

NFWA  
Minutes - April 21, 2012

President Rusty Fuller opened the meeting at 9:10 am.

Today's speaker is Mark Youngs from KISD. Our speaker next month will be the NWISD Superintendent Dr. Karen Rue. Many school issues are common to both districts, and relate to State issues. Rusty thanked everyone for coming today and encouraged everyone to come next time too, and to invite your neighbors.

Also next month, Jeff Law with Tarrant Appraisal District will talk about appraisals, how to protest, etc. No business meeting next month for time reasons.

Rusty announced that Thurs. 4/26 at 6:30, a public meeting will be held at Park Vista Apartments at Ray White to show what the new Ray White construction will look like when it's done. Also, they will be discussing the section of Shiver where it goes from 3 lanes to 2 and will be widened.

There will also be a Public Safety Forum 4/24, at 7:000 at Heritage Church of Christ. Police Dept will talk about safety issues

Another meeting at Heritage Church of Christ will be held to talk about the expansion of Beach St. and the use of public art along that route.

Jerry told us that Facebook has changed some things, and there have been issues, which he hopes to soon have fixed.

Regarding Re-districting – the City has contacted our Committee. We are meeting with the City representatives to show how this can work. Congratulations to Bill & Rusty – out of 10 plans submitted, 2 came from us. WE ARE HAVING AN IMPACT! Our plan tackled the whole city, not just one neighborhood.

The City of Fort Worth has extended the moratorium on salt water disposal wells in an 8 to 0 vote. The variance that was requested was not granted. The City is working towards legislation to control wells in county areas. Rusty has had some preliminary meetings with county and city. Our points of view were heard. Decisions were in line with our request when we sent the letter to the City in March.

Another success as part of our work to establish a Fort Worth identity in our area is new signage on street signs. They came up with a sign with the Ft Worth Longhorn, Molly, on it and they are being installed on road signs as you come into FW from different directions, next to road names. We are seeing more and more recognition that we are FW and not Keller – as a result of the NFWA efforts. We are trying to push to get FW on all street signs, but it will take time, and will be done as street sign maintenance is required. This is a test program for the entire city here in far North FW. We're the people that are bringing the issue up.

Another issue – all our kids have to go to Keller or Colleyville to play baseball. Rusty has talked to the City about the need for facilities in our own area for athletic activities. Nef Ortiz, with City of FW zoning mentioned that we need a regional park, and Hillwood has dedicated 300 acres for that purpose, but the City has no funds for maintenance.

Rusty introduced the speaker, Mark Youngs, KISD Assistant Superintendent for Finance.

Mr. Youngs gave an overview of the District demographics and current conditions:

- KISD has grown from 10,000 to 33,000 kids in 10 yrs.
- Added 221 buildings.
- Growth is slowing (used to add 2000 kids a yr, now 300 to 400).
- 22<sup>nd</sup> elementary school at Ridgeview Elementary was opened last year (first in Keller in 10 yrs) all other growth has been w of 377.
- Elementary School #23 will be west of 35 Freeway on Basswood. This will be the last planned building, and will happen in 2 to 3 yrs. so essentially they will be done building.
- Our tax rate is higher than surrounding districts because of the massive construction of recent years to keep up with growth.
- Real Estate Taxes for school districts are in 2 parts. OM tax (operation and maintenance) is the same for all districts. INS (bond funds) is different from district to district. Other districts nearby are mature districts and have not built new building in last 10 years.
- Demographics are evolving, and minority population is growing. 5 yrs ago free & reduced lunch kids were at 9%. Today, it is at 19%. Texas state average is 50%.
- Last year KISD had one unacceptable campus, Cap Rock Elementary. Many campuses are recognized and exemplary. Academically, KISD scores are higher than national average.
- 80% of budget is spent on payroll, 20% on utilities, buildings, etc.

History of the tax rate:

- Debt service tax has gone up as we build buildings
- Operating tax has gone down
- Future building budget is all renovation and maintenance.
- School buildings last for 50 years, but the way education is delivered has changed.
- Every classroom now has a projector hanging from the ceiling. Many other technology assets are included in the classroom.
- Timberview Middle School was built with electronic communications in mind. Every class has giant whiteboard, and a wall that faces the hall that and rotates between class and hall. There are alcoves with cushions, and many electrical outlets for students to plug in. Kids work more collaboratively, in multiple subjects at the same time

- It is unlikely we'll ever see another football stadium – too expensive. We have 1 stadium for 4 High Schools, and we're used to Thurs and Sat. afternoon football games.

Performance status:

- Educational Research Group does evaluations of the largest 200 districts in the state. (which have 84% of the kids)
- Financially – KISD's efficiency is rated at 14 out of 200.
- Academically we are 140 out of 200 (should be better based on our population)
- Academic ratings strictly based on TASK scores, graduation rate, & college admission tests.
- Financially we've never been lower than 20.
- The State Comptroller Report measures efficiency and effectiveness in use of funds
- This evaluation measures and compares all 1200 districts, ranking from 1 to 5 stars
- Keller is one of the 5 Star Districts, 2 yrs in a row.

KISD took 10 million out of the budget each of the last 3 yrs. They tried to keep most cuts away from classroom. The District is still doing well academically, but cuts finally touched classroom.

