# SAISD Restructuring Meeting Highlands High School September 8, 2009

# 6:02 p.m. Opening statement by Mr. Tom Lopez

Thank you for being here this evening. I want to express my gratitude to the community and all of you who represent this community. There are three proposals for the restructuring of our district that we will be looking at this evening. These three proposals reflect the time and effort of a restructuring committee that you see here behind me. This evening is the opportunity for you to provide to us what you like and what you don't like regarding these proposals. Based on the input we receive, the Board will, by late September or early October, have a plan that they can present. You the community at large, have a big stake in this decision. We would like to hear your input about what you like or don't like about these proposals.

#### Mr. Carlos Villarreal

I want to make sure we recognize all of our Principals. I want to thank everyone for being here. I also want to thank the committee. It has been an honor to work along side the community members that make up this committee. We have 3 proposals. Understand that these are proposals. This means that they are not set in stone. We are trying to build a bigger and stronger district. We understand that this restructuring won't be easy. There are realities that we have to face. There are schools that are going to have to be closed. This is a long term plan. This has been two years in the making. We try to take the emotion out of it.

### Dr. Durón

I want to thank you for being here this evening. Parents, grandparents, guardians, we are thankful of you and your time. I know that some of you have been here on more than one evening. Thank you for being involved. It shows that you support your school.

We are here for a very important reason, but the most important thing that I want to communicate to you is WHY we are restructuring. We don't always do what we want to do but we have to do what we have to do. That is why we are all here tonight. We are all different and:

- 1. We want our community to strengthen in the coming years
- 2. We want a quality education for our community's future
- 3. We must be as efficient as possible with your tax dollar
- 4. We must improve, and to improve we have to change
- 5. Our students deserve the facilities that all students are provided and deserve

So why go through all this work? We need to restructure to offer a quality education to our students. Living a life without choice is a life not worth living. We want every single student to walk across the stage. They need to be able to begin their careers. This is our purpose and this is our mission. We need to lay a solid foundation for college and for their careers. We need to meet the needs of our children. We don't want to do this, we have to do this. We don't want to say goodbye, but the truth is that the fond memories that we have in our schools will not help our children, especially 10 to 15 years from now. We have made progress toward this goal. Today 30% of our graduates are continuing their education. Our biggest dilemma is the declining enrollment over 4 decades. We have 20,000 fewer students than we did in the 1970's. When the enrollment goes down, it reduces the amount of funding.

We have cut cost and improved performance, but those savings still did not go far enough. It has limited our ability to better serve our students.

We want Art, Band and technology in our elementary schools. We need Science Labs with teachers, more electives and High School credit courses in our middle schools. In High Schools we need Advanced Placement and Dual Credit as well as increased Electives. We need High School Magnet Programs that will prepare our students for the rigor of college. We sometimes say that college is not for everybody. One of those programs is at Edison High School Health Careers. They can graduate as an LVN making 36,000 a year and with one more year of study becomes an RN.

Again we are partnership with our community colleges. We have so many bright children just waiting. So, we need to provide programs and facilities to maximize our student's ability to graduate prepared to succeed in college or careers. If we fail in our mission, in 12 years this will be devastating. We have to fulfill our mission as a district and keep our promise to our children.

The basic idea is that we want a healthy population and funding. The restructuring plans were made to change the dynamics. Funding follows the students. We are restructuring to maximize facilities and opportunities for our students and community. As our schools strengthen, our community strengthens. These plans are not my plans. The community came together. The future success of our community lies in what decisions we make today. We need to keep our eyes on the prize. I heard once that when there is a problem, there are 3 kinds of people:

- 1. No, can't do that
- 2. Some make the mistake of charging forward
- 3. Some look on the other side to see if it's worth tackling

We've looked on the other side and we all agree that we want to turn the promise into a reality for our children. We need your thoughtful suggestions. Remember why we are doing this work.

### Dr. Durón

Presentation of Power Point

# Ms. Rachel Ponce - Overview of the Four Phases

Good evening. I have been on the long range committee since the first phase. There are 45 committee members who met from January to March in developing the plan. Phase 3 had 39 committee members. The following are the four phases of this committee.

