

DALLAS SCHOOL DISTRICT

Board approves \$32 million prelim budget

By SARAH HITE
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The Dallas School Board approved a \$32 million preliminary budget at its meeting Monday evening. The increase could cost taxpayers an additional average of \$85 per property for the 2011-12 school year.

The budget was passed with a 7-1 vote with board member Dennis Gochoel Jr. voting against the spending plan. Gary Mathers was absent.

In addition to the millage increase, the budget also calls for a \$10 per capita tax, a 1 percent earned income tax to be shared between the district and municipalities and a \$52 emergency services tax, of which the district receives \$5 and the rest goes to the municipalities that have enacted such a tax.

The budget was presented to the board at last month's meeting, at which time Business Manager Grant Palfey told the board the increase in taxes is primarily caused by the new high school construction project. The new budget increases the millage rate from 11.0118 to 11.5624.

A mill is \$1 for every \$1,000 in assessed value.

Palfey said the board has been carefully tracking bud-

UP NEXT...

The next work session of the Dallas School Board will be held at 7 p.m. on Monday, March 7 and the next regular meeting will be held at 7 p.m. on Monday, March 14 in the administration building next to the Wycallis Elementary School.

gets for the last eight years to include only gradual increases. He said this year's budget has the highest tax increase because of the impending completion of the high school project.

With this year's Act 1 index at 1.7 percent, the board had to apply for special exceptions in order to raise taxes to the 5 percent limit. The Act 1 index determines the percentage at which school boards can raise taxes, depending on the statewide weekly wage index. Last year's index was 3.4 percent.

Palfey said the board plans to apply for special exceptions from the state Department of Education in the areas of special education, retirement contributions and grandfathered debt.

The board will also see many technological upgrades to the new high school when the academic year begins on

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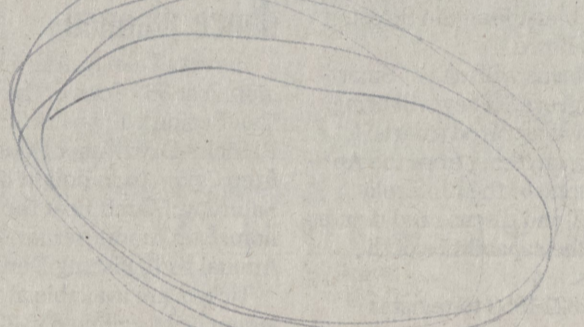
Rachel Johnson, 11, of Beaumont, has fun Zumba dancing at the Old Beaumont School.



Vanessa Burkhardt of Noxen participates in a Zumba dance class at the Old Beaumont School.

Zumba comes to Beaumont

Zumba, the latest craze in exercise, has found its way to Beaumont where Zumba classes are held at the Old Beaumont School as a fundraiser to help offset the costs of maintaining the building. Zumba is a dance fitness program created by dancer and choreographer Albert "Beto" Perez in Columbia during the 1990s. The program combines Latin and international music with dance in an effort to make exercise fun. Zumba classes are offered through licensed instructors in more than 10,000 fitness center locations in 100 countries with 10 million participants.



Zumba dance instructor Sally Johnson leads the dance fundraiser for the Old Beaumont School.

DALLAS TOWNSHIP

Residents want alternative to cast zoning board vote

By SARAH HITE
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Residents presented a letter to the board Tuesday evening, requesting an alternate for zoning board member Conrad Higgins in the hearing for Chief Gathering LLC's application to build a natural gas compressor station.

A hearing was held on Feb. 9, during which zoning board Solicitor William McCall announced that Higgins had signed a right-of-way agreement with Chief Gathering and could not actively participate in the proceedings. In accordance with the state ethics commission, Higgins can provide a third vote if needed. The other

UP NEXT

The hearing for Chief Gathering LLC's application for special zoning exceptions will continue at 7 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 23 in the Dallas Middle School auditorium at 2000 Conyngham Ave., Dallas Township.

board members are Robert Bayer and Gary Hozempa.

Chief Gathering LLC applied for special zoning exceptions on Jan. 21 to build a natural gas compressor station off Hildebrandt Road, 1,150 feet away from the Dallas School District campus property line.

A compressor station is a facility where natural gas from drilling wells is pressurized and sent through the Transco pipeline, which then sends the gas to homes across the country. The five-acre facility would include two metering stations, a building to house compressor

engines, several tanks and a 100-foot communications tower.

Residents Al and Mary Rodriguez, Liz Martin, Norm Tomchak and Diane Dreier presented the letter to the board, requesting "the appointment of Supervisor Frank Wagner, if he has no conflict of interest, to serve in the event of a tie vote in this matter."

Township Solicitor Thomas Brennan said alternates for various boards can be chosen at the township's annual reorga-

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HARVEYS LAKE BOROUGH

Debate sparks decision to hold public hearing on CELDF

By EILEEN GODIN
Dallas Post Correspondent

After considerable debate and pressure from residents, the Harveys Lake Borough Council voted to hold a public hearing on the Community Environment Legal Defense Fund, the right to self government ordinance.

