

*The following are highlights from the Comal ISD regular school board meeting on August 27. The next board meeting will be held Sept. 17 at 6 p.m. at Canyon Lake High School located at 8555 RM 32 in Fischer.*

## **Trustees approve 2009-10 budget**

The board held a public hearing for the 2009-10 proposed budget and tax rate.

### ***2009-10 proposed tax rate***

The proposed tax rate is \$1.31 (\$1.04 for maintenance and operations and \$0.27 for debt service), and it will be formally adopted at the Sept. 23 board meeting. Comal ISD's proposed tax rate is not the lowest in comparison to surrounding districts (highest is Schertz-Cibolo with \$1.42, lowest is Seguin and San Antonio with \$1.25), but Comal ISD taxpayers are paying the least amount of taxes (\$1,900 on a \$200,000 home) due to the optional 20 percent homestead exemption the district gives taxpayers.

### ***2009-10 budget***

Annually, the board must adopt a budget that includes the General Fund, Debt Service and the Child Nutrition Fund. The 2009-10 budget, which includes a general fund of \$128,315,172, a child nutrition fund of \$7,924,252, and a debt service of \$30,874,742, was approved by the board at the Aug. 27 meeting. A view of the budget book can be found at [http://www.comalisd.org/About\\_Us/Budget\\_Information.asp](http://www.comalisd.org/About_Us/Budget_Information.asp).

### ***General Fund***

The General Operating Budget (maintenance and operations) funds all expenses necessary to operate the district including salaries and benefits, utilities, equipment and supplies.

One factor affecting this year's budget is staffing with 83.4 percent of the general fund allocated to personnel. Sixty-two new positions including, 30 teachers and 24 campus support positions, were added for the 2009-10 school year and salary increases were given to all employees.

Some other factors affecting the budget include 740 new students, the opening of two new elementary schools (Johnson Ranch and Oak Creek), the addition of a 12th grade class at Canyon Lake High School, and start-up funding for schools to open in August 2010.

The major sources of revenue for the general fund include local property taxes, state and federal allocations, and other local revenue. As decided in the most recent state legislative session, Comal ISD is guaranteed the same state and local revenue per student as it received in 2006/07-2008/09, plus \$120 more per weighted student (Weighted Average Daily Attendance, WADA). HB 3646 also mandated a pay raise for those on the teacher salary scale which gave the vast majority a \$1,500 raise and consumed most of the \$120 in additional revenue per weighted student.

Through Chapter 41, the recapture threshold is currently \$476,500 (this threshold was at \$374,200 in 2008-09). Comal ISD's property value per WADA for 2009-10 is \$513,365. Under current law, the wealth level for recapture has no impact on funding. The combination of state/local revenue and Chapter 41 recapture per WADA for 2009-10 will equal the same state/ local revenue net of Chapter 41 per WADA for 2006-07, plus \$120 more per weighted student.

### *Child Nutrition Fund*

The child nutrition fund is a self-sustaining fund that generates local revenue and receives state and federal reimbursement. For the 2009-20 school year, the child nutrition fund will receive about \$8,050,063 in local, state and federal revenue, which is 6.1 percent more than received in 2008-09.

Appropriations, including payroll, professional and contracted services, supplies and materials, other operating costs, and capital outlay, total \$7,924,252, which is 6.8 percent less than 2008-09.

### *Debt Service Budget*

The debt service budget is developed to fund the repayment of voter approved general obligation bonds. The principal and interest on issued bonds are repaid through this fund. The debt service tax rate is set to ensure collection of the district's annual debt obligation.

Appropriations, including bond principal, interest and fees, totals \$30,874,742. Local revenue totals \$23,630,989. About \$7.2 million of the debt service fund will be used to keep the debt service tax rate at 27 cents.

## **Trustees recognize administrators, teachers, campuses for regional, state awards**

Several teachers and administrators were recognized by the board for receiving state and regional honors.

