

Consolidation Study Information

April 2017

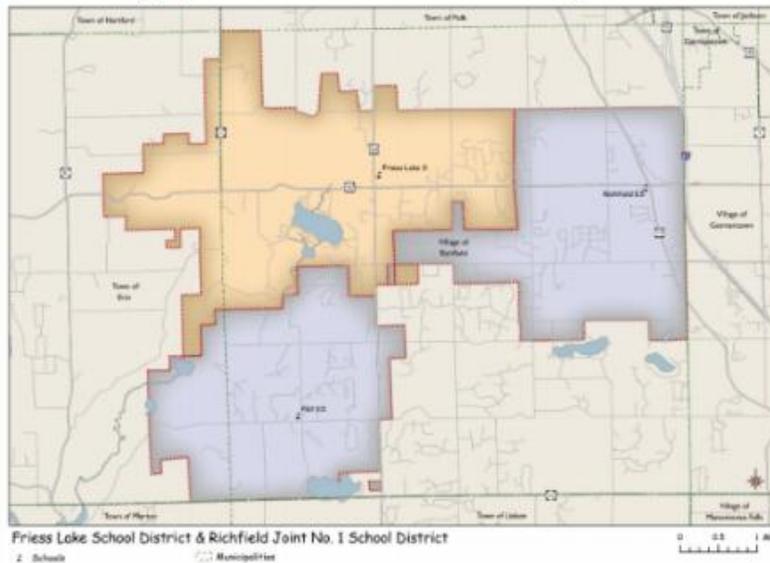


Friess Lake **Richfield J1**

Why Consolidation?

Educational Opportunities for our students
Increased offerings
Professional Staff Development
Community Unity
Operational Efficiencies
Overall Stability

Planning for the Schools of Tomorrow



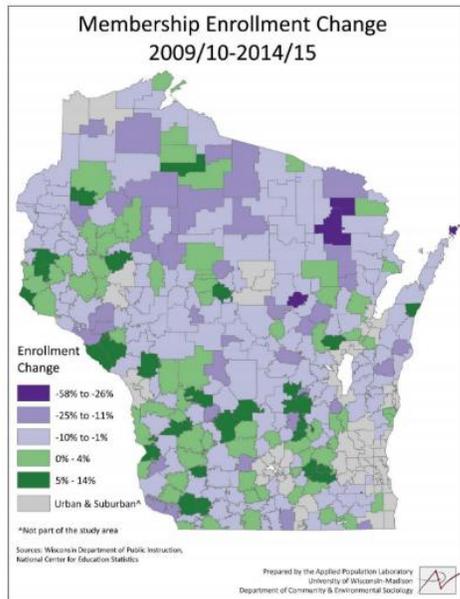
The districts were originally formed around 1868. While they have each served their communities well and have enjoyed a long history of excellence, much has changed. Like many other districts in Wisconsin, the districts have experienced declining enrollment. Despite this causing a reduction in funding, the districts are proud of the opportunities they have been able to provide students and the success they have found both in and out of the classroom. Consolidation is about looking to the future. The districts are trying to determine if students might be better served if two strong, but very small, districts within the same community were able to join forces. The districts believe that a consolidation would enhance their ability to strengthen and expand programming for students. Today, students in this community do almost everything together except go to school.

If consolidation moves forward, it would fully take effect on July 1, 2018.

Friess Lake



Richfield J1



- **Statewide declining enrollment leads to funding concerns that can negatively impact student opportunities for growth and learning.**
- In a consolidated district:**
- Taxes support strong, cohesive academics and widespread opportunities, creating rich experiences for students both in and out of the classroom, for students of all ages
 - Attract prospective home owners; continue to strengthen and enhance our community

Initial Planning

- Overhead costs reduced (facilities, transportation, duplicative positions/programming, food service)
- Greater ability to retain and attract specialist positions such as: librarian, instructional coaches, art, phy ed, etc... that are now filled by part time teachers.
- Increased opportunities for elective course offerings, academic and extracurricular opportunities, particularly at the middle school level.
- More collaborative professional development opportunities

Schools

Recommendations would likely include:

- Closing of Plat Elementary¹
- Remaining Campuses likely proposal:
 - 4K - 4 building
 - 5 - 8 building
- Decision(s) would be made and shared prior to the consolidation resolution

Savings would also be seen through operational efficiencies and reducing duplication of services.

The consolidation would result in a higher percentage of funds going directly to student programming.

¹ Early estimates show a potential savings of about 260K per year to winterize Plat School until a decision would be made on the future of the building.



