

Eagle Lake Headlight

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Serving Southern Colorado County
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VOLUME 103 NUMBER 51

EAGLE LAKE, TEXAS

MARCH 8, 2007

Rice School Board To Decide On Bond Issue Friday

The Rice School Board will hold a special meeting on Friday, March 9 at 12:30 p.m. to decide if they will call a bond election for May 12.

It is possible that the board will call an election asking voters for a total of about \$16.65 million for construction of new facilities in Altair to house seventh and eighth grade students district-wide.

The board met on Monday, March 5 and further discussed

plans for the new facility.

The election will be comprised of two propositions that voters may choose yes or no on.

The first proposition will likely ask for just over \$12 million for construction of 16 classrooms, two science labs, two computer labs, a library, gym, administrative area and band hall. This area will be used for seventh and eighth grade for the entire district.

The second proposition is

expected to ask for an additional \$4.6 million for construction of a 500-seat auditorium with a lobby-type area that would be used as an eating space for the seventh and eighth grade. The area would also include space for a kitchen if the district wanted to add one later.

Trustees have said that they feel this election package will be a compromise with voters who narrowly defeated a bond election a year ago. Board members

said that they had heard from constituents who did not like the idea of sixth graders being on the same campus with high school aged kids.

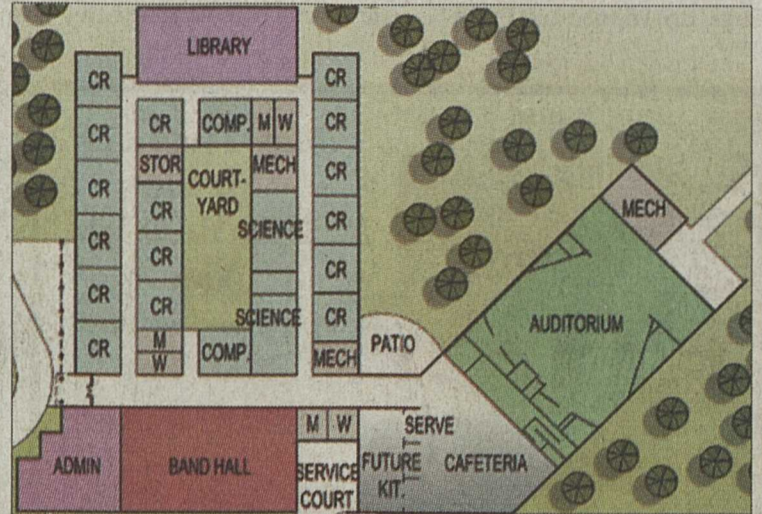
"If it doesn't pass this time, we need to make it clear that we will be back again because the issues at Eagle Lake Elementary School are not going to go away," said Superintendent Michael Lanier referring to the dilapidated portion of the Eagle Lake Elementary School.

Lanier indicated that the district would still be looking at spending some money at the elementary school to tear down part of it and rebuild a few classrooms.

He said that he hoped that there would be some contingency funds left over from the bond issues, should they pass, that could be used to help with this. The board had indicated in previous discussions that they would probably dip into the district's fund balance in order to cover the costs at the elementary.

The board is expected to pass a resolution at some time prior to the election stating that if only the second proposition passes, that the district will not go ahead with it. This is meant to safeguard against the possibility of not getting the classrooms, but having to go ahead and build something that is not the highest priority in terms of the district's dire needs.

The current overall tax rate for



Above is a conceptual drawing of the proposed new construction in Altair. These are working drawings and could change (See back page for more)

the district is about \$1.37 per \$100 of valuation. This amount includes seven cents in taxes that are going toward a past bond issue that will be paid off after 2010. At that point the seven cents would drop from the tax rate.

The state mandated reduction in maintenance and operation tax means that the rate will drop about 30 cents this year, no matter what happens with the bond election.

If both propositions of the bond election pass, the district would need a tax increase of about 18 cents to cover bond payments.

As things stand right now, if both propositions pass, the district expects the overall tax rate to go down next year from

the current \$1.37 to about \$1.30 per \$100 of valuation. This takes into account the state mandated maintenance and operations tax reduction and the increase in the interest portion of the tax rate due to the bond election.

Then, in 2010, after the old bond is paid off, the rate would go down another seven cents to about \$1.23 per \$100 of valuation. If only the first proposition passes, the rate would be about \$1.17.

On a \$50,000 home current school taxes are roughly \$480 per year. If both propositions pass, the new tax amount would be about \$455 until 2010 when it would reduce further to about

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From left to right are a few of the cast members from the PJ's recent production: Savannah Vasquez, Christina Lopez, Logan Young, Lindsey Wesselski, Danielle Lopez, Alyssa Struss and Christopher Pennington. (See story on page 7)

NEWSBRIEFS

Lenten Luncheons in progress

The Eagle Lake United Methodist Church (UMC) will host the 11th Annual Lenten Luncheons each Monday through April 2 from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., with special music and guest speakers. A love offering will be taken and net proceeds go to the Eagle Lake Community Food Pantry. The luncheon on Monday, March 12, will feature Rev. Charles Parnell, St. Paul United Methodist Church, Columbus and Wesley Chapel, Altair as guest speaker. First Presbyterian Church of Eagle Lake and UMC of Eagle Lake will provide an array of soups and desserts. A sliced meat and cheese tray, crackers, sandwich bread, hot cornbread, iced tea and coffee will be furnished by the UMC. Everyone is cordially invited...bring a friend!

