

MEQUON-THIENSVILLE

School recall election cost more than \$58,000

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MEQUON — Mequon-Thiensville School district officials revealed last week the total costs of the special School Board recall election last year.

During a special listening session of the School Board March 8, district officials said that the special election cost the district and taxpayers \$58,401.85. That includes:

- Legal fees of \$30,181.50
- Logistics, such as ballots, public notices, polling notification cards and more, for a cost of \$15,628
- Time and services, which includes election inspectors and poll workers, for \$12,592.35

The Mequon-Thiensville School District was responsible for all of the costs associated with the Nov. 2 election process as there was no state, county, municipal or judicial election being held that day.

The recall was prompted by a group of parents initially upset with the district's COVID-19 policies, including the School Board's decision in August 2020 to start the 2020-21 school year virtually for four days. The parents later claimed the district was in decline overall, with falling test scores and declining enrollment.

By August 2021, organizers had gathered enough signatures to prompt a recall election for those School Board members who were eligible to be recalled because they had served

more than a year of their terms: Wendy Francour, Erik Hollander, Akram Khan and Chris Schultz.

The recall group, later operating under the name Restore MTSD, put candidates Scarlett Johnson, Kris Kittell, Charles Lorenz and Cheryle Rebholz on the ballot to challenge the incumbents.

The incumbents won by at least 16% or more.

The \$58,000 figure does not include the cost of destroying the ballots, which, by statute, was done 30 days following the election, according to the MTSD Director of Communication and Engagement Molly Loucks. The district's business office has not yet received that bill, but they do not anticipate the cost to exceed \$500.