cost more each year.

Our Operational Referendum History

October 6, 1998

\$950,000

Recurring

Failed 1104 to 1867

June 29, 1999

\$598,000

Non-Recurring

Failed 1856 to 1894

April 6, 1999

\$598,000

Recurring

Failed 1042 to 1928

April 2, 2002

3 Questions

1. \$787,000
per year for 3 years

*(textbooks, maintenance,
operating deficit)*

Passed 1756 to 1561

2. \$353,000
per year for 3 years

*(staffing, technology,
restoration of co-curriculars
& classroom supplies)*

Passed 1704 to 1591

3. \$174,000
per year for 3 years

(K8 roof)

Passed 2010 to 1276

Our Operational Referendum History

(continued)

April 4, 2006

\$2,400,000
per year for 3 years

Failed 1603 to 2031

June 27, 2006

\$1,580,000
per year for 3 years

Passed 2281 to 1841

April 7, 2009

\$2,900,000
per year for 3 years

Passed 1963 to 1767

February 19, 2013

2 Questions

1. \$2,700,000
per year for 3 years

Passed 1601 to 1030

2. \$240,000
(smoke/firewalls)

Passed 1588 to 1029

February 16, 2016

\$3,900,000
per year for 3 years

Passed 1876 to 1034

February 16, 2019

\$4,600,000
per year for 3 years

Passed 1230 to 635

February 16, 2022

\$4,600,000
per year for 3 years

**Passed 1342 to 613
(68%)**

District Demographics and Financial Status 2024-25 School Year

District	Property Value	Tax Levy	Equalized Aid	Mill Rate	Square Miles	# of Operational Referendums 1993-2024
Northland Pines	\$5,812,541,288	\$19,381,052	\$13,241	\$3.33	474	13 (1998)**
Rhineland	\$3,575,554,131	\$26,577,654	\$7,159,091	\$7.43	388	10 (2004)**
Three Lakes	\$2,566,123,778	\$10,214,391	\$5,923	\$3.98	303	7(2003)*
Phelps	\$1,037,521	\$7,198,129	\$1,641	\$6.94	108	8(2000)*
Tomahawk	\$2,509,799,131	\$14,026,044	\$2,001,350	\$5.59	87	5(1999)**

* Currently Under an Operating Referendum

** Going in February or April for another Referendum

LINKS - SOURCE [#1](#) & [#2](#)

2024-25 Mill Rate Comparisons

Great Northern Conference K-12 Districts



Northland Pines

\$3.33

Medford Area

\$5.99

Tomahawk

\$5.51

Antigo

\$7.16

Mosinee

\$5.89*

Rhineland

\$7.43

Lakeland

Not a K12

Merrill

\$5.17



2024-25 MILL RATES

There are 421 school districts in the state of Wisconsin.
See below how Northland Pines compares to other districts.

10 Lowest K-12 Mill Rates

1. Beloit	\$1.92
2. Gibraltar Area	\$2.59
3. Webster	\$3.08
4. Northwood	\$3.31
5. Washington	\$3.31
6. Northland Pines	\$3.33
7. Green Lake	\$3.44
8. Drummond	\$3.51
9. Phelps	\$3.57
10. Three Lakes	\$3.98

10 Highest K-12 Mill Rates

1. Gresham	\$14.00
2. Shorewood	\$11.26
3. Verona Area	\$10.96
4. Ithaca	\$10.90
5. Clintonville	\$10.74
6. Highland	\$10.71
7. Plum City	\$10.66
8. Clinton	\$10.61
9. Cambria-Friesland	\$10.49
10. Johnson Creek	\$10.33

State
Average
is \$7.22

NPSD Mill Rate History



Year	Enrollment	Mill Rate	Total Levy
2019-20	1314	\$5.89(Actual) \$6.12(Estimated)	\$20,402,910
2020-21	1320	\$5.73(Actual) \$6.06 (Estimated)	\$20,517,716
2021-22	1371	\$5.40(Actual) \$6.07 (Estimated)	\$20,542,163
2022-23	1365(projected)	\$4.58(Actual) \$5.39 (Estimated)	\$20,698,555
2023-24	1367(projected)	\$4.05(Actual) \$5.36 (Estimated)	\$20,811,332
2024-25	1367 (projected)	\$3.33(Actual) \$4.68 (Estimated)	\$19,381,052
2025-26	1321(projected)	\$3.49 (with a passed referendum)	\$20,498,368
2026-27	1304(projected)	\$3.44 (with a passed referendum)	\$20,844,856
2027-28	1275 (projected)	\$3.38 (with a passed referendum)	\$20,963,841

District Successes



1. Security and safety - **SRO Partnership**

2. Academics

- Preparing students for world of work, college (2 & 4 Year), & military
- 99% Graduation rate last year
- All schools and District meet or exceed expectations on report card
- Local report cards recognize parent, community and business priorities



3. Opportunities for students

- Academics
- #activities
- Musical/Trap Shooting/Fishing Team/HOSA/SkillsUSA
- Mental Health Partnerships
- Job Fair at school



Academic Focus

Students have choices!

