

Meeting Minutes

Smithville ISD Community Facility Committee Meeting #2

May 10, 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 attendance. He introduced three board members in attendance: Tay Campbell, Alan Hemphill and Grant Gutierrez. Outgoing Trustee Mike Morgan, whose term ends Monday (May 16), was also introduced.

Presentation of TASB Facilities Assessment

Gary Marek, a facilities consultant with Texas Association of School Boards (TASB), provided an overview of the findings from the facilities assessment TASB conducted for Smithville ISD earlier this year. The purpose of the assessment was to measure the quality and educational effectiveness of the District's facilities and to identify potential issues and corrections needed.

Gary explained that information was gathered through onsite observations and administration surveys. This was not an invasive assessment, meaning the TASB staff visually inspected all of the District's facilities but did not open walls. Assessments were conducted in the following categories: School Site, Building Systems & Components; Building Safety & Security; and Educational Adequacy. While TASB does not make specific recommendations, the report is intended to suggest priorities and repairs to help the District begin conversations with the community and consider funding options. The following is a summary of the assessment's findings in each category:

Sites

- Drainage improvements are needed at all campuses, especially Brown Primary
- Asphalt parking surfaces need to be repaired or replaced at all campuses, especially the high school
- Additional pole lighting at parking areas and drives are needed

Building Systems & Components

- Various ADA improvements are needed on most campuses
- Roofs overall are in good shape but some repairs/replacements are needed at Brown Primary and the Administration Building
- Replacing HVAC units 18+ years of age (all facilities except high school) could improve efficiencies
- Upgrade lighting, electrical outlets, and single pane windows district-wide
- Upgrade technology, communications and data infrastructure
- Replace flooring and ceiling tiles in many of the older facilities

Safety & Security

- Parent/bus pick-up and drop off at junior high should be changed
- Provide canopies at student loading areas to provide weather protection (all campuses except Primary)
- Upgrade or replace football/track stadium and related structures (accessibility, old structures)
- Add secure vestibules on all campuses
- Consider adding security cameras, burglar alarm systems, key card access, ability to lock classroom doors from inside

Educational Adequacy

- Expand libraries at primary and elementary schools
- Expand science classrooms at junior high and high school
- Expand computer labs—although TEA may be reducing those space requirements
- Expand cafeteria kitchens at primary and elementary schools
- Renovate gyms & locker rooms

Overall, the TASB assessment identified the following large projects to consider within the next five years:

- Replace Buildings 1 & 2, including library, at the primary school
- Replace the gym and specials center/PE facilities
- Replace band hall and annex buildings at junior high
- Replace portables with classroom additions at all campuses
- Add gym at high school
- Build new football/track complex

In response to the presentation, committee members had the following questions and comments:

Q: The recommendation shows replacing buildings but also expanding libraries...wouldn't you be able to accomplish both at the same time?

A: Yes, you could.

Q: How many portables are on campuses now?

A: There are currently 10 portables at the elementary, 10 at Brown Primary, 2 at the junior high and 4 at the high school.

Q: What is the payback for making some of the suggested energy efficiency improvements?

A: A firm would have to be hired to conduct an in-depth energy efficiency study. But as O'Connell Robertson works through recommendations with the District, they will be able to provide some life cycle cost analysis regarding energy improvements.

Q: When you talk about building for a cushion for growth, has a study been done to predict growth? What are the projections?

A: There has been a basic demographic report but SISD would have to pay to have a full demographic study conducted. Generally, enrollment has remained fairly steady but still may want to plan to accommodate some growth. TASB recommends buildings to be at 70% capacity to allow for growth. One committee member commented that with Bastrop County being one of fastest growing counties, the past 10 years may not be good predictor for growth over the next 10 years.

