

Public Comments Received by CBOC in October 2019

All comments from the public are related to the district's School Changes Process, and can be discussed with staff and among committee members during School Changes portion of the November 12, 2019 meeting.

This is compliant with the district's [Communications and Visitor Requirements \(Click Here\)](#)

Public Comment #1

Hello Mr. Rivera,

Thank you so much for allowing Dusty to share your contact information with me. I am trying to understand how the bond money from both the 2013 and 2017 is allocated. Any assistance you or your co-chairs could provide would be greatly appreciated.

Here are my understandings of bond money allocations, but I may be wrong. If you could clarify for me, that would be really helpful.

- The district published a bond book before both bond elections. These books included specific projects for each campus and estimated costs.
- Only two of the Props from the 2013 bond were passed. So only the projects associated with Prop. 1 (Health, Environment, Equipment and Technology) or Prop. 3 (Academic and Building Infrastructure Renovations) were guaranteed to be funded, while projects associated with Prop. 2 (Safety and Security and Relief from Overcrowding) or Prop. 4 (Academic Initiatives, Fine Arts and Athletics) were not guaranteed to be funded.
- All projects from the 2017 bond were funded since the whole proposal passed.
- The district is committed to completing the projects listed in bond books associated with Prop 1 and 3 from 2013 bond book and all the projects in the 2017 bond book, unless a school is closed before the projects have been completed.
- If a campus is closed the bond money from incomplete projects follows the students to the consolidated campus.
- If the listed projects for a campus are completed under the estimated budget, the leftover money goes into a contingency fund.
- The district has discretion over where and how to spend the money in the discretionary fund, with approval from the Citizen Oversight Board.

My questions are:

1. Are the understandings I listed above correct?
2. What is the process for approval of funding from bond money for projects that were not initially listed in the bond books?
3. Are specific projects brought before the committee for approval from the district administration? From community members? Do committee members get to nominate particular projects? Are projects categorized in different ways? (For example, a facility emergency that needs to be funded right away or a nice to have project?)

4. What metrics are used to nominate or approve projects? (For example - the enrollment with and without transfers, the FCA and ESA ratings, etc) Is the committee given only information about the particular school with the nominated project, or is there comparative information given?
5. Is the committee given a total amount spent at each school compared to what they were estimated to get from Prop 1 and 3 of the 2013 bond and 2017 bond?
6. Is the committee given a summation of how much total money has been awarded schools with different populations? (For example, do you know how much money has been given to high poverty schools vs. low poverty schools compared to their overall proportion of the district as you make decisions?)
7. Do you feel like there has been a systematic way to ensure equity in the process of deciding what projects to fund or not fund? In what ways do you think communities with privilege and power have been able to influence (or not) the process?
8. At any point in the past two years did the district administration bring up the possibility of schools being asked to consolidate with no assurance of money for a new building (which is the current proposal)? Was this taken into consideration when awarding contingency bond money?

Thank you for your time. If you could please share my questions with your co-chairs, I would really appreciate it.

I am currently looking into why Lee Elementary (which is at 70% capacity without transfers and has 6th grade even though most elementary schools end at 5th grade) is getting a \$5 million classroom addition. This is especially curious to me when nearby schools that are being asked to consolidate will not get any extra of the current bond money and will only get a new building if another bond passes. A classroom addition for Lee was not mentioned in either the 2013 or 2017 bond books, and they were estimated to get just over \$4 million for an office and auditorium renovation and other, smaller projects. I know that much of that \$4 million was used for those projects, so I'm wondering where the money for this addition is coming from and why Lee was prioritized over schools that were asked to consolidate.

Thank you for helping me understand the process of allocating bond money and the COB's role. I appreciate it.

