

Board of Trustees

Oct. 29, 2009

MEETING SUMMARY

The following are highlights from the Comal ISD Board of Trustees meeting on Thursday, Oct. 29. The next regular board meeting will be held on Thursday, Nov. 19 at 6 p.m. in the board room of the Support Services building located at 1404 IH 35 North in New Braunfels.

Comal County officials recognized at October CISD board meeting

The Comal ISD Board of Trustees recognized Judge Danny Scheel from the Comal County Commissioners Court and Tom Hornseth from the Comal County Engineers Office for the continued working relationship and support the county has provided the school district over the years.

Along with fast growth issues, the district and county have also worked hand-in-hand on everything from traffic signal issues to disaster relief and shelters for storm refugees.

“Comal ISD relies on the help and cooperation the county has provided,” said Comal ISD project consultant Roy Linnartz. “The district’s success in meeting the educational needs of its students wouldn’t be possible without the help and cooperation of the county. We thank them for all they do.”

CISD receives ‘superior’ financial rating from School FIRST

A public hearing on the district’s financial rating was held at the October board meeting in which Comal ISD Assistant Superintendent for Business Services Debra Smith provided a report on Comal ISD’s “superior achievement” rating from School FIRST (Financial Integrity Rating System of Texas).

This is the seventh year Texas school districts have received a financial accountability rating from the state, and every year Comal ISD has received the highest rating of “superior achievement.” The rating is based on analysis of staff and student data, as well as budget and actual financial data reported for the 2007/2008 school year.

The determination of the rating is established by meeting standards within 24 indicators. Comal ISD received 84 points out of a possible 85. The report presented by Smith included the results of the School FIRST indicators and the district’s responses to each of those indicators.

Please visit http://www.comalisd.org/Fiscal_Information/Default.asp and look under Financial Reports and Policies for a link to the 2007-08 Schools FIRST Report, Comal ISD’s indicator responses to the report, and the 2008-09 Comal ISD financial management report for the 2007-08 school year.

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Board approves issuance, sale of \$55.85 million in 2008 bonds

The Comal ISD Board of Trustees approved the issuance and final sale of \$55.85 million in remaining bonds from the \$206 million bond package approved by voters in May 2008.

The remaining bonds are necessary for the renovations and additions being made to Church Hill, Smithson Valley and Spring Branch middle schools. Renovations at Church Hill Middle include a new kitchen, cafeteria and classrooms. Spring Branch Middle renovations and additions include new classrooms, science lab and art room expansions, and locker room expansions. Renovations taking place at Smithson Valley Middle include converting the current wood shop into additional classrooms and building a new wood shop. Each of the three campuses is being expanded to a capacity of 1,150 students.

The bonds sold at an interest rate of 5.197 percent. The favorable interest rate Comal ISD received is due to the sound credit ratings from Fitch Ratings and Moody's Investors Service. The credit ratings issued by these sources measure district financial health and stability. In 2008, Moody's upgraded Comal ISD's credit rating from A1 to Aa3, and this year, Fitch upgraded Comal ISD's rating from A+ to AA-.

The financial impact to the debt service fund as a result of the sale of these bonds will be determined when the growth in property values is known for 2010-2011.

Board approves bid for CLHS renovations

The bid for the Canyon Lake High School field house expansions and alterations, and the construction of a new pool was awarded to O'Haver Contractors. The bid selection was based on bid evaluations, references, work history and best value.

Per Bond 2008, Canyon Lake High School field house will be expanded by approximately 11,000 sq. ft. and alterations will be made to 4,000 sq. ft. of existing structure. A new 25-yard pool with mechanical room, public restroom and a ticket booth were also part of the bond. The budget for the project was \$2.4 million. The actual cost of the project is \$2.9 million because of the \$500,000 pool allowance.

Board approved \$80,000 budget amendment

The Comal ISD Board of Trustees approved an \$80,000 budget amendment to cover the cost of "Laying the Foundation," which is an intensive and comprehensive training package for AP and pre-AP teachers providing concrete strategies and models for teaching skills that will help teachers prepare students for the rigor of Advanced Placement courses and success in college.

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“Laying the Foundation” has been reviewed by the Superintendent’s cabinet, the DEIC, all principals, counselors and high school pre-AP teachers. The program will be utilized and considered in the budget as a part of districtwide staff development, which is allotted about \$500,000 annually.

“Laying the Foundation” includes a three-year commitment from the district in which a new cohort will begin each year. Four sessions will take place throughout the 2009-10 school year in which all Comal ISD pre-AP teachers will be required to participate. Every pre-AP teacher has already participated in the first day of training, and the second day of training will take place in November.

Reports and Discussions

Technology Report

As part of the \$206 million Bond 2008 issue, a little more than \$8 million was allotted for districtwide technology upgrades including wireless access in all schools; mobile computer labs for schools; and interactive technology for ESL, advanced instruction and special education. A Mac initiative was also included which put Mac laptops in the hands of every teacher as well as most students in the district, decreasing the student to computer ratio.

Comal ISD Director of Accountability and Instructional Technology Sandra Shelton provided the first of two reports during the 2009-10 school year to update the board on the progress of these initiatives.

Distance learning and videoconferencing capabilities are implemented at every Comal ISD campus. Videoconferences have been taking place districtwide at all grade levels, which creates seamless classrooms and real-world experiences for students. For the English Language Learners, iPods have been purchased to help them better learn the English language. The students can take the iPods home to use for studying purposes. They can download applications, textbooks and record themselves speaking or reading in English. Alphasmart NEOs are in the hands of every Comal ISD second-grader. The NEO is a small device that is like a keyboard with a small screen on it that students can use to type on. Second-graders are learning keyboarding and key strokes while working on their writing skills.

Please visit <http://www.comalisd.org/Curriculum/Default.asp> and click on the Technology Update October 2009 link.

Curriculum Report

Comal ISD Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction Dr. Jodi Duron provided the board with a report on district graduation plans with the passage of House Bill 3 (HB 3), course alignment and course offerings for secondary schools, new and revised class rank structures, and board policy revisions. Only input, not action, was required by the board during this meeting.

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Final recommendations from administration and action by the board will occur at the December regular board meeting.

HB 3 (Graduation Plans)

With regard to the new graduation requirements outlined in HB 3, the administration presented to the board their recommendation for future graduation plans. Specifically, it is being recommended that the district retain its current graduation plans with requirements for Health, PE, and Technology Applications for all students entering high school prior to 2011. It is further recommended that freshmen entering high school in 2011 and beyond would fall under the new graduation plan whereby Health, and Technology Applications are no longer required and PE is reduced from 1.5 credits to 1 credit.

Class Rank

Consideration for a new class rank structure was discussed. The administration will continue to review and study various models to present to the board for discussion at the November board meeting and a final recommendation will be presented at the December board meeting for approval.

Pre-AP

The administration updated the board on its progress with regard to the district's pre-AP program, including course alignment, curriculum development, intensive teacher training, and End-of-Course Exams for all pre-AP students, which would be factored as a major grade.

Course Selections

Comal ISD administration is preparing for student course selections, which will occur in early February.

Recommended changes to the middle school course guide include adding a high school PE course for high school credit at the middle school. Changes to the high school course guide include an additional math course, science course, and Foreign Language course. Other changes include a realignment of technology application courses and new defined courses for Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses based on the recent rewrite of the CTE TEKS.

For additional details and the full curriculum report provided by Duron at the board meeting, please visit <http://www.comalisd.org/Curriculum/Default.asp> and click on the Comal ISD October 2009 Curriculum Report and Board Presentation link.