Residents filled the meeting room to a standing-room only capacity Tuesday night. For over an hour, concerned residents and council members faced off over a proposed ordinance written by the CELDF.

The end result was a 3-2 vote with council member Ryan Doughton and council president Frances Kopko voting no. Council member Boyd Barber abstained due to requests from resi-

UP NEXT

The next Harveys Lake Borough Council meeting is scheduled for 7:30 p.m. on Tuesday, March 15 in the municipal building.

dents because he holds two natural gas leases in another municipality. Council member Rich William was absent.

Council members remained apprehensive, claiming the ordinance violated their oath and stated that, under state law, zoning is the legal way to limit and restrict the natural gas drilling industry.

Resident Neil Turner requested council consider the ordinance and hold a public hearing. "We need to do something," he said. "Think outside of the box."

Borough Attorney Charles McCormick advised council members a public hearing on the ordinance would lead to a mo-

tion vote to adopt or decline the CELDF ordinance.

The four-page ordinance claims residents have inalienable and fundamental rights to access, consume and preserve water drawn from the natural water sources within the borough and protect the natural ecosystems of the community.

Harveys Lake is a large watershed area which feeds into the Ceasetown and Huntsville Reservoirs which provide drinking water to about 100,000 Wyoming Valley residents. Concern over contaminated water from upstream flowing into the lake was

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HARPIN' ON THINGS

Why can't singers just leave the Star-Spangled Banner alone?

Raise your right hand if you watched the Super Bowl.

Raise your left hand if you enjoyed the game.

Clap like you would have after the singing of our National Anthem by Christina Aguilera.

I didn't think I would hear anything.

I know this story has been whipped like a bowl of mashed potatoes at Thanksgiving and Aguilera has made apologies but it really made me angry when yet another celebrity made a mockery of our nation's song by not only mixing up the lines (which is



Heffernan

understandable because mistakes do happen) but by taking the liberty of making the Star Spangled Banner last almost as long as Beethoven's 9th Symphony.

The Mrs. and I were prepared for the game, she on the couch next to the blazing fireplace wrapped in enough blankets to keep Sir Edmund Hillary warm and I in a t-shirt reclined into the Luge position in the old Lazy Boy. After the first 10 seconds of Ms. Aguilera's attempt at singing, I slammed down the foot rest and stormed into the kitchen to return only when the song was over. I must be getting old because I just can't listen to something like that.

The Mrs. and I both agreed (we did that once before in 1995 but I can't remember what it was about) that the country had been embarrassed again on the international level by one of our so-

called stars and that we would prefer a military singer or band perform or perhaps a professional opera singer belt out our anthem.

I watch a lot of rugby from around the world and before each game, both teams' national anthems are performed by pros. From South Africa to Ireland, the songs are always done the same way with no variations while the players and the fans all sing. The sound is wonderful and it brings goose bumps to your arms unlike here where players are joking with each other or people still have their hats on and are talking on cell phones.

Why do our singers think they have to do their own rendition of this historic song and embellish it every time they get the chance? I have sung the National Anthem the same way (poorly, but I sing) with the same rhythm since first grade at the Shavertown School

(that's where the Burger King parking lot is now, for you younger folk). We also said the Pledge of Allegiance, including the word God, with pride but I don't want to get off on that tangent today.

When will promoters and producers of events from baseball to football to Nascar stop worrying about bringing in the so-called big name celebrity to sing the National Anthem? The people are already in the stands and you don't see them leaving after the singing, do you? Promoters need to worry about how the men and women in the Armed Forces feel after putting their lives on the line every day to defend this country and our way of life, only to hear someone ruin the National Anthem.

I would wager a bet that Ms. Aguilera will be asked to sing at another sporting event about as soon as the gas well drillers will be asked to come back to Leh-

man.

Wanting to see if I was in the minority on this subject, I tracked down some people I know to get their input. Kunkle's Dave Shultz and Lehman's Chris Frederick agreed that the performance was disrespectful to all those who have served and are serving this country in the military and that it was bad for the moral of the troops. Jack Fowler of Dallas, a former Marine, said it was a disgrace and blamed the promoters' greed for the fiasco.

Heather Brown and Nick Volpetti said it was an embarrassment for both the singer and the country while Gerry Ogurkis said the performance was despicable and that the pride of our country was hurt by it. John Harry stated he would like to hear military singers perform the National Anthem and summed up Ms. A's performance by saying his dogs howl better than she

sings.

The next time you're at a sporting competition where the Star Spangled Banner is played, be sure to show the proper respect and sing along. It really does give you a good feeling.

Atta Boy of the week ...

Goes to Billy Zukosky, owner of Competition Plus Motorsports on Route 309 in Dallas. He has been in business 21 years and specializes in performance cars and motorcycles but, like all good mechanics, he will work on just about anything with an engine. Atta Boy Billy, keep up the good work.

Harp Heffernan was the associate publisher, outdoor editor and chief photographer of the Sunday Independent, a newspaper that was in his family for 87 years in Wilkes-Barre. You can e-mail him at news@mydallaspost.com.