

**Wakefield Community School
Board of Education Regular Meeting
Monday, September 22, 2025 Immediately Following the Tax Request Hearing
Posted Locations:**

**Wakefield Post Office
BankFirst
Wakefield Republican
School Main Entrance**

Posted Date: 09/11/2025

The Board of Education Regular Meeting convened in open and public session on Monday, September 22, 2025 at Immediately Following the Tax Request Hearing in the Board of Education Room at the Media Center
802 Highland Street
Wakefield, NE 68784.

President Brown informed the group of the Open Meetings Act posted in the room and accessible to all members of the public as required by law. All board members had received notice of the meeting and the meeting notice had been published/posted in a timely manner prior to the meeting date.

ATTENDANCE TAKEN AT Immediately Following the Tax Request Hearing:

Present: Josh Dorcey, Dex Driskell, Erik Haglund, Jeffrey Keagle, Sherri Lundahl, Eric Riewer.
Present: 6.

Opening Procedures

Call to Order

Open Meetings Act

Pledge of Allegiance

School District Mission Statement

Roll Call

Approval of Agenda

Motion to approve the agenda. This motion, made by Josh Dorcey and seconded by Eric Riewer, Passed.

Josh Dorcey: Yea

Dex Driskell: Yea

Erik Haglund: Yea

Jeffrey Keagle: Yea

Sherri Lundahl: Yea

Eric Riewer: Yea

Yea: 6, Nay: 0

Recognition of Visitors/Communication from the Public

Discussion and Action Items

Hold for discussion and appropriate action a motion to adopt a formal resolution setting the 2025-2026 property tax asking for the General Fund, Bond Fund, Special Building Fund, and Qualified Capital Purpose Undertaking Fund.

Move to approve a resolution to setting the tax request for the General Fund at \$5,797,980.00; the Bond Fund at \$0.00; the Special Building Fund at \$202,020.00 and the Qualified Capital Purpose Undertaking Fund at \$0.00. This motion, made by Eric Riewer and seconded by Sherri Lundahl, Passed.

Josh Dorcey: Yea

Dex Driskell: Yea

Erik Haglund: Yea

Jeffrey Keagle: Yea

Sherri Lundahl: Yea

Eric Riewer: Yea

Yea: 6, Nay: 0

Discuss and take appropriate action on the 2025-2026 budget, with consideration of the following funds: General, Depreciation, Employee Benefits, Contingency, Activities, Special Building, Bond, School Lunch, Qualified Capital Purchase, Cooperative and Student Fee Funds.

Move to accept the 2025-2026 operating budget as presented. This motion, made by Josh Dorcey and seconded by Eric Riewer, Passed.

Josh Dorcey: Yea

Dex Driskell: Yea

Erik Haglund: Yea

Jeffrey Keagle: Yea

Sherri Lundahl: Yea

Eric Riewer: Yea

Yea: 6, Nay: 0

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:17pm. This motion, made by Eric Riewer and seconded by Josh Dorcey, Passed.

Josh Dorcey: Yea

Dex Driskell: Yea

Erik Haglund: Yea

Jeffrey Keagle: Yea

Sherri Lundahl: Yea

Eric Riewer: Yea

Yea: 6, Nay: 0

Notice of Special Hearing To Set Final Tax Request

Wakefield Public Schools (90-0560) in Wayne County, Nebraska

PUBLIC NOTICE is hereby given, in compliance with the provisions of State Statute Section 77-1632, that the governing body will meet on the 22nd day of, September 2025 at Immediately following budget hearing at 5:30 o'clock P.M., at 802 Highland Street, Wakefield NE for the purpose of hearing support, opposition, criticism, suggestions or observations of taxpayers relating to setting the final tax request.

	2024-2025	2025-2026	Change
Property Valuations	688,031,015	774,130,915	13%

2024-2025 Budget Information

2025-2026 Budget Information

Fund	2024-2025 Operating Budget	2024-2025 Property Tax Request	2024 Tax Rate	Property Tax Rate (2023-2024 Request Divided By 2024 Valuation)	2025-2026 Operating Budget	2025-2026 Proposed Property Tax Request	Proposed 2025 Tax Rate	Change in Tax Rate	Change in Operating Budget
General Fund	10,109,900.00	5,500,000.00	0.799383	0.710474	10,119,300.00	5,797,980.00	0.748966	-6%	0%
Bond Fund(s) K - 12	30,802.00		0.000000	0.000000	31,431.00	-	0.000000	#DIV/0!	2%
Bond Fund(s) K - 8			0.000000	0.000000			0.000000	#DIV/0!	0
Bond Fund(s) 9 - 12			0.000000	0.000000			0.000000	#DIV/0!	0
Bond Fund			0.000000	0.000000			0.000000	#DIV/0!	0
Special Building Fund	1,159,150.00	68,808.00	0.010001	0.008888	868,220.00	202,020.00	0.026096	161%	-25%
Qualified Capital Purpose Undertaking Fund K - 12	15,000.00		0.000000	0.000000	-	-	0.000000	#DIV/0!	-100%
Qualified Capital Purpose Undertaking Fund K - 8			0.000000	0.000000			0.000000	#DIV/0!	0
Qualified Capital Purpose Undertaking Fund 9 - 12			0.000000	0.000000			0.000000	#DIV/0!	0
Total	11,314,852.00	5,568,808.00	0.809383	0.719362	11,018,951.00	6,000,000.00	0.775062	-4%	-3%