ELES to hold open house

Eagle Lake Elementary School (ELES) will hold their open house Thursday, March 8 at 6:30 p.m. in the school cafeteria. The public is invited to come out and see what their children have accomplished so far this school year.

Sisterhood schedules meeting

Chapter FB of the P.E.O. Sisterhood will meet March 10 at 10 a.m. in Eagle Lake. P.E.O. is an international philanthropic and educational organization interested in bringing to women increased opportunities for higher education. For more information, unaffiliated members please call Helen Craig at 979-234-2807.

Garwood Library Coffee Klatch

The Garwood Veterans Memorial Library will have the monthly coffee klatch on Tuesday, March 13 from 9:30-11:30 a.m. Come and bring a friend. Enjoy the fellowship of old friends and meet new ones. See the new books we have in the library start reading for your enjoyment.

Relay For Life

Everyone is excited about the upcoming Colorado County Relay For Life 2007 to be held this year at the Weimar Wildcat football stadium/track April 20-21. It is not too late to organize a team to participate in this worthy fundraising event to benefit cancer research. If interested in forming a team, you may contact Valerie Harmon in Weimar at 979-725-8912 or Robin Maertz in Columbus. Team captain meetings will be held at 5:30 p.m. at the St. Paul Lutheran Church Fellowship Hall in Columbus on the following dates: March 12 and 26, April 2, 9 and 16. See you there!!

Continued on page 3

City Council Discusses City's Animal Ordinance

The Eagle Lake city council discussed the city's animal ordinance at the regular meeting on Tuesday, February 27.

The discussion came at the request of Melissa Lipperdt and she addressed the council asking them to consider strengthening the city's animal ordinance as it pertains to livestock in the city.

Currently the guidelines for livestock cover distances that certain types must be kept from residences as well as square footage per animal.

Horses and cattle must be at least 100 feet from residences and goats and sheep must be at least 75 feet away.

"I think livestock should be banned altogether in the city, but I know that is probably unrealistic," she said.

She indicated she would like to see more stringent regulations on things how close livestock are allowed to be to residences and what type of enclosures livestock must be kept in.

She said that she was worried that a small child could walk right through a barbed wire fence and possibly get trampled by a horse. She also indicated that odor, disease, and insects associated with the animals were also of concern.

She said she would like the ordinance to require proof of proper veterinary care for livestock in the city as well as guidelines for proper fencing.

Currently, the ordinance is vague where livestock is concerned.

Council ultimately decided to table the matter in order to gather more information on the subject. City Manager Ron Holland said that he would look for some ordinances from other cities to see how other towns have dealt with the issue.

Police Chief Bill Lattimore said he has been working to make sure that anyone who is in violation of the existing animal ordinance is working toward getting into compliance with the regulations.

In other council action:

-A motion to allow the Chamber of Commerce free use of the Community Center for its annual banquet died for lack of a second. The Chamber had said they would pay utilities and cleanup and were

asking that only the rental fee be discounted. Councilwoman Jane Meldahl made the motion.

-Council approved an agreement with Region 4 Education Service that will allow the city to use the Fuelman fuel service for the purchase of fuel. The city will use the service for the fire department vehicles and if the system works well, it may be considered for use for all of the city's vehicles. The city may save some money on fuel, but the main benefits come with the ability to fuel vehicles at a regular service station, meaning the city will not have to buy and store as much bulk fuel. Holland indicated that the city would still keep some reserve fuel on hand in the event of an emergency like the hurricane evacuations in September 2005.

-Council tabled a discussion on mailbox placement in the city in order to get some more information from the postal department.

-Council discussed the possibility of annexing Taco Tony's into the city. The majority of property owners in the area being annexed must request annexation and the city would have to extend all city services to the area within 24 months of annexation. Holland said that the property owners in the area seemed receptive to annexation. No action was taken on the matter.

-Council discussed making Eagle Lake a railroad quiet zone, but no action was taken on the matter due to the high costs associated with improving the crossings in order to make them safe. The crossings would have to have a barrier that could not be driven around and estimates put that cost for Eagle Lake around \$100,000. Holland also said that he has found information indicating it is costing cities up to \$10,000 to \$15,000 per year to maintain these crossings.

Filing Deadline March 12

Filing for the Rice School Board, Eagle Lake City Council and Rice Hospital District ends on March 12.

Thus far, Jack Vawter has filed for re-election to the school board and Jane Meldahl will seek re-election to the city council.



April Pagel throws the ball as Chelsie Korenek looks on during a recent Lady Raider game against Weimar. (See page 5 and 6 for more Raider sports)



Eddie Elizondo hits the ball for the Raiders during a game on Friday in the Rice Tournament in Altair.

