



New Richland-Hartland-Ellendale-Geneva Public Schools

Independent School District No. 2168

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Dale Carlson, Superintendent

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Douglas Anderson, Principal

Empowering students with knowledge and skills to succeed.

Our Mission

Empowering students with knowledge and skills to succeed.

Our Vision

To be the school district of choice, inspiring excellence in academics, arts, and activities.

Operational Referendum Planned for November 3

Rick Schultz, School Board Chair

Dale Carlson, Superintendent

July 30, 2020

Our vision as a school community is to *be the school district of choice, inspiring excellence in academics, arts, and activities*. We strive to do this every day by *empowering students with knowledge and skills to succeed*.

At the July 20, 2020, School Board meeting, the Board of Education (BOE) approved a resolution to increase the general education revenue and calling for election by placing a question on the November 3, 2020, ballot. More specifically, the resolution includes placing a question on the ballot to increase the school district's general education revenue by \$560 per pupil annually over a period of ten years. If voters approve the additional revenue, the tax impact on a \$125,000 home is projected to be about 11.25/month. The increase in revenue, per student, to the school district would be about \$47/month.

The BOE took this action now after examining carefully the school district's financial history, present fiscal position and best budget projections looking several years into the future. Guiding the BOE's work has been its commitment to the school district's *Strategic Plan* beginning with the priority goal area of *Student Achievement*. Equally important is the BOE's focus and commitment to the priority goal of *Finance* and to "preserving the district's strong financial standing while maintaining programs, services, and facilities at maximum efficiency."

The BOE made the decision to ask voters for more revenue based on several factors including but not limited to:

- Increase in state aid over the past five years has not kept pace with the District's operational expenses, mandated purchases, and employee wages/benefits.
- After making more than \$160,000 in reductions, our budget for next year calls for \$200,000 in deficit spending.
- Additional revenue is needed now in order to maintain current programs and operational services.
- Schools throughout our region are investing more in their students than we are in NRHEG
- We learned from our community surveys in 2018 and 2016 that our citizens strongly support the following priorities:
 - Maintaining current class sizes and course offerings
 - Recruiting and retaining high-quality staff
 - Updating Career and Technical Education curriculum, equipment, and facilities
 - Sustaining curriculum replacement cycle
 - Utilizing latest technology in classroom
 - Expanding mental health services
 - Preparing students for life after high school including college and/or career
 - Increasing student achievement in literacy

For the past five years, the BOE has been closely monitoring and examining the most efficient and effective use of taxpayer dollars in order to make progress in meeting the goals and objectives of the school district's Strategic Plan. As early as 2016, the school district was projecting a flattening or decrease in student enrollment which is the primary driver of state aid for the school district. At the same time, the 2% average increase in state aid over the past five years has not kept pace with the school district's operational expenses, mandated purchases and employee wages/benefits.

The BOE has determined the increased revenue is needed in order to maintain and address the priorities listed above.

Seeking additional revenue from voters is the only option available for our school district. Through careful planning, we have worked to address unfunded and underfunded needs for years. There has been a reluctance to approach the communities seeking this funding because the BOE has always wished to practice the highest level of stewardship with the resources provided.

Needs associated with this operational referendum should not be confused with taxpayer support in approving the April 2019 building referendum. The 2019 referendum focused on addressing needed classroom repairs, safety improvements and deferred maintenance. The November 2020 operating referendum addresses operational services, programming and other ongoing or recurring costs that cannot be sustained within the current revenue limits received from the state and local taxpayers.

NRHEG Public Schools is proud of who we are, the people we serve, and the people who provide services to students, families and our communities. We also believe strongly in offering a wide range of opportunities within the classroom and beyond the classroom to help our young people learn, grow, and have the most options and the best options available to them in the future.

It does take quite an investment to educate every student every day, and your school district is committed to continuing that service and value to not only our students and the families we serve, but to our communities. The BOE realizes that the investment the school district needs to make requires resources in the form of time and money. The BOE takes its fiscal responsibility very seriously; just as the BOE takes asking for financial support very seriously. The BOE is appreciative of the community support the school district continues to receive. The BOE works hard to continue to earn your trust.

More information regarding the operational needs and the financial projections of the school district will be shared with you in the coming weeks and months so that you can make an informed decision on November 3. The BOE's financial advisor, Northland Securities, is in the process of developing a *tax impact calculator* that will be placed on the school district's website for anyone to access in the coming weeks.

Thank you in advance for your interest and for taking time to be informed about the November 3, 2020, operational referendum question to increase the general education revenue for the school district so that our school community can maintain as well as grow educational opportunities for our students.