Initial Planning, cont.

Staffing

How would this impact staff at the two districts?

Consolidation would not be done as a way to reduce staff. Most staff would continue on in the new district. Those decisions would be made during the 2017-18 school year.

High School

Does this impact the high school?

Both K-8 districts feed into Hartford Union High School District and would continue to do so in a consolidated model.

Enrollment

How does this impact Open Enrollment?

We hope that a consolidated school district would be an attractive place for families in the area. Families who currently open enroll into either district would be able to continue to open enroll into the consolidated district.

How is a decision made?

If the school board for each school district adopts a resolution ordering the consolidation, the consolidation takes effect on the next July 1, unless a referendum is required. If the school boards agree to consolidate, a referendum must be held *if* a petition requesting a referendum is filed before the second Tuesday of September. The petition must be signed by at least 10% of the electors who reside in either the Friess Lake or Richfield Joint 1 school district and must be filed with the clerk of the school district that has the highest equalized valuation of the affected school districts.

Alternatively, a referendum must be held if, at the time of adopting a resolution ordering the consolidation, the school board of either school district directs the holding of a referendum.

Since there are no other issues on the ballot this November, a special election would be needed, costing the districts about 15-20K each. Consequently, the Richfield School Board would feel comfortable moving forward without a referendum; the Friess Lake School School Board and Administration would feel comfortable moving forward without a referendum if a survey sent to all taxpayers and stakeholders yielded support for the consolidation. A survey will be sent to all Friess Lake School District taxpayers, staff and open enrollment parents in early April. The Friess Lake Board will consider the survey results as it makes a final decision.

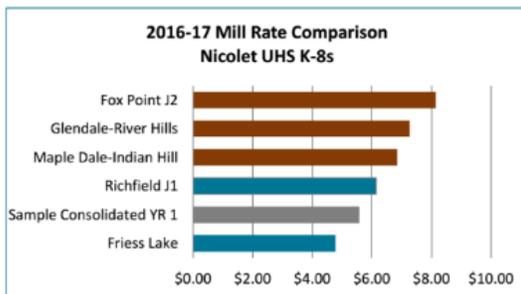
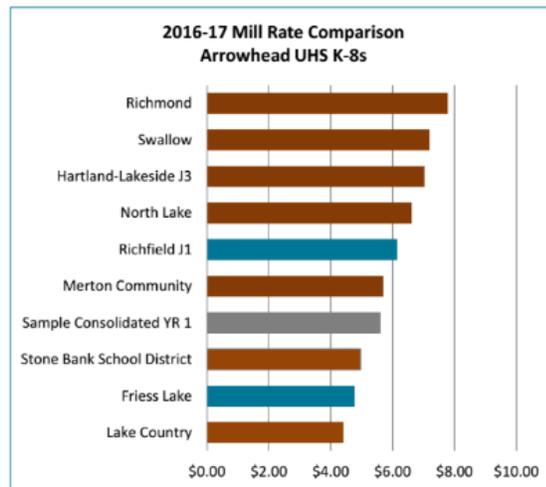
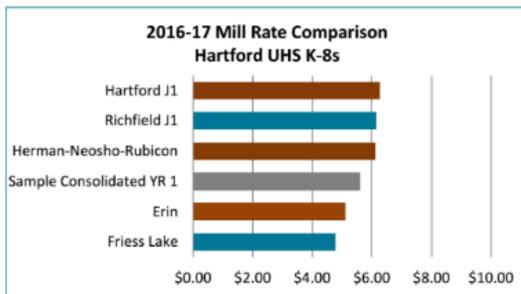
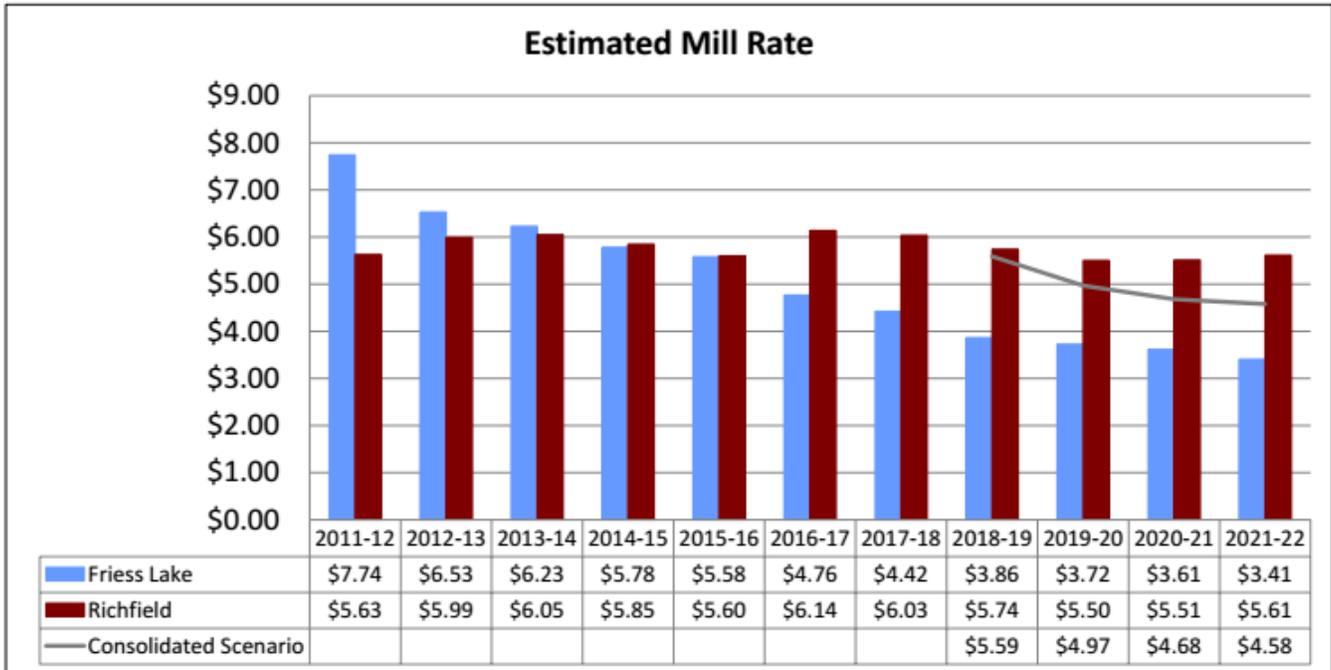
Resolution Process

