



May 18, 2021

Alan Niemann, Superintendent
Ashby Public School District, ISD #0261-01
300 Birch Avenue
Ashby, MN 56309-0030

Dear Superintendent Niemann:

Minnesota Statutes, section 123B.71, requires a review and comment statement on the educational and economic advisability of your proposed school construction project. Information supplied by your school district and from Minnesota Department of Education sources is the basis of this review and comment. With this positive review and comment, voter and board approval is required for Ashby Public School District, Independent School District #0261-01, to proceed with the proposed projects.

The district shall publish a summary of the review and comment statement (the final page) in the legal newspaper of the district at least 20 days, but not more than 60 days, prior to holding a referendum for bonds or soliciting any bids for the construction, expansion, or remodeling of an educational facility. The department may request a statement certifying the publication, and require the submission, review, and approval of preliminary and final construction plans.

Minnesota Statutes, section 123B.71, requires the commissioner to include comments from residents of the school district in the review and comment. As of the date of this letter, no public comments have been received. In addition, Minnesota Statutes, section 123B.71, ***requires the school board hold a public meeting to discuss the review and comment prior to the date of the bond referendum election.***

Minnesota Statutes, section 123B.71, ***requires that a school district, prior to occupying a new or renovated facility after July 1, 2002, must submit a certification prepared by a system inspector to the commissioner and the building code official that will provide an occupancy permit.*** The certification must verify that the facility's installed or modified heating, ventilation, and air conditioning system operates according to design specifications and code, a system for monitoring outdoor airflow and total airflow of ventilation systems has been installed, and any installed or modified heating, ventilation, or air conditioning system provides an indoor air quality filtration system that meets ASHRAE (American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers) Standard 52.1.

If you have any questions, please contact Chris Kubesh, Education Finance specialist, at 651-582-8319 or chris.kubesh@state.mn.us. Thank you for working with us to improve school facilities for Minnesota students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Heather Mueller, Ed.D.'.

Heather Mueller, Ed.D.
Commissioner

cc: Suzanne Wing, School Board Chair

Enclosure

**The Commissioner of the Department of Education
Review and Comment on the School Construction
Proposal of Ashby Public School District, ISD #0261-01**

A review and comment must be provided on a school district construction project proposal before the district conducts a referendum, solicits bids, or issues bonds for the project. A project proposal has been submitted for review and comment according to requirements set forth in Minnesota Statutes, section 123B.71, subdivisions 9 and 10, and Minnesota Statutes, section 123B.72. The district provides the following information:

1. The geographic area and population to be served:
 - a. preschool through grade 12 student enrollment for the past five years, and
 - b. student enrollment projections for the next five years.
2. A list of existing school facilities:
 - a. by year constructed,
 - b. their uses, and
 - c. an assessment of the extent to which alternate facilities are available within school district boundaries and in adjacent school districts.
3. A list of specific deficiencies of the facility:
 - a. demonstrating the need for a new or renovated facility to be provided,
 - b. the process used to determine the deficiencies,
 - c. a list of those deficiencies that will and will not be addressed by the proposed projects,
 - d. a list of specific benefits that the new or renovated facility will provide to students, teachers, and community users served by the facility.
4. A description of the project, including:
 - a. specifications of site and outdoor space acreage,
 - b. square footage allocations for classrooms, laboratories and support spaces,
 - c. estimated expenditures for major portions of the project,
 - d. estimated changes in facility operating costs, and
 - e. dates the project will begin and be completed.
5. A specification of the source of project financing, including:
 - a. applicable statutory citations,
 - b. the scheduled date for a bond issue or school board action,
 - c. a schedule of payments, including debt service equalization aid, and
 - d. the effect of a bond issue on local property taxes by property class and valuation.
6. Documentation obligating the school district and contractors to comply with the following items:
 - a. Minnesota Statutes, section 471.345 governing municipal contracts,
 - b. sustainable design,
 - c. school facility commissioning under Minnesota Statutes, section 123B.72, certifying the plans and designs for heating, ventilating, air conditioning and air filtration for an extensively renovated or new facility meet or exceed current code standards, including ASHRAE air filtration Standard 52.1,
 - d. American National Standards Institute (ANSI) acoustical performance criteria, design requirements and guidelines for schools on maximum background noise levels and reverberation times,
 - e. state fire code,
 - f. chapter 326B governing building codes, and
 - g. consultation with affected government units about the impact of the project on utilities, roads, sewers, sidewalks, retention ponds, school bus and automobile traffic, access to mass transit and safe access for pedestrians and cyclists.

Description of Proposed School Construction Project

Ashby Public School District, ISD #0261-01, is proposing a single-question bond referendum on August 10, 2021, that would authorize \$5.9 million in bonding authority to finance the construction of classroom additions, HVAC upgrades, site improvements and minor renovations to the existing PK-12 facility. The proposed building additions include two kindergarten classrooms, two middle/high school classrooms and a high school science lab.

The additional building space is needed to accommodate student enrollment which is projected to increase by about 1.1% annually over the next ten years. Open-enrollment from neighboring school districts impacts the number of students served by the district. In the 2020-2021 school year, 137 students open-enrolled into the school district and 51 students open-enrolled out; a net gain of 86 students.

Proposed projects would be scheduled for completion in the 2022-2023 calendar years. Cost estimates by project type and funding source are as follows:

Project Cost Estimates		Project Financing Sources	
Kindergarten Classroom Addition	\$1,782,756	Voter Approved Bond	\$5,904,331
Middle / High School Classroom Addition	\$2,889,983	Existing General Fund Dollars	\$561,300
HVAC Upgrades	\$1,225,900		\$6,465,631
Stage Area Renovations	\$93,288		
Secure Entrance Upgrades	\$71,760		
Parking Lot Expansion & Resurfacing	\$168,452		
Playground Relocation	\$35,880		
Weightroom Renovations	\$38,272		
Bond Issuance	\$159,340		
	\$6,465,631		

The district has supplied cost estimates to operate and staff the additional classroom space and it appears existing revenues will be sufficient to fund any associated operational cost increases. The proposed projects appear to be in the long-term interest of the school district.

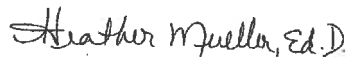
If the bond referendum is successful and bonds are sold, the debt service on the bonds will be eligible for debt service equalization under Minnesota Statutes, section 123B.53, subdivision 3, if the bond schedule is approved. The amount of debt service equalization aid, if any, the district receives is determined annually and is dependent upon property wealth, student population, and other statutory requirements.

Review and Comment Statement

Based on the department's analysis of the school district's required documentation and other pertinent information from sources of the Minnesota Department of Education, the Commissioner of Education provides a positive review and comment.

Additional Information is Available

Persons desiring additional information regarding this proposal should contact the school district superintendent's office.



Heather Mueller, Ed.D.
Commissioner
May 18, 2021