Jarrod Sterzinger, AIA, LEED AP, a Principal with O'Connell Robertson is leading the Firm's development of a long-range facility plan for Smithville ISD, which will be based in part on the TASB assessment. He noted that the TASB report identifies 200+ items that need to be addressed. O'Connell Robertson is working with District staff to identify items that can be addressed through the operating budget and items that need to be addressed through a bond election. *(The full TASB report is posted on the District's website on the Facility Committee Information page.)*

Dr. McNulty noted that the District has a regular maintenance schedule for roofs, HVAC systems, buses, and ceiling tiles, which are paid for through the operating budget. All of the District's utility bills are posted online. As lighting needs to be replaced, they are switched out with more efficient models. He also stated that some of the ADA issues identified are big, but most are small. Some of the issues are already being addressed. Locks on doors are also in the process of being replaced.

Smithville ISD Educational Vision

To provide the Community Facility Committee with a background on the District's academic focus areas, Dr. McNulty shared the vision and goals developed and adopted by the Board of Trustees in 2014. The goals were developed by the District Site-Based Team and Board through a series of workshops. Campus-based committees that included parents, community members, teachers and administrators also provided input.

The vision for Smithville ISD is: *SISD serves the community by equipping students with the quality of education that prepares them to be successful in a changing society.* Dr. McNulty noted that while the vision and goals remain the same, academic standards and needs frequently change based on changing college, military, and workforce requirements and accountability standards.

There are nine goals that support the District's vision; three of those goals have particular relevance to this committee's efforts:

- The district will meet and exceed state academic accountability standards.
- The district will maintain a safe and positive environment for students and staff.
- The district will incorporate relevant 21st century technology to support the delivery of quality instruction into every classroom.

Dr. McNulty stated that facilities have a definite impact on the quality of education students receive. He said students, parents and teachers all want to be at schools where they feel safe and comfortable, and that are functional and pleasing to the eye. Technology is also an ongoing issue—SISD facilities can't support the technology needed for learning today. Since all jobs today involve the use of technology, kids need to be able to use technology to prepare them for the future.

Dr. McNulty said that he had heard a comment after the last committee meeting stating a belief that District leaders had already decided what they would do so there was no reason for the committee to meet. He assured them that the only decision that has been made by the Board was that facility issues needed to be addressed, and they commissioned the facility assessment and created the Community Facility Committee as part of that process to address facility needs.

During previous planning sessions and workshops, the Board and Administration agreed on the following:

- Academics and programs drive facility needs
- Want to be out of portables
- Need to consider reconfiguring campuses for accountability and better use of facilities
- Want to demolish the 6th grade annex
- Need to rehabilitate restrooms
- Should consider a possible new 7th & 8th grade building on the high school site that could share facilities for UIL activities
- Renovate the Administration Building (Red Brick), especially windows, HVAC, and basement
- Consider a new football field and track to provide UIL competitive facilities for the District's use and also to possibly rent out for other meets and games

Dr. McNulty and SISD Assistant Superintendent Cheryl Burns then provided an overview of the academic programs and educational initiative that are impacted or limited by the District's current facilities.

- Tiger Academy – 30+ kids that had dropped out or were at risk of dropping out have graduated over the past three years through the Tiger Academy. There are currently only 15 seats, so with more space there would be an opportunity to expand the program.
- CTE programs—SISD is looking at the local job market to determine what skills kids need and building programs accordingly. Need good/safe equipment for construction trade—trying to offer certifications/licenses to enable students to get a good job right after high school or to help in furthering education. EX: Toyota pays signing bonuses to new hires that have OSHA certification.

- HB 5: STEM endorsements—currently have coding and robotics clubs but want to support expansion of science, math, and technology classes and offer dual enrollment credit classes so students can earn college credit in high school.
- Athletics—need facilities to support/improve current programs (girls & boys). Most of the kids involved in soccer (and other extracurricular programs) are not involved in any other program. Kids who are involved in an activity with a mentor/coach are more likely to do better academically.
- Fine arts—want to expand programs to lower grade levels and support/enhance the current programs (choral, art and music)
- Technology – infrastructure, hardware needed to try to stay up-to-date
- Grade level alignment—needed to support accountability system
- Project-based learning/Project Lead the Way – want to expand this STEM program at the junior high and high school levels.

With O'Connell Robertson's help, the District will be reviewing costs for possible renovations and new construction. The District's financial bond advisor will be consulted regarding the possible bond size and the impact on current tax rates (the bond advisor will be presenting information to the committee at the next meeting).

