

<p style="text-align:center"><b>Community Committee on Neighborhoods and Schools</b> <b>Summary of Meeting</b> <b>September 11, 2007</b></p>
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**Member Attendance:**

(See attached list)

**Others in Attendance:**

Sylvia Acevedo, Facility Use and Boundary Task Force  
David Belknap, Facility Use and Boundary Task Force  
Joey Crumley, AISD Planning & Community Relations  
Heather Dalrymple, AISD Planning & Community Relations  
Dr. Janis Guerrero, AISD Planning & Community Relations  
Joe Silva, AISD Facilities

**Proceedings:**

- The meeting was called to order at 5:50 pm in Conference Room A-230 of the AISD Carruth Administration Center.
- There were no citizens communications.
- Joe Silva with AISD's Facilities Office presented information on the district's formula for determining school capacity. This formula, first used in 1983, resulted from a need for a quantitative measure to justify using bond money for new school construction. Because of the huge variation in student program requirements, capacity determination cannot be made through a simple mathematical calculation. Initially, the district only addressed school design capacity. Now, the manner in which space is used is considered as well. In order to better understand school needs, the district is trying to separate design capacity from utilization through the use of two separate metrics. Design capacity calculations will assist in determining whether additional schools are needed while utilization measures will help to ascertain whether available space is being used efficiently. Principals currently have a great deal of discretion in determining how space is used at their schools.
- Discussion points included:
  - ☞ A district study focusing on design capacity and utilization is underway. Each school's enrollment is determined by the number of students in school at the end of the first six-weeks of class. For the utilization component, site visits to each school will be conducted so the district can better understand how space is being used at each campus. The study, which takes place over a two-year cycle, will focus first on those schools requesting portables or facing boundary changes.
  - ☞ Once a school reaches 115% capacity, the district needs to consider changing boundaries, adding onto the school or building a new school. To determine the appropriate course of action, the district first counts the number of students living in the attendance zone. Projections are used to decide whether the increase in student population is expected to continue. If the population is expected to drop, adding portables may be the best solution to tide the school over for a few years. Of the three options, changing boundaries provides the cheapest and most immediate solution, but it is also potentially proves the most sensitive option for residents of the affected community. Adding onto an existing school or constructing a new school are multi-

million dollar projects that take a much longer time to provide relief from overcrowding.

- ☞ AISD currently has about 600 portables. Most of these have two classrooms each, although a few have only one classroom. AISD is not planning to purchase more portables because all campuses are not being used to full efficiency. As the district must shift the existing portables around to different schools, it needs to ensure that schools utilize their space as efficiently as possible.
- ☞ Portable classrooms do not increase the amount of impervious cover on a campus because water is still able to reach the ground under them. Southwest Austin, because of the Edwards Aquifer, has restrictions on the allowable percentage of impervious cover. This area is fast growing so AISD will likely have to consider that factor in making school construction decisions.
- ☞ The Board puts a priority on co-locating its schools with other facilities, as is seen with Overton.
- ☞ Because some types of programs require lower student-teacher ratios, they do not fully occupy available classroom space.
- ☞ Schools serving lower-income students may need to have more support services in place than schools with more affluent students might. Although schools would continue to provide all necessary services, limits may have to be placed on services that could be considered discretionary if space is not available to house them.
- ☞ If a school needs to use portables for an extended number of years, that may be a signal that a more permanent solution to overcrowding is necessary.
- ☞ Building a school with enough space to house every program it might possibly need becomes a cost issue, as it is extremely expensive to build something that large.
- ☞ When a new large-scale subdivision project is being planned, AISD has not historically been part of the decision-making process, although it is kept informed about the project's progress. Because schools are neighborhood amenities, the developer often donates land for school construction.
- ☞ One possible policy recommendation for the committee to consider involves having AISD included in the approval process for future development.
- ☞ Construction of high-end apartment complexes does not have much impact on enrollment in area schools since families with children do not usually occupy these apartments. The district does focus on new three- and four-bedroom apartment complexes that are affordable since they bring children into the school system.
- ☞ Metrostudy collects data on projects that are breaking ground as well as those that are in the planning stage. AISD purchases this information for its demographer to use in making school attendance projections.
- ☞ When looking at school capacity data, a distinction must be made between projections and actual membership. Projections only count the number of students living in an attendance zone and do not take into account the number of students attending a school under its transfer policy.
- ☞ When making school attendance projections, a 5% margin of error is considered acceptable and a margin of error of 3% or less is considered good.
- ☞ The higher margin of error seen in the north and south central demographic projections results from changes in immigration patterns after 9/11.