Phase I - Visioning

Phase 2 – Facilities Implications

Phase 3 – Boundary Development

Phase 4 – Transformation of District Facilities

### Mr. Ben Garcia – Gap Analysis Plan

We developed our own guiding principals
We focused on future needs of SAISD students
We wanted to make sure we had clear feeder patterns
Used the gap analysis report to develop the boundaries
Entire district divided into small units
Studied current boundaries
Worked in small groups

Each small group shared their work and made suggestions

After identifying boundaries and after many ours of planning we shared our findings with the Board We hope that these findings will make a better SAISD

On my behalf and along with the committee, I want to thank you the Highlands community for coming to share your input. We welcome your input and don't hesitate to come to the mike.

# Ms. Cora Johns – Overview of three proposals

Presented and talked about the schools we presently have and the fact that we don't have straight feeder patterns. She spoke about our current structure; which schools have our largest population and which schools have our smallest population.

# **Proposal 1**

- 5 High Schools Edison, Jefferson, Lanier, Highlands, and new High School
- 2 Magnet High Schools Fox Tech and a second school Brack and Burbank would be MS
- 10 Middle Schools
- 39 Elementary Campuses
- 6 PK-8 Campuses
  - Tafolla repurposed
  - New High School would serve Sam Houston and Brackenridge students

# **Proposal 2**

- 5 High Schools Edison, Jefferson, Lanier, Highlands, and Wheatley
- 10 Middle Schools with Brack being a MS (average 1000 students)
- 39 Elementary Schools
- 6 PK-8 Campuses

# **Proposal 3**

- 6 High Schools Brack, Burbank, Edison, Jefferson, Lanier, with Wheatley the Magnet HS
- 11 Middle Schools
- 39 Elementary Campuses

# 7:00 p.m. Roz Instructs Speakers

State your name

State which proposal you like

State what you like about the proposal

State revision suggestions

Each speaker has 3 minutes

Comments should be relevant and about proposals

If you have to leave we want to invite you tomorrow night or to one of our other meetings

# **Highlands Speakers**

# **Speaker 1: Dorothy Barnett**

# **Proposal**

I don't want Sam Houston closed. I live in this area. I have been a Substitute Teacher. District 2 is in my blood. I'm also concerned about Davis MS. We don't want to over crowd another school. If some of the middle schools in the area that feed into Highlands would feed into Sam Houston, we would not have so many students here and we would have more students at Sam Houston. Why don't they feed into Sam Houston? I did Substitute teaching from 1986 to 1995. I don't want to be disrespectful but just skeptical right now. I see some good things. I'm also about vocational education. I don't want Sam Houston to go.

# Speaker 2: Ruben Espronceda

# **Proposal 3**

Welcome everyone to Highlands High School

I'm going to talk to the audience

Plan 3 is the most workable plan

The reason is because it changes a lot of the boundaries

These boundaries have not change in 30 years

Maybe that's why we have this problem

Kids that are going to Fox Tech are going to Lanier for example

What a way to divide the community

One of these plans has the kids from the west side going all the way to Jefferson HS

Margil is close to Lanier...why are we shipping them all the way to the North

Plan 1 has some problems but then plan 3 becomes a workable plan

Plan 3 saves 36 million dollars and other savings

Plan 3 has an attendance that can be tweaked

We can also have Sam Houston be a part of plan 3 and save Sam Houston

# Speaker 3: Faris Hodge, Jr

# **Proposal**

I want the audience to loosen up a little bit

We've got a serious problem at Sam Houston HS / We have gangs taking over

Everybody is scared

I don't want to hear anyone here say 'all black school' or 'all girls' school'.

I've seen a lot of discrimination...and you (SAISD) don't have enough police in the schools

Northside has 15-20 police and they are picking up kids and taking them back to school

Who's going to hire you with pants falling off your behind, tattoos, cussing, & nasty attitude

We need to focus on this Mr. Lopez...corporate America will not hire them

I was sitting outside Bill Miller's eating...lady and daughter there...mother had to fill out daughters application because they did not want anyone with a tattoo (and the daughter had one)

We've got to get back to Reading, Writing and Arithmetic

### **Speaker 4: Catherine Miller**

# Proposal

I teach at SAC, used to teach at Texas Tech and I live in the community

I want to address educational impact of these schools closing

SAISD only graduates 47.3 %

All the research journals talk about small and medium size schools being the most successful

In all the research these schools have more students graduating, and less behavioral problems They have more involvement in the schools by the community to its school

At Lanier you have unfriendly administration – how is this going to get you more students?

