

LONG RANGE PLANNING COMMITTEE

Meeting 3 Notes October 4, 2022

Welcome & Meeting 2 Recap

Tim McClure, assistant superintendent for facilities, welcomed the committee and provided a recap of Meeting #2 and Northwest ISD's ranking as the fastest-growing school district in DFW. NISD will need land, buses, new schools, another high school, another stadium(s), and other facilities to accommodate growth.

Technology

Cara Carter, executive director of technology who oversees technology infrastructure, cybersecurity, instructional technology and enterprise data for NISD, explained that NISD has been a 1:1 district since 2009. This means that there is one device for every student. Chromebooks and student devices have been funded by short-term bonds since 2009. K-5 grade students have Chromebooks available in the classroom, and students in grades 6-12 take their Chromebooks home. She also showed technology used by teachers in the classrooms, which provides instructional opportunities and helps with classroom management. All of those classroom instructional devices have also been funded by bonds. These bonds are issued on shorter finance and repayment terms.

She also spoke about how important digital citizenship is for NISD and how well prepared NISD was for COVID and remote instruction, compared to surrounding districts.

NISD has two new data centers owned and operated by the district that provide and protect the district's resilience and safety in terms of technology. Carter also showed a map of all facilities that are networked across the district. NISD also has its own fiber network that was started in 2004. In 2019, NISD partnered with all other school districts in Region 11 for a fiber partnership. This has improved connectivity and resiliency. This has been a good decision by this committee in the past to provide this fiber network and increase security and bandwidth between campuses.

From a safety perspective, Carter says it's really important to be able to boost connectivity and cellular capabilities in our schools.

Carter asked the committee to consider a number of projects for the next bond. Those include:

- Device refresh for teachers and students (these would be on a waterfall plan, meaning that they're replaced in planned intervals instead of all at once)
- Data center upgrades
- Infrastructure refresh
- Informacast PA expansion and upgrade
- Cybersecurity
- Phone
- Security camera growth, maintenance, and hardware
- Resilient fiber connectivity for future growth
- Access control for growth and maintenance

Questions:

- From a technology standpoint, what do we want our kids to do upon graduation?
- What is the plan for Chromebook replacement and software?
- What other school districts does the technology team watch?
 - Cy-Fair ISD, Denton ISD, Lewisville ISD, Clear Creek ISD, Leander ISD
 - Follow up: Out of state? Where do we want to be in 5 years, etc.?
- What alternative funding mechanisms do we look at if bond funds aren't available?
 - It is something we talk about. What sacrifices would we be willing to make?
- Is the data center in Roanoke a backup or does it actively support the records and new data?
 - Carter said NISD has an "active-active" data center, meaning that everything that happens at one data center happens at the other. They are exact replicas.

Pre-Kindergarten

Stephanie Espinosa, executive director of teaching and learning, and Micah Gierkey, executive director of student support services, spoke about pre-kindergarten in NISD. Espinosa explained the Pre-K requirements as part of House Bill 3 requires full-day pre-kindergarten be provided for all eligible four-year-old students. NISD has had to have waivers from the state because the district doesn't currently have the space to meet these requirements. NISD also offers a tuition-based Pre-K.

Espinosa shared a timeline that shows how many Pre-K programs have been added since the 2020-2021 school year, and shows where they are planning through the 2024-2025 school year. By the 2025-2026 school year, all pre-kindergarten programs

must be full-day programs. The number of Pre-K students has grown from 235 students in 2016-2017 to 482 in 2022. Only about 52% of eligible Pre-K students are enrolled in Pre-K in Tarrant County.

Gierkey explained that Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) is required to be provided to students at the age of 3. In 2017-2018, there were 63 students who came from Child Find. At this point in the 2022-2023 school year, there are 136 that have been referred for testing. They can only support 10 ECSE students per classroom.

The Texas Education Agency sets tuition rates across the state for all-day and full-day Pre-K. NISD's Pre-K programs have been successful, with a majority of students being on track for kindergarten readiness.

Challenges for Pre-K in NISD include:

- Do not offer full-day programs at all campuses
- Do not offer tuition with full-day programs
- Full-day programs show greater gains than half-day programs

Considerations for the Long-Range Planning Committee:

- Early Learning Centers
 - 4 locations
 - Staff daycare
 - Serve more students because we also accept tuition-based students
 - Customize learning opportunities throughout the building
- Add additional classrooms to all locations to account for more Pre-K and ECSE students.
 - Each campus would need a minimum of 4 additional classrooms (2 Pre-K and 2 ECSE)

Questions:

- How would the Parents as Teachers program work with expansion?
 - The Parents as Teachers program reaches out to families with infants to young children to work with families and offer events to support parents on how to support their children and how to teach their children at home.
- Would this create a potential partnership opportunity with our high school students who are interested in teaching careers?
 - Yes!
- Can you speak to the modifications these classrooms would need?

