

A message from Westonka Superintendent Kevin Borg

Dear Westonka Residents,

We are grateful for local support of Westonka Public Schools, which has brought positive growth, recognition and success to our students and community.

On Nov. 5, 2019, Westonka residents will be asked to vote on a single ballot question to revoke the three voter-approved operating levies currently in place and replace them with a single, 10-year levy with a tiered payment structure. School districts regularly rely on voter-approved operating funds to help close the gap created by state and federal funding shortages. Operating levies provide funds for day-to-day operating expenses, including teacher salaries, transportation, utilities, classroom supplies, mental health services, and other supports to student learning.



The new levy will provide 10 years of stable funding and will allow Westonka to stay competitive with the neighboring school districts to which we are regularly compared. We believe strong educational performance is imperative to retain demand, especially in a state with open enrollment. Westonka carefully balances costs with a curriculum that challenges each and every student.

As residents know, school taxes within the Westonka School District are the lowest in Hennepin County. That is forecast to remain the same even with the passage of this levy. This is a notable fact, especially when compared to the quality of education being delivered to our students. Overall, Westonka students rank second in the state in math and seventh in the state in reading on 2019 state assessments.

Having top-in-state academics and the lowest taxes in the county doesn't just happen. It takes a commitment to student success and to being responsible stewards of taxpayer dollars. The Westonka School Board only brings requests to the community when they feel something is truly needed by the school district. Westonka's last referendum for an operating levy increase was in 2007.

We work hard each year to balance the budget and make fiscally wise decisions. Despite recent enrollment growth, for the past two years the district has dipped into its fund reserve to protect class sizes, programs and student supports. We have reached the point where we either need to increase funding or make significant reductions, starting with a projected \$750,000 in cuts for the 2020-2021 school year.

Please read on to familiarize yourself with the Nov. 5 referendum, and visit the district website to learn more. As always, please feel free to contact me directly with any questions, comments or concerns.

Sincerely,

Kevin Borg, Superintendent
(952) 491-8001
borgk@westonka.k12.mn.us

Learn more: www.westonka.k12.mn.us/referendum

maintain the lowest taxes

nov. 5 operating levy referendum

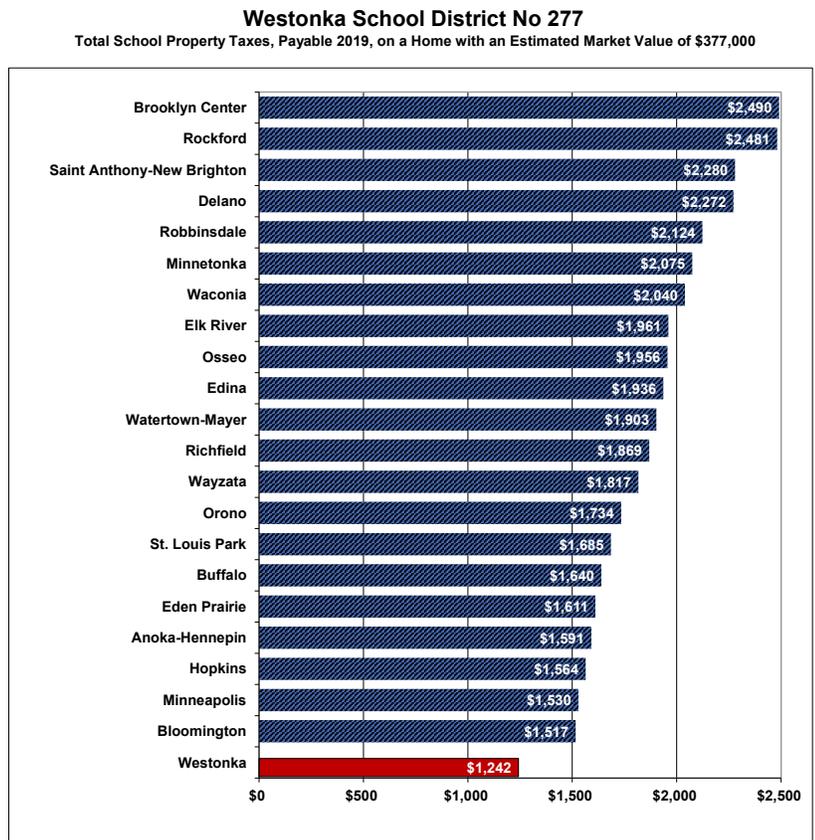
Westonka has the lowest school property taxes in Hennepin County

Even with the passage of a bond referendum in 2016 to build an activity center and performing arts center on the high school campus, Westonka Public Schools continues to have the lowest total school property taxes in Hennepin County. Westonka has not asked for an increase to its operating levy in more than 10 years, with the last increase coming in 2007.

