

# Bond Proposition Provides Improvements Without Raising Taxes

The Beauregard Parish School Board has called for an election to authorize issuing \$29,000,000 of 20-year general obligation bonds for construction, renovations, and improvements to school facilities throughout the parish without raising taxes. The issue will be placed before the voters on the May 4, 2019, ballot.

The bonds will be payable from ad valorem taxes with no increase in the millage rate. The board receives a portion of the parish property taxes which is used to pay for bonds and interest when the bonds mature. No new taxes are required for this bond issue since there is sufficient revenue in the current millage to repay the bonds.

Bonding Attorney Grant Schleuter of Foley & Judell in New Orleans addressed the board at the January 2019 regular meeting to explain that the School Board would be able to issue bonds for \$29 million without incurring any more costs to taxpayers due to a broader than expected tax base.

In addition, the board has realized savings on previous bonds through a reduction in interest rates over the past several years, creating conditions which allow the board to issue the current bond without increasing the tax rate to pay for it. The current rate of 17.8 mills is sufficient to pay the current bonds and the new bond premiums and interests.

The board met in special open sessions during the months of January, February, and March to discuss needed capital improvement and prioritize projects. Board members also toured school facilities across the parish to assess needs, interviewed principals, and heard from community members. After school visits, meetings, and deliberation, the board set out a Capital Improvement Plan to address needs at the schools with the bond proposition.

The board decided to call for a vote at this time because construction projects and facility upgrades are needed in parish schools.

“It has been eleven years since the School Board issued a bond proposition and the voters approved the bond for school construction and improvements,” explained Timothy Cooley, Superintendent of Schools. “Upgrading facilities and providing modern, safe, functional buildings and classrooms are important in assuring quality education for our children.”



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The voters of Beauregard Parish have always placed a high priority on having and maintaining an exceptional school system, explained Cooley. The public has supported every tax measure for schools since 1913.

The board voted to implement the bond in phases to address the most pressing needs in Phase I and additional needs in Phase II and Phase III. Phase I projects include an elementary school in DeRidder, a classroom addition at East Beauregard Elementary, a new cafeteria and administration office at Merryville High School, a classroom addition at South Beauregard Elementary, and technology parishwide.

Phase II projects will be addressed if there are bond funds remaining after projects in Phase I have been funded. They include agricultural building improvements at DeRidder High School, a band room and boiler replacement at DeRidder Junior High School, a weight room and field house along with track resurfacing at East Beauregard High School, a library at Singer High School, agricultural building improvements and track resurfacing at South Beauregard High School, and restroom, electrical, and AC upgrades at schools across the parish.

Phase III projects will be addressed if there are remaining funds after projects in Phase II have been funded. These include a gym restroom addition at East Beauregard Elementary, renovation at G.W. Carver Elementary, interior and exterior painting at K.R. Hanchey Elementary, an oxidation pond at South Beauregard, athletic upgrades at South Beauregard High School, and buses parishwide.

“Every school in the parish and each student will benefit from the capital improvements and technological upgrades which will be funded by this bond,” said Cooley. “With the implementation of this Capital Improvement Plan, we will be able to provide our students with facilities and technology that will benefit them for many years to come without increasing taxes to do so. We believe this is a win-win situation for all stakeholders in Beauregard Parish education.”