RESOLUTION SETTING THE PROPERTY TAX REQUEST

RESOLUTION NO. _____

WHEREAS, Nebraska Revised Statute 77-1632 and 77-1633 provides that the Governing Body of Wakefield Public Schools passes by a majority vote a resolution or ordinance setting the tax request; and

WHEREAS, a special public hearing was held as required by law to hear and consider comments concerning the property tax request;

NOW, THEREFORE, the Governing Body of Wakefield Public Schools resolves that:

1. The 2025-2026 property tax request be set at:

General Fund:	\$	5,797,980.00
Bond Fund:	\$	-
Special Building Fund:	\$	202,020.00
Qualified Capital Purpose	\$	-
Undertaking Fund:		

2. The total assessed value of property differs from last year's total assessed value by 12.51 percent.
3. The tax rate which would levy the same amount of property taxes as last year, when multiplied by the new total assessed value of property would be 0.719362 per \$100 of assessed value.
4. Wakefield Public Schools proposes to adopt a property tax request that will cause its tax rate to be 0.775062 per \$100 of assessed value.
5. Based on the proposed property tax request and changes in other revenue, the total operating budget of Wakefield Public Schools will increase (decrease) last year's budget by 0 percent.
6. A copy of this resolution be certified and forwarded to the County Clerk on or before October 15, 2025.

Motion by _____, seconded by _____ to adopt Resolution # _____.

Voting yes were:

Voting no were:

Dated this _____ day of _____, 2025

NOTE 1: If you need separate levies for separate funds your resolution should identify the tax request by fund. #1 should be modified to identify each fund that has a tax levy

NOTE 2: This sample resolution is intended solely to assist political subdivisions. It is not a required form. Each political subdivision is responsible for ensuring the resolution is accurate and complies with all requirements set forth in the State Statutes.

Report: Analyzing School Spending Growth in Wakefield Public Schools and Nebraska Districts Compared to Inflation and Other Sectors

Executive Summary

Concerns about rising property taxes for schools in Nebraska often point to "out of control" spending by districts like Wakefield Public Schools. However, data from the last six years (2019-2024) shows that spending growth in Wakefield Public Schools and across Nebraska districts has been modest, closely tracking or only slightly exceeding inflation. In contrast, expenditures in sectors like health care and construction have grown at significantly faster rates. This report uses publicly available financial data to demonstrate that school spending is not a "spending problem" but rather aligns with economic realities, while other industries have seen more rapid increases.

Key findings:

- Nebraska statewide per-pupil school spending grew by approximately 26% from 2019 to 2024, nearly matching cumulative inflation of about 25%.
- Wakefield Public Schools' operating expenditures grew by around 30% from 2019-20 to 2023-24, slightly above inflation but far below health care (42%) and construction (57%) over similar periods.
- National school spending growth mirrors Nebraska's trends, reinforcing that this is not unique to the state.

Data sources include the National Education Association (NEA), Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), U.S. Census Bureau, and district-specific financial statements.

1. Inflation Trends (2019-2024)

To contextualize school spending, we first examine U.S. Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation, which measures the rising cost of goods and services. Annual CPI rates are as follows:

Year	Annual CPI Inflation Rate
2019	1.8%
2020	1.2%
2021	4.7%

2022 8.0%

2023 4.1%

2024 3.0%

Cumulative inflation from 2019 to 2024 is approximately 25% (i.e., \$1 in 2019 costs about \$1.25 in 2024). This provides a benchmark: any spending growth at or near this level reflects cost adjustments rather than "out of control" increases.

2. Spending Growth in Wakefield Public Schools

Wakefield Public Schools' financial data is drawn from audited statements and National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reports. Focusing on operating or current expenditures (excluding one-time capital projects), growth has been steady but not excessive.

Available data points:

- 2019-20 School Year: General fund disbursements of \$6,764,676.
- 2021-22 School Year: Total current expenditures of \$7,792,000.
- 2023-24 School Year: General fund disbursements of \$8,820,227.

