

# The Bandera PROPHET

January 13, 2023

Bandera ISD approves \$79.5 million bond election

By Jessica Nohealapa'ahi  
The Bandera Prophet

During their regular meeting on Jan. 9, Bandera ISD trustees unanimously approved a bond election to be held May 6. The \$79,491,416 bond, if approved by voters, will fund numerous proposed projects including improved campus safety, a new Career and Technical Education (CTE) Center and Bandera multi-purpose facility, new HVAC systems at Alkek and Hill Country Elementaries, and overall district-wide maintenance.

Ron Gherman, representing the Citizens' Advisory Committee, said 50 people gathered over the course of five meetings between October and December last year. The purpose of the committee was to identify the district's and students' needs, and form ideas to pay for them.

"These are all community members with diverse opinions," Gherman told the board Monday evening, adding many BISD students live at or below the poverty line, and the school provides their one opportunity to rise above. "We really feel like our kids deserve better than what they're getting today."

Calling the bond proposal a "prudent sensible decision for the district and taxpayers," Russell Hevenor said the committee came to a consensus on the final package before presenting it to the school board.

"First and paramount in the bond is safety. We live in world that can be dangerous," Hevenor said, adding the bond would fund fencing, more fire and intrusion alarms, secured areas and controlled entries.

Hevenor said the CTE center would be a top-notch facility for subjects and trades including culinary arts, computer science, robotics, ag

science, welding and more. As a society, he said, people are finally accepting that college is not always necessary to achieve successful careers.

“Students will come out of these programs with certificates that help them get immediate employment,” Hevenor said. “It’s an expensive [bond] proposal but there’s no fluff. This bond will make this community better, our county better and this country better.”

Tony Battle said the playgrounds and restrooms do not meet ADA requirements.

“We are really just limping by with non-code compliant facilities,” Battle said, adding the district’s current budget cannot pay for the renovations needed. “Without this, these campuses will continue to struggle.”

The current BISD tax rate is \$.9784 per \$100 valuation. With an \$80 million bond, the rate would increase \$.1307. Homeowners whose properties appraise at \$300,000 would pay an additional \$339.83 annually, or \$28.32 per month.

The election will be held May 6, 2023, with early voting April 24 through May 2. This will be the district’s first bond election since 2002, when taxpayers approved \$26 million.

BISD Superintendent Gary Bitzkie said he talked to the Student Advisory Committee about their observations at the high school. He said one of the major complaints is the state of bathrooms and dressing rooms.

“The word coming out of their mouths is ‘disgusting,’” Bitzkie said, adding the maintenance department does what it can to shine and polish facilities installed in 1976. “There’s only so much you can do. Our kids deserve better. Our kids go to other schools and come back and ask, ‘why don’t we have that?’”

In other business, Bitzkie reported 2,353 students were enrolled as of Dec. 31, 2022. That tally is 27 students less than at the start of the year, however 43 more students than Dec. 31, 2021.