- ☞ School attendance projections only consider students enrolled in AISD. Private school students are not included in these figures.
- ☞ Improving a school's academic performance or increasing its available amenities could potentially increase the enrollment figures if some students are drawn back to the public school from a private school.
- Sylvia Acevedo and David Belknap, co-chairs of the Facility Use and Boundary Task Force, presented information on that task force's work. Their process began by looking at large amounts of data going to the block group level of detail. After looking at the data and the issues unique to each area being studied, they discussed possibilities and developed possible scenarios. Next, they met with the CACs and solicited public input. Area representatives held community meetings to discuss options and gather more input. By involving a large number of different groups, the task force was able to reach more people and get the greatest amount of input.
- Discussion points included:
  - ☞ Generally, the district tries not to relocate students. If students must be moved, it tries to move them as few times as possible. The district also tries to draw school boundary lines wisely so that students are not asked to cross busy highways or deal with other conditions posing a hazard. Finding a solution that works as effectively in practice as it does on paper is a challenging process.
  - ☞ Through its work, the task force learned some important points about demographics: 1) The general population has a high degree of mobility; 2) A huge baby boom in an area can rapidly increase pressure on a school's capacity; 3) Austin's lack of affordable housing has caused more families to double up which can cause an unanticipated increase in the number of students in a neighborhood; 4) People usually have a strong affinity for the neighborhood schools they have traditionally attended or where other members of their ethnic group attend.
  - ☞ In the last few years, the challenges presented by poverty and housing have been intense.
  - ☞ Need to look at bus routes when considering boundary changes. Parents do not want their children to attend a school that is inaccessible to them.
  - ☞ The number of students in east Austin schools could decrease over the next few years as the city permits former multi-family apartment complexes to be redeveloped as condos in response to gentrification.
  - ☞ Texas has the highest birth rate in the United States. It exceeds California, which has a higher population.
  - ☞ The district only counts the number of students that attend a school under its transfer policy. It does not do follow-up studies of children who have transferred to evaluate the effect of the transfer.
  - ☞ Two groups tend to be underrepresented at community meetings involving school issues: 1) parents who cannot attend the meeting or choose not to become involved in the issue; and 2) residents who do not want to pay for building new schools and instead want to bus kids in order to use tax money more efficiently.
  - ☞ One policy recommendation for the committee to consider involves studying the current transfer policy and searching for ways to tighten it up. The committee could also look at increasing the efficiency of classroom use by increasing the number of

- teachers, especially at the secondary level, that move between classrooms instead of being assigned to one permanent classroom.
- Discussion shifted to the open house activity scheduled for September 25, 2007 at Pearce Middle School. Committee members needed to decide whether to plan for the activity in a subcommittee or move the date back and do the planning during a regular meeting.
    - ☞ The committee decided to reschedule the open house. It is now tentatively scheduled for Tuesday October 9, 2007, from 6-8 pm. The new date also leaves time for the finalization of the community survey, allowing it to be distributed in conjunction with the open house.
  - Committee members need to wait to distribute surveys through the schools until the documents have received the associate superintendent's approval.
  - In addition to a list of the community groups they are meeting with, committee members were reminded to email Joey Crumley the dates and times of those meetings.
  - The committee will present information on its progress to the Board on December 10, 2007 and to the Joint Subcommittees on December 14, 2007.
  - The next meeting, which will focus on planning for the open house activity, will be held on September 25, 2007.
  - The meeting was adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

**CCNS Member Attendance Record:**

	2007											2008			
	5/22	6/12	6/26	8/14	8/28	9/11	9/25	10/9	10/23	11/13	11/27	12/11	1/8	1/22	2/12
Andy Anderson	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓									
Sally Brackett	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓									
Terry Clark	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓										
Christiane Woodley Erwin		✓		✓	✓	✓									
Chiquita Watt Eugene															
Lourdes (Lulu) Flores	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓									
Linda Gibeaut	✓	✓		✓	✓										
Rev. Sterling Lands	✓			✓	✓										
José Marrero	✓	✓	✓			✓									
Rachael Proctor May	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓									
Susan Moffat	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓									
Leroy Nellis	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓										
Yolanda Pedraza	✓	✓		✓											
Rev. Ivie Rich	✓		✓												
Paul Saldaña	✓	✓			✓	✓									
Alfredo Santos	✓	✓	✓		✓										
Kathie Tovo	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓									
Jim Walker	✓		✓	✓	✓										

✓ = Present