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Minnetonka Schools’ Tech Levy is Up for Renewal in November

The Minnetonka School Board has unanimously voted to put forth a referendum in November asking voters to consider renewal of the District’s Capital Projects Levy (also called a tech levy).

Approval of this referendum would renew critical funding for the District’s technology and security infrastructure, as well as support for staff members in these areas.

EXCELLENCE IN TECHNOLOGY & SAFETY

The Capital Projects Levy provides a major source of funding for technology and security for Minnetonka Public Schools. The following is paid for by the current capital projects levy: All instructional technology equipment, software and traditional textbooks; all instructional technology support personnel; all administrative software, such as student accounting and grading software, financial software and internet firewall software; all network hardware and software, such as network data storage devices and network fiber optic cable; all technology network security; all administrative technology support personnel; classroom equipment; security barriers of all types, including electronic security barriers and security monitoring equipment.

A HISTORY OF COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Executive Director of Finance and Operations Paul Bourgeois, who presented to the School Board regarding the history of referendums in Minnetonka, said, “The District’s citizens have supported technology referendums for over 30 years now, since 1992. Technology is constantly evolving and improving, and to utilize the latest instructional techniques and programs, the District must continue to improve in this area, as well.”

Minnetonka School District residents passed the current version of the tech levy in 2007 and renewed it in 2015. The current levy is set to expire in 2026.

An approval by voters in November would mean the current capital projects levy would be revoked, and it would be replaced by a new one at the same rate, which would then be in place through 2034.

FISCAL STEWARDSHIP

By revoking and replacing the current capital projects levy, taxpayers would continue to pay the same percentage for that levy as in years past.

“This is an extension, not an increase. It is basically a renewal, not a new tax,” said Lisa Wagner, Minnetonka School Board Chair. “The Board’s approval of this resolution is asking our voters to consider something that would not have a tax increase for them. It would stay at the same 6.569% rate that it has been at since 2002.”

We believe responsible and prudent fiscal stewardship is the best way to serve the community. Aggressive financial management on the part of the Minnetonka School Board and District Administration has saved taxpayers money and ensured that more than 92% of the District’s annual general operating fund budget (as noted in the 2021-22 Annual Report) is directed to school-level education services to maximize support for students and instruction.

“One of our District goals set by the School Board includes ensuring long-term financial stability,” said Minnetonka Schools Superintendent David Law. “The revenue from the current capital projects levy contributes to the success and safety of all students and the operations of the District.”



READY TO LEARN MORE & VOTE?

Minnetonka Schools is asking all District residents to consider renewing its current tech levy. By voting on or before November 7, you would help shape the future of our schools and the community those schools support.

Visit minnetonkaschools.org/tech-levy for all of the key information you need to make an informed decision, including Frequently Asked Questions.

Have a question? Want to schedule an informational presentation about the tech levy with District staff? Get in touch! communications@minnetonkaschools.org



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TECH LEVY FAST FACTS



What is a tech levy?

The Capital Projects Levy (also known as a tech levy) is a dedicated fund that provides 100% of the funding for technology and school security. It includes hardware, software, network infrastructure, broadband fiber, communication technologies, Wi-Fi, communications and learning management systems, database systems and all software licenses used by students and staff, technical support and technology training in the District.



Why is there a tech levy renewal on the ballot?

Voters have supported technology through referendums since 1992. Residents passed the current capital projects levy in 2007. It was previously renewed in 2015. It would expire in 2026 unless extended.

The levy provides a major source of funding for technology and security. If this levy is not renewed, funding to maintain our technology resources, dedicated support staff and District security would need to come from the general operating fund. In order to balance the budget, some of our staff and signature programs across the District would then need to be cut.



How much would a tech levy renewal cost?

There would be no increase or change in the capital projects property tax rate if this levy is approved. This would be a continuation of the same tax rate that is currently in place for this levy. The proposed levy would extend the existing levy through 2034.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Get the answers to all of your referendum questions

Included on this page are some frequently asked questions about the tech levy, which is up for renewal on the November 7 ballot.

Have a question you don't see answered here? Get in touch with us!



What does the tech levy support?

Renewing the tech levy would provide continuation of support for the District in upholding its high standards in technology, learning and overall safety. The tech levy currently funds:

- All instructional technology, including instructional hardware
- All instructional texts, including all instructional software and traditional texts
- All staff development for the use of instructional technology and software
- All administrative technology and hardware to keep the District running
- All administrative software from payroll to student records to budget tracking
- All network backbone to run instructional and administrative software, including fiber cable, wires, network control software, servers, cloud storage, etc.
- All staff members who deliver instructional staff development training
- All staff members who run the network and who ensure that instructional and administrative software is running
- All staff members who support the hardware, network devices and network wiring to instructional and administrative devices
- Firewall and anti-virus, anti-malware and information security measures
- Instructional equipment of all types, including technology and traditional classroom equipment and furniture
- Security barriers to keep intruders out of buildings
- Security monitoring system

Would my taxes increase if the tech levy passes?