What is the real problem? If it is money then let's fight the state for more funding.

# Speaker 5: Caty Villarreal, parent

### **Proposal**

Good evening my daughter attends and loves YWLA. The girls just got established there. We were hoping that they were going to graduate from there. I don't understand Mr. Carlos Villarreal.

# Speaker 6: Michelle Reyes – League for Public School Justice

# **Proposal 3**

My daughter attends Tafolla

I worked to keep Travis open; it closed

My daughter moved to Cotton Elementary; Cotton is up for closer

Tafolla, under two of the proposals is going to close

Every school my daughter attends is up for closure.

And now Burbank is going to close?

I've been to every meeting...I think it's confusing when they are reading from a paper

I'm sad not many community members are here this evening

This school is going to go down in enrollment

And then they are coming to you for a bond after shoving your kids around

Fox Tech – Is a Recognized school.

Fox Tech does not have dual credit courses because someone forgot to file paper work

Proposal 1 was voted down by the trustees, thank you

Then at these meetings they were suppose to say this is a beginning but NO

We need to unite...regardless of how this ends we need to stay together we have a website and we have a group

Proposal 3...good thing...Mann will be back...they deserve that school back

# Speaker 7: Martha Benitez, parent

# **Proposal**

I came to this school. I want you to know that my daughter was locked outside of Page. She was afraid. She and another little girl were locked out. The doors were locked. We want our kids at school we. The little boy across the street goes to Poe but they didn't ask her if she wanted to go to Poe. There's no reason for our kids to go across town to another school. Why are you splitting up our children? What I would like to know is why was my daughter locked outside the school? I was there 10 minutes late because I adopted 5 grandchildren. I wish they would leave the school open a little bit longer. Why close schools? Why don't we have GED classes here? I'll tell you why. They are teaching English to people from Mexico; English and not GED classes. Why?

# **Speaker 8: Susana Ortiz**

# Proposal

I am here tonight representing faculty at Forbes ES. Basically my mission is to get information for our community parents. I want to know about the list that has the names of all the schools that are going to be closed. Is Forbes going to be closed? We have space to house more students at Forbes. On a good note, we have increased PTA membership. I want to thank Ms Adela Segovia. She's the lady who helped me to begin to get involved in our school; so thank you Adela. I'm hoping that some of our parents will be at Tech tomorrow.

# Speaker 9: Lloyd Foster, Sam Houston community Proposal

I have been a scientist for 27 years. I have been at St Phillips College for 33 years. (?)

What I'm mostly concerned about is Sam Houston. I might mention that when I was at Brooks Air Force Base as a Scientist...from 1981 -1991...I learned a lot there. Looking at this matter from an equal opportunity point of view, they make mention that it is an all black HS. That's just not true. We could find derogatory remarks about all our schools. We know the location of Sam Houston. How many other High Schools are in close proximity? Tonight I've heard that we've planned; But I'm wondering... what kind of planning do we have about closing Sam Houston? If I look at it again, I think that it is more important to discuss this a little bit further; discussing a little bit further just to make sure that it's the right thing to do. I think that we need to go back to the drawing table to re-think what we are doing and I would like to sit in on that meeting.

# Speaker 10: Cynthia Perez, Highlands parent and Forbes ES staffer Proposal

I'm an employee with SAISD...I agree with the second speaker I agree with proposal 3...our community has expanded I think that they have been at a stand still for a long time...I know that changes are going to be made...how are the needs of the students are going to be met...for example...stud's here at High can't have 30 min lunch...can't get to their class on time...Transportation...right now I notice and issue with bus transportation...they are arriving later at school because of the ECE & Headstart...and it interferes with their breakfast...what is going to happen when more students are going to be bused...how is it going to interfere ...you were able to make those changes...it can be done without closing schools...just give it a thought

# Speaker 11: Shelley Potter, Alliance

# **Proposal**

I just want to thank the committee for the many long hours you've spent serving our district

There is tension between the research about small and large schools

Researchers conclude the optimal size is 650 students

High Schools between 600-900

Other studies show that 800 should be the max

The conclusion is that small schools are better

That smaller schools have more positive achievements

That larger school are not good for minorities

That small schools have a higher number of graduates, and better behavior,

That while larger schools can offer more, it is more difficult for more to get involved

