

School District of Ashland

Press Release

February 1, 2016

For immediate release

Call the superintendent, Dr. Keith Hilts, with questions at 715-682-7080.

Why Did the Ashland School District include a Field House in the April Facility Referendum?

The School District has received a strong, positive initial response to the facility plan to be voted on April 5th. If you are not familiar with the plan, I invite you to log on to the District website at www.ashland.k12.wi.us and review the plan under the REFERENDUM INFORMATION tab. People are excited about the chance to enhance education by creating spaces that inspire students. They are also very interested in the opportunity to support the arts, local cultures and regional history. People also appreciate the District's dedication to protecting the community investment in schools by keeping up with maintenance needs. Many are also excited by the prospect of the large field house. However, I have received many questions about the proposed field house. Allow me to address the field house concept in this article.

First, many people may not know what a field house is. The space that is envisioned is large. It would be approximately 56,000 square feet with a 200 meter walking/running track and 4 courts. It is a multi-sport facility that could be used for many types of training and competitive events, both by student athletes and the community.



An example of a field house similar to the one we are proposing can be seen in this photo.

Another important thing to know is that the School Board did not develop the idea of building a field house alone. The School District held many listening sessions where the idea of building a large community space for recreation and events was discussed. This came forward as an important community

need at every listening session. The reasons that people felt a field house was an important need were many, including: spaces for school and youth teams for training, community wellness, supporting economic development, spaces for special community and regional events.

Currently, there is not enough space for all the school and youth sports teams for training. This creates difficult scheduling and means that some teams are practicing late into the evening. The field house would allow all school sports teams places to practice at optimal times and get students home in time to have dinner with their families. Living in Ashland, we are all aware that our winter season can be long, extending into the fall and spring seasons. This can make it difficult for our teams to train adequately. The field house would provide safe spaces for youth sports teams to hold their practices and competitions. Additionally, the space will allow for curricular uses as well. The band can practice in a field house. Physical education classes would use the space. I have seen math classes outdoors doing real world work. This would allow class work to occur regardless of the weather.

Speaking of youth teams, I have spent many hours traveling to youth sporting tournaments at other districts across the state who have field houses. When we were there, we spent money at local businesses such as restaurants, gas stations and other retail stores and hotels. The field house will serve as a destination for many large regional events making it an economic development opportunity. The economic opportunities go far beyond youth sporting events and the possibilities are only limited by our imagination. Can you envision a Special Olympics competition in Ashland? Perhaps a regional “Battle Bot” competition can occur in this space? What type of events would you like to see happening here?

We know the community needs spaces to be active during the long winter months and beyond. We have several community members who walk in the high school before school starts. The field house would offer a better venue for all types of community activities.

Some people have asked about the on-going costs of adding on such a large space. Yes, it costs a lot of money to heat a space this large, According to our estimates, it will cost about \$60,000 per year for all utility costs for the proposed field house. Revenue sources are being researched. We have had preliminary talks with other school districts as well as Northland College who show great interest in the possibility of renting the space. Additionally, larger events and tournaments also represent potential revenue sources to offset the additional utility costs.

Ashland is a wonderful place to live, work, and raise a family. Improvements to our educational facilities will strengthen our pride and reinforce the commitment we have to our community.