

(11/13/24 District Administrator's Corner Article)

(Guest Writer – Brian Krey, Business Manager)

Two weeks ago, I stated that each school district receives our final “revenue limit” worksheet from the State, which provides detail on how much revenue each school district can receive for the current school year. The revenue limit caps how much money each school district can get from the combination of school district property taxes and state aid: this combination is our main revenue source.

The River Valley School District will need an operational referendum on April 1, 2025, to cover our projected deficit in the upcoming years. More details will be shared in January when the amount and number of years are finalized. Due to prior funding deficits, River Valley passed an operational referendum in April 2019 that provided revenue to cover the 2019-20, 2020-21, and 2021-22 school years. The operational referendum passed in April 2022 provided revenue for the 2022-23, 2023-24, and 2024-25. *The District is thankful for the community's continued support!*

The April 1, 2025, referendum will ask voters for tax funding to maintain our current educational programs, class sizes, services, and co-curricular activities. These tax dollars will allow River Valley to keep what we currently have in place (classes/courses, programs, class sizes, staffing, and maintenance). The District does not plan to add new positions or programs with these referendum dollars. *These funds are not for new buildings or facilities.*

It is important to understand that River Valley is not alone or unique in asking for funding through an operational referendum. In 2024, 132 school districts put an operational referendum on the ballot across the State. There are approximately 420 school districts, which means that 31% (almost 1/3) of all school districts in the State had an operational referendum in 2024. The high amount of school districts needing operational referendums begs the question of “*why do school districts need operational referendums?*”

The answer is that the funding available through the revenue limit and from the State isn't enough to continue to provide the current level of operations and education for our students. As stated earlier, the revenue limit caps how much money we can generate, and the increases per student are determined by the State. Since the 2010-2011 school year, the average annual increase per pupil for River Valley has only been 0.73% (*see table below for annual revenue limit per pupil increases*).

School Year	Annual Revenue Limit Per Pupil Increase from State Budget
2010-2011	2.10%
2011-2012	-4.90%
2012-2013	0.50%
2013-2014	0.75%
2014-2015	0.75%
2015-2016	0.00%
2016-2017	0.00%
2017-2018	0.00%
2018-2019	0.00%
2019-2020	1.71%
2020-2021	1.71%
2021-2022	0.00%
2022-2023	0.00%
2023-2024	5.34%
2024-2025	2.95%
Average	0.73%

As you can see from this table, school districts in Wisconsin have dealt with flat or little increases on our revenue limit for over a decade. Meanwhile, the cost of doing business (transportation, food service, utilities, salaries, benefits, general supplies) increases on an annual basis.

River Valley has continued to be fiscally responsible with our expenditures on an annual basis. The ten-year average for our general fund expenditure increases is 2.77%, while our five-year average for general fund expenditure increases is 3.96%.

As we approach the April 1, 2025, operational referendum, it is essential for our community to understand the ongoing financial pressures on our school district and the need to

sustain the quality of education, services, and programs that our students rely on. With limited revenue growth and rising operational costs, we have managed our finances responsibly, yet state funding constraints require us to seek community support to preserve the resources we currently have in place.

If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact me at the River Valley District Office (608-588-2551) or email me at bkrey@rvschools.org.