



Rockford Area Schools Announce November 8, 2016 Operating Levy and Capital Project Levy Referendum

Basic Education Funding Needed

The Rockford Area Schools Board of Education and administration is committed to continually and carefully reviewing all K-12 programs, while taking action to keep our district fiscally sound. In the past few years, the following options have been implemented:

- Concerted effort to increase student enrollment
- Applying for grant dollars to support innovative programming
- Working with state legislators, including testimony at the Capitol to promote legislation that supports our district with a minimal financial impact on taxpayers.

In addition, the district reduced the operating budget through a total of \$500,000 in budget cuts for the 2016-17 school year. Budget cuts included staff and administrative reductions; decreased spending on transportation, supplies and field trips; increased activity fees and meal prices; and diverting the deferred maintenance reserve to support day-to-day operations.

As they consider strategies to stabilize funding for district programs, the Rockford Board of Education made certain assumptions-based on historical data. These include maintaining stable student enrollment and receiving an annual increase in revenue of 2% by the State of Minnesota. Unfortunately, district expenses increase at roughly 5% per year, even with no increase in programming. This economic reality leaves Rockford Area Schools with a yearly 3% deficit. Therefore, at the August 23, 2016, regular board meeting, the Rockford Board of Education voted unanimously (6-0) to approve two questions to be placed on the November 8, 2016 ballot.

Question 1 – General Fund Operating Levy

The first question asks for an increase in general education revenue by \$1,142 per pupil, applicable for nine years. This levy means a \$39 monthly increase in property taxes for a \$200,000 property in the Rockford School District. This levy will help fund day-to-day operations in our schools, which include teachers, classroom supplies, science kits, instructional materials, assessments, utility bills, paraprofessional support, staff development and student registration. If the budget expectations stay true, this levy will stabilize our district well into the future with careful budget management.

Question 2 – Capital Project Technology Levy

The second question asks for a capital project levy authorization in the amount of 3.834% times the net tax

capacity of the school district. This capital project levy authorization will raise approximately \$395,100 for taxes payable in 2017, the first year it is to be levied, and would be authorized for nine years. This would allow our students and staff computer equipment, upgrades in network and wireless infrastructure, and additional funds for classroom technologies like interactive boards, document cameras, projectors and other peripherals. The capital projects levy means a \$6 per month increase in property taxes for a \$200,000 property in our district.

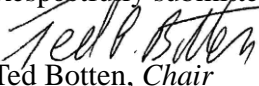
In Minnesota, schools receive funding through a formula that provides money based on the number of students in the district. Schools may seek additional revenues through the use of operating levy referendums where district residents can provide additional funds to their local school district by voting to increase their property taxes. Currently, 90% of Minnesota school districts have operating levies.

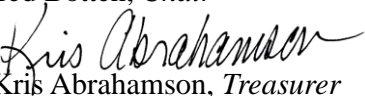
Rockford Area Schools' last operating levy referendum was held in November 2009, when voters approved a 5-year \$395 per pupil levy to support the general fund budget. *This voter-approved local levy expired in June 2015.* With recent state legislative changes in local revenue options, our school district has \$724 per pupil unit total referendum authority. The state average is \$1,215 per pupil unit, which includes additional voter-approved operating levies. This creates very real challenges to offer quality, competitive, educational programs when neighboring districts have total local authority revenues of \$1,084 (Delano), \$1,191 (Elk River), \$1,791 (Westonka), \$1,870 (Wayzata) and \$1,912 (Orono) per pupil unit to name a few. (See chart on next page.)

The Rockford Board of Education is asking our community residents to carefully consider the questions on the November 8 ballot. The Board of Education, staff and administration are proud of Rockford Area Schools and the educational opportunities we currently offer students and their families. Everything we do as a school community—parents, teachers, area residents, staff and administration—is focused on providing the best and highest quality education we can for Rockford Area Schools' students.

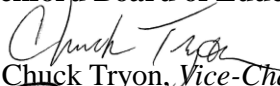
Please watch for more information in the future regarding school funding and the possible impact of a local levy referendum. Thank you for your continued support of Rockford Area Schools' students!