Sincerely,
Valerie Sterne
Education Policy Doctoral Student
University of Texas

Public Comment #2

From: webform@austinisd.org [<mailto:webform@austinisd.org>]
Sent: Tuesday, October 15, 2019 3:43 PM
To: Drew Johnson <drew.johnson@austinisd.org>
Subject: Contact CBOC

Submitted on Tue, 10/15/2019 - 15:43

Submitted values are:

Name

Brian Molloy

Email Address

brian.molloy@austintexas.gov

Comments and Questions

My name is Brian Molloy, and I am with the City of Austin's Office of the City Auditor. Our office recently received an allegation through our Fraud, Waste, and Abuse reporting system related to bond spending at AISD. Specifically, the informant sent us the following:

"Due to the light on AISD's school closure, it has become apparent that they have not used the 2017 bonds to fix the schools they have named to close due to the issues (like HVAC) that the bond was intended to fix. I've also come to learn that Lee got 6 million in a new unnecessary wing with bond money that was not voted for them. Priorities are wrong in AISD. It is neglect of children to allow them to be in extremely hot rooms when 2 years ago money was given to them by voters. Please investigate and hold them accountable."

These issues are outside the jurisdiction of our office, and is our understanding that they may be within the purview of your committee. We reached out to the resident who brought these concerns to our office and she has agreed to us sharing her contact information. If you would like further information regarding this concern, please contact Anita Robertson at 512-903-9922.

Staff Note: Referred to internal audit on October 16

Public Comment #3

CBOC Meeting

10/8/2019

Statement for Public Comments

Tim Krcmarik

Committee Members,

Thank you for this opportunity to speak. My name is Tim Krcmarik. I'm a firefighter for the City of Austin, your Engine 1 A-Shift Lieutenant. My son, Wyatt, is a first grade student at Pease Elementary. I will make a brief statement regarding School Closures, which everyone in the room knows is a matter of deep concern for thousands of students, parents, faculty, and staff across our fair city.

We understand that this bond package was passed in 2017 for improvements across the district. We are specifically concerned about the progress toward the proposed improvements for the following campuses:

Sims

Pecan Springs

Maplewood

Webb Middle School

Bertha Sadler Means Young Women's Leadership Academy

Brooke

Palm

Metz

Ridgetop

Pease

Joslin

Dawson

The bond was passed to improve and replace campuses as indicated in the bond proposal.

The bond was never considered in the context of school closures.

This advisory committee is tasked with monitoring and guiding the district in its implementation of proposed bond initiatives.

For the students and families of the district, we are looking to you all to review and push for the intended improvements for the following campuses:

Sims

Pecan Springs

Maplewood

Webb Middle School

Bertha Sadler Means Young Women's Leadership Academy

Brooke

Palm

Metz

Ridgetop

Pease

Joslin

Dawson

--rather than letting them languish and allowing the district to use their disinvestment as a reason to shutter them.

Please consider what adhering to the proposals and promises introduced in the bond mean – it means reinforcing trust in the district, teaching students across the district that they and their communities are worth investing in, that voters in the city of Austin felt that they and their communities are worth investing in.

You all have been entrusted to help guide the district in meeting the specifications outlined in the proposals and are part of the system entrusted to guarantee those investments.

So what does the school changes plan do to the trajectory of the bond proposal and implementation of those projects? Why are we in this space of not only not moving forward on bond initiatives for certain campuses, but where 12 campuses are being eliminated from the approved bond package and the Austin landscape overall.

This is not what we voted for and we hope that you all will advise the district that this does not align with the intentions and specifications of the bond. The progress toward district improvements, equity, and modernization are undermined if whole campuses are eliminated from the plan.

The bond was never predicated on the idea that school closures would be part of the plan to improve schools across the district. The bond implied that the district would use the funding to improve schools across the district including:

Sims

Pecan Springs

Maplewood

Webb Middle School

Bertha Sadler Means Young Women's Leadership Academy

Brooke

Palm

Metz

Ridgetop

Pease

Joslin

Dawson

The proposed closures also have implications for these other eastside campuses:

Norman

Winn

Campbell

Blackshear

Dobie

Govalle

Linder

Perez

Sanchez

Reilly

Zavala

St. Elmo

The bond didn't include funds to successfully absorb, accommodate the students that the closures would shift to them, or the increased population in these schools overall.

Passing the bond in 2017 was all about looking forward, investing in students across the district in meaningful ways, investing in communities across the district. It was not about reinforcing inequity, making communities that already sacrifice year in and year out sacrifice more, again.

And it was also not about closing the oldest operating public school in Texas – a living, dynamic reminder of why we're all here and what we all believe in – access to education FOR ALL and access in an area that typically excludes children and working families.

