

## **Citizen Community Meeting #2**

January 30, 2024

Time: 5:00 pm

Location:

Higley Unified School District  
Governing Boardroom  
2935 S Recker Rd  
Gilbert, AZ 85295

*The goal of the citizen's committee is to have thoughtful, public dialogue and provide our Governing Board with a recommendation that helps them make an educated decision on what critical needs should be addressed.*

### **AGENDA**

#### **I. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by Tyler Moore, Chief Financial Officer for Higley Unified School District at 5:00 pm.

The following committee members were present:

Tyler Moore

Gustavo Landeros

Melissa Johnson

Vanessa Shepherd

Victoria Payne

Eric Braun

Melanie Shaha

Kathleen Richards

Taylor Francis

Domingo Santos

Ozzie Lewis

Robert Furneaux

Marty Bender

Scott Hamilton

Not in attendance: Christopher Sexton, Michelle Bugg

Due to communication issues, Jennifer Nunez has withdrawn from the committee.

#### **Approval of the Agenda**

#### **II. Approval of the Minutes**

#### **III. Demographics**

- a. Presenter – Rick Brammer from Applied Economics, LLC. Focused on the following topics:

- Enrollment trends – Some parts of the district have continued to experience growth, while others have experienced decline. Enrollment in the district has peaked and is trending down. Affecting enrollment are alternative providers – a total of 10 charter schools are located in the district with 8 more located within one mile and school vouchers – this year there are 73,000 being utilized state-wide. Important to keep facilities state of the art and up to date to attract enrollment.

- Demographic characteristics of existing population – Aging population with school age students down.
- Residential development impacts – Not many new single-family homes being built now, mostly multi-family units. Typically, there are not a lot of children in multi-family housing.
- Enrollment projections – Enrollment is in decline but school-age population has continued to increase slightly due to new home construction and out of boundary enrollment.

*Conclusions:*

Enrollment has declined and now shows signs of further decline as smaller classes advance through upper grades.

Active and planned developments will add a number of housing to the district during the 10- year projection period, leaving almost no vacant land for additional development.

***Questions from committee members:***

Q – Do you track charters offering kindergarten full day vs. half day?

A – Do not track but charters are largely switching over to full day kindergarten.

Q – Are there details of ESA voucher usage by district?

A – The data is not available yet at that level of detail. Do not know which students in HUSD boundaries are utilizing.

Q – Are there any other states that have gone through this type of voucher program?

A – Not aware of any.

Q – Are you doing anything to attract students on the front end to the district?

A - Have worked with many districts to set up magnet schools.

Q - Are we tracking how much of our population is leaving for surrounding districts; do we follow up with families who leave?

A – Demographics can track how many are leaving but they do not know where students are going.

Q - Do we know how many school age children live within our boundary and whether they go to an HUSD school or not?

A – Yes.

Q - How do we know why students are leaving?

A - Surveys can be done; Mr. Moore stated that we have families fill out a form to capture that information but they are not mandated to tell us where they are going. This can be researched further.

Q – What does the boundary at Greenfield & Ray or Warner include?

A - That is outside the HUSD boundary.

Q – Does the district have any dedicated school sites in (the new) Legado development- are there any school sites for other districts?

A – HUSD does not have any dedicated school sites; we have neighboring schools that would service that area.

Q - Does the district have a connection with the town of Gilbert to rezone multi-family housing to single-family?

A – The district has no authority on this. Sometimes the town may ask districts their opinions.

Q -What are townhomes considered?

A - They are considered multi-family.

Q- Number of households and school age population continues to increase, the district service rate and enrollment population are down, do we know why? With the ESA voucher trend, will that continue to increase and further affect enrollment? C

A – Enrollment is due to (school) choice. In the next 5 years school choice is going to be important. ESA vouchers are a new phenomenon and new impact will happen first and then will fall, expect program to get capped due to sustainability.

Q - Can we track where we send student records when students leave?

A - Mr. Moore will follow up with assessment team to find out where student records are sent.

Q –As the service rate falls below 50% have you analyzed whether local overrides and bond elections are successful in that environment?

A – Have not done that research.

Q – What defines a service rate and how is it different from enrollment population ratio?

A – Service rate isolates the out of district enrollment because the enrollment to population ratio is a raw ratio between here is our population and here is the number of students we have.

Committee member commented that it seems like the reason we'd need a new school building is due to growth; enrollment projections have changed since previous bond initiatives. Does not believe it is a good idea to build a new school and would like discussion on that.