- First resolution on April agendas (states consideration and notifies the state)
- Second resolution on July agendas (official resolution, contains detailed information)



Joint Board

- School boards of consolidating districts make up the joint interim school board of new district
- Duties begin in September (if no referendum is required)
- Performs duties until new school board is elected (April 2018)



- Sample mill rates are shown for comparison only. "Sample Consolidated YR 1" reflects consolidated scenario mill rate in the first year of consolidation. This projected mill rate is within area comparable 2016-17 ranges.

How would a consolidation impact taxpayers?



Robert W. Baird assisted the districts by performing a fiscal impact study. Based on continued declining enrollment in both districts and preliminary state budget forecasts, the projected tax levy of the Richfield School District would go down slightly. The Friess Lake School District taxes would be in line with what they were last school year (2015-16), though that does represent an increase over what they would be if there was no consolidation. When two districts merge, the consolidated mill rate will fall between the mill rates of the independent districts. The new mill rate would be weighted closer to that of the larger district, which is Richfield. The levy would then drop in each of the next 3 years (2020-2022). The consolidated mill rates are projected to be lower than almost any other K-8 in the surrounding area.

What happens to the debt of the two districts if they consolidate?

Upon consolidation, the new district takes on the existing debt of both districts. The debt is distributed among all of the taxpayers in the new consolidated district. The Friess Lake School District does not have any debt at this time. As of July 2016, the Richfield School District passed an Energy Efficiency Exemption of \$1,440,059.00. This comes out to approximately \$140-146K per year in additional levying authority for the next ten years. The funds will be used to replace the roof, HVAC, windows, masonry and lighting at Richfield School.

Does the state provide any incentives for districts to consolidate?

Yes! The state provides five years of consolidation incentive aid for districts that consolidate. It is a complicated formula that is based on the amount of state aid each district was receiving prior to consolidation. It is estimated that the consolidated district would receive about 396K in additional aid for the 2018-2019 school year alone. Over the first five years of consolidation, the forecasted incentive aid is approximately \$1 million.



What happens if we don't consolidate?

Both districts are fiscally sound, have a strong fund balance, good facilities, excellent staff, great students, and supportive families and communities. If the districts do not consolidate, they will continue to find ways to create solid experiences for students. The questions are: *Is there a better way to plan and provide opportunities for the schools of tomorrow? and, Might we be stronger, together?*

Additional information can be found at www.friesslakeschool.org and www.richfield.k12.wi.us.

Questions can also be posted at <https://todaysmeet.com/ConsolidationStudy>, a site that is actively monitored. Questions may be posted anonymously.