Study Session
Tuesday, September 8, 2026 5:30 PM

Oak Park Learning Center
6355 Osman Avenue North
Stillwater, MN 55082

Agenda

I. **Call to Order**
Speaker(s): Ms. Alison Sherman, School Board Chair

II. **Roll Call**
Speaker(s): Ms. Alison Sherman, School Board Chair

III. **Pledge of Allegiance**
Speaker(s): Ms. Alison Sherman, School Board Chair

IV. **Approval of Agenda**
Speaker(s): Ms. Alison Sherman, School Board Chair

V. **Consent Agenda**
- V.A. Payment of Invoices, August 22 - September 4, 2026, Treasurer's Report and Gifts and Donations, May 2026

VI. **Business Items**

VII. **Workshop Topic**
- VII.A. First 30 Days: Building the Stillwater Experience
- VII.B. Levy 101

VIII. **Adjournment**
Speaker(s): Ms. Alison Sherman, School Board Chair

Expect More.

First 30 Days:
Building the Stillwater Experience

School Board Study Session
Sept. 8, 2026

As We Present, Be Thinking:

1. What are we learning about our ability to consistently deliver the Stillwater Experience?

2. Where should efficiency drive service decisions—and where could reductions undermine experience or enrollment?

3. Which state transportation, childcare or funding structures should become legislative priorities?

THE GOVERNANCE QUESTION:

Are we delivering an experience families will choose and we can sustain?

The first weeks show both the promise of major investments and the service tradeoffs created by limited resources and state requirements.

The Board’s role: Understand the evidence, name the implications and provide direction.

Strengthening the Stillwater Experience

These investments create compelling reasons for families to choose and stay with Stillwater.

OAK-LAND MIDDLE REMODEL/ADDITION

- Modern, collaborative learning spaces
- Expanded spaces for student and community use
- Capacity for future enrollment
- Refreshed school identity, community pride

NEW ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

- Kid-friendly, modern learning environments
- Enhanced safety and visibility
- Room for future enrollment
- New school identity, community pride

Project Delayed: New Timelines

- ✔ **Former media center renovation**
- ✔ **New gymnasium construction**
- ❑ **Former gymnasium renovation to new media center**
- ❑ **Science room addition**
- ❑ **8 classroom addition**

Strengthening the Stillwater Experience

These investments create compelling reasons for families to choose and stay with Stillwater.






ENHANCED LEARNING

- Year 2 of elementary literacy curriculum implementation
- Continued professional development in Science of Reading
- Piloting new math curriculum

NEW HIGH SCHOOL SCHEDULE

- More elective opportunities
- Expanded college and career pathways
- Online courses
- Greater student choice and flexibility

Enrollment Is Earned Through Experience

The Stillwater Experience

AWARENESS → WELCOME → DELIVER → COMMUNICATE → RECOMMEND

Students: Safe. Challenged. Known. | **Families:** Welcomed. Informed. Confident.

Student opportunities, transportation, and childcare are part of that experience every day.

Strong Opportunities. Real Constraints.

We're implementing major improvements but operating with few resources, less margin for error

OPPORTUNITIES

- New schools and learning environments
- More high school choice and pathways
- Strong community interest in new buildings and programs
- Greater capacity to attract and retain families

CONSTRAINTS

- Budget reductions with visible service impacts
- Increased competition for students
- Rising costs and state mandates
- Complex system-wide implementation
- Less flexibility when problems emerge

We balanced the budget. The reductions required to do that have real consequences for service.

Busing Model Brings Savings and Trade-Offs

WHAT IS WORKING

- Students are getting to and from school
- Fewer buses and routes are operating
- Cost savings are being realized
- Later secondary start times were preserved
- Transfer routines are becoming more predictable
- We are adjusting quickly as issues emerge

WHAT HAS BEEN DIFFICULT

- Longer rides and earlier pickups for some students
- Limited time between tiers
- Transfer complexity and greater supervision needs
- Less flexibility for individual requests
- Changes to bus stops, walk zones, student/family experience

The question is where the service trade-offs remain manageable and where they may undermine confidence.

Busing Rules Are Not Equal

Transportation savings require deeper service reductions for our own district students.

18
communities

~150
square miles

~6,610
students transported

834
charter/nonpublic students

DISTRICT STUDENTS

- Transportation primarily within attendance boundaries
- No transportation for alternate-enrollment situations
- ½-mile elementary walk zone
- 2-mile secondary walk zone

CHARTER + NONPUBLIC STUDENT OBLIGATIONS

- Districtwide transportation responsibility
- Service obligations established by state law
- Less local discretion to align service with district efficiency choices

Childcare Demand Exceeds Current Capacity

Staffing, not space, is limiting access for families

900	118	11+
students enrolled	students on the waitlist	additional staff needed

WHY IT MATTERS

Childcare access influences whether Stillwater works for a family and can affect enrollment and retention.