Annualized growth:

- From 2019-20 to 2021-22: ~7.5% per year.
- From 2021-22 to 2023-24: ~6.3% per year.
- Overall from 2019-20 to 2023-24: ~6.9% per year (30% cumulative over 4 years).

Compared to inflation (23% cumulative from 2020 to 2024), this represents a modest premium, due to enrollment changes, staff costs, or state-mandated programs. Total expenditures (including capital) were higher in some years (e.g., \$11,598,000 in 2021-22), but these reflect investments in facilities, not ongoing operations.

If we extrapolate to a full six-year period (2019-2024) using average trends, growth remains below 7% annually—far from "out of control" and aligned with necessary adjustments for rising costs like energy, supplies, and salaries.

3. Spending Growth Across Nebraska School Districts

Statewide data from the NEA provides a comprehensive view of per-pupil current expenditures (adjusted for enrollment to focus on cost per student). This metric is ideal for comparison, as enrollment in Nebraska has been stable (around 310,000 students from 2022-2024).

Per-pupil current expenditures (fall enrollment basis):

Year	Per-Pupil Spending	Annual Growth
2019	\$13,259	-
2020	\$13,704	3.4%
2021	\$14,381	4.9%
2022	\$15,808	9.9%
2023	\$16,281	3.0%
2024 (est.)	\$16,722	2.7%

- Cumulative growth (2019-2024): 26%.
- Average annual growth: ~4.7%.

This closely tracks cumulative inflation (25%), with peaks in 2022 likely tied to post-pandemic recovery (e.g., learning loss mitigation). Total statewide current expenditures rose from approximately \$4.2 billion in 2019 (estimated based on per-pupil and enrollment) to \$4.9 billion in 2023-24, a similar trajectory.

National school spending follows suit: Total current expenditures grew from \$636.6 billion in 2018-19 to \$798.3 billion in 2023-24 (est.), a 25% increase over five years—again matching inflation.

Historical context: A 2019 OpenSky Policy Institute report noted Nebraska school spending grew at 3.5% annually from 2007-2017, below inflation in many years. Recent data continues this restrained pattern.

4. Comparison to Health Care and Other Industries

School spending pales in comparison to growth in health care and construction—sectors often cited for rapid cost escalations.

Health Care Expenditures

National health expenditures (nominal, from CMS):

- 2019: \$3.8 trillion.
- 2020: \$4.1 trillion (9.7% growth).
- 2021: \$4.3 trillion (2.7% growth).

- 2022: \$4.5 trillion (4.6% growth).
- 2023: \$4.9 trillion (7.5% growth).
- 2024 (proj.): \$5.3 trillion (8.2% growth).
- Cumulative growth (2019-2024): ~42%.
- Average annual growth: ~6.9%.

This far exceeds school spending and inflation, driven by factors like aging populations, drug prices, and post-pandemic demand.

Construction Expenditures

U.S. construction spending (total, from Census Bureau and FMI):

- 2019: ~\$1.4 trillion.
- 2024: \$2.2 trillion.
- Cumulative growth (2019-2024): ~57%.
- Average annual growth: ~9.5%.

Growth has been fueled by infrastructure needs, housing shortages, and material cost spikes (e.g., lumber prices rose 300% in 2021).

Overall Economy (Nominal GDP Growth)

For broader context, U.S. nominal GDP grew at ~5-6% annually on average from 2019-2024, outpacing real GDP (average 2.4%) due to inflation. Schools' growth aligns with this, while health and construction surge ahead.

The data clearly supports that spending growth in Wakefield Public Schools and Nebraska districts over the last six years has not outpaced inflation and is far below increases in health care (42% cumulative) and construction (57%). Property tax pressures stem from state funding formulas or local needs, not excessive spending. Policymakers should focus on sustainable funding models rather than cuts that could harm education quality. For more details, refer to the cited sources.

The Myth of Out-of-Control School Spending in Nebraska: Data from Wakefield Public Schools, Statewide Trends, and OpenSky Policy Institute Research

Executive Summary

Claims of "out of control" spending by Nebraska school districts, including Wakefield Public Schools, are not supported by the data. Over the last six years (2019-2024), spending growth has been modest, closely aligning with or only slightly exceeding inflation rates of about 25% cumulatively. In contrast, sectors like health care (42% growth) and construction (57% growth) have seen far steeper increases. Statewide per-pupil spending rose by approximately 26%, reflecting necessary adjustments for rising costs rather than extravagance. Research from the nonpartisan OpenSky Policy Institute reinforces this, showing average annual growth rates as low as 3.5% from FY07 to FY17, declining as a share of personal income, and recent figures around 3.65% amid external pressures like federal aid fluctuations. This report combines district-specific, statewide, and analytical data to demonstrate that property tax concerns stem from funding structures, not unchecked spending. Policymakers should prioritize equitable state aid over myths that could undermine education quality.

