

Tuesday, February 7, 2023

Dickinson ISD Board of Trustees calls for \$120 million bond referendum for May 6 election

Dickinson ISD is asking voters to consider a \$120 million bond referendum during the May 6 election. The Board of Trustees approved calling for the election at the February 6 board action meeting. The projects identified in the bond referendum focus on the increasing student enrollment, additional safety and security needs, and the growing student interest in career and technical education programs.

If the bond is approved, the district's tax rate of \$1.294 will not increase. The growing housing population, appraisals and refinancing of existing debt all contribute to keeping the tax rate the same.

The district's Facility Task Force asked the Board of Trustees to call for the bond election during a formal presentation in January. The Facility Task Force, which consists of a cross section of the district made up of 62 parents, grandparents, business and community members, educators, and students from across Dickinson ISD, began meeting last October with district administration to review demographic projections, various scenarios to address identified district needs, financial capacity, and priority needs at multiple campuses and district facilities. The group also visited Career and Technical Education facilities in other school districts. These meeting discussions and the school visits were used to reach consensus on the recommended bond projects.

"As we travel Dickinson ISD's 61 square miles, especially west on FM 517, south on Highway 3 and south on I-45, it is easy to see the new development that will result in increased student enrollment for the next 10 years. The recommendations by this committee address long-term growth needs and provide the district with the space needed so that it will not be necessary to call for another bond referendum for several years," said Robert Bragg, member of the Facility Task Force.

The projects included in the May 2023 bond referendum include:

1. ***Construction of a 1,400-student capacity education complex to serve students in pre-kindergarten through fifth grade - \$68,134,676***

The location for this facility is a 30-acre tract the district purchased in 2020 at the corner of Lago Crossing and Hughes Road in the Lago Mar community. The largest growth in Dickinson ISD at this time is in this southwest portion of the district. Demographic projections are that this growth will continue with approximately 5,000 homes expected in the Lago Mar community once it is built out.

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2. *Safety and security upgrades including technology and infrastructure and access control - \$1,504,704*

Safety and security upgrades would continue to address access control around and within campuses with safety film, perimeter fencing and alarm security, as well as funds for security technology, and cybersecurity.

3. *Construction of a Career and Technical Education facility and upgrades to the existing CTE space at Dickinson High School - \$50,360,620*

A 100,000 square foot Career and Technical Education (CTE) facility is proposed for Dickinson High School to accommodate the high school enrollment as well as provide classrooms and labs designed specifically for CTE programs. Currently, 91 percent of DHS students are enrolled in at least one CTE course and several programs have waiting lists of students wanting to participate. By moving these CTE programs into their own building, regular classrooms and science lab classrooms currently occupied by CTE would be available to accommodate over 800 students. In addition, existing CTE facilities inside the high school campus would be renovated and updated. The planning process for the CTE facility will include a traffic study to improve efficiency during high school arrival and dismissal times.

“Dickinson ISD is a fast-growth district, and we are committed to providing high quality experiences in safe and secure learning environments for our students. Because of the support of Dickinson ISD residents, six bond referendums since 1999 were all successful, and we have been able to accommodate our growing enrollment and facility needs. Our enrollment continues to increase surpassing 12,200 students this school year. The Facility Task Force developed a recommendation that is fiscally sound, aligns with our district’s mission and goals, and it will prepare DISD for future growth,” said Carla Voelkel, DISD Superintendent.

A special Bond 2023 section has been added to the Dickinson ISD website, found at www.dickinsonisd.org/bond2023. Dickinson ISD will also be publishing a special issue of the district newsletter “Dialogue,” which will be mailed to all addresses in Dickinson ISD around the end of March. This newsletter will provide details about the bond referendum, as well as early voting and voting day times and locations.

In addition, public meetings to provide information about Bond 2023 will be scheduled and announced soon.