○ How they Learn

- Charter Schools
- PLP (Personal Learning Plans)
- Start College Now
- School to work opportunities
- School Forest
- Outdoor classrooms



○ What they Learn

- Strong Academic Classes with AP, College, and many levels in all core areas
- Strong Vocational Program
- Strong Arts Program- visual and musical
- Many electives to match students career and life opportunities

Community

Praise in the Pines

Pickleball

Tennis

Soccer

Girl & Boy Scouts

Headwaters for the Performing Arts

Vacationland Voices

Electronic recycling

Garden at MS/HS

Quilt Show

Fab Lab

Tech Help

Walking on Track

VCEDC - Entrepreneur Days & Award

Veterans Day at all 3 Campuses

Service Hours

Indoor Soccer

VCSD

Shelter







2024 Herb Kohl Educational Foundation
Teacher Fellow




Trina Burr
Eagle River Elementary Physical Education Teacher





What will happen if the referendum fails?

If the referendum fails the NPSD will have an average budget deficit of \$6,871,093 million per year over the next three years and some very difficult decisions will need to be made on how to balance the budget. **All aspects of the district will be impacted.**

- 2025-26 School Year would not have an operating referendum to run (\$4.6 million is gone)
 - Earliest another referendum could happen would be Fall of 2026 or Spring of 2027
 - Operating funds would be depleted meaning chances in the future to have to short term borrow and we would have to pay interest
- 

How has NPSD reduced operating costs?

1. Reduced one administrator 2018-19
2. Continue to bid out insurance
3. Implemented a \$5,000/\$10,000 deductible HSA/HRA Health Insurance plan in 2010 and continue to this day
4. Outsourced food service to a private vendor
5. Successful grant awards
6. All employees pay half of their WI retirement contributions with an estimated savings of over \$600,000 per year
7. Share teachers between Middle School and High School
8. Share teachers across the district
9. Energy projects to reduce long range costs (LED Lighting, Upper 90)
10. Solar on all campuses
11. Used federal dollars for technology upgrades that typically had been local dollars
12. Used federal dollars wisely during the pandemic for learning and saved when possible
13. Reduce staff when enrollment and other factors make sense

What have we done for the last 3 Years?

1. Transparent

- a. All Board and Committee Meetings are shared online
- b. Budgets are open and transparent
- c. Audits prove that our procedures and policies are in place and being followed
- d. Share academic data at the public board meeting multiple times a year and ongoing with parents

2. Use of Dollars

- a. We have been conservative with the funds we get allowing for a smaller dollar amount than inflation would have said we needed
- b. We have invested dollars in staff for academics, training in the areas of reading, math and writing.
- c. We offer vocational and fine arts classes, keep classes small and focus on opportunities for students and community.
- d. We continue to find partnerships and give students rigorous and relevant learning.
- e. We have 3 and 5 year plans that give the Board not only the best information to vote on use of funds, but has also allowed us to save funds.

3. Trust - Building Referendum

- a. Board promised the building would come off the taxes when paid for and not just moved over and that was done.

Tax Impact on Citizens

The “**Mill Rate**” is the rate at which property taxes are determined. A property tax bill is comprised of four taxing authorities: City/Township, Vilas or Oneida Counties, Nicolet Area Technical College and the Northland Pines School District. 2024/25 Mill Rate is 3.33

If passed, the referendum would **slightly increase** the NPSD mill rate **based on current mill rate*** approximately:

2025/26 - 3.49 - Increase of .16

2026/27 - 3.44 - Increase of .11

2027/28 - 3.38 - Increase of .05

**2024/25 Mill Rate is 3.34*

The estimated tax implication on the value of your house with a passed referendum would be:

2024/25 \$200,000 home

\$666/year

2025/26 \$200,000 home

\$698/year (32 dollars)

The mill rate for 2022-23 was \$4.58 per thousand of equalized valuation. With an estimated decreases, the **tax rate would average \$3.44 per thousand over the new 3 years.** (Cloverland, Conover, Eagle River, Land O' Lakes, Phelps*, Lincoln, St Germain, Newbold, Plum Lake, Washington)

Tax Impact on Citizens

PROJECTED TAX IMPACT OF THE REFERENDUM

1st Year, 2026 Tax Bill	\$16.00 per \$100,000 of property value
2nd Year, 2027 Tax Bill	\$11.00 per \$100,00 of property value
3rd Year, 2028 Tax Bill	\$5.00 per \$100,000 of property value



The total impact over three years is \$32 per \$100,000 of property value.

