

8/2/07

Rancho Santa Fe trustees turning to voters

\$46 million bond election scheduled

By Sherry Parmet
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RANCHO SANTA FE — The school board here will ask voters in November for \$46 million to renovate their only campus and build a second one.

Last night, the board unanimously approved the measure, which would add \$30 a year per \$100,000 of assessed property value to the annual property tax bill for homeowners in the Rancho Santa Fe School District.

The median sale price for homes in Rancho Santa Fe last quarter was \$1.5 million, according to DataQuick Information Systems, and the bond measure would tax those homeowners \$450 a year.

The tax would last 25 to 40 years, depending on whether the district needed all the money, Superintendent Daniel Vinson said.

The bond would also pay for a future school site in Elfin Forest, where the district projects growth over the next decade.

"We can't do these projects without a bond," said Vinson. "And I'd like to believe that this community believes in its schools enough to support a bond."

Under Proposition 39, the Nov. 5 bond measure would require 55 percent voter approval to pass.

It would pay for a new campus that would relieve crowding at Rancho Santa Fe School, where 16 portable classrooms are needed to serve 810 kindergarten through eighth-grade students this fall. An additional

▶ BOND

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Site picked for school proves controversial

370 students are expected to enroll by 2007, according to a district demographics study.

The bond also would pay for renovations to the existing campus, which was built in 1954. That would include a bigger and safer drop-off area, wiring for additional computers and telephone lines, and a new building to replace the portables.

"The school is just getting old and worn down, and it needs to be cleaned up," school board President Kathy Stumm said.

The preferred location for the second school has generated controversy. The property owners, Roland and Ramona Sahm, don't want to relinquish any part of their 208-acre citrus ranch. Over the years, they have used their estate to host many fund-raising events for the arts. The school district wants 27.5 acres of the property on the north side of Del Dios Highway.

The selection of the Sahm

property has also spurred an uproar in the Hacienda Santa Fe subdivision across the street. Residents say they would have to contend with increased traffic from a school their children wouldn't be allowed to attend. The neighborhood is part of the Solana Beach School District.

Both parties have hired attorneys to block the school district's acquisition of the land, east of the boundaries of the Rancho Santa Fe Association.

But the district is standing firm and could ultimately invoke eminent domain to acquire the property, say board members.

The board has been scouting the community for three years for land, and Vinson said this is the best of 18 locations identified.

"Regardless of what site we selected, there was going to be opposition," he said.

The bond would pay for the land as well as the cost of construction of the second campus. It would also pay for a third school site in Elfin Forest, years before a school is needed so the district doesn't again find itself in this predicament, Stumm said.

N-1483
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