If the new levy is approved in 2019, Westonka will *still* have the lowest school taxes in the county.

Westonka Avg. Taxable Market Value	Estimated Monthly Tax Impact	
	Taxes Payable 2020 (Increase #1)	Taxes Payable 2024 (Increase #2)
\$377,000	+\$7.50 per month	+\$6.50 per month

Source: Ehlers.
More tax information available on the Referendum page on the district website.



Source: School Tax Reports



accelerate progress

Westonka Public Schools consistently ranks among the top school districts in the state and the nation. Our schools have experienced over 15 consecutive years of top-in-state test results. In 2019, Westonka students scored **#2 in the state in math** and **#7 in the state in reading** on Minnesota's statewide tests.



Westonka Schools Recognized for Excellence

- Westonka is ranked 12th out of 452 Minnesota districts by SchoolDigger, and all four Westonka schools earned five stars (highest possible rating)
- Westonka is listed as the No. 16 "Best School District" in Minnesota by Niche.com, and all four schools have an "A" rating
- U.S. News & World Report ranks Mound Westonka High School as the 12th "Best High School" in Minnesota

secure long-term funding

nov. 5 operating levy referendum

Securing our future

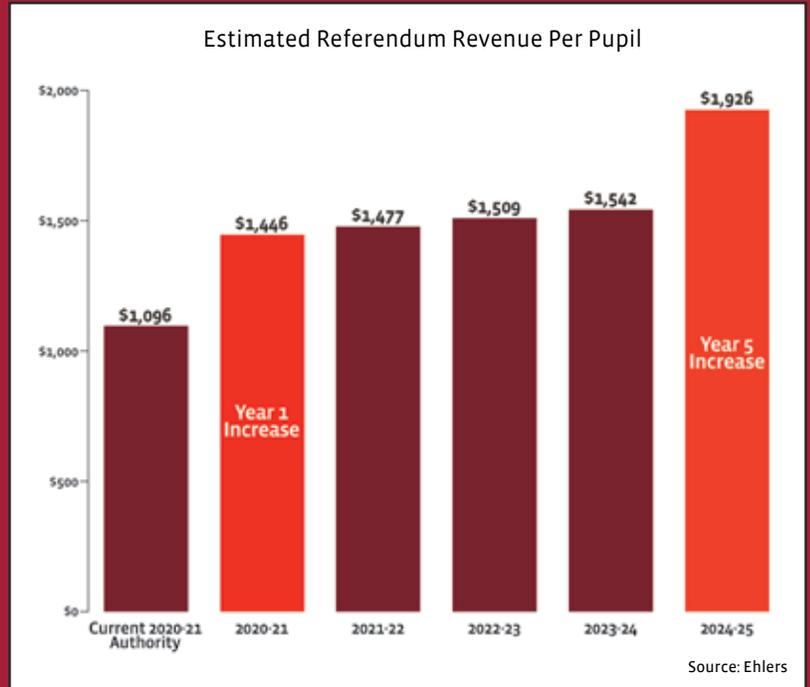
The new levy will provide 10 years of stable funds needed for growth and continuous improvement. State funding has not kept up with inflation over the last decade, and unfunded federal and state mandates divert funds from other needed programming. Westonka makes annual budget reductions to help close this funding gap; however, even with reductions and enrollment growth, the past two years the district has dipped into its fund reserve to protect class sizes, programs and student supports.

Using an “emergency fund” to balance the budget is not sustainable. Furthermore, the enrollment growth the district has relied on for revenue in recent years is projected to level off in 2023. Without a long-term funding solution, significant reductions impacting student learning will be required.

