



## **2012 WASB Presentation**

# **Using Technology to Help Pass a Referendum**

**Friday, January 20, 2012**

Presented by:  
School District of Fort Atkinson

School Board President Mr. Rodger Thomann  
Superintendent Dr. James Fitzpatrick  
School Board Vice-President Mrs. Carrie Chisholm  
Director of Business Services Mr. Jason Demerath

## Utilizing Technology in Passing a Referendum

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- I. Welcome and Introductions – Board President Mr. Rodger Thomann
  - A. Mission of the District, guiding questions
- II. Background and demographics – Superintendent Dr. James Fitzpatrick
  - A. Location, city populations, enrollment, number of schools, number of employees
  - B. History of Referendums since 1997
  - C. Utilization and formation of Taskforces
- III. Taskforce Recommendation – Dr. Fitzpatrick
  - A. Keep level of support the same as in 2006, \$694,000 above the revenue limit, only this time for only three years instead of five
  - B. Fort Atkinson citizens will not support a recurring referendum. There has to be a sunset.
- IV. Obstacles to Overcome prior to April 5 referendum – Board Vice-President Mrs. Carrie Chisholm
  - A. Political turmoil with ACT 10
  - B. Teacher unrest, cancellation of school February 18, 2011
  - C. Budget reductions of \$630,000
- V. How would we tell our story and message to our citizens? We needed something different than 2005 and 2006 – Mrs. Chisholm
  - A. We would use media technology
  - B. We still needed some print information and information on our website
  - C. Still needed to get to service clubs and organizations for presentations. "The March Blitz," a strategy to have a short but hard-hitting campaign.
  - D. Needed Board to be out front playing a very leading role.
  - E. AlertNow
  - F. Cable Channel
- VI. A visual of our mission in telling our story – Mrs. Chisholm
- VII. Simplifying the fiscal message using Jing software for a uniform message – Director of Business Services Mr. Jason Demerath
- VIII. Passage April 6<sup>th</sup> ...endured a recount, and a court challenge for a second recount. Ultimately won by 4 votes with over 5292 cast – Mrs. Chisholm and Dr. Fitzpatrick
- IX. Closure – Dr. Fitzpatrick
- X. Questions

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**A Message From Our Board of Education: WE NEED YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT!**

“Amidst the turmoil in Madison, school boards across the state have been studying their district finances, trying to plan for best and worst-case scenarios. The Fort Atkinson School District Board of Education is no exception.

We have had an opportunity to review the impact the Budget Repair Bill would have on our schools and the proposed Biennium Budget. In trying to erase the \$3.5 billion state deficit, Governor Walker will be reducing state aid to public schools by nearly \$750 million. In Fort Atkinson, the revenue cap decrease per student will be \$545 less in 2011-2012 and remain flat at that rate again in 2012-2013. This translates to a \$1.5 million reduction in our revenue. Governor Walker has indicated that in making these cuts, he will also give school districts the tools to neutralize the revenue reductions through higher district employee contributions to their pensions and health care.

Per health care contributions, the Fort Atkinson School District health insurance plan for employees is cheaper than the state plan, and has always been kept in check through competitive bidding when renewal rates came in higher than the projections we deemed reasonable.

Our health insurance *expense savings* under the Governor’s plan would be relatively small (\$100,000), as our employees already contribute 10% towards the cost of their premiums. Some districts with lower or no contributions will realize a greater opportunity for savings. In other words, the tools the governor speaks of have *great disparity* among school districts depending upon what employees previously contributed. We estimate that on the expense saving side from employee pension and insurance premium contributions we will save \$940,000. However, in comparison with the revenue cap reduction of \$1,512,375, we have a \$572,375 shortfall.

Our district has worked hard to raise revenue sources, maximize efficiencies, and make reductions when necessary, saving over one million dollars in the last year alone. Prior to the Governor’s Repair Bill, a Citizen Taskforce recommended last June to continue to exceed the revenue limit by \$694,000, the same level approved in April of 2006. Our Board of Education approved this recommendation with a sunset of three years and is placing a question before the citizens on the April 5<sup>th</sup> spring election ballot.

