

# What Do Fiscally Successful Schools Do Differently?

BAIRD

WASBO 2021 Spring Conference  
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# Presenters



**Kevin Mullen**

Director | Baird Public Finance



**Lisa Voisin**

Managing Director | Baird Public Finance



**Pete Hibner**

Asst. District Administrator | Portage Community School District



**Julie Kelly**

Asst. Superintendent for Business | Muskego-Norway School District



**John Stellmacher**

Chief Financial Officer | Kettle Moraine School District



What Defines Fiscally Successful?

District Case Studies

Summary/Questions

# What Defines "Fiscally Successful"?

lower taxes **balanced budget** **satisfied employees**

strong leadership

active strategic plan

supportive constituency

Aaa bond rating

low net open enrollment loss

high graduation rates

**surplus budget**

high state report card

experienced administration

high state equalization aid

longevity in employees

**strong fiscal policies**

**growing enrollment**

blue ribbon school

Aaa Moody's rating

**long-term facility plan**

**updated facilities**

**low debt**

successful referenda

flat mill rate

ESSER funds

**involved community**

21<sup>st</sup> century learning

flat tax levy

Budget forecasting

## What to Consider

- Facility needs
- Board objectives
- Strategic plan
- Community goals
- Funding strategies
- Tax levy implications
- Effective communication
- ***Others??***



*The future  
is always  
**NOW!***





**Pete Hibner, Assistant District Administrator**  
Portage Community School District  
hibnerp@portage.k12.wi.us  
608-742-4867

The logo for BAIRD, consisting of the word "BAIRD" in white, uppercase letters on a blue, parallelogram-shaped background.

## Case Study: School District of Portage



# Portage's Referenda Success

## Non-Recurring Referenda History

Feb. 3, 2003  
**\$4,500,000**  
 NR – 3 years

April 6, 2010  
**\$7,800,000**  
 NR – 3 years

April 5, 2016  
**\$13,000,000**  
 NR – 5 years

Feb. 21, 2006  
**\$7,500,000**  
 NR – 5 years

April 2, 2013  
**\$7,800,000**  
 NR – 3 years

November 3, 2020  
**\$18,500,000**  
 NR – 5 years



**Key takeaway:** Community goals , tax levy maintenance, strategic planning, effective communication

## Community Strategy

- How soon do you begin to publicize or discuss the referendum?
- How much info do you share?
- How do you discuss tax impact?
- Discuss the consequence of referendum failure?

