

Meeting Minutes

Smithville ISD Community Facility Committee Meeting #1 Minutes

April 28, 2016 / 7 p.m.

Smithville ISD Administration Building

Welcome & Introductions

Dr. McNulty, Smithville ISD superintendent, opened the meeting by thanking all of the committee members for their service, noting that they would play an important role in determining the district's facility needs. He introduced two board members in attendance: Tay Campbell and Samella Williams, along with key staff members who will serve as a resource to the committee. Board members will rotate their attendance so that each has an opportunity to observe the meetings, but board and staff resource members will not be voting members of the committee.

Amy Jones, president of O'Connell Robertson, explained the firm's role in facilitating the committee and assisting the district with the bond planning process. She provided an overview of the firm, noting that O'Connell Robertson was established in Austin in 1950 and currently has more than 50 employees, including architects, MEP engineers, interior designers, construction administrators, and communications and graphic specialists. O'Connell Robertson has a history of working in Smithville, having designed the Smithville hospital and current renovations to that facility.

Amy, who will serve as the principal-in-charge leading the O'Connell Robertson team and committee facilitation, then introduced the Firm's other key members who will be working with Smithville ISD on facility bond planning and design:

- *Jarrod Sterzinger, AIA, LEED AP* – a registered architect who is the K-12 Team Leader and a principal in the Firm, who will serve as senior project manager for the District Facility Master Plan development;
- *Cathy Brandewie* – an associate in the Firm with 20+ years of communications and PR experience for public entities, including eight years with Round Rock ISD, who will also be facilitating the committee's work and leading any bond communications efforts;
- *Casey Nicholson, AIA* – a registered architect with extensive experience in educational facility planning and design, who will provide support for the SISD master plan and design.

Committee Introductions

Amy then asked committee members to share their names, connections to Smithville ISD, occupation, and what they hope to learn, how they would like to make a difference, or what they really like about SISD. A list of committee members is provided separately. Committee members shared the following comments regarding their hopes and likes:

- Hope to be part of building something that our students can be proud of
- Happy to see growth and changes
- I love our kids and want them to be proud of their campus
- Our kids deserve quality facilities and want our children to be proud.

- Love the children, principals and teachers
- New updated facilities; keep growth and offer more opportunities for all students
- Love the small town home feel
- Hope to learn how we can provide everything our students need to succeed
- Would like to see the kids provided with all the great opportunities.
- Excited to learn the process and about SISD
- Hope to learn how the schools will be improved to give the students better facilities for learning and participating (athletics and academic)
- Would like to learn what is going to change and how we can make things better for academics and athletes. We want our kids to take pride in everything. Want to maintain small town feel.
- Want to understand the process for the children and teachers to support recruitment and maintaining excellent teachers
- Want facilities that our students, staff and families can be proud of
- Hope to make a difference that affects academics, athletics, and fine arts as well as provides a draw for the community
- Love how SISD provides a family for all students
- Appreciate that SISD teaches the *whole* child and supports a community feel
- Feel there have been mistakes in the past and want to move forward with something we are proud of
- Like students' willingness to adopt change and would like to see the committee do the same
- Want to provide a resource for technology enrichment programs and IT instruction
- Here for the kids—love working with the kids
- Like the people in SISD
- Want to see SISD continue to address growth and provide a safe environment
- Want to maintain life-long learning and respect for education and learning—this philosophy should permeate throughout and be reflected in the facilities
- Hope the committee can recommend facilities that will make it better for teachers and students
- Learn plans for future growth and expansion and participate in the process; want to see a healthy school district to foster growth and attract current and potential residents of Smithville
- Excited about being involved in this process and what the future holds for the community
- Appreciates SISD as a District that values and holds dear the employees and staff that support it
- Want to provide information that educational and athletic activities go hand in hand
- Want to learn how to utilize and capitalize on existing campus assets and infrastructure, and use this knowledge to focus on expanding our campuses in a focused way to maximize and enrich the learning environment of our students
- Want to help support staff and students of SISD
- Love the ease of access to teachers and principals, allowing a focus on student needs
- Want to be a part of good change for the kids; support students' growth academically and athletically
- With 27 years in one District, I can share information on the past and what has been done before; want there to be pride in our kids and town
- Want to see benefits for all students for all campuses

- Want to focus on energy efficiency to help fight climate change and also want to maintain the fostering relationship of schools and public libraries
- Appreciated the welcoming feeling when first hired--staff support each other and that feeling is passed down to students
- Would like to educate the town to make sure there is opportunity to continue growth
- SISD is a great place to be and a great place to learn
- Want to see what improvements are coming in, and having the opportunity to vote on it would be an honor
- Looking forward to the changes and improvements to the schools, particularly Brown Primary
- Want to be part of something that is creating an inviting and appealing school district, including classrooms, landscaping, and athletic facilities
- Loves the town and the community and wants to help others understand how special SISD is; would like to be out of portables
- Love the staff and small town atmosphere
- Hope to bring about the needed changes to improve the facilities for the students and staff and community
- Love Smithville—it's a great place to raise a family; looking forward to finding opportunities for growth / change and the facilities should be commensurate with the great things going on in the District so that the facilities can be a draw to Smithville
- Excited to be listening and supporting the District; want to ensure all are communicating the great information
- This is the first school district I've worked at where I've felt valued and appreciated and the staff is genuinely nice
- Want to learn the working parts of SISD and help build a solid future for ALL children
- Hope to learn what are the priorities of the community for SISD
- Want to better understand the needs and demands of the school district, teachers and students and bring future value to the community
- Hope to learn how we can make our facilities better
- Hope to build a school system that our children can be proud of
- Hope to learn about what changes this community is interested in making
- Love the feeling of small town working together
- Want to help facilitate changes that are best for all of the students, staff and the community of Smithville; fine arts!

