

Board of Trustees

Aug. 26, 2010

MEETING SUMMARY

The following are highlights from the Comal ISD Board of Trustees meeting on Thursday, Aug. 26. The next regular board meeting will be held on Thursday, Sept. 30 at 6 p.m. in the board room of the Support Services building located at 1404 IH 35 North in New Braunfels.

Public hearing on budget/tax rate

The board held a public hearing on the 2010-11 budget and tax rate at the Aug. 26 meeting in which the board proposed a \$125 million general fund budget (net Chapter 41) and a six-cent increase to the debt service tax rate (raising it from 27 cents to 33 cents). No one from the community spoke during the time allotted for public participation.

The board approved the budget, which is a \$2.3 million increase from the 2009-10 budget due to additional staff for a new school (Clear Spring Elementary), other new campus staff, computer replacement within the Technology Department and additional buses for the Transportation Department.

In addition to approving the general fund, the board also approved the debt service fund (\$36,458,654) and the child nutrition budget (\$8,050,063).

The board also discussed the proposed six-cent increase to the debt service tax rate, which the trustees will not take action on until the Sept. 30 meeting. Administration proposed the increase as a result of property growth values dropping significantly over the last few years and slower enrollment. The six-cent increase will be needed in addition to the board opting to use \$4.8 million from the debt service fund balance.

Several of the board members voiced their concern and hesitation in raising the debt service tax rate, but they also stated that the state is forcing the district to do it because of the current funding formula. Board members also pointed out that the district is already helping its taxpayers with a 20 percent homestead exemption and that taxpayers who are 65 and older can freeze their property values and will not have to pay any additional school property taxes if the tax rate is increased.

The district's debt service tax rate, or interest and sinking (I&S) tax rate, is partnered with the maintenance and operations (M&O) tax rate, which is set and will remain at \$1.04. The debt service tax rate solely supports the district's bonds and debts, and the M&O tax rate supports the district's general budget. The two are exclusive of each other and taxes collected on the debt service side cannot be used for general funds. Should the board approve the 33-cent debt service tax rate in September, the district's total tax rate will be \$1.37.

Factors considered in the estimation of revenue for the general fund include property values and student enrollment. Property values and tax collections impact both local and state revenue estimates. Property growth value increases have declined significantly since the more than 21.1 percent property growth value increase in 2006-07, and the negative one percent decrease for 2010-11. An increase in student enrollment is the only opportunity for increased revenue. Budgeted enrollment growth for the 2010-11 school year is 483 students or 2.9 percent.

To review the adopted budget and the public hearing power point presentation, please visit http://www.comalisd.org/Fiscal_Information/Default.asp.

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Board recognizes district, campuses for top TEA ratings

In early August, Comal ISD and 10 of its campuses received a Recognized rating from the state, and 12 schools earned an Exemplary rating. The board recognized the principals at the August board meeting.

Ratings are based on student performance on the 2010 TAKS (Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills), the completion rate, and the dropout rate.

“Exemplary” ranked campuses must have at least 90 percent or more of their students and each student subgroup (white, Hispanic, African-American and economically disadvantaged) pass each TAKS test given. Those tests include math, writing, reading/English language arts, science and social studies.

Campuses that earn a “recognized” status must have at least 80 percent or more of their students and each student subgroup pass each TAKS test given, which is an increase from the 75 percent requirement in 2009.

In addition to meeting passing standards on the TAKS, high schools are rated on completion rates for the class of 2009. To be “recognized,” high schools must have 85 percent of all students and each student subgroup complete high school, which is the rating each of Comal ISD’s high schools received. The overall completion rate for Comal ISD’s class of 2009 was 94.7 percent.

To see how the district or your campus did, visit http://www.comalisd.org/About_Us/Student_Performance.asp and click on the TAKS report link.

