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<https://anchor.fm/ofpanthers/episodes/Panther-PAWDcast-Ep--039-April-2021-Referendum-Information-es7i8d>

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00:00:03.480 --> 00:00:10.349

Jason Schmidt: Everyone welcome once again to the panther podcast this is your host Jason and we have a special edition of the podcast this week.

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00:00:10.950 --> 00:00:25.920

Jason Schmidt: we're talking about an upcoming referendum question that's going to be proposed to the community of Oconto Falls, so I have superintendent Dean Hess with me on the podcast again today so Dean welcome back it's good to have you on the podcast.

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00:00:26.370 --> 00:00:28.110

Dean Hess: Jason I appreciate it, as always.

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00:00:29.790 --> 00:00:39.300

Jason Schmidt: Thanks for taking time out of your day to help us understand a little bit more about this upcoming referendum on April six so.

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00:00:39.810 --> 00:01:00.030

Jason Schmidt: I guess, first of all let's spend a little bit of time talking about what specifically is the question that is being brought to the Community, and what are like what specifically are we are really looking for that that community to vote on in this referendum.

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Dean Hess: You bet and one of the things that I'll throw it right in the beginning, is all of the information, or at least a huge majority of the information we're talking about today.

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00:01:09.060 --> 00:01:17.850

Dean Hess: People can actually access this right on our kind of falls website and I'm actually on there right now and I'll just read the question real quick.

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00:01:18.270 --> 00:01:33.720

Dean Hess: Shall the school board of the kind of falls public school district be authorized to exceed the revenue limit that it gives a statute over the next five years, beginning in the 2122 school year in the amount of \$3.3 million, which is the amount that is sun setting in.

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00:01:35.340 --> 00:01:44.550

Dean Hess: In our current referendum, and it talks about that it would increase by 270,270 \$5,000 each year between.

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00:01:46.200 --> 00:01:46.410

Dean Hess: and

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00:01:48.150 --> 00:01:59.160

Dean Hess: And then ending and sustaining at \$4.4 million in the 2526 school year and thereafter, and the purpose of this is maintaining current programs and services.

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00:01:59.790 --> 00:02:12.000

Dean Hess: Funding building maintenance competitive staff compensation expanding course offerings and additional building security improvements, so it gives you a flavor of the why we're going for it.

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00:02:13.260 --> 00:02:19.680

Dean Hess: And again it's replacing \$3.3 million referendum that is scheduled to sunset right now in.

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00:02:21.870 --> 00:02:37.500

Dean Hess: we're asking for a 275,000 increase each year for the first five years and then it sustains at 4.4 million and to put that in perspective \$275,000 is just a little bit more than half of what we've been increasing.

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00:02:38.610 --> 00:02:48.810

Dean Hess: And the idea behind that we've been doing a lot of deferred maintenance with our buildings and grounds, as well as with our technology infrastructure with our transportation.

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00:02:49.200 --> 00:02:59.010

Dean Hess: Such that we feel we can reduce that that annual increase for those first five years and that's based on the fiscal planning that we've been doing.

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Jason Schmidt: So to sum it up, then this is a this question that's going to be posed to the Community is to replace in a referendum that has already been existing since 2017 so we're in year four.

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00:03:15.990 --> 00:03:23.010

Jason Schmidt: Have a five year referendum and we're replacing that now or asking the Community to replace that.

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00:03:23.760 --> 00:03:35.910

Jason Schmidt: With a with another referendum, and then this one would be a recurring referendum, as opposed to the previous one, which was non recurring So could you talk a little bit about the difference between those two.

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00:03:36.360 --> 00:03:40.020

Dean Hess: Absolutely, and in our the communities that we serve.

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00:03:40.530 --> 00:04:05.220

Dean Hess: They approved a non recurring referendum back in 2014 and at that time they approved it for three years and that was for \$400,000 each year when that were non recurring referendum sunset in 2017 we went back to the communities that we serve and a little bit of history behind that.

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00:04:06.480 --> 00:04:19.650

Dean Hess: We were in a situation in 2015 16 we recognized, we were going to have more than a \$500,000 deficit and we had to do some significant layoffs.