If your house is valued at \$300,000, you would pay an additional \$96 to the school district over three years.

Editor's Opinion

Flawed state revenue caps are the referendum culprit

As the Northland Pines and Phelps school districts go to referendum next Tuesday in hopes of avoiding even more program and personnel cuts, the voters should know the truth on why the districts have been forced into this "survival by referendum" cycle.

It is not the fault of school boards, administrators and local teachers that Pines is seeking authority to exceed state revenue caps by \$2.9 million, and Phelps by \$835,000 over the next three years. They are simply playing by the rules established by the Legislature.

Legislators get the blame for tossing school districts into the referendum cycle. It was 16 years ago that they carelessly set a revenue cap of 2.1% but created a Qualified Economic Offer bargaining system that allows salary and benefit increases of about 4.2% annually.

With the districts' major budget item growing at twice the rate of the cap, it didn't take but a decade for most districts to run out of cuts to make or funds to steal from other budget accounts. It was the Legislature, under the guise of accountability to local taxpayers, that created a cycle few districts have escaped. Some of the lucky ones, mostly urban districts, escaped the cycle with new state aids and stable if not growing student numbers.

The situation got even worse when student enrollment started dropping in 1999, which eliminated even more taxing authority. Northland Pines, for example, has lost \$1.84 million in levying authority because of the 203 students the district has lost since 2001.

At the very least, taxpayers should recognize that legislators intended for the referendum cycle to occur — that they didn't want to be blamed for an annual 4% tax levy increase each year to cover contract costs and other increases. Instead, they placed that responsibility with local taxpayers — as if there is a choice that won't lead to the destruction of the state's educational system.

It was a shameful act on the part of legislators, especially when you consider that the state Supreme Court ruled in recent years that the Constitution mandates that the state will provide a sound basic education to every child.

We have witnessed the enormous effort administrators and school boards here have made to save money by refinancing loans, creating more efficient schools, cutting personnel, cutting programs, changing health-care providers, reducing supply budgets, restructuring contracts, outsourcing work, eliminating overtime, eliminating bus routes and cutting back on bus runs tied to extracurricular activities.

Meanwhile, they have aggressively pursued state and federal grants to supplement local tax dollars, and they continue to fight Madison for a fair share of state school aids. Once caught in the referendum cycle, there is no escape. With no more cuts to make short of severely hurting educational quality, the districts must turn to the taxpayers for authority to exceed the flawed revenue caps.

We believe the students — the future of our country — deserve that support.

Behind the editorial 'we'

Editorials that appear here weekly are composed by Editor Kurt Krueger, and include input from Publisher Byron McNutt and Assistant Editor Gary Ridderbusch.

Our View

Legislators get the blame for school referendums

In a recent press release, the Wisconsin Policy Forum (WPF) noted state levy limits, inflation, and lost federal pandemic funding were major reasons for an increased number of school district referendums to exceed levy limits this spring.

And while that is probably accurate as a general statement regarding school funding issues today, what the WPF did not fully explain is exactly how so many school districts were forced into the "survival by referendum" more than 20 years ago.

We believe the why in this case is very important, because it places much of the blame for referendums on short-sighted legislators who had to know they were setting up school districts for financial disaster.

History shows that when legislators implemented the Qualified Economic Offer (QEO) system in regard to contract bargaining, they basically allowed school boards to avoid binding arbitration if they offered a salary and benefit package that rose 4.2%.

This was long before Act 10, which effectively wiped out contract negotiations and binding arbitration, giving significantly more bargaining power to school boards.

The flaw in the QEO system was that at the same time, the state imposed a 2.1% levy limit on school districts — a limit that was half of the 4.2% expected to be spent on salaries and benefits.

It didn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that at some point, with districts having to steal from other budget accounts to make up for the salary and benefit losses annually, that they would exhaust all sources and run out of things to cut — forcing them to ask the taxpayers to exceed the revenue caps for operating expenses.

Add to that declining enrollment across the state, which lowers state aid and per pupil spending increases, along with inflation, and you've got a formula for fiscal disaster. And that's what school districts have been facing for two decades.