If voters approve this referendum, we will have maintained the same level of support from 2006 through 2014, but we will need to continue to look for ways to reduce expenses. Our goal is to remain a beacon district of educational excellence, as that is what our citizens and students have come to expect, and we feel, is our duty to provide. Our mission in continuing finer education in this community is to provide opportunities that help our students reach their academic and personal potential. We believe that we will not merely endure but prevail through this difficult and uncertain time.

For more information regarding the April 5<sup>th</sup> referendum and the repair bill, please go to our website at [www.fortschools.org](http://www.fortschools.org) and click on Referendum Information. Thank you—The Board of Education.” You will also find enclosed a Referendum Information Document that addresses the most frequently asked questions.



# APRIL 5, 2011 REFERENDUM INFORMATION

All information is available electronically at [www.fortschools.org](http://www.fortschools.org)



## QUICK FACTS:

- ✓ The district is seeking continuation of the current referendum at the same level of support - not an increase
- ✓ The district has already made substantial cuts - over a million dollars in the past year
- ✓ This referendum will sunset in three years
- ✓ Continuation of the same level of support is critical at this time to maintain our high quality programs and services

## Do you have additional questions?

- ◆ Please visit our webpage at [www.fortschools.org](http://www.fortschools.org)
- ◆ Call the district office 563-7807
- ◆ E-mail Dr. Fitzpatrick, Superintendent, at [jfitz@fortschools.org](mailto:jfitz@fortschools.org)

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What cuts or reductions has the school district already made?

Throughout the last 5 year referendum, the district has made cuts and identified efficiency opportunities. Just in the last year, the district has reduced its spending by over a million dollars through cuts and efficiencies. All of these reductions have been accomplished while preserving programs and services as promised to the voters during the last referendum.

### How has the district raised revenues for operating expenses since the last referendum?

By being a school of choice in the area, the district raises its available revenues by nearly three-quarters of a million dollars annually through the open enrollment program. This raised revenue is one reason we are able to come back to our voters without asking for an increase on this referendum.

### How much will the referendum cost a home owner?

If passed, the referendum amount will remain at the same level of support as currently provided. Individual tax assessments vary with home value; however, the amount requested by the school district through referendum will not have increased from 2006 through 2014.

### If this referendum doesn't pass, will the district come back to the voters? What will that referendum look like?

If the April 2011 referendum does not pass, the Board of Education will need to determine when to return to voters. The opportunity to stay at the same level of support will be lost, and the next referendum amount will be significantly higher and may still require cuts to programs and services.

### What will the School District of Fort Atkinson look like if the referendum doesn't pass?

If the referendum doesn't pass, the Board of Education will be forced to begin dismantling our current educational system. The loss of \$694,000 annually would force us to make difficult reductions in programs and services, increased class sizes as well as further cuts to employee compensation packages.

### Why does the district need this money when the Governor says you have the tools to balance your budget without a referendum?

The vast majority of the Governor's new tools center on the reduction of employee compensation and benefit packages. Fort Atkinson has already been utilizing some of these tools for quite some time. Our current health insurance premiums are lower than the State plan that is proposed, and our employees have been paying a larger share of their premiums, as compared to other districts, for many years. Fort Atkinson will utilize other tools provided by the Governor while being mindful of staying competitive with area schools to continue recruiting and retaining high quality teachers and staff.

### Why not postpone the referendum until all of the State figures and new tools are known?

Time is money at this point. By continuing the current level of support, we are able to maintain current programs and services for three more years. Throughout this time period, we will explore and utilize the Governor's tools to strategically implement a budget in the best interests of our students and taxpayers. If this referendum doesn't pass, the opportunity to preserve programs and services for the next three years will be lost.

## APRIL 5, 2011 REFERENDUM INFORMATION

### Frequently Asked Questions



#### **OUR MISSION**

*The School District of Fort Atkinson is committed to delivering the quality opportunities and services each student needs to achieve his or her academic and personal potential*

Visit us on the web!  
[www.fortschools.org](http://www.fortschools.org)

#### **What exactly is "collective bargaining" and how does it impact the finances of the district?**

Collective bargaining is a type of negotiation used by employees to work with their employers. Through collective bargaining, the district and workers' representatives together negotiate a contract which includes wages, benefits and working conditions. With over 80% of our annual budget tied to employee costs, collective bargaining has a large impact on district finances. In addition to the fiscal impact, collective bargaining ultimately represents the partnership between the district and its employee groups working together to achieve our mission.