## Fiscal Strategy

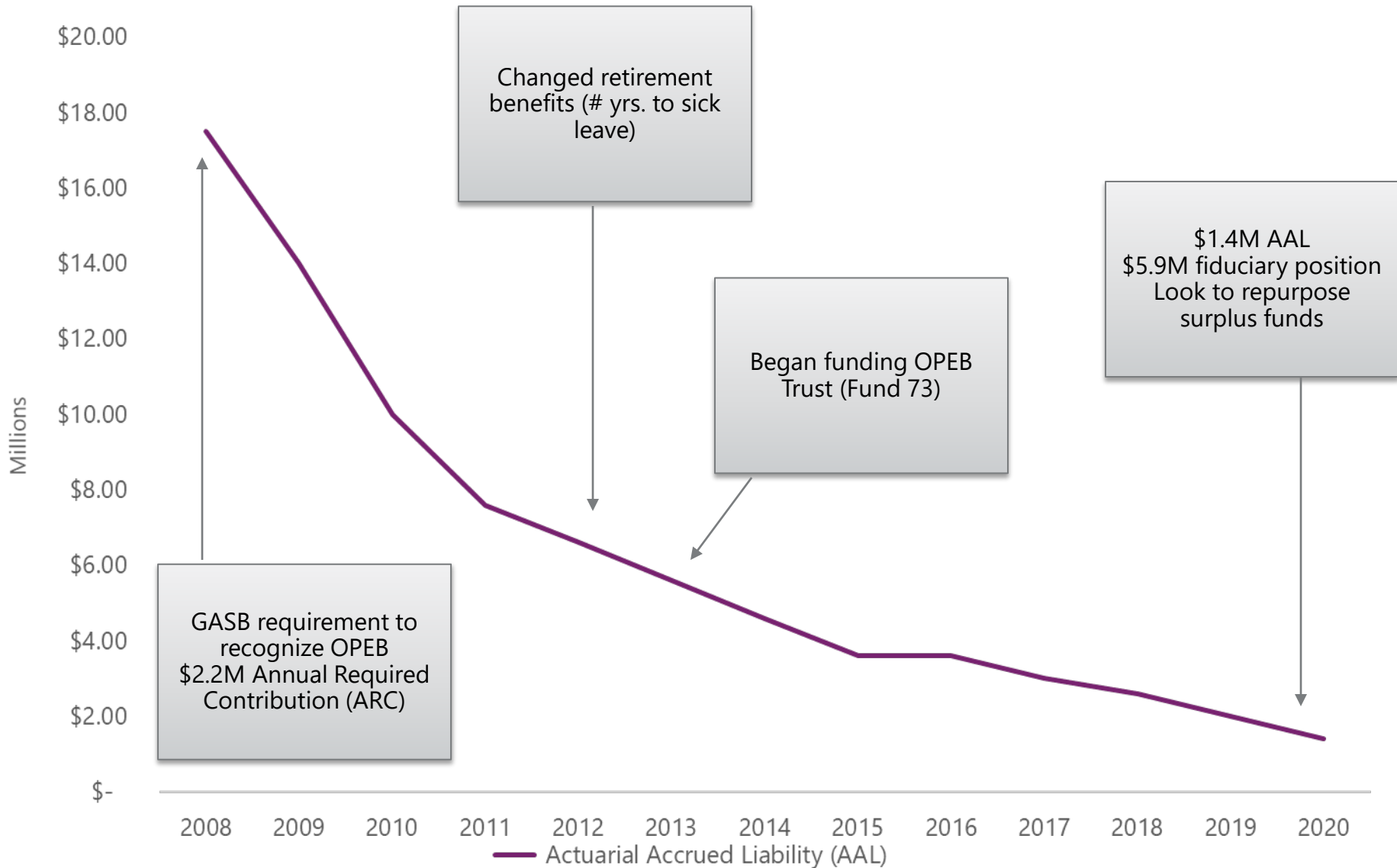
- Non-recurring vs. recurring?
- If NR, do you ask for the same amount each year?
- Communicate future needs beyond “non-recurring timeline”?
- Consider how to balance with building debt?



**Key takeaway:** Know your community and build trust



# OPEB Trust Established



- **Strategy to build OPEB trust balance?**
  - Surplus funds at year end
  - Money available under revenue limit
  - Contributions redirected once OPEB Trust was adequate:
    - General Fund HRA (where we will repurpose funds)
    - Fund 46 (Capital Improvement Trust)
- **Communication to Public**
  - Made changes to our retirement benefits concurrent with changes to our health plan
  - Stated Board Goal – fund future OPEB benefit within annual budget



**Key takeaway:** Strategic planning, effective communication



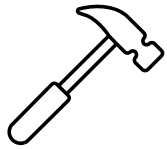
**Julie Kelly, Assistant Superintendent for Business**  
Muskego-Norway School District  
julie.kelly@muskegonorway.org  
262-971-1800 ext. 2106

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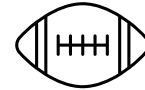
## Case Study: Muskego-Norway School District