There would be no increase or change in property tax rate if the tech levy is approved. This would be a continuation of the same tax rate - 6.569% of the tax capacity of the District - that is currently in place for this levy.

If there would be no increase in the tech levy, why do residents need to vote on it?

State law currently requires that the District must ask voters to consider the renewal of a capital projects levy every 8-10 years, even if there is no property tax rate increase.

What is the status of the District's finances?

Minnetonka Public Schools believes responsible and prudent fiscal stewardship is the best way to serve the community. Aggressive financial management on the part of the School Board and District Administration has saved taxpayers money and ensured that more than 92% of our annual general operating fund budget (as noted in the 2021-22 Annual Report) is directed to school-level education services to maximize support for students and instruction. The District also regularly takes actions to reduce costs and to operate as efficiently as possible.

Is the tech levy affected by open enrollment?

The Tech Levy is not tied to enrollment. It is tied to the net tax capacity of the District. Additionally, the amount levied does not rise and fall with the number of enrolled students; it rises and falls with the value of properties within the District.

ABOUT THE MINNETONKA PUBLIC SCHOOLS



Ensuring Every Student Achieves Their Family’s Personal Vision of Excellence

Our mission is to ensure all students envision and pursue their highest aspirations while serving the greater good.

In a community that transcends traditional definitions of excellence, we use learning and teaching as tools to value and nurture each person, inspire in everyone a passion to excel with confidence and hope and instill expectations that stimulate extraordinary achievement in the classroom and in life.

Our students benefit from a giving community and learn to pay it forward in return. The Minnetonka Public School District is a great place to raise a family.

Technology & Safety Benefit All Students

We are guided by the belief that technology addresses the way children learn today and changes the way teachers teach to match up with learners.

Effective use of technology helps students approach problems more creatively, think more critically, collaborate more skillfully and communicate with higher levels of precision. We are developing the community, business, nonprofit and global leaders of the future. Technology has been an essential component in the great increases in student achievement.

Renewing the tech levy would generate approximately \$9.2 million annually for 10 years that would then be used to:

- Maintain, update and replace current technology systems, software, hardware and infrastructure (servers, switchers, broadband, Wi-Fi, phones, websites, devices, etc.).
- Provide technical support for the system, staff and student use of technology.
- Maintain and improve classroom technology for students so that skilled teachers can:
 - Personalize learning and adjust the content, pace and approach to learning based on individual student needs.
 - Incorporate relevant and current online educational resources into their lessons.
 - Facilitate online testing and assessment, which can provide immediate feedback to students regarding progress and mastery of material.
 - Prepare students for college and careers after graduation.

A National Leader in Innovation & Technology

Since voters first approved a dedicated technology levy in 2002, the District has used technology as an accelerator for learning: personalizing education, digitizing curriculum, increasing collaboration and providing anytime, anywhere access to learning.

Moody’s Aaa Bond Rating

Our school district ranks among the top one-half of one percent in the nation for school financial management. Like a top credit score, a Aaa bond rating reflects a pattern of responsible spending and prudent financial management, as determined by rating experts.

The Only Metro District to Not Cut Budgets

Our school district has used a free-market enrollment growth strategy to increase sufficient revenue annually to avoid budget cuts and staff layoffs since 2006.

Parent & Community-wide Surveys Show Support for Minnetonka Public Schools

Each year, we survey all current parents about their family’s educational experience in our schools. Results of the 2023 survey were outstanding, showing high confidence in our programs, schools, teachers and leadership. This spring, we also administered a survey to members of the District’s residential community. Results showed deep support, connectivity and appreciation for our efforts.



96%

of respondents to the 2023 Parent Survey rate the education provided by Minnetonka Public Schools as excellent or good.



96%

of respondents to the 2023 Parent Survey believe our community receives a good value from its investment in our schools.



94%

of respondents to the 2023 Parent Survey believe their child’s school provides a safe learning environment.



88%

of respondents to the 2023 Community-wide Survey would rate the educational technology opportunities in the District as excellent or good.



83%

of respondents to the 2023 Community-wide Survey believe that Minnetonka Public Schools has spent past funds responsibly.



89%

of respondents to the 2023 Community-wide Survey would be in favor of renewing the tech levy.

View the full 2023 Parent Survey results at minnetonkaschools.org/PS2023. You can watch the School Board presentations on the 2023 Parent Survey results and 2023 Community-wide Residential Survey results at minnetonkaschools.org/survey2023.