Thanks to an informed, understanding and pro-education electorate, the Northland Pines, Phelps and Three Lakes school districts have received the community support they need to survive.

Behind the editorial 'we'

Members of the Vilas County News-Review editorial board include Publisher Kurt Krueger, Editors Josephine Hinderman, Mickey Schommer and Jacob Heid and



VILAS COUNTY NEWS- REVIEW

Northland Pines School District provides free services to senior citizens

The Northland Pines School District (NPSD) provides free services and activities for older adults, ranging from community times for walking in the field house to technology training sessions.

District Administrator Mike Richie said the district values the senior citizens and all active older adults living in and around the Eagle River area.

The Northland Pines Middle and High School opens its doors to the field house for anyone in the community wishing to walk indoors rather than outside during the sometimes hazardous winter snowy and icy weather.

Walking the field house track is free to the public and is available during the following times when school is in session Mondays through Fridays:

- 6:30 to 8:15 a.m. (enter through doors 15 or 16).
- 1 to 3 p.m. (enter through door 1 at front of middle and high school building).
- 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. (if there are no events; check facility use calendar at npsd.k12.wi.us).

The field house also is open for walking on Saturdays from 7 a.m. to noon (enter through door 16). The field house is closed Sundays.

Richie said the district does require any person from the public who is entering the building to walk during the student school day to provide a photo ID which officials can run through a background check machine.

"This is a student safety issue and everyone has been extremely cooperative in this regard," said Richie. "We all work together to keep our students and staff safe."



The Northland Pines Middle and High School field house track is open for walking Mondays through Fridays when school is in session, as well as Saturday mornings.

Free tech training

The Northland Pines School District offers free technology training to senior citizens and community members.

Staff and students volunteer their time to answer questions and provide tips and tricks for tablets (iPad or Android), Chromebooks, laptops (Mac or PC), phones or anything else community members want to bring in.

The next technology training session will be Tuesday, Feb. 20, from 4 to 6 p.m.

For more information, contact Harlan Lousink, NPSD technology director, at (715) 479-4479, ext. 3319, or hlousink@npsd.k12.wi.us.

Free sporting events

The Northland Pines School District celebrates its senior citizens by offering senior passes to all district residents who are 62 years of age or older.

This pass entitles senior citizens to free admission to all school-sponsored sporting events (excluding WIAA tournaments). To obtain a pass, seniors can stop by the Northland Pines Middle and High School office with a photo ID or request a pass at the ticket booth at one of the events.

Wellness Center specials

The Pines Community Wellness Center, located in the Northland Pines Middle and High School, is available for use to all district residents.

On the third Wednesday of every month, senior citizens may use the Pines Community Wellness Center for free (does not include classes).



Northland Pines instructor Adam Matyaka assists seniors in a school-sponsored tech training class. The next free session is set for Tuesday, Feb. 20. —Contributed Photos

The Pines Community Wellness Center offers a wide variety of classes geared toward the active older adult.

The center also offers special rates for senior citizens (ages 62 and older) as follows:

- Senior citizen single annual: \$240, includes one free eight-week session per year.
- Senior citizen single monthly: \$20.
- Senior citizen family annual: \$400, includes two free eight-week sessions.
- Senior citizen family monthly: \$35.

Senior fitness programs

One of the strongest programs offered through the Wellness Center is the SilverSneakers® Fitness Program which currently has more than 180 members.

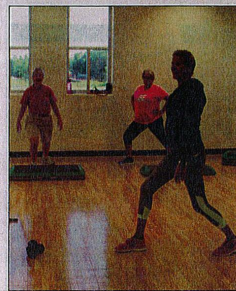
Members of participating Medicare health plans join the SilverSneakers Fitness Program to take charge of their own health and well-being. To qualify, seniors must be a Medicare-eligible member of a health plan that offers the SilverSneakers Fitness Program.

The Pines Community Wellness Center is now affiliated with the Silver&Fit® program. The Silver&Fit program is designed for older adults.

"By exercising regularly and meeting new people, you can be silver, fit and fabulous too," said a program spokesperson. "Improved fitness is a better way of life. After all, regular physical activity is one of the best ways to improve your health."

Health plans offer the Silver&Fit program to eligible Medicare Advantage/Supplement beneficiaries and group retirees.

For more information on any of the Pines Community Wellness Center programs, contact the center at (715) 479-4473, ext. 3351 or ext. 3350.



The Pines Community Wellness Center offers a variety of classes geared toward active older adults. One day a month, the center can be used for free.

ANY QUESTIONS?





Remember to vote on
Tuesday, February 18, 2025!

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complete voting information,
public meetings, videocast and
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