

# Citizens Advisory Committee

## Meeting Minutes

**April 16, 2024 | SAISD Operations Services | 6 p.m.**

**Attendance:** CAC members Amado Briseño, John Burnam, Sarah Gonzales Busse, George Garcia, Ted Guerra, Robert Sipes; Yvonne Little, senior director, Planning and Construction; Michelle Jimenez, senior communications coordinator; Guadalupe Rios, resource planning specialist; plus one community member

### **Minutes:**

Yvonne Little briefed members on the Highlands P-TECH student tour of the Highlands High School construction site in March. She said Construction and Development Services would like to find more of these opportunities for students.

Little started a presentation on the Bond 2020 update, explaining that she would cover mostly the major renovation projects. She shared that Phase 1 project Bowden Academy and J.T. Brack are complete. Almost all Phase 2 projects are under construction, with three Phase 2 projects still in the design phase and still working through some of their scope-to-budget challenges. She said the district is starting to work on Phase 3 projects and is working through value-engineering options, going out to those campuses, finding out what the priorities are, due to inflation and other factors. Phase 4 projects are Carvajal and Smith elementaries.

Little stated that rightsizing impacted Bond 2020 but that rightsizing was not caused by Bond 2020. Seven projects within the bond program were affected due to right sizing closures. She explained that \$9.1 million was spent at those campuses, primarily for design. The other costs were chillers and cameras that had already been completed, and those items can be repurposed.

Little shared that the money saved from closure of the seven campuses would be put toward HVAC infrastructure, safety and security, and project scope restoration -- high-priority critical needs for the district. She said that in Bond 2016, about a quarter of SAISD campuses received new HVAC. In Bond 2020, half of the remaining campuses are receiving HVAC. So that leaves about a quarter still left that will still need some HVAC improvements. In terms of safety and security the district is making sure schools have secured vestibules, cameras, and other security infrastructure. And then any scope that possibly had been eliminated from projects was re-evaluated.

She reminded members that in November of 2022, she communicated to the Board of Trustees that the bond program was \$420 million over budget because of inflation and because of technical design guidelines that required spaces the district didn't have the footprint to be able to build. A lot of the money the district was able to recover from canceled projects at the seven schools was used to put the bond program back in the black, by about \$2 million, and that \$2 million is being prioritized for the three priority areas.

Little provided additional details about the HVAC upgrades, followed by a brief status update on the security and technology upgrades happening under Bond 2020. She began to provide status updates for each of the campus major renovation projects, noting that as the result of budget challenges, the district will not be installing turf on baseball and softball fields, though turf is still being considered for multipurpose fields, such as football and soccer fields. She told members she would like to hear their feedback on what they thought the dollars that had been dedicated to the fields should be used on, if the district decides not to install turf.

In providing the update for the Young Women's Leadership Academy, Little explained that this was the school's first trip to the bond, so there was a lot to try to accomplish with this bond program. However, due to the budget, the district could not get to all of it. She pointed out that the district is able to build a new building and do site work for the school in Bond 2020 and that a lot of the infrastructure is going to be set up and ready for the next bond.

Member Ted Guerra expressed his concerns about another bond, given community concerns about Rightsizing and declining enrollment, as well as the lack of information about Bond 2020 progress. Little explained that being strategic about school renovations and which campuses receive them is at the forefront of district planning. She acknowledged that bond communications had been quiet because the district had been without a bond communications person, and that position is now filled.

Member Sarah Gonzales Busse said it would be helpful to have updated schematics to share with their communities, and that there needs to be a clear accounting of what has changed with the projects in response to construction estimates coming in over budget.

In response to a follow-up question by Member George Garcia, Little explained the district recouped \$174 million from the seven schools whose projects were canceled due to Rightsizing. It had taken the \$420 million deficit and already gotten it down to about \$188 million. When it recouped the \$174 million, it still had a deficit, which it is addressing

through value-engineering. Every single major renovation project came in over budget, Little shared.

In response to a question by Sarah Gonzales Busse, Little explained that the district will not sell campuses involved in Rightsizing but instead intends to lease the facilities. She shared that there is a lot of interest in leasing the facilities but first the district will be conducting community engagement to receive input from communities about their needs. There is a Facility Repurposing Committee in place.

Member George Garcia asked how much another bond would be. Little explained we are not there yet. She said one of the things she thinks the district needs in order to be able to plan better is a true facility condition assessment.

Little said we will be finishing the Bond 2020 renovations in 2026-2027 with MLK Academy, the longest project. Little said we have planned for increased costs of half a percent per month but that costs have plateaued and have started coming down.

She said we should not lose quality on the projects. The district has technical design guidelines that give the district standards it is not willing to bend on. Little shared with members how project managers are assigned to projects, with some focused on the design aspect and others responsible for execution.

The group discussed choice schools and waitlists and whether occupying a second location would open more seats for more students and thus reduce waitlists.

Little shared about the need for a future bond and explained that it's a 2030 plan, so up until 2030 we expect two to three more bonds in order to touch every campus fully. The district also relies on bonds to refresh technology.

Member Amado Briseño said that if the district can show that we made improvements, even if we were unable to make all of them due to budget, the district should not have problem going out for a bond, albeit smaller than the 2020 bond.

Michelle Jimenez, the new senior communications coordinator for the bond program, gave the members an update on communications strategy.

Little circled back around to some of the challenges Bond 2020 has faced. She shared that the city changed their flood maps. That was one reason the district paused on some projects, including Tafolla, because the new gym that is going to be built was now in a flood zone. Another challenge was code updates. She explained another challenge was materiality, such as chillers not arriving for upwards of 17 months. It is now about nine months to receive a chiller.

A couple of members said they would like to see how the bond improvements impact student achievement or student pride in their school.

Little suggested for the next meeting we share short video updates with the members for the project update, and then she can provide a financial update. The members agreed.

Jimenez suggested July 10 and October 10 for the next two meeting dates. The group agreed to having future meetings at the Operation Services building, unless we have a need for outside presenters, in which case we may want to have it at the Board Room.

Member Ted Guerra recommended a monthly update to members, so they are still in the know. Member John Burnam recommended sharing simple talking points so the members can be better advocates.

Sarah Gonzales Busse requested that there be an online option for the July meeting.

George Garcia recommended for the next meeting that the quality supervisor give them a briefing.

Little asked the committee for their thoughts on whether the community would favor not doing turf fields in order to bring more funds to other projects. The turf fields would not be installed, the grass fields would remain, but possibly seeded. Little shared the turf background with the members. Some members brought up concerns about head injuries or other injuries with turf. Little told the members it is something she would like them to think about. She said she would like to find out what their communities think.

Sarah Gonzales Busse asked if there was data around water recapture to maintain the fields. Little said the gallons per minute needed to saturate grass would be more than the district could hold in a recapture container.

Little circled back around to HVAC and provided background to the members about past HVAC work and the various components of HVAC.