

**Minutes of the Facility Advisory Committee Meeting
Unified School District No. 435
Dickinson County**

Abilene, Kansas

October 2, 2013

The Facility Advisory Committee of Abilene Unified School District No. 435 met for a meeting in the District Office at 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, October 2, 2013.

Keith Blackburn addressed the committee first. A priority list of the committees thoughts on district needs was compiled and handed out by Keith. The priorities were recorded by building and included the price estimates which totaled over 27 million dollars. Keith summarized the list and then opened the floor for discussion and questions.

One committee member stated that the electric system needs at the high school have changed drastically since the building was built.

Dr. Guy said that she was approached by a superintendent who said that Abilene is the only school in our league that doesn't have the capability to play 4 games at one time. The games have to be played one at a time, causing the students to be out too late.

Keith was asked if updating the HVAC systems at the high school would fix all of the leaking pipes. His answer was yes. Another question regarding the HVAC systems was if they could only update the power systems at Kennedy and McKinley as their lighting is OK and if that would save the district some money. Keith said that was a possibility, however he didn't have the cost saving numbers with him this evening. Committee members wanted to discuss the HVAC updates in more detail. Keith said that that isn't a good discussion to have this early in the process. The true needs of each building won't actually be known until a bond issue is passed and work begins. Estimates provided are just that, but should cover the cost unless something really unexpected is discovered. Keith said that once a bond issue amount has been voted on and passed, only that amount can be spent. He has to make it work to accomplish the priority list. Keith shared that when the board has voted on a dollar amount, Steve Shogren will write it up legally, giving more specifics and details.

Committee members asked if the proposed new 4-5 building would be built to allow for expansion in the event that K-3 students move over there in the future as district buildings age. Keith said yes, however the current plans would be to have a kitchen, gym, cafeteria and media center that would just house the 4th and 5th graders at this point. These areas of the building would be located on the outside of the building though so that they could be enlarged in the future if needed.

Committee members asked if any mold issues discovered would be a big surprise money-wise. Keith said that they could be.

Steve Shogren then addressed the committee, handing out updated mill levy assumptions and sales tax information. The 27 million dollar total had been added so committee members could see the effect it would have on home owners and land owners. Steve said the cost to a \$100,000.00 home owner would be approximately \$13.00 a month, the cost of a pizza and a gallon of gas. The cost to land owners would be

approximately \$1.03 per acre. Steve noted that some types of land would be a little more and some would be a little less.

Also on the mill levy handout were a couple of scenarios showing how the mill levy amounts would change if the district were to pursue a dedicated sales tax with the city of Abilene. Steve stressed that these were just scenarios at this point, as the city has not been petitioned by the district to do this. Committee members also received a handout showing the sales tax amounts of Abilene and surrounding communities. Salina is the lowest at 8.05%. Abilene is currently in the low middle at 8.25%. Several communities are at 8.65%. Steve feels that if the city is willing to do this, it would take some of the burden off of property taxes and share it with Abilene's tourist population. Questions and discussion followed. One committee member asked the history of bond issues in Abilene. Dr. Guy said that in her 18 years at Abilene, none have failed. Another committee member added that the district has never pursued one this large.

Steve told the committee members that they need to do what is best for their kids and grandkids. That they need to weigh the needs versus the wants. He also reminded them about the benefit that state aid has on bond issues. It is currently at 39%, but changes from year to year since it is based on local assessed valuation. Historically, the aid has never been below the low 30s. Steve said that the legislature has talked about taking it away completely the last couple of years, but feels that if a bond issue is passed prior to the end of the upcoming legislative session, districts with state aid will keep it for the life of the bonds.

One committee member feels that our enrollment will continue to grow and would like people to see Abilene as a destination to go. Smaller communities are struggling and he thinks that may cause them to choose to come to Abilene. If we improve our facilities, it will benefit the district, as quality attracts. Steve added that the first thing families considering a move look at is the school system. He also feels that the bond issue is more than a school decision, it is an economic development decision.

A 5 minute break was called at 8:15 p.m. The meeting reconvened at 8:20 p.m.

Dr. Guy then addressed the committee asking them for 2 things. The first was a dollar amount that the committee members feel they could financially support and that they think the community of Abilene could support. The second was for ideas to re-purpose or sell the current Garfield building should a new 4-5 building be pursued.

The first committee member to respond said he feels that the priority list is all needs. His family falls into the category of upper middle class, owning a \$100,000.00 home and believes that the mill levy rate on 27 million dollars is doable. Pursuing the dedicated sales tax option would be an attractive addition. At past meetings, there has been discussion regarding separating the high school gym and auditorium out on the ballot. This committee member does not feel that is a good idea. It should be all together and let the voters decide. The other committee members were thanked for their participation and opinions which he values.

