

Dickinson ISD plans May bond election to fund new schools

By Natalie Harms | January 21, 2014

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Voters in the Dickinson school district will be asked May 10 to approve a \$56 million bond proposal to build schools.

Trustees of the Dickinson Independent School District approved in early December holding the spring bond election.

Voter approval of the bond proposal would fund construction of an elementary school and intermediate school on district-owned land off Interstate 45 near FM 517 and Calder Road, said **Tammy Dowdy**, district director of communications.

If approved, the bond package would raise the tax rate by 3 cents per \$100 of valuation. The owner of a \$100,000 home would pay an extra \$33 a year. The 2013 district tax rate is \$1.54 per \$100 of valuation.

Dowdy said the goal is to complete construction by 2016.

The school district has welcomed an average of 300 to 500 new students a year, and the new schools will help prepare for accommodating the growth, she said.

In 10 years, the district has seen a jump from 6,000 students in 2003 to an expected 10,000 students this fall, Dowdy said.

Gary Jones, who has served as a member of the Dickinson ISD facility task force for several years, said that he and the task force looked for what the district needed, taking into account the rapid enrollment growth.

"We found pretty much what we always find," Jones said. "In order to keep up with growth, you have to try and predict what your student population is going to be and have those facilities that meet that need.

"We looked at renovating and it usually cost more to renovate a school than it did to start from scratch and build a new school," Jones said. "Plus, the new schools are much more efficient both in terms of student learning and the utilities we use."

Campus expansion isn't new to the district, which has held three successful bond elections.

The elections paid for creating new campuses and enhancing older school buildings. In 1999, the community approved a \$47.4 million bond. Another bond of \$85 million was approved in 2005, and two years later voters approved a \$107.5 million bond.

"(The community has) seen the growth. The growth is obvious. We've had three bond issues over the last 15 years," Dowdy said. "The schools are here now for their children to use and enjoy and learn in."

Jones, a former member of the school board, can see not only an increase in student population, but also an increase in student success.

"Dickinson school district is now one of the premier school districts in Galveston County. We're sending kids to Harvard, Rice, all of the military academies. All of our kids are going to great schools when they graduate," Jones said.

"It's just a school district that is coming into its own with its academic success. And people are coming into the area in large part because of our school district now."