# Muskego's Referenda Success Since 1995



Purpose: Maintenance & capital improvements



High school remodel

**April 4, 1995**

\$3,735,000 –  
Issue Debt

**Sept. 10, 1996**

\$12,700,000 –  
Issue Debt

**Nov. 6, 2001**

\$36,615,000 –  
Issue Debt

**April 5, 2016**

\$43,180,000 –  
Issue Debt

Middle school constructed

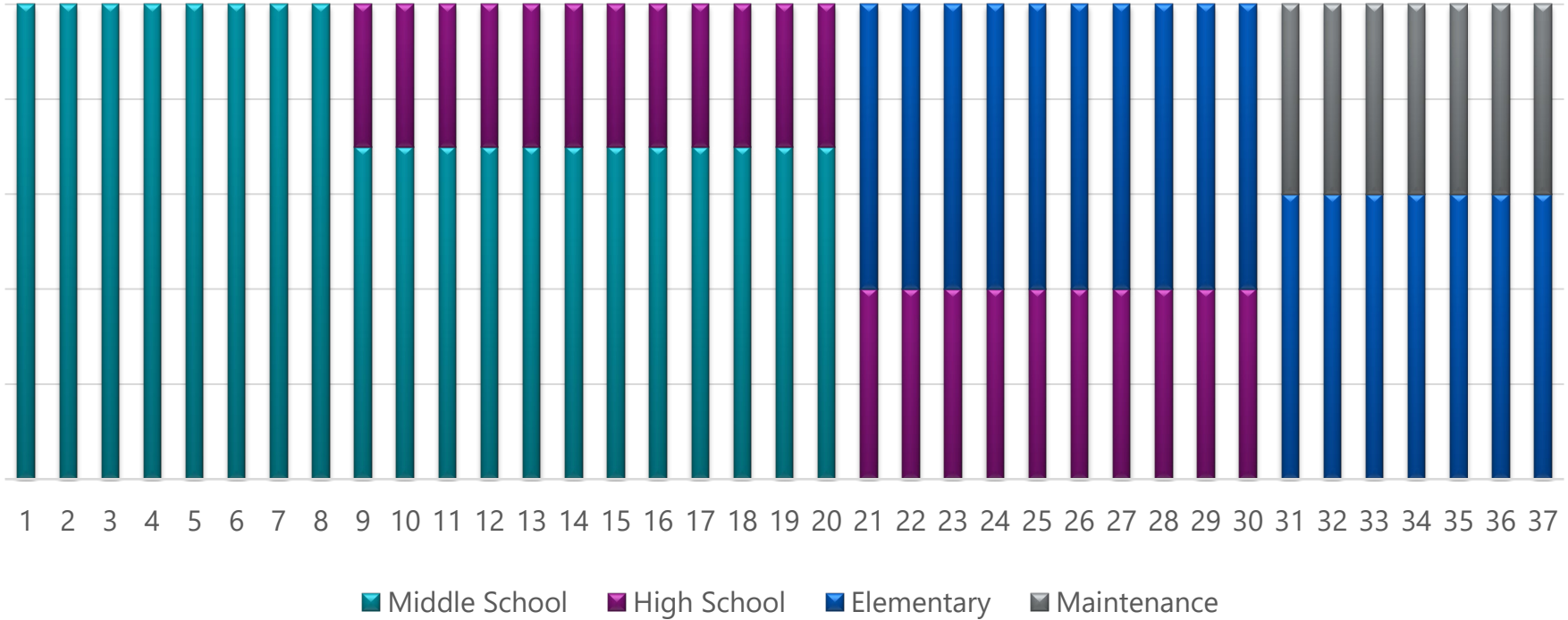


Elementary school consolidation and new middle school



# Example 40-Year Facility Plan

TOTAL LEVY FOR DEBT PAYMENTS



**Key takeaway:** Facility needs, tax levy management, effective long-term communication



## Facility Needs and Budget Planning

- [5-Year Strategic Planning](#)
- [Eye on the Goal](#) – Annual Goal Setting Plan
  - Cascading plan, metrics and dashboard
- Zero & Evidence Based Budget Process
- Master Planning Committee
- 10-Year Capital Plan
- Survey Community Readiness
- Tax Levy Management

## Engage Stakeholders (long before there is a referendum need)

- Spring and Fall Community Newsletters
- Monthly Parent Newsletters
- Weekly School Newsletters
- Social Media
- Community/Parent Participation in Committees
- Website - [Fast Facts](#), [End of Year Dashboard](#)



**Key takeaway:** Facility needs, tax levy management, effective long-term communication

- Rounding (staff and students)
- 30 and 90 Day Interviews (all new staff)
- Survey Stakeholders (students, parents, staff)
  - Roll out survey results
  - Action Plan
  - Communicate Back
- Recognition
  - Staff-to-Staff
  - Positive feedback to parents
- Onboarding
  - Commitments



## OUR COMMITMENTS

A commitment to every student learning, growing...succeeding.

- Use valid, reliable data and assessment to inform practice
- Provide and respond to quality feedback
- Engage in protocols and deliberate practice to support development of expertise
- Pursue rigorous goals and benchmark results
- Work collaboratively toward the mission and vision
- Be open to new ways of knowing and doing
- Engage in meaningful, purposeful reflection

Our Vision is to be the District of Choice in Southeastern Wisconsin for Students, Staff, and Our Community.