Data sources include the National Education Association (NEA), Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), U.S. Census Bureau, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), and OpenSky Policy Institute reports.

1. Inflation Trends and Comparative Analysis (2019-2024)

To debunk claims of excessive growth, we benchmark school spending against U.S. Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation and other sectors. Cumulative inflation from 2019 to 2024 is approximately 25%, meaning costs for goods and services rose by that amount. School spending has tracked this closely, while other industries have surged ahead, highlighting that education is not uniquely "out of control."

Annual CPI rates:

Year	Annual CPI Inflation Rate
2019	1.8%
2020	1.2%
2021	4.7%
2022	8.0%
2023	4.1%

2024 3.0%

Comparison to Health Care and Construction

- **Health Care Expenditures** (CMS data): Grew 42% cumulatively from \$3.8 trillion in 2019 to a projected \$5.3 trillion in 2024, averaging 6.9% annually—driven by factors like drug prices and post-pandemic demand.
- **Construction Expenditures** (Census Bureau and FMI data): Increased 57% from ~\$1.4 trillion in 2019 to \$2.2 trillion in 2024, averaging 9.5% annually—fueled by material costs and infrastructure needs.
- **Broader Economy**: Nominal U.S. GDP grew at 5-6% annually, outpacing real growth due to inflation, with schools aligning more conservatively.

These comparisons underscore that school spending is restrained, not mythic excess.

2. Spending Growth in Wakefield Public Schools

Wakefield Public Schools exemplifies modest growth, countering local complaints. Operating expenditures rose by around 30% from 2019-20 to 2023-24, slightly above inflation (23% from 2020-2024) but attributable to enrollment, staff, and mandates—not waste.

Key data (from audited statements and NCES):

- 2019-20: General fund disbursements of \$6,764,676.
- 2021-22: Total current expenditures of \$7,792,000.
- 2023-24: General fund disbursements of \$8,820,227.

Annualized growth: ~6.9% overall (30% cumulative over four years). Extrapolating to six years keeps it below 7% annually, far from "out of control." Total expenditures occasionally higher (e.g., \$11,598,000 in 2021-22) reflect capital investments, not operational bloat.

3. Statewide Spending Growth Across Nebraska Districts

Nebraska's 244 districts show similar restraint, with per-pupil current expenditures growing 26% from 2019 to 2024—nearly matching inflation. Enrollment stability (around 310,000 students) ensures this reflects true cost trends, not population shifts.

Per-pupil data (NEA):

Year	Per-Pupil Spending	Annual Growth
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2019	\$13,259	-
2020	\$13,704	3.4%
2021	\$14,381	4.9%
2022	\$15,808	9.9%
2023	\$16,281	3.0%
2024 (est.)	\$16,722	2.7%

Total statewide current expenditures: From ~\$4.2 billion in 2019 to \$4.9 billion in 2023-24. National trends mirror this (25% over five years), proving it's not a Nebraska-specific issue. Peaks (e.g., 2022) tie to pandemic recovery, not irresponsibility.

4. Insights from OpenSky Policy Institute Research

The OpenSky Policy Institute's nonpartisan analyses further dismantle the spending myth, showing long-term moderation and structural challenges. Their 2019 policy brief and recent OpenSkyLIGHTS updates provide historical and timely context.

2019 Policy Brief: "A Look at School Spending in Nebraska" (FY07-FY17)

- **Growth Rates:** Average 3.5% annually, down from 5-5.5% in prior decades. State aid grew at just 1.8%, increasing property tax reliance.
- **As Share of Income:** Declined over time (less per \$1,000 in 2018 than 1993).
- **Administrative Costs:** \$599 per pupil (below national \$674; lower than 34 states).
- **Drivers:** Rural enrollment declines raised per-pupil costs; staff increases (39.3% over 30 years) driven by special education mandates; benefits/aides rose to 20.3% of costs; operations at 3.5% annually; construction at 7.5% for facilities.
- **Implications:** Spending reflects needs, not excess; urges balanced tax reform.

Recent OpenSkyLIGHTS Updates (2024-2025)

- **March 8, 2024:** Budgeted general fund expenditures grew 3.65% statewide (2022-23 to 2023-24). Interactive district map highlights variability; only 14 districts had high levies.
- **August 16, 2024:** Notes expiration of \$122 billion federal ESSER funds, warning of adjustment challenges without implying prior waste.
- **April 4, 2025:** Extension for \$401,538 in ARP-HCY funds for vulnerable students.

- **July 11, 2025:** U.S. DOE retains \$38 million in funds, affecting programs like teacher development (\$11M) and student well-being (\$7M).
- **September 5, 2025:** Overview of school finance, encouraging engagement.

