

## Description of Proposed School Construction Project

Little Falls Community Schools, ISD #0482-01, is proposing a two-question bond referendum on April 14, 2026. The first ballot question would authorize \$34.305 million in bonding authority to finance facility renovations and upgrades to the existing high school. The second ballot question would authorize \$9.52 million in bonding authority to finance a three-stations gymnasium and weight/fitness area. Passage of the second ballot question is contingent upon the passage of the first ballot question.

Passage of the first ballot question would allow the district to convert the existing (9-12<sup>th</sup> grade) high school into a (7-12<sup>th</sup> grade) middle/high school. The project proposal focuses on: renovating the second level of the existing high school, renovating the lower level of the existing high school to accommodate 7-8<sup>th</sup> grade students, renovating and providing specialty educational spaces for all middle/high school students and extensive building system upgrades.

The proposed projects would be scheduled for completion in calendar years 2026 and 2027. Cost estimates by ballot question project component are as follows:

Question #1		Question #2	
High School Improvements		Gym / Weight Room Addition @ High School	
Renovations	\$ 12,700,000	Building Construction	\$ 6,750,000
HVAC Upgrades	\$ 7,600,000	Existing Weight Room Renovations	\$ 440,000
Plumbing & Electrical Upgrades	\$ 4,600,000	Site Improvements	\$ 370,000
Fire Suppression Upgrades	\$ 420,000	Fees, Permits & Testing	\$ 860,000
FF&E	\$ 500,000	Contingencies	\$ 1,100,000
Technology Upgrades	\$ 455,000	Bond Issuance Costs	\$ 198,216
Asbestos Mitigation	\$ 100,000		<b>\$ 9,718,216</b>
Building Envelope Repairs	\$ 370,000		
Science Lab Renovations	\$ 275,000		
Security Upgrades	\$ 240,000		
Lighting Upgrades	\$ 110,000		
Site Improvements	\$ 135,000		
Fees, Permits & Testing	\$ 2,900,000		
Contingencies	\$ 3,900,000		
Bond Issuance Costs	\$ 507,648		
Capitalized Interest	\$ 472,800		
	<b>\$ 35,285,448</b>		

Current K-12 enrollment at the district is approximately 2,233 students. The district is projecting a decline in enrollment over the next five-year period to around 1,854 K-12 students. The district is currently losing around 384 student residents to open enrollment and gains about 142 students via open enrollment; a net loss of 242 students.

Though the district is working with City of Little Falls to explore alternative uses of portions of the middle school facility, the district will continue to use the gymnasium and swimming pool housed at the middle school. The district has supplied cost estimates to operate and staff the additional building space. Operational savings from improved building systems at the high school would be offset by the increased operating costs associated with the three-station gymnasium proposed in the second ballot question and the operating costs associated with continued use of the swimming pool and gymnasium space at the existing middle school. Aside from the uncertainty surrounding the duration of the operating costs from continued use of the existing middle school facilities, 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.



Willie L. Jett II  
Commissioner

February 18, 2026