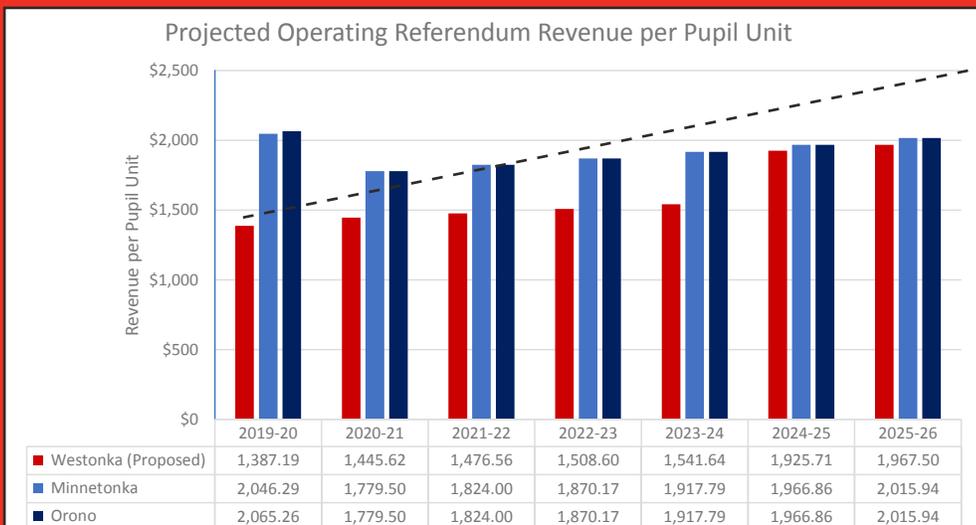
Responsible tiered approach

If approved on Nov. 5, the single, 10-year levy will be implemented in two steps and will adjust for inflation, providing long-term revenue and lessening the tax impact for residents. Instead of asking for a larger increase up front, this levy accesses funds only as they are needed by the district.

If the levy passes, the current levy authority will increase to \$1,446 per pupil for taxes payable 2020 (generating approx. \$1 million in additional revenue) and to \$1,926 for taxes payable 2024 (generating an additional \$1 million).



stay competitive



Westonka’s operating referendum revenue currently falls well below the districts to which our results and programs are regularly compared.

The passage of the levy would gradually bring Westonka’s per pupil funding closer to that of neighboring school districts Orono and Minnetonka.

Data compiled by Ehlers from Minnesota Department of Education Phaseout Report dated 9/17/19. For fiscal year 2020-21 and later, all allowances have been reduced by \$300 due to new legislation approved in 2019 that will shift \$300 of referendum authority to Local Optional Revenue. Estimates are based on the latest estimates of inflation provided by Minnesota Department of Education.



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Learn more at www.westonka.k12.mn.us/referendum or contact Superintendent Kevin Borg at (952) 491-8001 or borgk@westonka.k12.mn.us

Prepared and paid for by Westonka Public Schools. This publication is not circulated on behalf of any candidate or ballot question.

voting information

- **Find your polling location** or print an early voting application on the Minnesota Secretary of State website: www.sos.state.mn.us
- **Eligible voters** must be 18 years of age or older on or before Nov. 5, 2019, and must reside in the school district. A voter must be registered to vote to be eligible to vote in this election. An unregistered individual may register to vote at the polling place on Election Day (Nov. 5)
- **In-person absentee/early voting** will be held at the Westonka Educational Service Center, 5901 Sunnyfield Road E, Minnetrista, weekdays through Nov. 4 during regular business hours, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Residents may also vote absentee by mail.
- **During the last week of absentee voting**, Oct. 29-Nov. 4, absentee voters will be able to vote by “direct ballot,” meaning that they will be able to feed their ballot into a ballot counter just as is done on Election Day. Check the district website for extended voting hours during the last week of absentee voting.
- **Also on the ballot**, there are four candidates to fill four regular, four-year terms on the Westonka School Board. Find candidate profiles at www.westonka.k12.mn.us/referendum
- **Voting questions?** Visit www.westonka.k12.mn.us/referendum or contact Carol Shukle in the Superintendent’s Office at shuklec@westonka.k12.mn.us or (952) 491-8007.