Additional tools like district profiles show funding inequities, with state aid doubling since 2020 but still lagging in some areas. OpenSky consistently portrays spending as responsive, not rampant, advocating for state-level solutions.

The combined data irrefutably debunks the myth of "out of control" school spending in Nebraska. Wakefield's 30% growth, statewide 26%, and OpenSky's documented 3.5-3.65% rates all align with or trail inflation, dwarfed by health care and construction surges. Property tax pressures arise from funding formulas, demographic shifts, and aid shortfalls—not extravagance. Addressing these realities through informed policy will better support students than perpetuating unsupported claims. For deeper dives, consult cited sources or OpenSky's resources.

Wakefield Community Schools 2026 Property Tax Report

Executive Summary

Wakefield Community Schools (District 90-0560) is facing a challenging fiscal environment for the 2025-2026 school year due to rising property valuations and corresponding reductions in state aid. Property valuations across Dixon, Wayne, and Thurston Counties have increased by 12.51% from 2024-2025 to 2025-2026, totaling \$774,130,915. This growth has led to a 35% decrease in state aid, from \$2,044,174 in 2024-2025 to \$1,330,616 in 2025-2026. To maintain operations without a deficit, the district requires approximately \$9,000,000 for the general fund. Funding sources include 12% from federal dollars (approximately \$1,080,000), \$1,330,000 in state aid, \$600,000 in reimbursements, and the remainder from property taxes.

The district is requesting \$6,000,000 in property taxes for 2026, which will fund the second half of the 2025-2026 school year and the first half of the 2026-2027 school year. Of this amount, \$202,000 is allocated for special building projects, while \$5,797,908 supports general fund operations. This request is essential to sustain educational programs, staffing, and infrastructure while protecting against unforeseen issues. Despite the increase in total tax collection, the levy rate is projected to decrease to 0.7750627037, mitigating the impact on individual taxpayers amid higher valuations.

Property Valuation Trends

Property valuations in the district's counties have shown consistent growth, reflecting regional economic development. This has expanded the tax base but reduced eligibility for state equalization aid under Nebraska's Tax Equity and Educational Opportunities Support Act (TEEOSA).

Year	Dixon County	Wayne County	Thurston County	Total Valuations	Change	% Change
2025-2026	\$424,797,154	\$302,951,879	\$46,381,882	\$774,130,915	\$86,099,900	12.51%
2024-2025	\$377,577,509	\$269,078,461	\$41,375,045	\$688,031,015	\$67,763,643	10.92%

2023-2024	\$342,655,201	\$238,453,972	\$39,158,199	\$620,267,372	\$83,077,257	15.47%
2022-2023	\$285,141,624	\$214,415,779	\$37,632,712	\$537,190,115	\$31,482,535	6.23%
2021-2022	\$268,171,544	\$201,080,723	\$36,455,313	\$505,707,580	\$9,822,686	1.98%
2020-2021	\$265,788,616	\$193,746,034	\$36,350,244	\$495,884,894	-\$7,633,658	-1.52%
2019-2020	\$270,703,328	\$194,253,810	\$38,561,414	\$503,518,552	\$14,504,834	N/A

The 12.51% increase in 2025-2026 elevates the assumed local effort from a \$1.00 levy to \$7,741,309, directly contributing to lower state aid.

State Aid Impact

State aid has declined sharply due to higher valuations increasing the district's calculated local resource capacity. The 2025-2026 State Aid Certification details a total state aid of \$1,330,616, including \$493,398 in equalization aid, \$46,462 in allocated income tax funds, and \$816,915 in foundation aid (with \$490,149 included in resources and \$326,766 outside). This represents a 35% reduction from the prior year.

Component	2026-2027 (Est.)	2025-2026	2024-2025	2023-2024
Equalization Aid	\$0	\$493,398	\$1,131,275	\$1,860,867
Net Option Funding	\$0	\$0	\$40,422	\$0
Income Tax Funds	\$46,000	\$46,462	\$46,326	\$41,425
Foundation Aid	\$756,000	\$816,915	\$826,151	\$794,747
Total State Aid	\$802,000	\$1,330,616	\$2,044,174	\$2,697,039

Formula needs for 2025-2026 total \$9,110,580, with resources at \$8,617,182, resulting in the aid amount. Enrollment (formula students: 544.61) and allowances (e.g., \$351,009 poverty, \$360,661 LEP) contribute to needs, but resources like \$6,880,000 from local effort offset them.