12 EXEMPLARY Schools: Garden Ridge (formerly Comal Elementary), Goodwin Frazier Elementary, Hoffmann Lane Elementary, Johnson Ranch Elementary, Morningside Elementary, Oak Creek Elementary, Rahe Bulverde Elementary, Rebecca Creek Elementary, Arlon Seay Elementary, Specht Elementary, Timberwood Park Elementary, Spring Branch Middle

10 RECOGNIZED Schools: Bill Brown Elementary, Freiheit Elementary, Startzville Elementary, Canyon Middle, Church Hill Middle, Mt. Valley Middle, Smithson Valley Middle, Canyon High, Canyon Lake High, Smithson Valley High

Board votes on name for new elementary school

At a board meeting nine to 12 months prior to the opening of a new elementary school, the board is required to name the new school to reflect the name of the residential community or communities the school serves or a local geographic area in which the new school is located.

The board approved the name Kinder Ranch Elementary School for the new elementary that will be built in the Kinder Ranch subdivision.

Kinder Ranch Elementary will be located near the intersection of Borgfeld and Bulverde roads in northern Bexar County and is scheduled to open at the beginning of the 2011-12 school year. It will relieve overcrowding at Timberwood Park and Specht elementary schools.

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The estimated construction cost of the two-story elementary school is \$16 million. The campus will have many energy saving green school features such as geothermal heating and cooling, rain water harvesting with on-site storage, and a living roof.

The campus is one of two elementary schools left to be built using funding from the district's \$205.85 million Bond 2008. Originally, a new elementary in Canyon Lake off of FM 306 near Sattler was supposed to precede the elementary school in Kinder Ranch, but due to Comal ISD's demographics showing greater need for schools in the fast-growing southwest region of the district, the construction of a new elementary in Canyon Lake has been postponed until a future bond issue. Comal ISD still has the FM 306 site, which will be used in the future.

Board approves final purchase of land

The board approved the final purchase of three different properties.

One property is a five-acre tract located off FM 482 that is contiguous with the South High School site that will serve the Garden Ridge area. The additional five acres will allow greater flexibility as the new high school is designed. The sale totaled \$235,000 (excluding attorney and associated consultant fees), which is about \$47,000 per acre.

The other two properties totaled 72 acres and \$4.5 million. The properties are located on either side of the future Kinder Parkway off Borgfeld Road. One property is a 30-acre tract with an intended use as a middle school. The other property is a 42-acre tract, which is contiguous with the district's existing 38-acre tract, totaling 80 acres for a high school site. The new Kinder Ranch Elementary will feed into these schools, which will help serve the growing population in northern Bexar County.

Back-to-school construction report

Assistant Superintendent for Support Services Thomas Bloxham reported on construction that is still ongoing, and he mentioned that although some work is still not complete on some projects, that all staff and students were in the schools on the first day of school.

All of the bond 2005 projects are complete including Rahe Bulverde and Clear Spring elementary schools with the exception of the weather-tightness warranty requirements being updated on the Mt. Valley Middle roof. The contractor is updating the requirements, and the Mt. Valley project will be closed out once they are complete.

To view the full construction report, please visit http://www.comalisd.org/Bond_Information/Bond_2008.asp.

Bond 2008 projects:

Canyon High School: The construction is complete on the front of the school, the administrative offices, and the gym and main hallway, but landscaping is ongoing. The new performing arts theater is being worked on and will be complete later this school year.

Canyon Middle School: All areas are complete with the exception of a few minor details.

Church Hill Middle School: The project is substantially complete except for some additional fire sprinkler work in the old kitchen cafeteria wing.

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Smithson Valley High: The field house and stadium work is complete except for the new home ticket booth, which will be started after football season. Interior finish work is ongoing in the theater, gym and administration wing. The project is ahead of schedule and will be turned over to the district in early December.

Spring Branch Middle: The classroom wing addition is complete. All parts of the existing building will be complete and the ensemble room and girls' locker room should be complete within the first week of school. Landscaping is ongoing. The back road and new approach to Hwy 46 are still in progress as well as the renovation of the weight room.

Canyon Lake High School Field House Expansion: The project has not received the man-power levels needed to complete the work prior to football season. The players can currently use the original area for dressing and storage of their pads and equipment, but all other areas are not available. The plumbing subcontractor has been the major delaying factor in the construction process, and it is having a domino effect on the subcontractors that have to follow behind his work.

Kinder Ranch Elementary School: Clearing and silt fencing have begun and permits from Bexar County should be ready toward the end of August.

Alamo Colleges – Memorial Early College High School (formerly Memorial High School): Interior demolition is complete in the existing building. Work is ongoing.