

## Memorandum

**To:** SAISD Board of Trustees c/o Patti Radle, President

**From:** Mario A. Barrera and Victoria Moreno-Herrera, Co-Chair  
Persons together with all the other 19 members of the  
Blue Ribbon Task Force Committee

**Date:** July 28, 2020

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[Victoriamoreno@hotmail.com](mailto:Victoriamoreno@hotmail.com)

**Re:** Blue Ribbon Task Force Committee Findings,  
Recommendations and Final Report

### I. Background

On April 22, 2020, the San Antonio ISD Board of Trustees ("Board") formally appointed the undersigned as members and co-chairs of a Blue Ribbon Task Force Committee ("Committee") charged with thoroughly examining the District's future operating and capital needs and providing feedback to the Board on how to fund and meet those needs including contemplation of a possible Bond election in November 2020.

The Committee began meeting on May 14, 2020. Because of the COVID-19 crisis, it was held virtually via Zoom; as were all subsequent meetings. After some introductory remarks, the Committee heard detailed briefings from Superintendent Pedro Martinez and Chief Operations Officer Willie Burroughs. Superintendent Martinez addressed a number of related topics including the importance of school facilities and how continued investment in those facilities can act as an "equalizer" for the District's socio-economic disadvantaged students, the District's Master 2030 Plan, proposed bond 2020 referendums throughout the state, an overview of the District's 2010 and 2016 Bonds and finally, the District's capacity and ability to float a \$2.5 billion capital improvements bond. Mr. Burroughs then discussed the District's approach to maintenance and operations including the allocation of funding for M&O as well as Interest & Sinking (I&S). He also discussed the District's Master Plan 2030 in greater detail; especially the District's objectives with respect to safety and security, technology, and a facility condition assessment.

The Committee met again on May 21, 2020 and heard detailed presentations from Pablo Escamilla, the District's board counsel, regarding The Dos and Don'ts of Political Advertising for a Bond Election, and Larry Garza, the District's Chief Financial Officer, on the District's finances. The Committee also had the opportunity to view two school videos that had been recorded by staff; Rhodes Middle School and Steele Montessori. The Committee then decided that school tours would begin on the week of June 1st; specifically on Tuesday evening, Thursday morning, and every other Saturday morning. The Committee also decided to schedule two weeks of school tours before reconvening to discuss them.

During the week of June 1st, the Committee visited ALA Euclid, Storm, Neal, Gates, Highland Hills, Longfellow, Highland Park, and Graebner. The following week, the Committee visited YWLA Secondary, Lamar, Carvajal, Huppertz, Schenck, and Smith. A total of 14 Committee members joined in the actual visits and all were videotaped for others including the general public to watch at their convenience.

The Committee then resumed meeting on June 14, 2020 to share what they had learned from the school tours. After a lengthy discussion, the Committee was of the unanimous opinion that the schools which were visited needed substantial upgrades, if not a total remodel. The Committee then viewed a video on MLK Academy that had been prepared for the May 21st meeting but, due to time limitations, was not shown. At the end of the video, the Committee again confirmed the need to upgrade/remodel that school as well. The meeting closed with the Committee wanting to schedule more school tours.

The next set of schools tours took place during the week of June 22nd. The schools that were visited included Brackenridge High School, Carrol Early Childhood Education Center, Collins Garden, Davis, Fox Tech campus, Highlands High School, Irving, Lanier, Madison, Rogers, Sam Houston, and Tafolla. A total of 7 Committee members attended these tours, including 2 who had been unable to attend the prior tours.

Because of the increase in COVID-19 cases locally, the last set of school tours were simply recorded by District staff with no Committee members present. The recorded school tours, which took place after the July 4th holiday, included: J. T. Brackenridge Elementary, Bowden, Jefferson High School, Edison High School, and Burbank High School. Committee members were encouraged to view these and all other recorded school tour videos before the next meeting.

The Committee then resumed meeting on July 16th. Committee members discussed a range of concerns that they had observed on the tours including outdated HVAC systems and poor ventilation, ADA compliance issues with historic structures, the poor condition of some special education classrooms, and a range of upgrades needed in order to ensure a safe environment for learning and innovation. These findings affirmed the independent assessment of the condition of the facilities commissioned by the District. The Committee also heard about the need to finally complete all the District's high schools so that they do not continue to appear on future bond proposals. After further discussion, the Committee reaffirmed the need to upgrade the various schools and move forward with a proposed bond. The Chairpersons asked for volunteers to help assist them in drafting the final report. Committee member Gina Amatangelo volunteered to help along with Branden Dross, Christopher Green, Ted Guerra, Cristina Noriega, and Denise Ojeda.