Funding Breakdown for General Fund

The district requires approximately \$9,000,000 to operate the general fund without a deficit, covering staffing, programs, facilities, and other essentials. Breakdown based on projections:

- **Federal Dollars:** 12% (~\$1,080,000) – Supports programs like special education and Title funds.
- **State Aid:** \$1,330,000 – As certified, down 35% due to valuation growth.
- **Reimbursements/Other Receipts:** ~\$600,000 – Includes special receipts (\$667,907), transportation (\$113,518), and other non-property tax sources (\$1,200,571 total resources minus local effort).
- **Property Taxes:** Remainder (~\$6,000,000 requested, netting ~\$5,944,312 after commissions) – Critical to bridge the gap.

Total revenue cap for 2025-2026 is \$9,162,592, with a certified property tax request authority of \$7,513,374 (plus \$532,730 board-approved additional, up to \$8,046,104 maximum).

Property Tax Request Details

The \$6,000,000 tax request for 2026 includes:

- **General Fund:** \$5,797,908 – Funds daily operations, programs, and safeguards against issues like enrollment fluctuations or emergencies.
- **Special Building Fund:** \$202,000 – For building projects and maintenance.

Year	Total Levy	Tax Request	Amount Change	% Change	County Comm.	Tax Received
2025-2026	0.7750627037	\$6,000,000	\$431,187	7.74%	(\$55,688.13)	\$5,944,312
2024-2025	0.809384	\$5,568,813	\$847,958	17.96%	(\$55,688.13)	\$5,513,125
2023-2024	0.7611	\$4,720,855	-\$712,635	-13.12%	(\$47,208.55)	\$4,673,646
2022-2023	1.011465	\$5,433,490	\$517,143	10.52%	(\$54,334.90)	\$5,379,155

2021- 2022	0.986737	\$4,916,347	\$20,738	0.42%	(\$49,163.00)	\$4,867,184
2020- 2021	0.897247	\$4,895,609	-\$31,093	-0.63%	(\$48,956.09)	\$4,846,653
2019- 2020	0.978455	\$4,926,702	\$4,926,702	N/A	(\$49,267.02)	\$4,877,435

This request aligns with the Property Tax Request Authority Certification, which allows up to \$8,046,104 with board approval. The increase offsets state aid losses while keeping the levy low. Recent staff reductions (6 certified teachers, 6 classified positions, 1 administrator) have helped mitigate the need for even higher taxes.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The 2026 property tax request is a necessary response to valuation-driven state aid reductions, ensuring Wakefield Community Schools can provide high-quality education to its 514 students (down from 596 in 2023-2024). By maintaining fiscal responsibility—through cuts, efficient budgeting, and alternative revenue exploration—the district minimizes taxpayer burden. The projected levy decrease to ~\$0.78 per \$100 of valuation means tax increases are primarily due to higher property values, not rate hikes.

FUNDS	Actual Disbursements & Transfers	Actual/Estimated Disbursements & Transfers	Budgeted Disbursements & Transfers	Necessary Cash Reserve (4)	Total Available Resources Before Property Taxes (5)	Total Personal and Real Property Tax Requirement (7)
	2023-2024 (1)	2024-2025 (2)	2025-2026 (3)			
General	\$ 8,820,233.00	\$ 9,825,550.00	\$ 10,119,300.00	\$ 1,080,211.00	\$ 5,459,511.00	\$ 5,797,980.00
Depreciation	\$ 130,080.00	\$ 123,700.00	\$ 638,984.00		\$ 638,984.00	
Employee Benefit	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 79,940.00		\$ 79,940.00	
Contingency	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -		\$ -	
Activities	\$ 210,238.00	\$ 219,351.00	\$ 274,772.00		\$ 274,772.00	
School Nutrition	\$ 573,523.00	\$ 554,400.00	\$ 617,159.00		\$ 617,159.00	
Bond	\$ 9,739.00	\$ -	\$ 31,431.00		\$ 31,431.00	\$ -
Special Building	\$ 699,692.00	\$ 538,650.00	\$ 868,220.00		\$ 668,220.00	\$ 202,020.00
Qualified Capital Purpose Undertaking	\$ 117,793.00	\$ 15,000.00	\$ -	\$ 5,034.00	\$ 5,034.00	\$ -
Cooperative	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -		\$ -	
Student Fee	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -		\$ -	
TOTALS	\$ 10,561,298.00	\$ 11,276,651.00	\$ 12,629,806.00	\$ 1,085,245.00	\$ 7,775,051.00	\$ 6,000,000.00

Breakdown of Property Tax	Bond Purposes	Non-Bond Purposes	Total
	\$ -	\$ 6,000,000.00	\$ 6,000,000.00

