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Colby to hold \$4 million in school referendums

BY ADAM RODEWALD • MARSHFIELD NEWS-HERALD • JUNE 25, 2008

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COLBY -- Two referendums totaling about \$4 million to renovate Colby school buildings and help pay off district debts were unanimously approved Tuesday by the school board.



The referendums will be held on Sept. 9.

A \$2.55 million facilities referendum would cover costs to upgrade school buildings and make them more energy efficient.

The second \$1.4 million override referendum would repay debt from state retirement benefits in an effort to save \$2 million the district would otherwise pay in interest during the next 20 years.

The school board increased the facilities referendum \$38,000 above the estimated amount provided during a facilities committee meeting earlier this month. The extra money would help cover additional re-flooring costs in the elementary school and connect the Little Stars pre-school

heating system into the new high school system.

The board denied requests to add money for replacing the high school track and upgrading the theater's sound and lighting system.

The referendum already stipulates \$10,000 for the theater.

"We're looking at the difference of a Cadillac and a Chevy here. Do we really need a Cadillac?" said board president Dennis Engel.

Out-of-date heating systems are the highest priority of the district's renovation plan. They are looking to replace the old boilers with a new system that runs 95 percent efficient. The board is also considering a wood pellet heater for the middle and high school building.

The upgrade to a high-efficiency system would cost about \$841,000, but it would pay for itself in a little more than nine years and save the district more than \$92,000 annually, according to a district facilities study conducted by Eau Claire-based APEX Engineering.

As a rule of thumb, districts should begin marketing a referendum about one year in advance of the vote, said Superintendent Terry Downen.

Colby has about two months to inform voters about the issue.

"So it's important for us to get hard marketing strategies to show (voters) how this (referendum) will pay off," he said.

A public information meeting on the referendums will be held at 8 p.m. July 21 during the school board meeting in the Colby District Education Center.

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