- The Pre-K classrooms have restrooms and an area with tile called a wet space.
- Has NISD thought of repurposing campuses?
 - Yes! Those are always good ideas. The district looks at options of repurposing a building and/or repurposing a site. Justin Elementary is a campus that could be considered for modifications, should the committee recommend it for a replacement elementary campus.
- With the dual language programs, do you have projections of when we'd need to open dual language programs, etc.?
 - We are going to need a third campus for the dual-language program.
 - Nepali is one of our fastest-growing languages. It is difficult to find certified Nepali teachers.
- Is NISD considering adding more dual language programs, from Pre-K onward?
 - We have a hard time finding qualified bilingual teachers, and providing enough across grade levels would prove very challenging.
- If we're not in compliance by 2025-2026, what will NISD do?
 - We will be in compliance, whether it means portable buildings, or something else.

Rating Factors

McClure explained an activity to rank criteria. Committee members were asked to place dots on the criteria that they feel is the most important.

Tour

Committee members toured Justin Elementary School.

Construction Cost Forecasting - Panel Discussion

McClure explained how NISD and consultants build a bond budget. First, they study current construction costs and then add escalation for inflation, and that gives them the total construction costs. Then they add soft costs, permits, fees, etc.; furniture, fixtures and equipment known as FFE; technology, site preparation costs; and contingency. These combine for the total project budget.

A panel of contractors joined the LRPC meeting to answer questions from McClure and the committee. They include general contractors from three companies: Northstar, CORE Construction, and Pogue Construction.

Questions for the panel are in bold:

- **Inflation. Everyone in this room has been subject to it (gas, groceries, etc.).**
What can this group expect and how can we plan for it?
 - Within the state of Texas, up to \$7 billion in school related construction bonds could be on the ballot for next May. We are advising 1 to 1.25% per month. Every year or every two years that you don't build a building it gets more expensive. It also helps to group projects which NISD has done a good job of grouping projects together.
 - The escalation per month is how to look at it. Anywhere from a percent or a percent and a half per month. In the past, they've usually recommended about a half a percent. What we've experienced in the last 24 months is not like anything they've seen in the last two years. We are optimistic that the supply and demand will balance out. Over the last 24 months, we've had cost escalation that has run rampant. Through the pandemic shutdown, the winter freeze, and China port challenges, has restricted the import of goods. The war in Ukraine has also created some problems. There is some hope. Steel and lumber prices are coming down some. What about an owner-contract clause that could benefit the client when the prices come down?
 - It is a supply and demand issue. Pre-COVID we were telling people 5-6 percent per year. We saw 35% inflation in some areas. We are hoping that we're heading in a direction that will bring things down.

- **In what ways are you seeing school districts trying to control cost overruns?**
 - We've tried to work with clients about getting items early, like switchgear or roofing material so they can procure materials early. Getting a contractor on board early helps.
 - NISD's bond planning has to start with a good budget. You almost have to prepare for the worst and hope for the best. In this market, being collaborative, transparent and strong teamwork helps. As contractors, they are communicating with trade partners. About a year ago, it was taking about 12 months to get joists. There are creative solutions.
 - There is no magic pill. It's a kick in the shorts for everyone. One creative solution is to build less parking while prices are high and come back later to add more parking when prices go down. Currently, rooftop air conditioning units are months out and screws for roofs are now two years out.

One of the things NISD did was to try and procure materials in advance to be prepared to build the new schools.

- **Labor and material shortage. What have you seen in the recent months? What have you seen and what have you done?**

- We saw up to 30% increase in materials, but we had labor. Material prices are starting to flatten, but the labor costs are going to be higher.
- The labor problem is going to be a factor.
- Supply chain examples:
 - Electrical switchgear - 12 months out
 - Roofing - 7-9 months
 - Food service coolers and freezers - 12 months

- **Are there things that NISD could do with design to save money? For example, large window walls vs brick, etc.?**

Yes. NISD considers that in the design and construction of schools.

Closing

Committee members were asked to define consensus. The group determined that $\frac{2}{3}$ of the people present will be used as committee consensus.

McClure thanked everyone for coming and closed the meeting.