BUDGET STATEMENT AND CERTIFICATION OF TAX

County-District # 90-0560
Wakefield Public Schools

2025-2026 BUDGET ADOPTED

	TOTAL BEGINNING BALANCE (Column 1)	TOTAL AVAILABLE RESOURCES BEFORE PROPERTY TAXES (Including Beginning Balances) (Column 2)	PERSONAL AND REAL PROPERTY TAXES (Column 3)	TOTAL RESOURCES AVAILABLE (Col 2 + Col 3) (Column 4)	TOTAL BUDGET OF DISBURSEMENTS & TRANSFERS - SPECIAL EDUCATION (Column 5)	TOTAL BUDGET OF DISBURSEMENTS & TRANSFERS - NON-SPECIAL EDUCATION (Column 6)	TOTAL BUDGET OF DISBURSEMENTS & TRANSFERS (Col 5 + Col 6) (Column 7)	NECESSARY CASH RESERVE (Column 8)	TOTAL REQUIREMENTS (Col 7 + Col 8) (Column 9)
General	2,592,542.00	5,459,511.00	5,740,000.00	11,199,511.00	1,572,500.00	8,546,800.00	10,119,300.00	1,080,211.00	11,199,511.00
Depreciation	383,984.00	638,984.00		638,984.00			638,984.00		638,984.00
Employee Benefit	77,940.00	79,940.00		79,940.00			79,940.00		79,940.00
Contingency	-	-		-			-		-
Activities	39,522.00	274,772.00		274,772.00			274,772.00		274,772.00
School Nutrition	34,359.00	617,159.00		617,159.00			617,159.00		617,159.00
Bond	31,431.00	31,431.00		31,431.00			31,431.00		31,431.00
Special Building	640,220.00	668,220.00	200,000.00	868,220.00			868,220.00		868,220.00
Qualified Capital Purpose Undertaking	5,034.00	5,034.00		5,034.00			-	5,034.00	5,034.00
Cooperative	-	-		-			-		-
Student Fee	-	-		-			-		-
				-					-
TOTAL ALL FUNDS	3,805,032.00	7,775,051.00	5,940,000.00	13,715,051.00	1,572,500.00	8,546,800.00	12,629,806.00	1,085,245.00	13,715,051.00

PERSONAL AND REAL PROPERTY TAX RECAP	General Fund	Bond Fund(s) [Total Of All Bond Funds]	Special Building Fund	Qualified Capital Purpose Undertaking Fund
PERSONAL AND REAL PROPERTY TAXES FROM COLUMN 3 (Line A)	5,740,000.00		200,000.00	
COUNTY TREASURER'S COMMISSION 1% OF TAXES COLLECTED (Line B)	57,980.00	-	2,020.00	-
TOTAL PERSONAL AND REAL PROPERTY TAXES (Line A + Line B) (Line C)	5,797,980.00	-	202,020.00	-

CERTIFIED STATE AID	MOTOR VEHICLE TAXES
\$ 1,311,969.00	\$ 200,000.00

COUNTY TREASURER'S BALANCE, 9-1-2025			
597,746.00		50,352.00	

Wakefield Community Schools 2026 Property Tax Report

Executive Summary

Wakefield Community Schools (District 90-0560) is facing a challenging fiscal environment for the 2025-2026 school year due to rising property valuations and corresponding reductions in state aid. Property valuations across Dixon, Wayne, and Thurston Counties have increased by 12.51% from 2024-2025 to 2025-2026, totaling \$774,130,915. This growth has led to a 35% decrease in state aid, from \$2,044,174 in 2024-2025 to \$1,330,616 in 2025-2026. To maintain operations without a deficit, the district requires approximately \$9,000,000 for the general fund. Funding sources include 12% from federal dollars (approximately \$1,080,000), \$1,330,000 in state aid, \$600,000 in reimbursements, and the remainder from property taxes.

The district is requesting \$6,000,000 in property taxes for 2026, which will fund the second half of the 2025-2026 school year and the first half of the 2026-2027 school year. Of this amount, \$202,000 is allocated for special building projects, while \$5,797,908 supports general fund operations. This request is essential to sustain educational programs, staffing, and infrastructure while protecting against unforeseen issues. Despite the increase in total tax collection, the levy rate is projected to decrease to 0.7750627037, mitigating the impact on individual taxpayers amid higher valuations.

Property Valuation Trends

Property valuations in the district's counties have shown consistent growth, reflecting regional economic development. This has expanded the tax base but reduced eligibility for state equalization aid under Nebraska's Tax Equity and Educational Opportunities Support Act (TEEOSA).