Impressed by the progress of the committee was the first sentiment of the next committee member. He has not been able to be in attendance at all of the meetings. Looking the community of Abilene in the eye to say that these are the needs of the district should be done. He also feels that blending the bond issue with the dedicated sales tax should be pursued.

The next committee member said that she has visited with several community members who have children that will not benefit from any improvements that are made. However, they are very supportive of the potential bond issue. They said that it is time for Abilene to “catch up” to our surrounding communities. Upgrading the gym planned at the possible new 4-5 to a competition gym is a suggestion that would benefit the community.

Thanks to Keith and Steve for their expertise was expressed by the next committee member. He feels that it would be difficult to cut anything from the priority list and believes that we should go for it all.

Agreement with all that’s been said was the opinion of the next responder. She said that all of our buildings need renovations and that things will just get more expensive if we wait. Taking advantage of the state aid offered at this time would also be financially wise.

The next committee member jumped on the band wagon with the previous comments. He feels like the committee’s presentation to the board at their regular meeting on October 14, 2013 should recommend going for the 27 million dollar bond issue blended with the dedicated sales tax option. Educating the public via any means possible will be important. He feels that if they understand it, they will support it.

Steve was then asked what kind of a time frame it would take to work with the city regarding the dedicated sales tax. He does not feel that it would be a drawn out process, but that there would need to be several meetings and approval by the city council and board of education. The committee member who asked this question favors that dedicated sales tax option. A great school system is the biggest draw of a good city and feels that the bond issues should be a joint effort between the district and city.

No unnecessary items on the priority list were seen by the next committee member. She would like more details on how we can educate the public. The building tours taken early in the facility study process by committee members really spoke to her. This could be a good way to convince people. Some of them may not have been in the buildings for years. Steve summarized the normal plan for this portion of a bond issue. It runs 60 days and is a very busy time. If a bond issue is pursued, he’d appreciate the help of the committee members during this portion.

The opinion of the next committee member is that the needs on the priority list justify the 27 million dollars and believes that the district could come up with even more needs.

Several committee members are worried that the community may vote no to a bond issue because of what could happen to Garfield. Much of the community cares deeply about Garfield and would not like to see it torn down or become an eye-sore. Steve said that it shouldn’t be difficult to find an alternative use for this building if it is structurally sound. One possibility is re-purposing it for early education or district support services. The Coop is not interested in buying the building but would be interested in renting part of it. In this case, maintenance of the aging building still be a concern.

Lowering the bond issue to 23 million was the opinion of the next committee member. He feels that by cutting the HVAC items, we might still be able to get everything on the priority list. Sharing the burden of the cost with the community/tourists via the dedicated sales tax is also favored.

Committee members then asked if the district has any cash reserves that could be used to help with the costs. Dr. Guy answered that there are balances in some funds, but that the district is governed by the state on how

they are spent and this priority list does not qualify. We do have a capital outlay fund that gets used on a yearly basis to make improvements such as new bathrooms, etc. Our current mill levy collected for capital outlay is 3.5 mills. Dr. Guy informed the committee that the board of education has the authority to collect 8 mills but has chosen to keep it low.

Dr. Guy asked for a show of hands regarding the sale of Garfield. The majority of the committee raised their hands. They do not want to see the building become a burden to the tax payers.

Committee members were informed by Dr. Guy that the time frame of a special election for the bond issue, if pursued, would be February-April 2014. This would mean that the board of education has to decide in December/January 2013/2014 if they wish to pursue it and the dollar amount. One committee member asked Steve what happens if it were voted down at a spring 2014 special election. He said that the next time it could be done again would be during the general elections in November 2014. But advises it that happens, we run the risk of losing state aid.

Dr. Guy invited all of the Facility Advisory Committee members to be in attendance at the board meeting on October 14, 2013 at 7:00 p.m. and asked that they designate 1-2 people to be the spokespersons for the presentation. She said that it does not have to be elaborate and that board members would receive a copy of the priority list, sales tax and mill levy information prior to the meeting. They have also seen most of the building plans at previous facility study meetings. Committee members were also informed that the board of education would not be making a decision on the bond issue at this meeting. They will just receive the information presented, possibly ask questions and put it on the agenda of a future meeting.

Mike Whitehair was nominated to be the presentation spokesperson. He accepted and said that he would probably enlist a couple more committee members to assist.

Dr. Guy thanked the committee for the countless hours and effort that they have put into this project.

The meeting adjourned at 9:10 p.m.