Finally, on July 28th, the Committee met to receive the draft final report. After discussion, all those presented voted to support and approve the Committee's recommendations as set forth in this final report.

## II. Recommendations

The Committee hereby presents the following unanimous recommendations to the San Antonio ISD Board of Trustees.

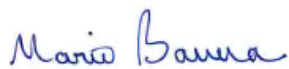
1. Pursue a bond in the amount of \$1.2 billion to cover either substantial renovations or a complete remodel, together with project management fees and other related costs, for the following schools: Advance Learning Academy (ALA Euclid), Bowden Academy, Brackenridge High School, J.T. Brackenridge Elementary School, Burbank High School, Burnett (Bonham relief) Middle School, Carroll Early Childhood Education Center, Carvajal Early Childhood, CAST Med, Collins Garden Elementary, Davis Middle School, Edison High School, Fox Tech Campus (ALA, CAST & Fox Tech), Gates Academy, Graebner Elementary, Highland Hills Elementary, Highland Park Elementary, Highlands High School, Sam Houston High School, Huppertz Elementary, Irving Dual Language Academy, Jefferson High School, King Academy, Lamar Elementary, Lanier High School, Longfellow Middle School, Madison Elementary, Neal Elementary, Rhodes Middle

School, Rogers Middle School, Schenck Elementary, Steele Montessori, Storm Academy, Tafolla Middle School, and Young Women's Leadership Academy (Secondary). The Committee recognizes that the District has been very efficient with its two prior bonds and that it has been able to achieve certain efficiencies and costs savings. The same is expected here so, to that end, the District, with public input, can certainly add additional projects to this list and if it does, the Committee strongly recommends that it consider adding Smith Elementary. Like the other schools, Smith has not received substantial upgrades in many years and is not accessible to special education students.

2. Pursue an additional bond for \$100 million to cover technology upgrades throughout the District.
3. Have the bond election coincide with the November 3, 2020 General Election.
4. Appoint a Citizens Advisory Committee to oversee all school renovations/capital improvements.
5. Publicize and distribute extensive information to District taxpayers and parents on the bond election to ensure its successful passage.
6. In deciding to support the calling of the bond election, the Committee affirmed the guiding principles and core promises adopted by the Board of Trustees. To that end, the Committee specifically requests that the Board of Trustees consider the following:
  - As you evaluate priorities with an equity lens, give specific attention to students with special needs and to areas where there has been a chronic lack of investment such as outdated restroom facilities at particular campuses. Also commit to ensuring that for the 2020-2021 school year, all self-contained special education classrooms will meet a minimum standard of health and safety.
  - Prioritize investments that allow the district to sustain and scale successful academic programs while considering issues of overcrowding. Plans should be forward-looking and ensure that facilities support model programming, address waitlists, and allow space for target enrollment numbers established by campus leadership.
  - Ensure that funding is adequate to fully complete projects so that the results of investments are visible to the campus and the community.

Thank you for the opportunity to be of service to the children, parents, and taxpayers of the San Antonio Independent School District. We truly believe these recommendations are absolutely necessary in order to ensure the continued success of the District and its children. We are available to come before the Board of Trustees to answer any questions regarding the foregoing recommendations or our deliberations in arriving at them.

Sincerely,



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Mario A. Barrera, Co-Chair

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Victoria Moreno-Herrera, Co-Chair

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Mari Aguirre, District 1

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Gina Amatangelo, District 1

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Nellie Shannon, District 1

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Christopher Green, District 2

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James Howard, District 2

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Branden Dross, District 3

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Pat Jasso, District 3

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Denise Ojeda, District 3

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Rosalinda Casillas District 4

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Maria Cruz, District 4

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Albert Regalado, District 4

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Amado Briseno, District 5

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Leticia Gonzalez, District 5

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Helen Gutierrez, District 5

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Cristina Noriega, District 6

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Mary Ellen Veliz, District 6

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Veronica Goldbach, District 7

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Ted Guerra, District 7

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Sara Hernandez, District 7