Smaller schools have many advantages

So we're not saying that the small school research is the only thing; yes larger schools cost less

We ask that if you review the plan, that you take a look at the research

Factor the research into your recommendation

# Speaker 12: Patti Garcia – League for Public School Justice

# Proposal

Don't want closure of schools

I've been talking about AYP

I want to let you know that it's something that's strongly affecting Highlands

This year Jefferson is on the first year of probation because of AYP

AYP = Average Yearly Progress

We should not crowd our students

We need to draw our students back to our community schools

# Speaker 13: Oscar Vicks, Sam Houston PTSA

# **Proposal**

Mr. Duron, the Board, Committee. Mr. Howard stated that some things are not true

There is some bad information out there

I want to know if they are true or not (I want to know 3 things tonight)

The committee was told to make sure that all schools are treated equally; True or False?

The Board was suppose to keep all schools open but then

Did the Board already decide about Proposal 3?

Dr. Duron said the Board has not decided.

Are you using the committee?

I have heard that Board stepped in and came up with proposal #3

Plan 3 is to save Burbank and if you use the committee you are using us

I have been to all the meetings.

If you ask the committee...and committee, you don't have to say what they want

It don't make sense to come to all these meeting and then you do what you want to do

Does CPS wants to buy Sam Houston land?

Do you want to close Sam Houston to enlarge downtown?

Does the city want Fox Tech to close, to buy the land to expand downtown? True or False?

Why not let the city buy the land on Lavaca?

Do you know how much that land is worth?

Whoever's feeding you information is telling you wrong

We want to help you market SAISD. Fort Sam wants to help us. We had 1000 people last time at Sam Houston HS that are offering to help. If you're really serious about helping our students, if you're really committed to equality then take all of this into consideration. You're about equality, really? Where do you see equality in that our children would have to get up early to catch a bus, can't participate in after school activities, etc...Next time equality runs through your mind, be sure your definition matches mine. Why not take 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade Davis students and give them a wing at Sam Houston. We love our side of town. I don't plan on going no where. So I would appreciate it if you consider how we feel.

# Speaker 14: Walter Gonzalez

# **Proposal**

I'm here representing Highlands High School. I have a junior here.

I want to thank committee and speakers

One thing that has been buggin' me...First, question for the Board. ? What have you done?

Nobody wants to see our schools closed

If you don't have students in Elementary Schools then they have to close the schools

I'm retired Military...what you're asking these parents is that they have to send their children away In Virginia...my kids had to get up at 5 in the morning...it cost and wasted a lot of educational time You're wasting time. That's what you will be doing.

I'm all in favor of keeping kids in the community. So work with this committee

Why under-populate areas? Why? We want to bring back quality schools

How do we bring them back here? Well you hired someone to improve our image

So set standards higher

Make students meet standards

Hold teachers responsible

Kids don't go to school because it's fun but because they want to learn something

In LA, inner city schools are some of the best schools

The teachers and the parents were 100% helping and supporting the program at that school

Get more people involved

The 2<sup>nd</sup> step is to set the standards higher

People will want to come back to SAISD schools

# Speaker 15: Olive Bacon

# **Proposal**

I am the parent and grand-parent and uncle of Sam Houston children

I am against all of the proposals

Why have schools if we're going to shut them down?

All of our children deserve a better chance in life

Children's attendance is low because they are going to other schools

And their performance low because they do not have the proper equipment to learn And the teachers are just sitting around SAISD needs to save schools. The school is about education All you're doing is throwing student 'behind' What's the problem? Are the teachers teaching? You need to look at the teachers and check them out. Teaching is not going on So, re-evaluate. I don't think you need to build new buildings. Tell the city to use that money for schools instead of correctional facility.

### Roz

I'd like to thank you

After tomorrow night, all notes and comments will be shared with the committee members and they will take notes and use the information to help them make a final decision by the end of September or beginning of October. Thank you for your input.

# **Carlos Villarreal**

I want to know when we've had an all-Black school. There is no "all-Black" school. Let's stop that. It is (SH) more Hispanic than anything. Next, this is not a Board recommendation. It's a committee recommendation. Ms. Perez, it's true. They have not looked into 2300 students. Let's get our facts straight. Phase 4 is where we talk about transportation. So please let's go through one more meeting without more rumors or lies.