Committee members asked the following questions:

Q: Have you thought about fine arts vertical alignment?

A: Yes, that is something we are considering.

Q: Could we rent out a Performing Arts Center?

A: Possibly, depending on the needs and use by our students, and the type of facility we might add.

21st Century Learning Environments

Jarrold Sterzinger, AIA, LEED AP, provided an overview of the trends and opportunities for the design of educational environments. Schools today are designed to support 21st century skills that help prepare students for jobs/education beyond high school, such as critical thinking and problem-solving, creativity, collaboration, communications, technology, and career and technical knowledge.

Jarrold discussed and shared photographs from other school districts that illustrated the following trends in core educational environments:

- Neighborhood organization – new facilities provide small learning communities; common spaces for collaboration, research; and transparency into/out of the classroom to allow teachers to continue monitoring students in the common areas, expand learning environments, puts education on display
- Expanding the classroom—allows students to come in/go out for inclusion, special projects, etc. – uses hallway spaces for education in addition to classrooms
- Flexibility – furniture, partitions and casework can be easily moved/rearranged for lectures, group work, labs, and other needs
- Project based learning – spaces promote student learning with the teacher as a facilitator; use the entire classroom as learning space so that students are not just at their desks
- Library transformations – today's libraries go beyond being repository of books; now reducing number of books to encourage collaboration, research, and technology-based learning – the space becomes the heart of the school
- After-hours access—provide access for students and the community after school while maintaining safety and security
- Fine & performing arts spaces – facilities often combine functions, such as including displays for student artwork in a theater lobby; designing an auditorium to support UIL events as well as graduations and other district events; including control booth, practice rooms, and other technical spaces that can serve multiple purposes and provide places for learning plus performing
- Technology – there are fewer computer labs, more hand-held devices, carts

- Sustainability/green design—energy efficiency, location of windows, solar array, rainwater harvesting –there are multiple options to minimize impact on operational costs
- Athletics – artificial turf maximizes use, minimizes maintenance costs; consider safety, community pride/fan experience; press boxes now usually require an elevator for ADA compliance; consider support facilities (locker rooms, weight rooms, grandstands)
- Furnishings – create opportunities for flexibility and enable the function of a space to change without changing the shape/size of the space

Committee members responded to the presentation with the following questions and comments:

Q: Thinking about junior high students especially—can they deal with transparency?

A: As examples, Jarrell Middle School and Success High School have large windows from classrooms into hallways. We've seen students adapting to this and taking pride in their schools, wanting to show they are on their best behavior. But keep in mind that this group will not be involved in designing the facilities—we just need your help prioritizing projects and thinking about aspirations for facilities.

Q: With transparency, how do you address security?

A: Ideally, you want all classrooms under one roof so anyone coming into the building has to go through a secure entrance and sign in. Card access and video surveillance are considerations. We discuss in advance where students go if there is an issue with weather or an unauthorized person on campus. There are many options for handling security, but the District has to balance security with the desire to have an accessible campus.

Q: Schools are important but are you addressing other district facilities? For example, the transportation facility currently does not have a garage for repairs, no place for drivers to do paperwork.

A: Other support facilities are being reviewed and discussed. Specifically, SISD staff have shared feedback already on the deficiencies with the transportation facility.

Q: Are construction costs different between open concept or transparent classrooms versus traditional classrooms?

A: Costs are comparable, especially when you consider that you can expand the learning environment by using hallways rather than using hallways only for moving between classes. We will be presenting general facility design options based on the District's priorities and how they plan to use the facilities. That general feedback on conceptual options will help us determine an estimated cost per square foot. We are not actually designing facilities at this time. It is understood that any project proposals will have to fit the community.

Next Meeting

Committee members will meet again at the SISD Administration Building on May 24 at 7 p.m. Members should dress comfortably as they will be touring the campus for part of the meeting. The financial consultant will be presenting information about the District's current bond capacity and the tax implications. An overview of the current construction cost data also will be presented. Dr. McNulty closed by again thanking committee members for their service and attention.