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High Island ISD seeks \$27 million to replace 76-year-old school

By LAUREN FRICK The Daily News

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PROPOSED HIGH ISLAND ISD
ENTRANCE OPTION #1



NOT FOR CONSTRUCTION

03.26.2025

The High Island Independent School District is seeking \$27.9 million in the upcoming May election to replace aged and condemned buildings.

Courtesy rendering

HIGH ISLAND

High Island ISD is asking voters to approve a \$27.9 million bond to replace aging school buildings and to demolish three metal buildings condemned more than 16 years ago.

Some of the small Bolivar Peninsula district's buildings reached "end of life," long ago, Superintendent David Walker said.

“Three of the district’s buildings have been condemned over 16 years,” he said. “But the district had nowhere else to house these kids, so we were having to use them. I can take you into areas where you walk in and you can look up and see daylight.

The buildings are not structurally sound, he said.

“It’s one of these things where like lipstick has been put on them,” Walker said.

The \$27.9 million bond would provide a new 49,000-square-foot building with a shared gymnasium and library to accommodate elementary and high school students, Walker said. The district’s middle-school students have a relatively new building, he said.

Unlike the existing buildings, the new construction would meet all the latest safety, security and windstorm standards, Walker said.

The existing elementary and high school is 76 years old, while the current gymnasium is 69 years old and at end of life.

The bond also would fund a new school bus and the demolition three metal buildings that were condemned in 2008.

While \$27.9 million might seem like a steep price tag for a district that had a total of 159 students last school year, Walker asserts the cost accounts for inflation and is comparable to similar sized projects, he said.

“I built a school around 2005, a very comparable-sized job as far as scope of work, and that building was about a \$6 million bond,” Walker said. “In 20 years, with inflation and everything, a comparable size building that was not the Taj Mahal, was about five times less in cost.”

If the bond passes, the current tax rate wouldn’t increase, which is possible because of the district’s choice to extend debt payments eight years upon the passage of the bond, Walker said.

Now is the right time to propose the debt package because the district can meet all of its needs while not raising the tax rate, which it hasn’t been able to do in the past, Walker said.

“This would be the bond that would take care of the district’s needs and put us in a good situation for years to come to where, if anything in the future comes up, you would be looking at maybe a roof replacement versus having to build a whole new school,” Walker said.

“This is going to be the big-ticket item that’s going to push us in the future, to where we will be able to operate for a long time without having to ask for another big capital improvement program.”

Early voting continues through April 29 and Election Day is May 3.

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