WHAT LIMITS GROWTH

Hiring, workforce conditions and state requirements make it difficult to expand, even where space is available.

First 30 Days Reveal Momentum and Risk

Families have stronger reasons to choose Stillwater as well as clear pressure points that weaken their experience

PROMISE	EXPERIENCE	CONSTRAINTS	CHOICES
To inspire curiosity and the love of learning in every child.	Families judge the whole system	Budget cuts, staffing challenges, state rules shape service	Protect priorities and advocate for change

Our task is to protect the Stillwater Experience while building a service model the district can sustain.

First 30 Days: Implementation Checkpoint

PROGRESS MONITORING SCORECARD

↑→↓	**SAHS schedule**	Evidence: student/staff feedback • course registrations • PSEO enrollment	Owner: Rob Bach Review: October
↑→↓	**Bond Projects**	Evidence: milestones against revised schedule • budget variance • operational readiness	Owner: Mark Drommerhausen Review: November
↑→↓	**Transportation**	Evidence: ride-time outliers • savings vs plan	Owner: Tom Risley Review: November
↑→↓	**Childcare**	Evidence: students served and waitlist by site • staffing vacancies • additional capacity opened	Owner: Annette Sallman Review: November
↑→↓	**Enrollment**	Evidence: October 1 enrollment vs. projection and prior year • resident retention/open-enrollment balance • new enrollment and withdrawal trends	Owner: Review: November
BOARD	**Trigger / decision**	Threshold: [risk, service standard or guardrail crossed]	Direction: [decision or support needed]

Evidence reviewed. Implications named. Next checkpoint scheduled.

Board Discussion

1. What are we learning about our ability to consistently deliver the Stillwater Experience?

2. Where should efficiency drive service decisions—and where could reductions undermine experience or enrollment?

3. Which state transportation, childcare or funding structures should become legislative priorities?

Direction | Sustainability | Advocacy

Levy 101

September 8, 2026

Marie Schrul

Chief Financial Officer

Stillwater Area Public Schools

Expect More.

What is a Levy?

- A levy is the amount of revenue a school district intends to raise from property taxes in the upcoming year
  - School district levies are limited by state statute and are either based on statutory formulas or provide revenue for specific costs

- The estimated data provided by districts during the summer levy timeframe will determine which programs a district can levy for and how much revenue the levies will generate

Source: MN Department of Education

Levy Basics

- School budgets are a combination of state, federal and local funding, including voter approved operating, bond & technology levies
- Unlike cities and counties, the 2026 Payable 2027 Levy for school districts is for the following school year (2027-2028)
- Levy revenue is approximately 29% of the district's general fund budget

Factors Impacting School Levies

- Changes in tax base
- Changes in enrollment
- Legislative changes to education formulas
- Referendum
- Employment changes that drive severance and unemployment levies
- Capital bonds, refunding of bonds, abatements, long term facilities maintenance & health and safety projects, lease costs

Levy Timeline

Date	Action
July – September	District submits levy information to MDE
September 8	MDE provides preliminary levy limit calculations to school districts
September 22	School Board meeting to certify the Preliminary Proposed 2026 Payable 2027 Property Tax Levy & set truth in taxation hearing date
September 30	Deadline for the district to provide the county with the preliminary proposed levy and the date of the truth in taxation meeting. The proposed levy and current school year budget will be discussed at the truth in taxation hearing.
mid November	County mails property tax statements showing estimated Payable 2027 property taxes and meeting date/time/location for the final levy and budget discussions
December 8*	Truth in Taxation meeting, 6:00 p.m. (time certain)*pending school board approval on 9/22
December 22	School Board meeting to adopt the final 2026 Payable 2027 Property Tax Levy
December 28	School district deadline to certify final adopted levies to home county auditor

Summer Levy Process

- Districts enter initial levy data into the MN Department of Education (MDE) levy information system (July-August)
- Long Term Facilities Maintenance (LTFM) 10-year plan is approved by the School Board & submitted to MDE by the end of July
- Data reflected on first MDE levy limitation calculation report in September