Q – Between the last analysis and this one, what are the top 3 reasons for the huge shift?

A -

1. More school choice in the district (charters)
2. ESA vouchers
3. Demographics (lower birth rates, area not affordable for people to move into)

Q – Charter schools enrollment is down by 400 students, is that for all schools?

A – That is the total of all 18 schools

Q – Population for household has been decreasing, do we see that going back up?

A – Aging of population, group of people came in at the same time and are aging at same time. Age structure of householders is tracked.

Q - From a population and enrollment perspective do we need to see a fundamental shift in the way the town of Gilbert is zoning – agree or disagree?

A - Disagree in this case. The overwhelming demographics in this community would not be enough in this case.

Q - In the next 10 years or so, certain schools will have a decline in enrollment – is there a way to determine at which sites we should invest in to remain competitive?

A – In the full report it shows where students go to school vs. where they live. (Full report will be provided to committee)

#### **IV. Survey Instrument Review**

- a. Presenter – Paul Bentz from HighGround, Inc. discussed polling registered voters in the Higley boundaries regarding a bond (November 2024).

- Of registered voters who cast a ballot, only 30% of respondents have children at home, meaning approx. 70% of people who vote in November will not have children and receive any newsletters, etc. information that Higley would send out.
- Shared that 71% of AZ residents are registered voters and that 76% of those voters participate in elections, which is why polling (surveys) is important.
- Survey sponsors are not disclosed to provide accurate, unbiased information (will not identify that the survey is on behalf of HUSD).
- Reviewed draft of district survey. This is a statistically valid sample of 400-person poll which provides a 4.9% margin of error, which is 5 points higher or 5 points lower on any issue. This is a very accurate sample with a 98.5% confidence interval.

*Questions from committee members:*

Q – Will you call 400 people and a percentage of those will respond or will you stop once you hit 400 responses?  
A - 400 completed survey results will be presented (will call over 400 people)

Q – How does the district use the data?

A – Get an understanding of where your electorate are, gives an understanding of the biggest challenges, and what is pervasive in the district. It is a tool to determine if it makes sense to call for an election for an item and if it has viability.

Q - If you're reading the question on the ballot, many people may not understand the wording (i.e. M&O budget).

A – Respondents give the *don't know* answer. These voters will be getting ballot language.

Q - On prop 123 have you done any research on how having a higher up the ballot education initiative influences down ballot participation?

A – Have asked the question before, it depends on how Prop 123 will be constructed, there are still too many unknowns.

Q – Are you concerned about the impact on override and bond elections arising from the Gilbert goons?

A – That is something that is being monitored.

Q - Need to determine if the bond funding is needed before determining if we need a survey.

A – This is one piece of information. It takes time to do the surveys and while the committee is doing its work, that provides time for the surveys to take place to provide the committee with data. The survey does not presuppose a decision to go out for a bond.

Q - What is the cost of the survey?

A - Do not have the exact amount, will check notes (Mr. Moore stated he did not have the exact number for previous survey costs but it could have been in the \$5-10K range)

Q – People who respond to surveys, is it pretty spread between conservative, moderate and liberal or is it does it typically favor one side or the other?

A – Typically 10 points conservative is very reflective of what our electorate is particularly in this area.

Q- Are you going to define what modernization is?

A- No, we will use the phrase modernization.

Q – With age-restricted communities, are you modelling that when you're selecting who you are going to call?

A - Yes.

Q - Clarifying what the committee's purpose is – is committee authorizing survey and obligating funds for this? Would like to have a cost amount before a recommendation is made as to whether or not they vote for the survey.

A – The committee can decide the value of the survey and whether to proceed or not.

The committee agreed that a quote is needed before deciding on whether or not to move forward with the survey. The presenter responded that the survey can be done for \$15,000.

Q - When would the survey begin?

A - 2 weeks. The results would be brought back to the committee so that they can make recommendation to the governing board.

Q - What does it cost the district to put this (bond) on the ballot?

A - Approximately \$120,000

It was determined that with the quote from the vendor, a vote by committee members would be taken to approve and proceed with the survey/poll or oppose:

**Roll call vote of the members in attendance:**

- In favor of proceeding with the survey: 9 voted in favor
- Opposed: 3 opposed

Results will be provided at meeting #4. *\*Question 35 will be updated.*

**V. Future Agenda Items**

- A. M&O Continuation
- B. Capital Maintenance Assessment/Project List
- C. Classroom Space Usage

**VI. Adjournment**

*Next meeting date February 20, 2024*

*Meeting adjourned at 7:01 pm*