**MUSKEGO-NORWAY SCHOOLS**



**Key takeaway:** Engagement, Commitment to Practices

# Top Workplace Recognition Award

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## Top Workplace Survey Process

- Won 5 years in a row
- Ranked either 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> in the large company sector (500 employees or more)
- Additional awards
  - **2017** – Meaningfulness - “My job makes me feel like I am part of something meaningful.”
  - **2018** – Innovation – “New ideas are encouraged at this company.”
  - **2019** – Meaningfulness - “My job makes me feel like I am part of something meaningful.”
  - **2020** – Leadership - “I have confidence in the leader of this company.”
  - **2021** – Meaningfulness - “My job makes me feel like I am part of something meaningful.”



**Key takeaway:** Strategic planning, effective communication, engagement



**John Stellmacher, Chief Financial Officer**

Kettle Moraine School District

[stellmacherj@kmsd.edu](mailto:stellmacherj@kmsd.edu)

262-968-6300 ext. 5303

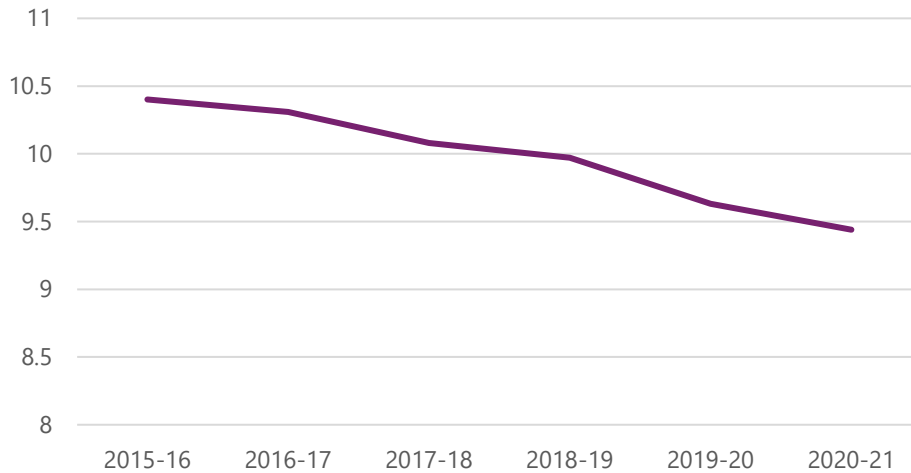
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## Case Study: School District of Kettle Moraine



# Strategy: Over-Levy to Manage Mill Rate

Kettle Moraine Mill Rate 2016-2021



## Fund 39 Debt Levies

2015-16	\$4,176,045
2016-17	\$4,236,889
2017-18	\$4,255,021
2018-19	\$4,904,188
2019-20	\$7,418,871
2020-21	\$8,812,612



**Key takeaway:** Strategic planning, tax levy management, effective board communication



# Strategy: Over-Levy to Manage Mill Rate

## Fund 39 Debt Levies

2020-21	\$8,812,612
2021-22	\$7,038,256
2022-23	\$6,058,003
2023-24	\$4,729,603
2024-25	\$4,159,035

## Recurring Referendum Phase In

+ \$2,500,000
+ \$1,500,000
+ \$1,500,000
+ \$1,500,000
+ \$0

*Anticipated that the district will levy (cumulatively) approximately \$20 million dollars ahead of schedule (2015-2025) which should allow for the retirement of 2014/15 Referendum Debt as many as eight years early at a significant savings for local taxpayers.*