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00:04:20.340 --> 00:04:34.650

Dean Hess: In 2016 in order to balance our budget and those layoffs were in areas such as agriculture, art English Fayyad French tech head choir as well as core structure and elementary and middle school.

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00:04:35.520 --> 00:04:49.680

Dean Hess: And in 2017 we ran a referendum and we explained to the communities that we serve if that had not passed, we would have had to made again some really significant cuts in our programming.

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00:04:50.310 --> 00:05:06.540

Dean Hess: The communities that we serve past a five year non recurring referendum, and that non recurring is critical to understand, basically, what it says we're going to support you for a specific period of time, then we want you to come back and give us an update on where we're at.

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00:05:07.680 --> 00:05:17.070

Dean Hess: In that situation if funding for public school has changed and you're able to get more funding, you can potentially move forward without a referendum.

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00:05:17.760 --> 00:05:32.520

Dean Hess: Unfortunately, we haven't had any significant changes to the funding of public education and therefore we are happy to come back as we had shared with the communities that we serve back in in 2017 when we when we brought this forward.

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00:05:33.540 --> 00:05:49.530

Dean Hess: we've increased the amount by \$500,000 each year and the reasoning behind that is we've not only been dealing with trying to address the deferred maintenance, the deferred transportation, the deferred tech infrastructure, but then also we've been.

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00:05:50.640 --> 00:06:08.460

Dean Hess: Addressing other aspects of operations and now at \$3.3 million again if the non recurring referendum were not to be replaced, we would need to make three plus million dollars worth of cuts in our current budget in order to balance the budget.

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00:06:09.750 --> 00:06:11.340

Dean Hess: that's what we call a fiscal cliff.

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00:06:12.630 --> 00:06:16.260

Dean Hess: We really appreciate the support that has been given to the school district.

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00:06:17.340 --> 00:06:26.760

Dean Hess: With that stated in a non recurring situation if it doesn't pass You then have to address that fiscal cliff of three plus million dollars.

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00:06:27.900 --> 00:06:32.100

Dean Hess: At this point, we're proposing to the communities that we do a recurring referendum.

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00:06:33.270 --> 00:06:43.470

Dean Hess: And we're very hopeful that the communities that we serve are recognizing we have done everything we can to be good stewards of their taxpayer dollars.

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00:06:44.670 --> 00:07:02.520

Dean Hess: people that have been involved in watching board meetings over the last few years know that if we did not have a need for the fiscal resource, it was reinvested back into the school district, and so we have a healthier fund balance today than we did four years ago.

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00:07:03.660 --> 00:07:06.810

Dean Hess: We have been able to put dollars aside for future capital.

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00:07:08.010 --> 00:07:16.920

Dean Hess: Improvement needs we have approximately a million dollars in our fund 46 so as we start to replace doors and windows and roofs.

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00:07:17.730 --> 00:07:27.270

Dean Hess: In the future we could potentially utilize those dollars from 46, and so this recurring referendum is something that, if passed.

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00:07:27.990 --> 00:07:37.290

Dean Hess: The school district continue continue sustaining the operations that we've been doing, we can address some of the items that are in the question itself.

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00:07:37.740 --> 00:07:51.270

Dean Hess: Regarding ensuring that we're competitive with staff compensation, the potential of expanding course offerings for our students are addressing building security issues that we know exists that we need to work on.

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00:07:52.950 --> 00:07:53.730

Dean Hess: and move forward.

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00:07:56.220 --> 00:08:07.170

Jason Schmidt: So everything that is is planned and intended with the referendum dollars, that would be coming in with a yes, is all in line with a.

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00:08:08.010 --> 00:08:22.680

Jason Schmidt: With the district's key interests that we've been promoting for the past several years and kind of fits in with the overall strategy that the district has to be able to work for the families in the in our in our Community right.

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00:08:23.130 --> 00:08:27.210

Dean Hess: Absolutely, are we have an outstanding Board of education and.

