

BISD puts bond on ballot

By SHANNON DAUGHTRY | Posted: Wednesday, February 8, 2012 2:00 am

CLUTE — Brazosport ISD trustees voted unanimously Tuesday to accept its Citizen Bond Advisory Committee's recommendation and call a \$40.26 million bond election to pay for technology upgrades, security and maintenance.

All seven members raised their right hands in unison to vote to place the measure on the May 12 ballot.

At current property values, the bond would cost homeowners less than 5 cents per \$100 of appraised property value, district officials say. The current tax rate is about \$1.24 per \$100 of value.

District officials described the bond as a necessity.

"We don't have a choice with technology," said Bill Frizzell, a bond advisory committee member. "Right now it's costing us more to maintain the old computers than it probably would to replace them. If the bond fails, the quality of our education will go with it."

The bond includes \$23.5 million in technology costs, \$9.63 million for maintenance, \$3.3 million for district security costs, \$730,000 for equipment and grounds costs and \$2.9 million for extracurricular costs.

The technology component includes \$5.2 million for mobile computing devices for all students; \$3.6 million for equipment needed for the state's required web-based curriculum; \$1.25 million for a wireless infrastructure upgrades needed to support the electronic textbook mandate; and \$420,000 for software purchases and updates for the entire district.

"Our students wouldn't have the instructional resources for the testing they're having to take if we can't update our technology," Brazosport ISD Chief Financial Advisor Dan Schaefer said.

It will be hard for the district's teachers to teach if they can't get the money, said Sandra McCoy-Jackson, assistant superintendent of curriculum, instruction and assessment.

"We don't have an option to pay for the e-books," she said. "We have until 2013 to make the transition."

The bond would address major maintenance and operations issues Brazosport ISD hasn't been able to afford with annual budget funds such as a districtwide carpet replacement, flooring at Madge Griffith Elementary, replacing the gym floor at Brazosport High School, replacing two 300-ton York chillers at Brazoswood High School, replacing the cafeteria air conditioning at O.A. Fleming Elementary, and installing new boilers at Jane Long Elementary, O.M. Roberts Elementary, Stephen F. Austin Elementary and T.W. Ogg Elementary.

“I’m excited we’re doing something for our school district,” board member Jim Koch said. “We’re asking for a third less than we did last time. I’m proud that we’re going to do something for our own kids.”

Voters rejected a \$166 million proposed bond in 2009 that would have replaced two elementary schools and the majority of another, added classrooms and gyms to many schools and built a natatorium.

Jeff Gilbert, a parent in attendance Tuesday, said he wants to see a reason for parents with children to stay in Brazosport ISD.

“We need to show a commitment to our children,” Gilbert said. “BISD and the schools of BISD ought to be the first choice, not a backup choice.”

Area resident Frank Fox said the proposed bond didn’t provide enough specifics.

“This is too broad of a paintbrush to paint with,” Fox said. “There are a lot of things that haven’t met my test of proving to me that this bond is worth my time to vote for.”