Respectfully submitted,


Ted Botten, Chair

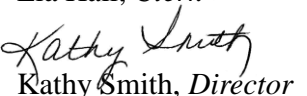

Kris Abrahamson, Treasurer

Rockford Board of Education

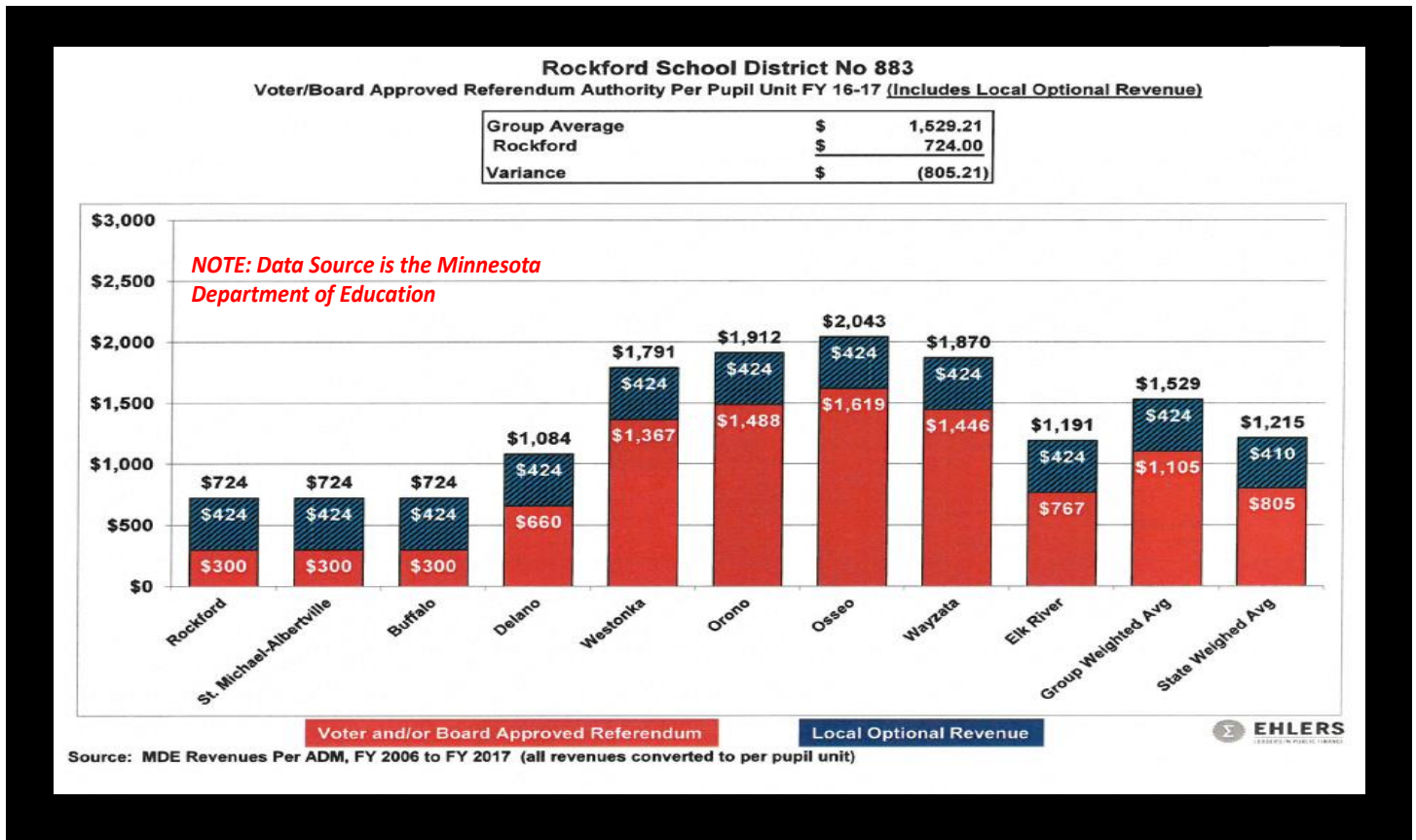

Chuck Tryon, Vice-Chair


Todd Anderson, Director


Lia Hall, Clerk


Kathy Smith, Director

Funding support compared in local school districts



Prepared and paid for by Rockford Area Schools - ISD 883, 6051 Ash St, Rockford MN 55373.
 This document is not prepared on behalf of any candidate or ballot question.
 September, 2016



Excellence at Rockford Area Schools

Launching Pad Preschool received a 4-Star rating for another year. This is the highest rating given from the MN Parent Aware Quality Rating System.

In 2015-2016, RMS-CES received the Profile of Excellence Award from Minnesota Rural Education Association, the Local Government Innovation Award from the Humphrey School of Public Affairs, and the Star of Innovation from the Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals.

The 2015-16 school year marked the 12th year for REAMS as an arts magnet school and fifth year for RMS-CES as a STEM magnet school.

District #883 qualified for MN Department of Education's Finance Award for the ninth year.

In 2015-2016, the Rockford Rockets had State participants in band, choir, dance team, FFA, softball, trapshooting and track and field.

Be Sure to Vote Tuesday, November 8!

Independent School District 883
ROCKFORD AREA SCHOOLS
 6051 Ash Street
 Rockford, MN 55373

Pre-sorted
 First Class Mail
 US Postage
PAID
 Permit No. 4
 Rockford MN

Current ISD 883 Resident