BALLOT QUESTION DETAILS

SCHOOL DISTRICT QUESTION
REVOKING EXISTING CAPITAL PROJECT
LEVY AUTHORIZATION; APPROVING
NEW AUTHORIZATION

The Board of Independent School District No. 276 (Minnetonka) has proposed to **revoke** its existing capital projects levy authorization of 6.569% times the net tax capacity of the school district and to **replace** that authorization with a new authorization of 6.569% times the net capacity of the school district.

The proposed new authorization would raise approximately \$9,240,000 for taxes payable in 2024, the first year it is to be levied, and would be applicable for ten years. The estimated total cost of the projects to be funded over that time period is approximately \$92,400,000.

The money raised by the proposed authorization would be used to provide funds for the following: The purchase and installation of software and technology equipment; costs related to the support and maintenance of technology; costs related to training staff in the use of technology; the purchase of classroom equipment and instructional texts; and building security equipment. The projects to be funded have received a positive review and comment from the Commissioner of Education.

Shall the school district's existing capital projects levy authorization be revoked and the new capital project levy proposed by the Board of Independent School District No. 276 be approved?

YES
NO

BY VOTING "YES" ON THIS BALLOT QUESTION,
YOU ARE VOTING FOR A PROPERTY TAX INCREASE.

What is a Capital Projects Levy?

Capital Projects Levy [for Technology and Safety] is a term used in state law enabling school districts to seek voter authorization to provide funds for an approved project that would be paid over a specified period of years. The term of this proposed levy is 10 years. The projects to be funded have received a positive review and comment from the Minnesota Department of Education. The proposed levy would fund: All instructional technology equipment, software and traditional textbooks; all instructional technology support personnel; all administrative software such as student accounting and grading software, financial software and internet firewall software; all network hardware and software, such as network data storage devices and network fiber optic cable; all technology network security; all administrative technology support personnel; classroom equipment; security barriers of all types, electronic security barriers and security monitoring equipment.

Approval of the question on the ballot would renew and extend through 2034 the existing capital project levy for technology at the current rate. Because the question is an extension and not an increase, there is no change in the authority or rate. Approval of this question would extend the same authority through 2034.

What does revoke and replace mean?

Terms used on the ballot must conform exactly to state law.

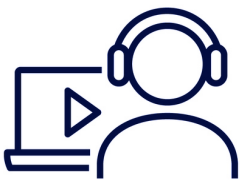
By approving this question voters are "revoking," or ending, the current capital projects levy authority and "replacing" it with a new one. By doing this, the District resets the time on the capital projects levy, allowing it to remain in place for another 10 years instead of expiring.

There is no change in the tax rate or details of the levy.

What does this section mean?

The language at the bottom of the ballot is required by law. There will be no increase or change in the capital projects property tax rate if the capital projects levy is approved. This is a continuation of the same tax rate that is currently in place for this levy.

CONTINUED EXCELLENCE IN TECHNOLOGY & SAFETY



Advancing Technology for
Enhanced Learning

Renewal of the tech levy would allow the District to keep its technology infrastructure on the cutting edge. This means ensuring students have access to critical instructional technology and that teachers have the tech tools they need to provide exceptional learning experiences.



Support for Dedicated
Technology Staff

Renewal of the tech levy would provide funding to maintain staff members who play an integral role in supporting technology and teacher training. Investing in technology staff is a key aspect of how we lead and nurture growth within the school community.



Safeguarding the Learning
Environment

Renewal of the tech levy would maintain funding for top-tier protection and safety, encompassing data and device security, building security measures and monitoring systems. This funding would enable the District to continue to secure its school environment with firewalls, anti-virus, anti-malware, and information security measures.

THREE WAYS TO VOTE

1

Absentee in person

Vote absentee in person September 22 until November 6, Mon-Fri. 8-4:30 p.m.

Beginning on September 22 through November 6, ISD 276 residents living in the City of Minnetonka can vote in person at Minnetonka City Hall. All other ISD 276 families can vote at the Minnetonka District Service Center Monday-Friday from 8am-4:30pm.

2

Absentee by mail

Ballots must be received by Election Day for the vote to count.

Hennepin County and Carver County oversees all absentee voting by mail. For more information regarding absentee voting by mail, please visit Hennepin County's or Carver County's absentee voting page.

3

Vote on November 7

Polls would be open from 7 a.m. through 8 p.m.

Find your polling location: pollfinder.sos.state.mn.us

SCHOOL BOARD ELECTION

In addition to the Capital Projects Levy referendum, this year there is a School Board Election that will be held on November 7, 2023. There are four seats open to be elected to 4-year terms. For a list of candidates, visit minnetonkaschools.org/election. If you have any questions regarding school-related elections, please call 952-401-5000.