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00:08:27.930 --> 00:08:44.940

Dean Hess: They continuously look back at the key interest to guide them in the work that we're doing and as an administrative team and the members of the school district we're always doing the same, so the key interest guide us and we're expecting that as we invest resources we're doing so thoughtfully.

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00:08:47.040 --> 00:08:59.580

Jason Schmidt: that's good to hear appreciate the the work that you and the board, are doing to make sure that we're being good stewards of the dollars that that the Community has provided to the school district for for the work that we do.

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00:09:01.230 --> 00:09:21.300

Jason Schmidt: You had mentioned earlier that we had we had a situation, a few several years ago, where we needed to make about \$500,000 worth of cuts and now we're with a with a know to to this to this referendum, the there's going to be.

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00:09:23.370 --> 00:09:33.780

Jason Schmidt: An impact on property taxes for families in our Community and there's also going to be an impact on the the district's budget as well.

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00:09:34.320 --> 00:09:49.020

Jason Schmidt: Could you give us a little bit of an idea of what that what kinds of cuts were needed to make where it needed to be made with that \$500,000 deficit and if we're looking at a 3.3 or \$3 million plus.

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00:09:49.560 --> 00:10:01.380

Jason Schmidt: kind of a cut what would those what would be need to be done, I guess, in that situation if the you know if we if we need to if we need to go back to.

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00:10:02.610 --> 00:10:04.350

Jason Schmidt: Pre referendum funding levels.

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00:10:04.950 --> 00:10:15.270

Dean Hess: yep so and and we can always learn from from history and looking back in that 2016 era when we knew that we had to.

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00:10:16.710 --> 00:10:30.990

Dean Hess: Look at cutting positions in order to balance the budget we cut more than nine fts back then, we were able to realize some of that 500 plus thousand dollar deficit away from the classrooms away from people.

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00:10:32.160 --> 00:10:35.850

Dean Hess: But a majority of it had to come from our people, because we had.

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00:10:36.360 --> 00:10:46.680

Dean Hess: Already for years before that then making cuts by deferring maintenance and deferring professional development and deferring a lot of things that that didn't directly impact a.

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00:10:47.250 --> 00:10:58.290

Dean Hess: position, so you can imagine if it was nine plus positions for 500,000, then you can have some understanding of what it could potentially be if we have to cut more than 3 million.

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00:11:00.720 --> 00:11:12.120

Dean Hess: As far as the tax pair and the school district, and the outcomes so it's been shared that overall over the course of five years taxes would actually go down.

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00:11:12.780 --> 00:11:25.110

Dean Hess: If the the taxpayers were to approve the referendum, I received a question recently about well how much would they change if the referendum were to fail and.

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00:11:25.770 --> 00:11:44.130

Dean Hess: We shared some numbers I don't have right in front of me right now but it's between three and \$400 that the taxes would go down on hundred thousand dollar home and that that is something that i'm fully aware, a lot of folks would say that's very beneficial for a family.

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Dean Hess: specific to their taxes, by the same token it's that same three or \$400 reduction that would cause the three plus million dollar reduction out of the school district budget, so it would have that impact on the individual taxpayer, you would have a three plus million dollar.

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00:12:05.070 --> 00:12:14.790

Dean Hess: negative impact on the school district budget so ultimately it's going to as it always does go to the taxpayers, for their decisions.

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00:12:16.020 --> 00:12:21.690

Dean Hess: And one of the things to that people have asked me as they said, you know when you share information with us.

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00:12:22.800 --> 00:12:29.460

Dean Hess: i've had a couple of people say you don't you don't seem real persuasive and I shared with them, I I recognize that.

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00:12:30.570 --> 00:12:40.200

Dean Hess: And I need to be real thoughtful because i'm not supposed to be persuasive as a superintendent my job is to do the best I can to provide information.

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00:12:40.770 --> 00:12:49.770

Dean Hess: To the folks of the communities that we serve and give them the facts, as I understand them as to how different situations would be affected.

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00:12:50.670 --> 00:13:05.400

Dean Hess: If a referendum were to pass versus if a referendum were to fail and so that's what we're doing and we're also doing everything we can to share that information through different modes and you know, one of them is the the social media our district web page.