QUESTIONS:

? Why is NWISD's tax rate for bonds so much lower when they are a growing district? NWISD passed a 700 million \$ bond without raising tax rates because Alliance Airport and Texas Motor Speedway pay large amounts of taxes that go to the NWISD. KISD receives most of its tax revenue (94%) from individual home owners. That's a stable tax base, but puts the burden on people, with few business taxes contributing.

? With natural gas prices going down, and less gas drilling – how does that affect revenues to the KISD?

Natural gas revenues are a very small portion of the KISD budget.

? Does the hospital and Alliance Town Center contribute much, or are there tax breaks? There were no tax breaks given for school taxes. But under current state funding, when tax revenue goes up – state allocation to districts goes down. So increases in tax revenue do not mean a net increase in total funds to the district. The district gets a certain dollar amount per student (40% state funds, 60% tax revenues). KISD is a beneficiary of Robin Hood. Southlake and GCISD are donor districts.

? Will growth in the western part of the district affect High School boundaries?

No, the children from the proposed elementary school #23 will go to Fossil Ridge.

? Fossil Ridge High School has the lowest academic standing, but they also have the most challenging population. How does the district address that?

If we know certain groups are difficult to teach – maybe we need to figure out how to do it. It is a nationwide problem.

? Regarding State funding – it is my understanding that NWISD gets more per money from the State per student than KISD. How do we influence the State to balance that? This is already underway in the form of lawsuits to change the target revenue formula established in 2006 when the State lost a lawsuit, and established the current Target Revenue formulas. The legislature basically created a monster. Now 5 new lawsuits have been filed. Property wealthy districts have friends in Legislature, and have influence. The court will hear arguments in the suites in Oct, and expect a decision in Dec. The legislature meets again in Jan. 2013. KISD supports the current lawsuit. The current Target Revenue is \$4900 per student, and will be down a bit next year. Cuts made in summer 2011, have helped carry the budget through 2013. They may add some things back.

? Dr. Veitenheimer is leaving to work in another State. Can he draw retirement from KISD, while working elsewhere?

Under the Texas State Retirement system he can if he chooses. Based on the rules of TSR, any educator can choose to do this, not just Dr. V., and not just employees of KISD.

? I don't know anything about the Legislature. As parent, how can I get involved to make sure elected officials fix the state funding system?

Locally, your current representatives in the State House are either Vicki Truitt or Barbara Nash, and in the Senate, Wendy Davis. Write to all of them. Emails are best, short and to the point. Tell them that something is broken and it needs to be fixed. Use NWISD as an example. If KISD has the same Target Revenue as NWISD, we would have \$33 million more each year in state funding. The Board has to remain politically neutral.

? Is there a website where we can go to get financial figures?

KISD website, click on the finance tab.

? Email question: Is there any funding available to improve the rock strewn fields behind all the KISD Elementary schools in NFW, to make them safe for the children? KISD does not have funds for this. Talk to local school folks, and community organizations and see what can be done as a neighborhood to help that campus.

Nef Ortiz mentioned that it's possible someone like Hillwood might have some dirt to get rid of, and want to donate it. Those are out of the box types of solutions that might help.

? Email question: What is the plan for replacing Dr. Veitenheimer, and the timing of it? The Board will name search firm at the next meeting. Within 2 months they hope to have a new candidate hired who would start work during the summer.

? Email question: I was disappointed in the choice of cuts. Important programs for GT were widely cut. In my opinion, the district is not meeting the needs of this group. Pay to Play type programs were not considered.

Cuts were made to every area including fine arts, and athletics. People don't think that athletics were hit, but teams were cut from every sport across the board. Every head football coach is now teaching a class – that's unheard of.

? Email question: How will the lawsuit affect KISD?

Mr. Youngs said he is not optimistic about the outcome. Some people think that the state setting the tax rate for schools (maximum \$1.04 for M & O) is a de-facto state property tax which is prohibited in the State Constitution. They are not confident that the next legislature will do anything better.

? What is the current target revenue per student, and what was it last year?

This year it is \$4900 per student. Last year it was \$5000.

? How have the budget cuts affected student teacher ratios?

The State has caps on students per teacher. We used to hire another teacher when one class reached the cap, but that meant another classroom, and the results would be 12 students per teacher in those two classrooms. This yr the district filed 69 waivers for the student teacher cap. Most districts are doing the same. They discovered that the impact is marginal. Academic studies show that class size does not affect academic performance until it reaches 40 students per teacher. Intellectually you think smaller is better – studies don't support that. Kindergarten is capped at 24 internally at KISD.

? Why did the Board do a TRE?

We either needed to raise revenue, or make cuts. We put the question to the voters. Voters 3 to 2 said cut budget, so that's what we did. We need to remember that it's a big budget. \$1 million in cuts is only 1/2 of 1 percent of the budget.

? Parents are concerned about technology levels at Timberview Middle– they don't bring home books, everything done electronically. Now the kids are moving on to Timber Creek High – is more tech going into it so that there is continuity?

Timberview Middle has created middle school envy in the District. They do have a tech budget, but no longer get the tech allotment from the State – \$1 mill. The Board has been able to replace the State tech money from savings, and some will go to TC High. District recognizes that problem.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:30 am.