

Rice Bond Questions Answered

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toring) have brought about guidelines and mandates that make it extremely difficult to address our facility issue given our current geographic arrangement particularly at the secondary level.

The educational environment is constantly evolving and changing as these directives and mandates move toward the goals of each of these programs.

Providing certified and "highly qualified" instructors in the academic areas at the secondary level is becoming more and more difficult as the number of "highly qualified" teachers in math, science, English, and social studies continues to dwindle across the state.

As the mandates increase, the ability to share qualified teachers between the high school and junior highs is imperative if we wish to continue offering these courses to our students.

We offer our junior high students a very basic education when compared to other districts of comparable size.

This in turn limits the offerings at the high school level because students in an accelerated program are limited to class choices that meet the requirements for graduation instead of completing some of these requirements at the junior high level and opening up their schedules for electives and programs that may assist them in the pursuit of a career or college major.

We currently offer two high school credit courses at the junior high level (Algebra I and Integrated Physics / Chemistry). These offerings are on a year to year basis as we struggle to meet the certification requirements to teach these courses.

A consolidated junior high would allow high school teachers the ability, if necessary, to teach these courses and allow us to continue to offer them to our junior high students.

The ability to offer Spanish I as a junior high course would also become possible with a consolidated junior high. It is currently impossible as the shortage of certified and now "highly qualified" Spanish teachers has long been an issue.

We are at a point in time, with the condition of the Tate Street facility, that major construction needs to occur. Construction of a consolidated junior high would serve several purposes:

1. it would facilitate meeting both state and federal academic requirements
2. it would be the use of public tax dollars that has the widest scope, and
3. most importantly, it would create the possibility of increased educational opportunities for our secondary students.

In contrast, rebuilding the current facility would commit this district to the status quo for the foreseeable future.

Q: How would the communities as a whole benefit from the new campus?

A: The most important benefit to the communities would come in the form of educational opportunities for our students.

I discussed the academic benefits in my response to the first question but did not touch upon the vocational possibilities. Career experience courses (vocational) could become a possibility at the junior high level utilizing existing facilities.

They are impossible to offer at this time because of time constraints, lack of facilities at the current three junior high campuses, and a financial limitation on the number of employees we are capable of employing.

I would hope that our area would experience some growth over time. This is best ensured through the influx of new businesses. One of the many criteria that businesses research when searching for a new location is the quality and condition of its schools and school systems to offer employees.

Q: One concern of the plan is the mixing of JH and HS students. How will the district address this issue?

A: The junior high facility will be separate from the high school. Any areas shared by both will be addressed by scheduling to ensure that the mingling of these two age groups is minimized.

This issue was brought to our attention during the developmental stages of the first bond proposal and we have kept its importance to the communities as a priority during the development of the current bond proposal.

Q: How would the bond affect homeowners' taxes?

A: Financial forecasts indicate that the successful passage of this bond election will result in an actual increase on the owner of a \$50,000 home by \$63.35 per year.

The state is reducing the property tax rate by 25% effective in your 2008 tax statement. Therefore, the actual tax increase, if Propositions 1 and 2 pass, combined with the state's decrease will be a reduction of the taxes on a \$50,000 home of \$49.49 per year.

There is a window of opportunity that exists brought about by the Legislatures' effort to reduce the burden on the local tax payer.

It will allow us to construct a new facility to meet the educational needs of our students and still enable the local tax payer to experience relief in taxation.

We have a large number of tax payers in our district who have reached the age of 65. By law, those citizens's homestead property tax rate will not be adversely affected by passage of this bond. Their tax rate on their homestead is and will remain frozen.

Q: If successful, is there an estimate on a completion date for the facility?

A: If successful, the sale of bonds could begin as early as this summer with ground breaking and construction to begin as early as January.

A positive vote on May 12th would start the architectural process in earnest. The drawings and presentations to this point have been conceptual only.

They have addressed what we see as the needs of the district taking into account state requirements for school facilities.

The conceptual models allow us to put a price tag on the project without getting into the specifics of things such as square footage for peripheral areas and intricacies such as the number and location of electrical outlets, the color and type of floor and wall coverings, etc.

Meetings would be held with as many stake holders (teachers, administrators, Board members, and community members) as possible to ensure that "no stone is left unturned" in the construction of this facility.

We are limited, by law, to the scope of the construction as presented on the ballot and limited financially to the dollars approved by a positive vote. What is constructed must be sound and must meet the educational needs of our students for years to come.

Although the Rice High School facility is approaching 40 years of age, its outward and inward appearance still reflects a modern facility that our students and communities can be proud to claim as our high school.

Barring unexpected delays (weather, etc.), the building should be ready to occupy at the beginning of the 2009-2010 school year.



May Proclaimed Adult Abuse Prevention Month

Colorado County commissioners approved a resolution proclaiming May as "Adult Abuse Prevention Month." Front, from left: Commissioners Darrell Gertson, Tommy Hahn, County Judge Al Jamison and Commissioner Doug Wessels. Back, from left: Representatives from the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services: Gerie Darr, Jim Barnes, Pleshette Cook, Mary Breaux and James G. Booker.

Courthouse

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conviction. Sentenced to 120 days in jail, credit for 71.

Lamonte D. Miller, driving while license invalid with previous conviction. 120 days in jail, credit for 71, 43 hours community service.

Felipe D. Silva, JP appeal. Fined \$100.

Juan Jose Tovar-Hernandez, driving while license invalid-second offense. Sentenced to two years probation, fined \$750.

Andrew Brown, theft by check. Sentenced to 12 months deferred adjudication, fined \$100, \$97.69 restitution.

April 18, 2007

Johnisha H. Ettienne, possession of marijuana. Sentenced to 60 days in jail.

Jared Rougeou, driving while license invalid. Sentenced to six months unsupervised deferred adjudication, fined \$100.

Jeremy Speck, deadly conduct. Sentenced to 20 days in county jail.

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