And let us be very clear, AISD keeps insisting that the root of public discontent over the proposed School Changes 2019 plan lies in the rollout of the plan. While we agree that the rollout was indeed a disaster, it is the plan itself we object to, a plan which runs counter to the bond we voted for.

Please hold the district accountable for honoring the intentions and promises of the 2017 Bond.

Avoid the false dichotomy that the district is presenting with its school closures plan. Stay the course for improvements for all of the students promised improvements. Avoid moving backward and enacting the same systemic racism and classicism.

Honor what voters, students and families supported in 2017 and support – more than ever – today. Move forward on the expressed bond initiatives FOR ALL OF THE SCHOOLS. Don't pretend 12 don't exist. Don't leave them out of improvements.

Follow-up Questions

Dear Ms. Mercer,

Thank you for your kind email. I've attached my comments here for further consideration by the CBOC and as a matter of public record. Please relate my heartfelt thanks to the CBOC for their engaged and thoughtful approach to the difficult task before them, namely, of holding AISD accountable for the tenets of the 2017 Bond on behalf of the citizens of Austin. The Board is welcome anytime to reach out to me for clarification of anything stated in the comments. I know myself and many Pease parents would love an opportunity to sit with members of the CBOC for an informed discussion about the School Changes Plan and it's hard right turn away from the 2017 Bond.

I do have a question for the board concerning one of the buzzwords AISD keeps using, "modernization." AISD has repeatedly stated it seeks to move students into modernized facilities, as older buildings are a financial burden and an unsuitable learning environment (I am happy provide the committee with documentation that refutes both of those points). And yet, Pease Elementary is slated to close its doors and be absorbed into Zavala Elementary after a Zavala received a "facility improvement." **What exactly is meant by "facility improvement?"** New paint? A total renovation? A modernized facility. The disturbing vagueness of this prospect makes us wonder where the equity is for our Pease and Zavala students. We cannot find it. And it speaks to the point that the problem here is not the rollout of the plan, but the plan itself.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak last night. As a parent fighting for his child's school, as a parent who voted in 2017 to keep its doors open, I deeply appreciate it.

Respectfully,

Tim Krcmarik

Public Comment #4

(received 11/9)

From: Valerie J Sterne

Sent: Saturday, November 9, 2019 7:57 PM

To: Drew Johnson >

Cc: Jacob Reach , Zack Pearce , Paul Cruz ; Michelle Cavazos ,Shuronda Robinson . Beth Wilson, Matias Segura , Kevin Schwartz , Melissa Laursen , Stephanie Hawley , Ali Ghilarducci ,Celso Baez , Nicole Conley, Lori Moya, Cheryl Bradley, Julian Riveria, Arati Singh

Subject: Re: Equity within Bond Contingency Fund

Hello,

Both Matias and Drew were very generous with their time today at the district-wide meeting. I was able to chat with them and come to some understandings about the new Lee construction. The following points are what I understood from our conversations. (Matias and Drew, please correct me if I am wrong.)

1. The Lee classroom addition project was not listed as a priority project in either the 2013 or 2017 bonds. The project was a discretionary spend.
2. There was a definite need for the classroom space at Lee, though it wasn't necessarily more urgent than many of the other needs across the district.
3. The decision for this project was made before either Drew or Matias were hired.
4. As far as they could tell when the decision about spending this money at Lee for the classroom addition was made it was not with a lens of equity. The district did not look at other campuses and their needs when deciding to spend the money at Lee. Whoever made this decision did not take into account the history of inequity in our district or the possible closures. They did not look at the many needs across the district when deciding where to spend the funds. The funds were awarded to a school full of privileged and powerful families. It was not an equitable decision.
5. Going forward, there will be a more explicit process for ensuring equity followed when making decisions about additional projects with contingency funds, which Dr. Hawley is helping them develop. Drew assured me that going forward not only will the money that is estimated to

be spent at campuses be made public (as they are now in the bond books) but also what is actually spent will be made public knowledge.

I appreciate the time that was spent by staff and board members at today's meeting. I do not need any of my other questions answered. The situation is what I assumed: there was no explicit plan for equity in the Lee decision. I will not continue to harp on this issue as long going forward there is an assurance that all decisions will be made with an explicit plan for equity. I will continue to look at data and ask hard questions.

Sincerely,
Valerie