September – Preliminary Levy Certification

- Preliminary levy certification is part of the overall levy process & due to the county auditor and the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) by Sept. 30
- Based on MDE levy limitation calculations provided to school districts in September (September 8)
- Adjustments to the levy are likely still being made which will may change the total amount
- Certifying the "Maximum" allows for greater flexibility
- Levy can only move down after Oct. 1

General Fund Levies

General Fund	Certified 2025 Payable 2026 RMV Amount	Certified 2025 Payable 2026 NTC Amount	Certified 2025 Payable 2026 Total	Proposed 2026 Payable 2027 (TBD) RMV Amount	Proposed 2026 Payable 2027 (TBD) NTC Amount	Proposed 2026 Payable 2027 (TBD) Total
Operating Referendum - Voter Approved	$ 16,959,178.26	0.00	$ 16,959,178.26			
Prior Years Adjustments	137,561.57	0.00	137,561.57			
Subtotal	**17,096,739.83**	**0.00**	**17,096,739.83**			
Equity	782,046.07	0.00	782,046.07			
Local Optional	6,394,099.81	0.00	6,394,099.81			
Transition	27,342.04	0.00	27,342.04			
1st Tier Board Approved Referendum	0.00	0.00	0.00			
Prior Years Adjustments	81,920.63	0.00	81,920.63			
Subtotal	**7,285,408.55**	**0.00**	**7,285,408.55**			
Capital Projects Referendum/Tech Levy	0.00	7,087,369.63	7,087,369.63			
Operating Capital	0.00	1,832,988.34	1,832,988.34			
Alt Teacher Comp (QComp)	0.00	773,122.35	773,122.35			
Achievement & Integration	0.00	384,482.07	384,482.07			
Reemployment Insurance	0.00	92,000.00	92,000.00			
Safe Schools	0.00	330,343.20	330,343.20			
Safe Schools Intermediate	0.00	137,643.00	137,643.00			
Career and Technical	0.00	385,308.34	385,308.34			
Annual Other Post Employment Benefits	0.00	1,128,037.00	1,128,037.00			
Long Term Facilities Maintenance	0.00	6,353,773.54	6,353,773.54			
Building/Land Lease	0.00	2,068,806.00	2,068,806.00			
Total Before Adjustments	**0.00**	**13,486,503.84**	**13,486,503.84**			
Prior Years Adjustments	0.00	166,312.75	166,312.75			
Subtotal	**0.00**	**13,652,816.59**	**13,652,816.59**			
Total General Fund	**$ 24,382,148.38**	**$ 20,740,186.22**	**$ 45,122,334.60**	$ -	$ -	TBD

RMV = Referendum Market Value
NTC = Net Tax Capacity

Community Service Fund Levies

Community Service Fund	Certified 2025 Payable 2026			Proposed 2026 Payable 2027 (TBD)		
	RMV Amount	NTC Amount	Total	RMV Amount	NTC Amount	Total
Basic Community Education	0.00	$ 561,211.80	$ 561,211.80			
Early Child Family	0.00	289,480.05	289,480.05			
Home Visiting	0.00	9,960.00	9,960.00			
Adults w/ Disabilities	0.00	9,241.11	9,241.11			
School Age Care	0.00	375,000.00	375,000.00			
Prior Years Adjustments	0.00	77,581.16	77,581.16			
Total Community Service Fund	0.00	$ 1,322,474.12	$ 1,322,474.12	$ -	$ -	TBD

RMV = Referendum Market Value
NTC = Net Tax Capacity

Debt Service Fund Levies

	Certified 2025 Payable 2026			Proposed 2026 Payable 2027 (TBD)		
Debt Service Fund	**RMV Amount**	**NTC Amount**	**Total**	**RMV Amount**	**NTC Amount**	**Total**
Debt Service Voter-Approved	0.00	$ 15,889,336.00	**$ 15,889,336.00**			
Debt Service Voter-Approved	0.00	3,536,926.00	**3,536,926.00**			
Debt Excess	0.00	(605,944.60)	**(605,944.60)**			
Prior Years Adjustments	0.00	64,897.34	**64,897.34**			
Subtotal	**0.00**	**18,885,214.74**	**18,885,214.74**			
Debt Service Other	0.00	1,284,751.00	**1,284,751.00**			
Debt Excess	0.00	(48,994.44)	**(48,994.44)**			
Prior Years Adjustments	0.00	0.00	**0.00**			
Subtotal	**0.00**	**1,235,756.56**	**1,235,756.56**			
Total Debt Service Fund	**0.00**	**$ 20,120,971.30**	**$ 20,120,971.30**	$ -	$ -	TBD
Total - All Funds	**$ 24,382,148.38**	**$ 42,183,631.64**	**$ 66,565,780.02**	$ -	$ -	TBD

RMV = Referendum Market Value
NTC = Net Tax Capacity

Expect More.