Year	Dixon County	Wayne County	Thurston County	Total Valuations	Change	% Change
2025-2026	\$424,797,154	\$302,951,879	\$46,381,882	\$774,130,915	\$86,099,900	12.51%
2024-2025	\$377,577,509	\$269,078,461	\$41,375,045	\$688,031,015	\$67,763,643	10.92%

2023-2024	\$342,655,201	\$238,453,972	\$39,158,199	\$620,267,372	\$83,077,257	15.47%
2022-2023	\$285,141,624	\$214,415,779	\$37,632,712	\$537,190,115	\$31,482,535	6.23%
2021-2022	\$268,171,544	\$201,080,723	\$36,455,313	\$505,707,580	\$9,822,686	1.98%
2020-2021	\$265,788,616	\$193,746,034	\$36,350,244	\$495,884,894	-\$7,633,658	-1.52%
2019-2020	\$270,703,328	\$194,253,810	\$38,561,414	\$503,518,552	\$14,504,834	N/A

The 12.51% increase in 2025-2026 elevates the assumed local effort from a \$1.00 levy to \$7,741,309, directly contributing to lower state aid.

State Aid Impact

State aid has declined sharply due to higher valuations increasing the district's calculated local resource capacity. The 2025-2026 State Aid Certification details a total state aid of \$1,330,616, including \$493,398 in equalization aid, \$46,462 in allocated income tax funds, and \$816,915 in foundation aid (with \$490,149 included in resources and \$326,766 outside). This represents a 35% reduction from the prior year.

Component	2026-2027 (Est.)	2025-2026	2024-2025	2023-2024
Equalization Aid	\$0	\$493,398	\$1,131,275	\$1,860,867
Net Option Funding	\$0	\$0	\$40,422	\$0
Income Tax Funds	\$46,000	\$46,462	\$46,326	\$41,425
Foundation Aid	\$756,000	\$816,915	\$826,151	\$794,747
Total State Aid	\$802,000	\$1,330,616	\$2,044,174	\$2,697,039

Formula needs for 2025-2026 total \$9,110,580, with resources at \$8,617,182, resulting in the aid amount. Enrollment (formula students: 544.61) and allowances (e.g., \$351,009 poverty, \$360,661 LEP) contribute to needs, but resources like \$6,880,000 from local effort offset them.

Funding Breakdown for General Fund

The district requires approximately \$9,000,000 to operate the general fund without a deficit, covering staffing, programs, facilities, and other essentials. Breakdown based on projections:

- **Federal Dollars:** 12% (~\$1,080,000) – Supports programs like special education and Title funds.
- **State Aid:** \$1,330,000 – As certified, down 35% due to valuation growth.
- **Reimbursements/Other Receipts:** ~\$600,000 – Includes special receipts (\$667,907), transportation (\$113,518), and other non-property tax sources (\$1,200,571 total resources minus local effort).
- **Property Taxes:** Remainder (~\$6,000,000 requested, netting ~\$5,944,312 after commissions) – Critical to bridge the gap.

Total revenue cap for 2025-2026 is \$9,162,592, with a certified property tax request authority of \$7,513,374 (plus \$532,730 board-approved additional, up to \$8,046,104 maximum).

Property Tax Request Details

The \$6,000,000 tax request for 2026 includes:

- **General Fund:** \$5,797,908 – Funds daily operations, programs, and safeguards against issues like enrollment fluctuations or emergencies.
- **Special Building Fund:** \$202,000 – For building projects and maintenance.

Year	Total Levy	Tax Request	Amount Change	% Change	County Comm.	Tax Received
2025-2026	0.7750627037	\$6,000,000	\$431,187	7.74%	(\$55,688.13)	\$5,944,312
2024-2025	0.809384	\$5,568,813	\$847,958	17.96%	(\$55,688.13)	\$5,513,125
2023-2024	0.7611	\$4,720,855	-\$712,635	-13.12%	(\$47,208.55)	\$4,673,646
2022-2023	1.011465	\$5,433,490	\$517,143	10.52%	(\$54,334.90)	\$5,379,155

2021- 2022	0.986737	\$4,916,347	\$20,738	0.42%	(\$49,163.00)	\$4,867,184
2020- 2021	0.897247	\$4,895,609	-\$31,093	-0.63%	(\$48,956.09)	\$4,846,653
2019- 2020	0.978455	\$4,926,702	\$4,926,702	N/A	(\$49,267.02)	\$4,877,435

This request aligns with the Property Tax Request Authority Certification, which allows up to \$8,046,104 with board approval. The increase offsets state aid losses while keeping the levy low. Recent staff reductions (6 certified teachers, 6 classified positions, 1 administrator) have helped mitigate the need for even higher taxes.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The 2026 property tax request is a necessary response to valuation-driven state aid reductions, ensuring Wakefield Community Schools can provide high-quality education to its 514 students (down from 596 in 2023-2024). By maintaining fiscal responsibility—through cuts, efficient budgeting, and alternative revenue exploration—the district minimizes taxpayer burden. The projected levy decrease to ~\$0.78 per \$100 of valuation means tax increases are primarily due to higher property values, not rate hikes.