

# Chalkboard

By

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Part 4. When you read this article, less than a week will remain until the Annual School Election, which will be held on Tuesday, September 21, 2004. The voting site for all zones will be at the First Baptist Church Youth Activities Building, which is located on Main Street. The polls will open at 7:30 a.m. and close at 7:30 p.m.

One board seat, currently held by board president Keith Harper, is to be decided. Opposing Mr. Harper for the position is Mr. Mark Stave. Ted Dorn, representing citizens of Zone 4 faces no challenger for that position. Both Mr. Dorn and the winner of the Harper/Stave contest will hold his respective position for the next five years.

The functioning of the school board has always been an interesting process to me. From time to time, I reflect on the dynamics of their group interaction. During the last twelve years in which I have served as Gentry Public Schools' superintendent, I have worked, and am working, under the oversight of what I consider to be highly effective board members. For the record, let me list them- Judy Reems, Phagan Shelley, Jim Ward, Brad Dezurik, Peggy Dillahunty, Keith Harper, Jerry Harris, Fred Rosborough, Jim Barnes, Ted Dorn, Brenda Willett, Tom Dillard, Merrill Reynolds, and Kevin Martin. No one now serving on the current school board was on the board that hired me in the spring of 1992.

What has been the interesting part to me is how, first five, and now seven very individual thinking people can come together with each other to conduct school business in the professional manner they do. Certainly some votes on routine matters are easy to be in unanimous agreement. But there have been many nights I have seen the board agonize in attempting to decide what the right and fair thing should be. Most of those issues have dealt with personnel matters, student disciplinary hearings, and some legal entanglements the district faced.

The most recent issue the board spent much time in deliberation about was whether or not to bring to you the question of this millage increase of 5 mills which will also be decided next Tuesday by your vote. This increase is dedicated to the construction of a new elementary school and classroom additions to both the middle and high schools.

Their hesitation was not in recognizing the need but rather the responsibility of asking you to shoulder a higher tax burden. Their final opinion was that it was their duty to bring the question to you, the parents of present and future generations of Gentry students, and let you make that decision.

It has been my good fortune to be working in this district now and in the last decade plus two. During that time the district has seen the student population increase by about 300 students. A new middle school, a new cafeteria building, a middle school classroom addition, and a new vocational building have been constructed for our students. All those building programs were based on actual need for space, were initiated for the good of our children's education, and were supported by the great majority of voters.

The last millage increase of this type was a decade ago. The last three *Chalkboard's* and several penned last spring have attempted to let you know that need is upon the district again. I have tried to answer all the questions that have been posed to me. Yet, two questions remain to be answered.

Who will be elected?

Will the millage pass?

The answers to both of those questions, the answers to both being critical to the future direction and progress of this school district, are left to you to answer. That is as it should be; it is your school.