

Kieleidoscope  
March 12, 2015

On April 7, 2015 citizens of the Kiel Area School District will be asked for their input on three referenda questions regarding: 1) a new eight lane pool and renovation of the 1970 locker rooms, 2) a warm water therapy pool and 3) authority to exceed the revenue cap for pool operations, facilities and technology upgrades.

I would like to share some background of how the School Board arrived at the three questions. During the preplanning for the 2012 referendum, there was much discussion about the pool observation deck. There is inadequate spectator seating and deck space which is a safety concern. It also limits the district's ability to host larger competitions. At that time the Board determined that a part of the referendum dollars if approved would be put into building an upper level observation deck. We were very fortunate to have citizen support for the facilities referendum. When the actual architectural work was started on the observation deck, a pool audit was done by Councilman- Hunsacker.

The results of the Councilman- Hunsacker pool audit led the Board's discussion in a completely different direction. The Board assigned a community and district committee to review the pool audit, discuss its condition and bring a recommendation back to the Board. The recommendation was unanimous that investing in fixing the current pool was too expensive with no guarantee about the investment. In addition, the pool being 44 years old and having its heating system run through the high school boiler was a huge waste of energy. It was recommended that an entire new boiler system be purchased for the pool. After investing in an entire new structure, and a new heating system, we would still be left with the issue of no spectator seating or open deck space. The committee recommended building a new pool.

The Board then appointed a new pool committee comprised of district staff and community members to work with the general contractor and architect to determine options for the pool. The options were to repair the pool in the current location or build a new eight lane pool. Through these discussions the committee came up with the idea of a warm water therapy pool to serve our community. This committee recommended a new eight- lane pool and warm water therapy pool. They also recommended that the old locker rooms be remodeled and updated since they are the original 1970 locker rooms.

The Board, being very cognizant of the investment in a referendum decided to conduct a community survey to determine if there was support for a pool and to determine which option the community would support. The survey results indicated that of the 815 respondents a range from 62%-85% supported updating the district's pool. Then citizens were asked to choose which options they would support. Option 1 was to rebuild the existing six lane pool. Option 2 was to expand the existing pool to 8 lanes. Option 3 was to build a new pool and option 3b was to build a new pool and a smaller therapy pool. The option that received the most support was option 3, building a new eight lane pool. The second highest option was 3b, building a new pool and a smaller therapy pool. Two other questions

that received a high percentage of survey respondents' support were to renovate the locker rooms and to exceed the revenue limit for pool operations and facilities and technology upgrades.

From the survey and committee recommendations, the Board made a decision to take three questions to the citizens. The warm water therapy pool was pulled out as its own question to allow voters the ability to vote on it separately.

Now it is in the hands of the voters. There are many advantages to a new eight lane pool for the school and community. There are also advantages to having a warm water therapy pool for the community members. The third question to exceed the revenue limit is critical to the entire project. If we do not have the extra funds to operate the pool, then the building of a new pool may not occur.

Obviously, there are going to be some people in support and others who do not agree with the Board's decision to go to referendum for a new eight lane pool. There are people who question the therapy pool and there are people who question the operations and maintenance of the school district. People have a right to their opinions and each one of us will form our own perspectives on what should be done. For this reason, a referendum vote was chosen. The School Board heard from all sides. They made every effort to provide for community input and now it is in the hands of the voters. Going to a referendum is a long and arduous process that is not taken lightly. The Board heard from survey respondents that a pool is an important part of this community. The School Board is an elected body that voted to take three questions to the public. It is now up to the citizens of the Kiel Area School District to determine the future of the pool. Please cast your vote on April 7th.

*Complete detail of the referendum process can be found on the district website [www.kiel.k12.wi.us](http://www.kiel.k12.wi.us) under pool referendum. You can also call Dr. Blankenheim at the district office at (920) 894-2266.*