

# **Chalkboard**

By

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As I write this, there remains less than a month to the annual school board election, which will be held on Tuesday, September 21, 2004. I hope you already have that marked on your calendar because it is an important election in the life of our school district.

You are invited and encouraged to mark two other dates on your calendar- August 30, 2004, and September 13, 2004. Both of these dates are scheduled for school board meetings. At 5:30 p.m. on Monday, August 30<sup>th</sup> the school board, in a special session, will review the Annual Financial Report for the 2003-2004 school term and will consider the budget for the 2004-05 year. The second meeting will be the board's regular September meeting and is scheduled to be held on Monday, September 13<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m. at the middle/high school cafeteria. Included within the regular order of business, the Annual Report to the Public will be presented, the district's Teacher Of The Year will be named, the candidates for the contested board seat will be invited to speak, and the architects will be present to give an update on the proposed building program.

If the proposed 5-mill debt service increase is approved at the annual school board election, the revenue generated will be used to fund payment of a bond issue for construction of additional classroom space at the middle and the high school and the construction of an elementary school.

At the special meeting on September 13<sup>th</sup> one main point that may be decided is whether the proposed new elementary school should be a new Intermediate School or a new Primary School. From one perspective, an Intermediate School, now serving grades 3 to 5, would place the students sequentially in age level next to the middle school and might allow for easier use of shared space. On the other side of the coin, the construction of a new Primary School, now serving grades Kindergarten to Grade 2, would solve the problem of our youngest students having the oldest and the most "open" facilities. (Our Primary classrooms are now found in the "wing" buildings which were constructed in the 1960's.) There is no argument that a structure where our students, aged 5 to 7 years old, would be able to leave their regular classroom and go to lunch, to P.E., to Art, to the nurse, to the office, etc. without leaving the building would be a marked improvement in both

safety and control of the environment compared to our current arrangement where such classrooms open to an outside world.

Perhaps also to be decided at the special meeting will be the location and sequence of construction should the new millage rate be approved. The location of classroom additions on both the middle and high schools are easy to determine, as both were pre-planned with the construction of the buildings. The middle school classroom addition would be on the southwest corner of the building. At the high school, the addition would be the southeast corner in the space between the cafeteria and high school building.

The location of the new elementary school site could be on the front of the “football practice field” adjacent to Pioneer Lane. If so, the existing bus drive, running north and south behind the middle and high schools, would be extended north across the practice field to Swepco Road allowing vehicular traffic to have two points of egress from the new campus. Conversely, the new elementary could be built to the south, the southwest, or west of the Middle school.

The sequence of construction could possibly be in phases or simultaneous depending on how the project is “bid out”. Projected occupation dates could be as early as the beginning of the 2005-06 school term for the additions to the high school and middle schools and the 2006-07 school term for the new elementary school.

In closing, I note that the *Chalkboard* will not be used as a political medium where you are harangued to vote for the millage proposal. It is my intent that the *Chalkboard* remains true to its original purpose- a means of communicating current school issues to parents and patrons of the district.

Because the school election is the most current and pressing issue in light of the short timeline on which it will be decided, I will devote the next three articles prior to the election to giving you all the facts, as I know them, that relate to this proposed millage increase and the resulting proposed construction plans.

Finally, I encourage you to attend the next two board meetings to hear and see the workings of your school governance first-hand. The August 30<sup>th</sup> meeting, being a special session, does not have an agenda item for public comment, but there is such an agenda item at each of the regular meetings such as the one on September 13<sup>th</sup>. You are always invited to come and share your opinions.

Next week’s topic will be **“So if we are building a new elementary school, what will we do with the old one?”**