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00:13:06.630 --> 00:13:11.730

Dean Hess: to share those documents and a video in this podcast and then also.

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00:13:13.170 --> 00:13:27.300

Dean Hess: Giving people other opportunities and and One of those is is coming up here on march 24 we're actually going to be doing a presentation in the falls area performing arts Center at 630 and so.

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00:13:28.320 --> 00:13:40.710

Dean Hess: Members of the communities that we serve, which is 10 different municipalities are welcome to come face to face in our PAC they will also have an opportunity that they can join in on that activity.

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00:13:41.910 --> 00:13:51.150

Dean Hess: Online similar to how we do our our board meetings so we're trying to do a lot of different things to give people the opportunity to gather the information.

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00:14:45.690 --> 00:14:56.070

Jason Schmidt: Okay that's awesome so people have the opportunity to attend a meeting asked questions and get the information directly from the horse's mouth, so to speak, right.

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00:14:56.490 --> 00:14:57.750

Jason Schmidt: So I think that's.

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00:14:58.080 --> 00:15:04.500

Jason Schmidt: I think that's I think that's a good that's a that's a good way to get the information out there and I think it's also important.

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00:15:05.370 --> 00:15:11.520

Jason Schmidt: That that you pointed out that we're our purpose here is just to educate there's no.

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00:15:12.330 --> 00:15:20.970

Jason Schmidt: You know, trying to convince people, one way or the other, or anything like that, we do have a an ethical obligation to our Community, to make sure that.

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00:15:21.690 --> 00:15:37.140

Jason Schmidt: The you know we're we're not being pro or con it's just this is this is, this is the question and here's what happens if it's a yes here's what happens if it's a no and then the voters make the decision for themselves, so I think that's an important point for us to make.

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00:15:38.580 --> 00:15:55.290

Jason Schmidt: The the the vote is happening on April 6 obviously you know people have the opportunity to vote in person, I also could do absentee ballots all of that information is available as well on the reference of the referendum.

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00:15:56.310 --> 00:16:00.180

Jason Schmidt: site that we have on the district website is that accurate in.

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00:16:00.720 --> 00:16:08.400

Dean Hess: It is if they go to the oof panthers.com website and then click on the referendum tab.

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00:16:08.850 --> 00:16:18.540

Dean Hess: And then just scroll to the bottom, they will see a list of frequently asked questions and the last of those frequently asked questions is working residents vote on April 6.

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Dean Hess: And it just talks about the fact that residents can cast their ballots at their usual polling location.

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00:16:25.140 --> 00:16:39.420

Dean Hess: With that stated due to coven 19 if they would feel more comfortable voting by mail we've given them a link that they can go to my vote wisconsin.gov and they can just click on that link and it'll share with them how they do absentee ballot.

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00:16:40.410 --> 00:16:47.190

Jason Schmidt: awesome yeah so we'll include a link to that in the show notes and make sure that people are aware of how to get access to those as well okay.

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00:17:17.160 --> 00:17:25.200

Dean Hess: That, I think, would be one of the things that I think would be important for our folks to to recognize as well is.

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00:17:28.950 --> 00:17:38.550

Jason Schmidt: Alright well thanks for your time this afternoon Dean appreciate all of the information and the communication that's coming out of the district Office about.

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00:17:39.390 --> 00:17:50.430

Jason Schmidt: what's going on with our referendum on April six So hopefully lots of people go out and vote and were able to plan for what is coming.

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00:17:51.330 --> 00:18:00.090

Dean Hess: Absolutely, and I want to thank the media in the area for assisting us with sharing information I anticipate that there'll be.

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00:18:00.540 --> 00:18:17.640

Dean Hess: A couple more newspaper articles coming out over the next few weeks and like we stated folks can attend the meeting on the 24th of March, as well as they can always go to our webpage to gather more information and, ultimately, if they still have questions they can call me anytime.

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00:18:19.020 --> 00:18:22.080

Jason Schmidt: Outstanding well thanks again for your time appreciate it a Dean.

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00:18:22.500 --> 00:18:23.340

Dean Hess: Thank you Jason.