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Rush Springs Community Members Push for School Bond Issue

RUSH SPRINGS, Okla. – Rush Springs Public Schools Board of Education released a bond issue requesting new facilities Jan. 28.

The issue, budgeted at \$19.6 million, calls for the construction of a new gymnasium and renovations to the current agricultural show facility, said Garrin Bratcher, Rush Springs Public Schools Board of Education member.

The election is set for March 4 at the Glover-Spencer Memorial Library in Rush Springs, Bratcher said.

“The gym was constructed in 1961 and is showing signs of wear,” Bratcher said.

In 2019, the school administration proposed the construction of a new track and field facility, basketball gym, and renovations to the show barn, he said.

“The bond failed because the expenses seemed to be more than community members were willing to pay,” Bratcher said. The board decided to remove the track and field facility from the upcoming bond issue to reduce costs, he added.

“I will vote for anything that benefits the children, no matter the cost,” Bratcher said.

Jennifer Burch, Rush Springs Public Schools head basketball coach, said the idea of a new gym gets everyone motivated.

“The basketball girls have seen the plans for the new gym and have lived in the old gym for all these years,” Burch said.

Talk of a new facility keeps the girls encouraged for what’s to come, she added.

Daniel Ballard, Rush Springs Public Schools agricultural education instructor, said he expects renovation costs of the show barn to total \$200,000.

“The wash racks are beginning to show signs of wear,” Ballard said.

The current flooring is difficult for livestock to walk on, and the concession stand needs remodeled, he added.

“Seeing the improvements will help our livestock exhibitors be better stewards of their animals and invoke mindfulness of the facilities,” Ballard said.

Emma Gunn, Rush Springs High School senior, said education does not just happen in core classes.

High school should be about preparing students to go into college, career tech or straight into the workforce, Gunn said.

“We can learn numbers and facts, but skills learned on the football field, basketball court, or show ring is where real life lessons are learned,” she said.

Putting interest in activities that students are interested in shows them that the community cares about their education and success, she said.

“While you can get a good education through online resources, you can’t replicate real-life experiences,” Gunn said. “There is no substitute for the life lessons learned outside of the classroom.”

There are issues that affect the status of the bond, both Burch and Gunn said.

“The biggest issue that could impact voters is the fact that Rush Springs is an impoverished community,” Gunn said.

Older community members are on fixed incomes and tax increases immediately raise red flags for them, Burch said.

“Failing a bond is disheartening,” Burch said. “It makes the kids feel like they aren’t supported.”

People do not realize that renovations and cleaning cannot change the fact that the building is old, Burch said.

“It is time to focus on the big picture,” she said. “This is a community effort.”

Rush Springs Public Schools administration is gathering voter information from a shared spreadsheet, she added.

“The list contains previous voters, registered voters, potential voters, and the parents of all students enrolled at the school,” Burch said.

The most recent data count confirmed 348 yes votes, with many people still to be contacted, Burch said.

“An investment in our school is an investment in our community and state,” Gunn said.

The Board of Education members and administration are conducting a series of community forums to receive input for the upcoming election, Bratcher said.

“The last one is set for Feb. 17 at the Lloyd Conover Gymnasium in Rush Springs,” Bratcher said.

“We invite locals who are interested in the future of our school to support our students and the future of our town,” Bratcher said.

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