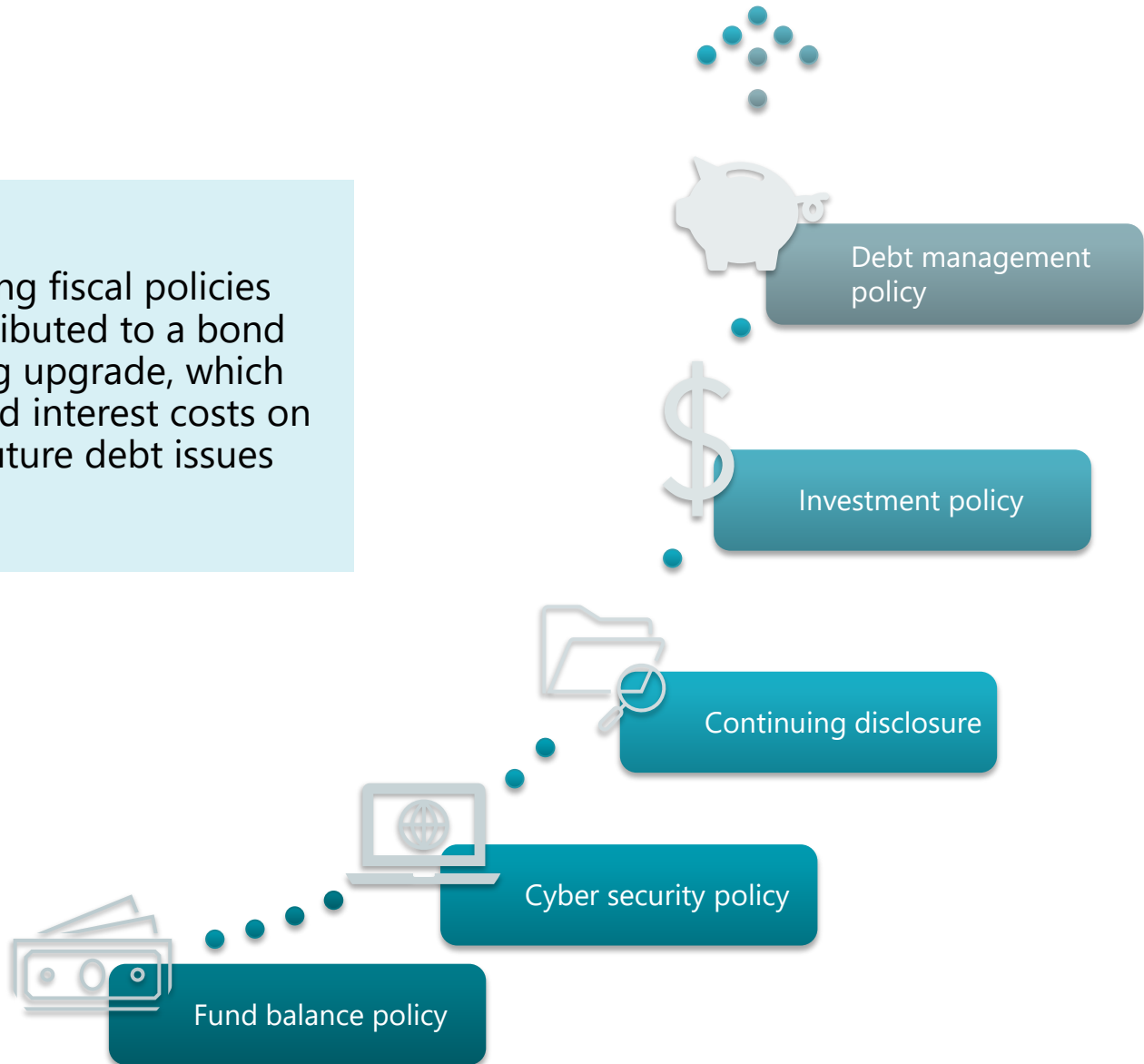


**Key takeaway:** Strategic planning, tax levy management, effective board communication

# Fiscal Policies Established



Strong fiscal policies contributed to a bond rating upgrade, which lowered interest costs on all future debt issues



# Summary



## Portage Community School District

- Communication builds trust within the Community and is critical to execute long-term financial plan

## Muskego-Norway School District

- Long-term facilities planning is a viable strategy when the needs are too high to do all at once

## Kettle Moraine School District

- Implementing smart fiscal strategies can produce significant cost savings

**No “one size fits all” plan**

**Learn from your peers**

**Continuous education**

**Make sure your Board is on board**

**Be willing to get creative**

**Communication is key!**

**Think outside the box**

**Address the elephant(s) in the room**

**Talk to your financial consultants**



**For more information, please do not hesitate to reach out to today's presenters!**

**Kevin Mullen**

Baird Public Finance  
kmullen@rwbaird.com  
414-765-8709

**Lisa Voisin**

Baird Public Finance  
lvoisin@rwbaird.com  
414-765-3801

**Pete Hibner**

Portage Community School  
District  
hibnerp@portage.k12.wi.us  
608-742-4867

**Julie Kelly**

Muskego-Norway School District  
julie.kelly@muskegonorway.org  
262-971-1800 ext. 2106

**John Stellmacher**

Kettle Moraine School District  
stellmacherj@kmsd.edu  
262-968-6300 ext. 5303

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