

News Release

Alexandria Public Schools
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Referendum on November ballot to Increase Funding for Alexandria Public Schools

After several months of community input, deliberation, budget review and discussion, the Alexandria School Board unanimously approved placing a school funding request on the November 5, 2019 ballot.

The one-question ballot request is for a phased increase to an operating levy, which would provide additional funding to bridge the district's budget gap and help maintain its academic programs, student support services and class sizes. Rather than ask for one larger increase, the School Board chose to phase in the increase over time. The funding increase would be phased in over three years to address increasing deficits in future years by only requesting funds as they are needed:

- \$375 per student in the 2020-21 school year
- \$485 per student in the 2021-22 school year (+\$110 over the prior year)
- \$595 per student in the 2022-23 school year (+\$110 over the prior year)

If approved by voters, the \$595 per student would then remain in place for the final seven years of the levy. The phased-in levy amounts also means the corresponding tax impact would be phased in over the first three years. The tax impact is not equal to the per pupil amount; the tax impact would be approximately \$10 per month for the average homeowner (\$220,000 value home) in the first year of the levy.

"By increasing the levy over time, we are spreading out the tax increase over three years," said Superintendent Julie Critz. "We are only asking for what we need, as we need it. We feel this is the most respectful and fiscally responsible approach for our community."

The request is based on increasing pressures on the district's operating budget which include:

- The district faced a \$1.1 million shortfall in 2019-20, requiring it to cut more than half a million dollars in addition to drawing down its fund balance which is a critical safety valve for all districts. The district projects ongoing cuts without additional revenue.
- Alexandria is in the bottom 10% of all Minnesota school districts for general education funding.
- Alexandria is one of the only school districts in the area without a voter-approved operating levy, which means it doesn't have the additional financial support that many communities provide to help operate their schools.
- While the district is grateful for the additional state funding recently approved for the next two years, it does not make up for years of inadequate state funding and unfunded mandates.

The last time the school district asked voters for increased funding was the 2011 bond for Alexandria Area High School; the last operating levy request was in 2004.

The School District will develop informational materials and a comprehensive website to help the community understand the request in advance of the November vote.

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If you have any additional questions, please contact Julie Critz, (320) 762-2141 ext. 4203, jcritz@alexschools.org