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TOP STORY

Ahead of Nov. 5 referendum, School District of Jefferson explains mill rates

SCHOOL DISTRICT

OF JEFFERSON

Oct 27, 2024

JEFFERSON — As the November 2024 operational referendum approaches, the School District of Jefferson aims to educate residents on mill rates and their impact on property taxes.

As you will read, the mill rate is estimated to decrease more than initially projected.

What is a Mill Rate?

A mill rate represents the amount of property tax per \$1,000 of assessed property value. In Wisconsin, school districts use mill rates to determine the portion of property taxes that fund local education. According to the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, the mill rate is calculated by dividing the total property tax levy by the total equalized value of all taxable property in the district, then multiplying by 1,000.

Impact of upcoming referendum

The preliminary data the School District of Jefferson had available during the summer projected a mill rate of \$8.99 with a passed referendum, which residents will notice on informational operational referendum materials. However, the School District of Jefferson recently received the final amount of equalized aid from the state.

An increase from the previous year will help lower the mill rate from our earlier conservative estimates. This is positive news for local taxpayers.

As a result, if the November 2024 operational referendum passes, the School District of Jefferson's mill rate will be \$8.93 (0.00892584). This is calculated before the inclusion of other property tax credits delivered at the municipal level. Property owners would pay \$8.93 for every \$1,000 assessed property value. The mill rate in 2023 was \$9.04 (0.00903774). That means the mill rate is projected to decrease from the previous year, even with a passed referendum.

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To illustrate: Based on a mill rate of \$8.93, the annual school tax on a home valued at \$300,000 would be \$2,677.75 with the referendum ($\$300,000 \times 0.00892584$). If the referendum fails, the School District of Jefferson will present a mill rate of \$8.89 (0.00888554). The difference equates to approximately \$4 per \$100,000 of home value. Using the \$300,000 example from above, that would increase the tax bill by \$12.

This illustration does not account for the various tax credits, such as the School Level Tax Credit, which lowers property tax bills, or additional property assessment, which increases tax bills. School districts do not have any control over the distribution of various tax credits, the distribution of levy amongst municipalities, or the re-assessment of properties within municipalities.

Regardless of the referendum vote result, the total tax levy for all funds for the School District of Jefferson will increase from last year. While taxpayers will see an increase in the net levy from 2024 to 2025, the total net levy impact will be less than it was in 2023, regardless of the outcome of the November 5th referendum. We encourage you to view our property tax explainer on the School District of Jefferson website and look at your prior year's tax bills to further understand the impact on your taxes with this updated mill rate.

“We want our community to make an informed decision,” said Charles Urness, superintendent of the School District of Jefferson. “Understanding mill rates helps residents see the minimal financial impact of this referendum compared to its potential benefits for our students.”

The School District of Jefferson is one of over 100 districts in Wisconsin with a referendum question on the Nov. 5 ballot. It reads as follows: “Shall the School District Jefferson, Jefferson County, Wisconsin be authorized to exceed the revenue limit specified in Section 121.91, Wisconsin Statutes, by \$1,400,000 for the 2024-2025 school year and for each of the succeeding three school years thereafter, for non-recurring purposes to fund operating costs to maintain educational and co-curricular programs, including elementary reading; behavioral and mental health resources for students; school safety and technology infrastructure; and to sustain student to staff ratios?”

For more information on school funding in Wisconsin or the upcoming referendum, please visit

www.sdoj.org or contact Charles Urness at 920-675-1013 or urnessc@sdoj.org.