In November 2022, the Onalaska community approved a $75 million referendum to undertake remodeling projects at both Onalaska Middle School and Onalaska High School. Multiple design development concepts were presented for the middle school building and site based on the Long Range Planning Study and community input. The completion of the design involved over 26 meetings with staff, the school board, engineers and the community task force. The middle school project will undertake a complete addition and renovation to meet prioritized needs.

Prior to bidding, general contractors and subcontractors completed a pre-qualified review using a request for statement of qualifications questionnaire to determine their skills, expertise, reputation, and capacity for this project. In June, the Board pre-qualified numerous vendors to bid the project. We were very excited to have high interest from a highly qualified and deep pool of contractors. There were two building pre-bid walk thru meetings in July with bids due on July 27. Four of the six prequalified firms submitted bids as outlined on the Bid Tab Document. We are extremely grateful to all four contractors who invested a great deal of time and money to create their proposals. The quality of their work was evident in the spread of the bids submitted. All bids were within budget. While more than cost was considered for the contractor recommendation presented for Board consideration, the two lowest bids were very close in price and were from two very reputable local firms. We are proud of the amount of money that will be reinvested into the local economy with the contractor and subcontractor labor on this project which aligns to District Policy 6450.

The ad-hoc committee consisting of two board members, the Middle School principal, the Director of Buildings and Grounds, and the Director of Finance and Business Services, along with Vantage Architects, interviewed the two lowest bidders. The committee recommends Market & Johnson to the Board for consideration as the contractor for the Onalaska Middle School project based upon:

- Lowest bid
- Past proven and positive experience with Market & Johnson as a district construction partner
- The volume of work performed with other school districts, especially involving projects of complicated and staged demolition and remodeling
- Market & Johnson will have a large amount of work self-performed. This is important for schedule control with a project of this complexity with such a tight timeline
- The depth of Market & Johnson’s pre-planning and subcontractor analysis and outreach performed to gain a solid understanding of the project
- Market & Johnson’s attention to detail in the pre-planning work. As one example, they have identified equipment that may experience lead time challenges that could create challenges with staying on schedule.
- Market & Johnson’s transparency and internal review process with change orders
- Market & Johnson will devote two on-site project superintendents to the project

At this time, the committee is also recommending rejecting both alternate bids. We are satisfied with the boiler that was included in the base bid. We will have further discussion with Market & Johnson regarding reuse of our existing Bipolar Ionization Equipment.

The ad hoc committee recommends selecting Market & Johnson as the general contractor for the Middle School project at a bid price of $34,089,000. The committee also recommends Bernie Buchner for the building’s automation system at a bid price of $510,885.