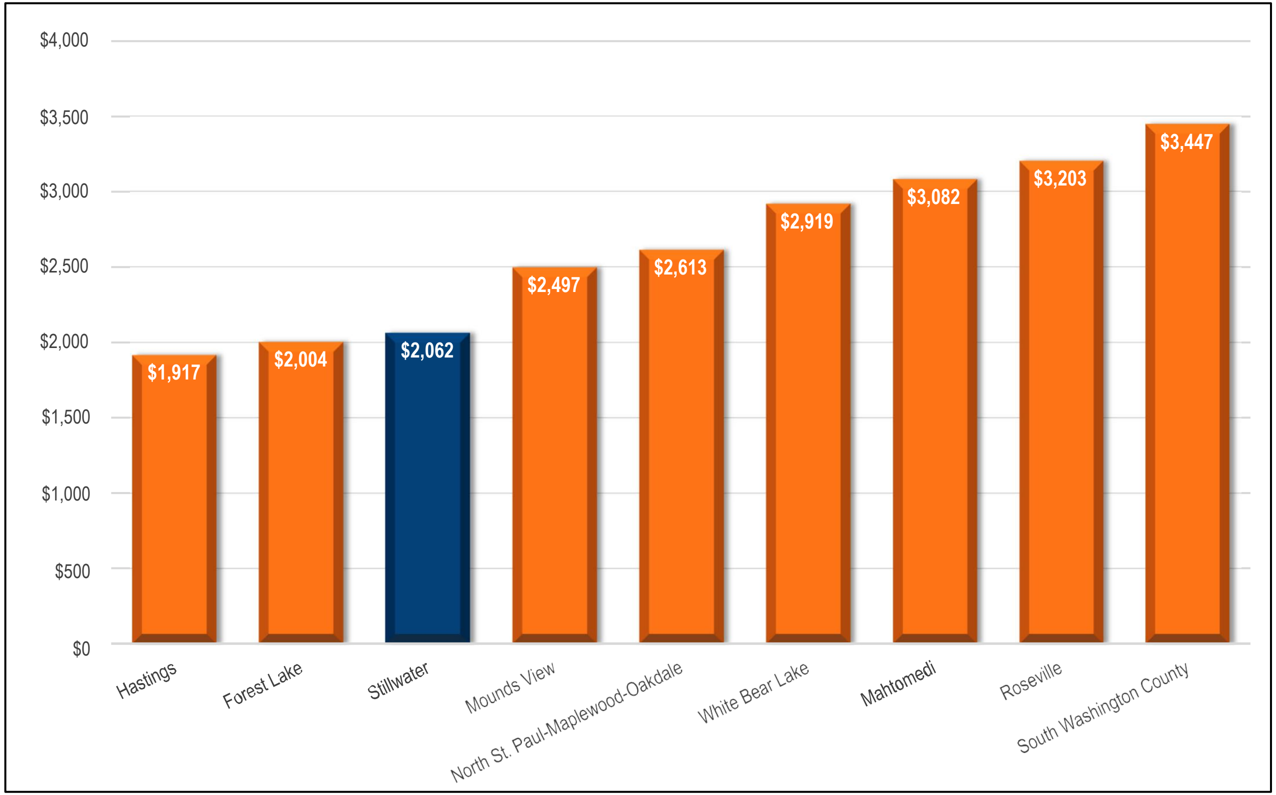
Factors Impacting Individual Taxpayers' School Taxes

Many factors can cause a tax bill for an individual property to increase or decrease from year to year

- Changes in value of individual property
- Changes in total value of all property within District
- Increases or decreases in levy amounts caused by changes in state funding formulas, local needs & costs, voter-approved referendums & other factors

Stillwater School District

Total School Property Taxes, Payable 2026, on a Home with an Estimated Market Value of $550,000



Source: Pay 26 School Tax Report.

EHLERS
PUBLIC FINANCE ADVISORS

December – Truth in Taxation Hearing

- State statute requires all local governments (cities, counties and school districts) to hold a public hearing prior to finalizing their levy authority and allow for public comment
- School districts are required to discuss the levy and the budget
- The hearing must follow the release of the proposed tax notices from the county

December – Final Levy Certification

- The School Board approves the final levy amount at the school board meeting following the truth in taxation hearing
- The final levy must be adopted by the school board by December 28

Questions?