#### **How was the federal jobs bill money spent?**

The district has banked its one-time federal jobs money. It will be used to offset anticipated deficits within the next three years. Our fiscal prudence in saving this money is another reason why we are currently able to come back to voters asking for the same level of referendum support for three additional years.

#### **Is there a savings now with so many veteran teachers retiring?**

The district will incur savings due to a higher than anticipated number of retirements. Recurring savings from retirements due to lower replacement costs are offset by the cost of ongoing retirement benefits for the retiree. This savings will not be substantial enough to eliminate our need for the referendum.

#### **Does Fort Atkinson choose to do any "extra programs" that other districts don't do that we could do without?**

Fort Atkinson currently provides a comprehensive school system that includes AP courses, music and art programs, varied sports opportunities, etc. If we began to eliminate these, we risk losing current open enrollment families and Fort Atkinson families to other school districts, as well as the revenue from their choice to attend here. We also lose much of what this community has so highly valued in our schools.

#### **Are the green energy initiatives really saving the district money or, for now, just costing the district more money?**

All of the green energy initiatives implemented by the district are done to ultimately save the district recurring expenses in relation to energy costs. Any initial costs are incurred knowing that future taxpayers will reap the benefits of the increased savings.

### **BUDGET FACTS**

The following information is a simplified summary of the effects of the proposed budget repair bill and State budget on the School District of Fort Atkinson as it relates to our continued need for the referendum.

ALL ELSE =	
<u>Budget Repair Bill</u>	<u>2011-13 State Budget</u>
50% of Pension = \$840,000	Reduction of 5.5% Per Student = -\$545
12.6% of Health = \$100,000	2,775 Students x -\$545 = -\$1,512,375
District Cost Savings = \$940,000	\$940,000
	Gap to Make Up With Referendum <u>-\$572,375</u>
	April, 2011 Referendum Amount <u>-\$694,000</u>
	Gap Without Referendum <u><u>-\$1,266,375</u></u>



SCHOOL DISTRICT OF



FORT • ATKINSON

**Referendum Events and Efforts  
March 3, 2011**

<i>Date</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Event/Effort</i>	<i>BOE</i>	<i>JING, Video, Presentation</i>	<i>Looping Video</i>
Sunday, March 6	6:00 pm	Academic Letter Awards - HS	SJ, BC, CC, RT		X
Monday, March 7	7:00 pm	AAUW – Methodist Church	Carrie	X	
Tuesday, March 8	4:30 pm	MS Parent-Teacher Conf.	Rodger		X
Wednesday, March 9	4 pm	Network Booster Meeting – LE	Carrie, Bob, others?	X	
Wednesday, March 9	6:30 pm	Junior Women's Club – Sals	Carrie	X	
Thursday, March 10	4:30 pm	MS Parent-Teacher Conf.	-		X
Thursday, March 10	7:30 pm	FFA Alumni	Rodger		
Sunday, March 13	2 pm	Orchestra Dessert Concert	Carrie		X
Monday, March 14	6:30 pm	Winter Awards Night	-		X
Monday, March 14	6:15 pm	Lions Club – Legion Dugout	Bob, Kent	X	
Monday, March 14	6:30 pm	MS Parent Advisory	Rodger	Rob A	
Monday, March 14	7:30 pm	Heart of the City – Café Carpe	Rodger	X	
Tuesday, March 15	7:30 am	Chamber Board (present at 8)	Carrie	X	
Tuesday, March 15	12 noon	Optimist – Hospital (classroom near Cafeteria)	Carrie	X	
Tuesday, March 15	4:00 pm	MS Arts Festival	Rodger		X
Tuesday, March 15	6 pm	FFA Pork Dinner Consignment	Rodger		X
Tuesday, March 15	6 pm	Community Forum, Legion	Rodger, Kent	X	
Thursday, March 17	5:30 pm	Barrie PTO Art & Library Fair	Kent	Tony	X
Monday, March 28	Noon	Rotary Club – Jansen's	Bob	X	
Monday, April 4	6 PM	Kiwanis Club – Salamone's	Kent	X	