

■ *PW-S administrators negotiating purchase of 10 acres immediately west of Village of Saukville described as ideal for new elementary school*

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The Port Washington-Saukville School District has found what is being described as an ideal site for a new elementary school adjacent to a residential area on the west side of the Village of Saukville.

After meeting in closed session Monday, the School Board directed administrators to negotiate the purchase of 10 acres at 2803 Orchard La. in the Town of Saukville for the site of a new \$45.8 million Saukville Elementary School, which is the focus of a \$59.4 million referendum voters will decide in April.

The land, which would be annexed into the village if purchased by the School District, is at the west end of Bucktrout Street. Village water and sewer services, as well as sidewalks that would allow children to walk and bike to school, extend up to the parcel.

"We see a lot of opportunities for this to be a neighborhood school that children can walk to safely," Supt. Michael McMahon said.

The 10 acres are part of a largely undeveloped 100-acre parcel owned by the Elda V. Bunk Living Trust that was listed for sale late last year for \$1.55 million.

The School District will negotiate the purchase of 10 acres on the far east side of the property with a land agent representing a prospective buyer of the 100 acres, McMahon said, adding the district does not know who the buyer is and a price for the

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# School: Land around site would be protected

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school site has not yet been discussed.

According to multiple sources, the buyer intends to divide the 10-acre school site from the rest of the property and protect most or all of the remaining 90 acres with a conservation easement that would ensure it will remain undeveloped in perpetuity.

"The other 90 acres would be untouched land that our students can look out at," McMahon said. "The 10 acres could be perfect for a school."

"As the land agent said, this could really be a win-win."

Town of Saukville Chairman Kevin Kimmes said a preliminary presentation on the land division was favorably received by the Plan Commission last week.

According to real estate listings, the property includes a home and pole barn as well as more than 40 acres of wooded wetlands. There are no wetlands on the school site, nor is it in a floodplain — two problems that plague the current Saukville Elementary School site on Mill Street, McMahon said.

The district identified two other potential school sites in the Town of Saukville, but the owners are not interested in selling their properties, McMahon said.

That, along with the fact the Orchard Lane land is the ideal size for an elementary school, is in a desirable location and would abut an area protected from future develop-

ment, puts a premium on negotiating an offer to purchase it and winning approval for the referendum, McMahon said.

The land purchase would be contingent on approval of the referendum, and its unlikely that the property will remain available if the referendum fails and the district has to appeal to voters again, McMahon said, noting the district does not have the option of holding a November referendum because there is no fall general election this year.

"I'm only six months into this job, but we've worked really hard to put a referendum on the ballot this April because we know our next opportunity isn't until April 2026," McMahon, a former Grafton School District administrator who took the helm of the Port-Saukville School District in July, said. "And we know that costs will only go up between now and April 2026."

The referendum also seeks \$13.6 million to pay for major maintenance projects at its other four buildings, but constructing a new school is the priority of the spending plan.

Saukville Elementary School was built in 1955 and last underwent a major remodeling in 1989. Beyond its age and failing mechanical systems, its space limitations and open concept create what administrators say is a noisy, distracting environment that is being blamed for compromising the academic achievement of students who



THE PROPOSED site for a new Saukville Elementary School is shown on the left side of the map at the south end of Orchard Lane near Bucktrout Street immediately to the west of the Village of Saukville. The current school, shown on the right side of the map, is on Mill Street on the other end of the village.

struggle to learn as well as the school's performance on key indicators such as the state report card issued by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction for all schools that receive public funding.

The School District has ruled out remodeling or rebuilding Saukville Elementary School on its current site because the property is in a floodplain and flanked by wetlands. Bray Architects, the firm that con-

ducted a facilities study for the district and would design the new school, has advised that building a new school on a new site would be a better use of taxpayer money.

The maintenance projects at other schools would address aging heating and cooling systems, Americans with Disabilities Act compliance and security, as well as window and roof replacements, new playgrounds and emergency generators.