Smithville ISD History & Background

Dr. McNulty then provided an overview of Smithville ISD, noting that the district was established in 1895 and now covers 282 square miles. SISD is located in Bastrop County, which is the 10th fastest growing county in Texas and the 49th fastest growing county in the nation.

District facilities currently include five campuses: Brown Primary (grade PK-2), an elementary school (grades 3-5), a junior high (grades 6-8), and a high school (grades 9-12); along with the Administration Building (Red Brick), and a bus yard. The DAEP and Tiger Academy programs are considered part of the high school.

Dr. McNulty reviewed the student enrollment (1,757) and demographics, noting that 60 percent of students qualify for the free/reduced price lunch program. There are 273 staff members, making SISD the largest employer in the city and surrounding area.

The District tax rate has decreased over the past seven years, while the fund balance has increased to the equivalent of four months of operating capital. The annual operating budget is \$18 million.

It has been 15 years since the District's last bond election, when voters approved funding for a new high school in March 2001. Previously, successful bond elections were held in 1907, 1924, 1986, and 1994. The newest facilities and systems in the District are from 2002 when the new high school opened; the oldest facilities date back to 1924.

Planning for this process began when the SISD administrators and board members began discussing the District's current facility needs in 2014. In Fall 2015, the Board of Trustees identified facilities as one of the most important priorities (second to academics), and began discussing how to address those needs. The Board recognized that every campus appears to have facility needs and all are utilizing portable buildings. Changes are needed to better support the educational classrooms and services needed to meet business and community expectations.

In December 2015, TASB Facility Services conducted a formal facility assessment of all the District's facilities and reported findings to the Board in March 2016. During Spring 2016, the Board was updated on the District's bond capacity, and confirmed that the District is financially stable in maintenance and operations costs and in a good position to consider capital projects. During this time, SISD completed a process to review and select architecture firms to assist with the bond planning and future design work, resulting in the selection of O'Connell Robertson.

O'Connell Robertson then assisted in developing a timeline and process for creating a Community Facility Committee to provide input for a possible November 2016 bond election. Board members and Dr. McNulty identified and invited the members who are now on the committee to provide a diverse representation of the SISD community.

Dr. McNulty told the committee that all minutes and presentations will be posted on the District's web site for their reference and to provide transparency to the community. All meetings are open to the public, although only committee members can vote on recommendations for the Board.

Committee Charge & Meeting Schedule/Process

Cathy Brandewie reviewed the Committee Charge, which was approved by the Board to provide committee members with clear direction for the Community Facility Committee. The Committee will serve in an advisory capacity to help the Board assess and prioritize the District's facility needs, and make recommendations regarding a possible bond election. The Board will make the final decision regarding any future bond elections, but will seriously consider the committee's input, recognizing that the committee represents the community and what it is likely to support.

Committee members will be asked to review all of the information presented regarding the District's capital improvement needs, work together to prioritize projects for a bond election, provide input on an election strategy, and present recommendations to the Board. By law, school district elections can only be held in November or May of each year; to hold a November 2016 election, Board members must call the election by August 22.

Five committee meetings are scheduled, to be held the second and fourth Tuesdays in May and June (April 28, May 10, May 24, June 14, June 2), from 7 to 9 p.m., with different topics to be covered at each meeting. The goal is to present recommendations at the July 18 SISD Board of Trustees meeting. Ground rules were outlined to ensure the committee is able to work most effectively.

Committee members are asked to try to attend as many meetings as possible and to review information from meetings they miss. Everyone was reminded to objectively consider all the information presented and consider what will be in the best interests of the District overall. Members also are asked to share the information with their friends, neighbors, family and business and personal groups to help keep the community informed.

Cathy then asked for nominations or volunteers to chair the committee. This is primarily a spokesperson role, with the chair(s) asked to represent the committee at Board meetings as needed and to present the Committee's recommendations to the Board. Dennis Snyder and April Daniels were nominated and agreed to serve as co-chairs of the group.

Bond Planning Process Overview

Amy and Cathy then presented an outline of the bond planning process, explaining the timeline and activities of each phase:

- *Facility Assessments* – the O'Connell Robertson team is already working with SISD staff and administrators to review and analyze the information gathered during TASB's facility assessment to develop a Facility Master Plan that will address the District's short- and long-term needs.
- *Educational Planning & Visioning* – the District's curriculum plans and instructional strategies will be considered to determine facilities needs to support those goals.
- *Community Engagement* – the Committee will learn about the facility needs and the draft Facility Master Plan and provide feedback.
- *Election Planning* – early voting and voting locations, ballot wording, the number of propositions, and other election activities will be coordinated with bond counsel and other governmental agencies before the election is called.
- *Fact Communications/Information* – print and electronic communications materials will be developed to *help the District share factual information with the community once the election is called.*
- *Coordination with Citizens Advocacy Group* – the District will share factual information with any group, but all other coordination related to a PAC will be separate from SISD staff.

The pre-bond planning phases (the committee meetings, review of the facility assessment, educational planning, presentation of district financial information, and development of a master plan) will take place

concurrently between April and July 2016. Election planning and communications will take place between June and November 2016.

Next Steps

Committee members will meet again at the SISD Administration Building on May 10 at 7 p.m. Topics will include a presentation of the TASB Facility Assessment (already available on the District's website), the SISD educational vision, and 21st century learning environments. Dr. McNulty closed by again thanking committee members for their service and attention.