### *Region 13 Teacher of the Year*

Morningside Elementary School fifth-grade teacher Madonna Binney was honored by the board for being named the Region 13 Elementary Teacher of the Year. Binney received the Comal ISD Elementary Teacher of the Year award in May. She is the first Comal ISD teacher to win at the regional level. Binney helped open Morningside Elementary in 2008. This is her third year teaching in Comal ISD and her 20th year in education.

### *Comal ISD educators receive state awards*

Comal ISD Director of Career and Technology Becky Walker was recognized by the board for receiving the Family and Consumer Sciences Teachers Association of Texas 2009 Outstanding Career and Technology Administrator. Church Hill Middle School's instructor and former Smithson Valley High School instructor Tina Hartmann was also recognized by the board for being named as the association's 2009 Region V Outstanding Teacher.

### *Seventeen schools receive top TEA ratings*

Seventeen Comal ISD campuses and principals were also recognized at the board meeting for receiving either an "exemplary" or "recognized" rating from the Texas Education Agency for student performance on the 2009 TAKS (Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills) exam. The nine Exemplary schools are Arlon Seay Elementary, Bill Brown Elementary, Comal Elementary, Freiheit Elementary, Hoffmann Lane Elementary, Rahe Bulverde Elementary, Rebecca Creek Elementary, Specht Elementary and Timberwood Park Elementary. The eight Recognized campuses are Canyon Lake High School, Church Hill Middle, Canyon Middle, Mountain Valley Middle, Spring Branch Middle, Smithson Valley Middle, Goodwin Frazier Elementary and Morningside Elementary.

## **Board approves AP agreement**

A new Comal ISD Advanced Placement agreement was approved by the board to ensure parents/students comply with the AP course requirements and to address the financial aspect of the AP exam requirement to further assist families in need. The AP agreement outlines the requirements for taking and paying for the exam(s).

All students enrolled in Advanced Placement courses will be required to take the corresponding AP examination in order to meet the requirements of the course. AP testing fees are shared by the students and the district and are due by the end of the first nine weeks. For the first and second exam, the cost is \$30/exam. For the third and fourth exam, it is \$20/exam. The fifth exam and any additional exams beyond the fifth exam are \$15/exam. Fees are also greatly reduced for students with proven financial need as evidenced through the free and reduced lunch program.

Important information for students who take AP classes but do not meet the course requirements as stated in the agreement include: Students who do not pay the AP exam fee by the end of the first nine weeks may choose to remain in the AP class, but the student will not receive the weighted rank points for the class. Students who timely pay for the AP exam fee but drop the course at the end of the first semester or prior will be entitled to a refund; however, they will not receive the weighted rank points for the semester. Students who timely pay for the AP exam but fail to show up to take the test will be required to take a final exam at the end of the second semester with no option to exempt the exam.

## **Board approves contracts for earnest money and Comal Discipline Center, Spring Branch Middle School renovations and additions**

The board approved hiring Drymalla Construction and allowing administration to negotiate a price not to exceed just over \$8 million for renovations and additions to Spring Branch Middle School. The board also approved a change order from Baird Williams Construction Company in the amount of \$1.8 million for additions and renovations to the Comal Discipline Center.

Spring Branch Middle School additions and renovations include 34,691 square feet of new construction and renovations to existing science labs, life skills, locker rooms and the air conditioning in both gyms, which is being done to bring the school up to the district standard of 1,150 student capacity.

The Comal Discipline Center needed changes to help it meet the future needs of Comal ISD. The new design separates the secondary and elementary students without duplication of services. The campus will be built at the old Child Nutrition warehouse and includes 5,940 square feet of existing renovated space and a 3,848 square foot new addition. Find out more about construction updates at [http://www.comalisd.org/Bond\\_Information/Bond\\_2008.asp](http://www.comalisd.org/Bond_Information/Bond_2008.asp).

The board approved the earnest money contract to purchase 25.11 acres of land for a proposed future elementary school in the Vintage Oaks development on Hwy. 46.

The negotiated price with the Bluegreen Corporation is \$7,500 per acre, which is a total of \$187,500. This site will require on-site wastewater disposal. The site is located near the community amenity center and will have road access on two sides and utilities (water and electricity) to the site.