

Chalkboard

By

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Gentry Public Schools

A school millage campaign at Gentry is rather simple. We do not spend school dollars hiring consultants. An effort is made to explain why we are asking for an increase. You decide if the request is reasonable and vote **Yes** or **No**. Prior to the next time a request for a millage is made, you get to see if we spent the money wisely and for the purpose that it was requested.

For any newcomers to the district, I will provide a brief recap of past millage campaigns. Space does not allow an extensive discussion of millage rollbacks, millage restructuring predicated by changes in state law, and such. Sufficient to say that every time the need has arisen, you have said “**Yes**” to the following: a 1993 5 mill debt service levy, a 1994 3 mill dedicated maintenance and operation levy, a 1999 2.1 maintenance and operation mill levy, a 2000 2.9 mill renewal of the 1994 3 mill dedicated M&O millage rate, and a 2004 5 mill debt service levy.

With those mills we built a middle school in 1995, added an addition to it in 1999, built a VoAg building in 1999, built a bus drive in 1999, built a Middle/High School Cafeteria in 2001, added an addition to the high school in 2006 and built a new Primary School in 2007. I note that the 3-mill increase in 1994 was dedicated to classroom technology.

Various individuals have asked me why Gentry’s success rate in these type affairs is so successful. I tell them that the answer is two-fold. The first and foremost is that the citizens of the Gentry School District support the school. The second is that we never ask for anything that we do not need.

The millage increase that we are seeking this year is for “Dedicated Maintenance and Operation”. The revenue from the three mills will be used to purchase school buses, re-roof buildings, fix or replace broken equipment, and to keep our classroom technology up-to-date.

In one sense, this request may be harder for you, the voter, to see than past requests because the need is not so tangible as a building. You can see the Middle School, the addition to the Middle School, the VoAg building, the Primary School, the Cafeteria, and the High School Addition. If you were here in the early 90’s you can now see the technology in the classrooms and computer labs that were basically nonexistent in 1994.

With the price of a gallon of gasoline being higher than a gallon of milk, it may be harder for you to vote to add to your tax burden. That is

your decision.

On the other hand, these are your children you are being asked to support. Everybody wants the best for their children. Everyone wants Gentry's facilities to be safe, dry, and healthy. Everyone wants safe school buses. Everyone wants top-notch offerings in academic and activity curriculum. Everyone wants highly qualified teachers in the classroom. Everyone wants a school they can be proud of because the school represents an extension of the home and an extension of the community.

The simple and bare fact is that the price of having school costs more in 2007 than it did when I came here in the summer of 1992. It is a different world and Gentry is a different community. Your household costs have increased and the school's household costs have increased.

In 1992-93 the school's budget of expenditures was \$3,695,205. For 2007-08 the budget of expenditures is projected to be approximately \$13,355,603. In the 15 years in between the district has managed to keep its head above water by relying on increased revenue from local and state sources, by asking you for money only when we needed it, and by growing in size.

From 1992 to the present, the district has increased in student enrollment by almost 500 students. You said **Yes** when asked in those years to build buildings to house them. You said **Yes** to keep our students abreast of the information age.

On September 18, 2007, you are going to have an opportunity to say **Yes** to maintain the facilities and programs that the school offers. As explained in an earlier article, if your real and personal property is worth \$100,000 then the amount your taxes will increase is about \$60 a year.

It's your school; it's your call, it's your vote.