

Austin Independent School District
Environmental Stewardship Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes
May 23, 2019
5:30 – 7:30 pm
Carruth Administration Center, 1111 W. 6th Street, Board Auditorium

Attendees

Members in Attendance

Aimee Aubin
Liz Cardinal
Alecia Casper
Irene Dooling
Colleen Garland
Kristi Hibler-Luton
Sherry Lepine*
Kate Martin
Amanda Mortl Walker
Mary Priddy
Dub Taylor
Jeff Wacker
Jessica Wilson

Visitors

Jennifer Cregar

* Indicates Committee Tri-Chair

**Indicates excused absence

Staff Coordinators in Attendance

Darien Clary

Members Not in Attendance

Pamela Abee Taulli
Melody Alcazar
Bianca Bidiuc Peterson**
Karen Bishop**
Rob Borowski**
Jake Carter
Sam DeSanto
Cassidy Ellis**
Amir Emamian
Charlie Gutierrez
Kris Hafezizadeh
Cari Land
Monica Lopez Magee**
Lauren Maples**
Anne Muller**
Susan Peterson
Justo Ramirez**
Carrie Schreiber
Richard Shearman**
Ilya Schmulenson**
Cory Skuldt
Anneliese Tanner**
Cynththia Wilcox
Louis Zachary

Minutes

I. Welcome and Approval of Minutes

The ESAC Tri-chair Mary Priddy facilitated the meeting and called the meeting to order at 5:42pm. Ms. Priddy thanked AISD Food and Nutrition Services for providing the delicious dinner at the ESAC meeting. Guests were welcomed and asked to introduce themselves. Neither January nor March meeting minutes were approved as the group did not reach quorum.

II. Public Comments & Announcements

There were no public comments.

III. Reinvention Roadmap

AISD Chief Operations Officer, Matias Segura, hosted a discussion about the Reinvention Roadmap. During the presentation, Mr. Segura noted that the roadmap has an aggressive schedule with the Trustees voting in October of this year. The process includes data collection, developing goals that include academic visions, staffing support, deferred maintenance, utility costs, bond projects, and other factors. Planning regions will be developed, and community engagement will be sought. If a consolidation occurs, we want to be thoughtful about what may happen to the site so it can benefit the community. This could be an opportunity to provide affordable housing, recreation space, support for creative space, etc. The idea is that when AISD makes a recommendation, we will understand what the change is and the related opportunities.

The most recent milestone that was complete was establishing the guiding principles. These were approved by the Trustees at the May 20, 2019 board meeting and include: (1) Ensure equitable access to programmatic opportunities that engage and inspire all students, (2) Put more students in reimagined, 21st-century learning environments that engage and inspire. (3) Maintain assigned-school concept and other choices options, (4) Reduce financial obligations not directed toward student learning and support, (5) Optimize facility use to benefit students, families and communities. Additionally, AISD hired an equity officer in February to engage in the school change process because the District wants to prevent change from happening in an unbalanced way.

During the discussion, ESAC members pointed out that the environment is not clearly stated in the guiding principles, but that it does seem to factor into these decisions. For example, re-imagining the schools could help cut emissions related to transportation. There may be an opportunity to make this feature in the decision-making process more prominent, and the Austin community would likely support this approach. Mr. Segura noted that sustainability (financial, equitable, environmental) factors are threaded throughout the school changes process. We would want to quantify the environmental benefits in a way that they can be compared and used in the school changes scenarios. The ESAC Tri-chair, Dr. Sherry Lepine, mentioned that the new AISD Educational Specifications and Project Development manual embrace the environment.

An ESAC member asked about the \$1.7 million in deferred maintenance costs. Mr. Segura replied that this is the total cost to bring facilities up to a suitability score of 90.

Mr. Segura shared that public meetings will begin in June to engage the community in their

visions for what makes a school (and school district) great. Then, “Think Tank” meetings will take place, and Mr. Segura encouraged the ESAC members to apply to serve on a Think Tank, stressing the importance of creative approaches and people who think out of the box. Another source of community input will come from the “Thought Exchange” online platform. This will enable the district to understand if a thought/issue resonates with the larger groups. AISD Department of Communications and Community Engagement is analyzing where feedback is coming from and where the missing voices may be for targeted outreach.

During the conversation, it was also suggested that the District may have additional opportunities for improved community connection by piggybacking on events that already bring the community to the school (Brighter Bites food giveaways, etc.). It was also mentioned that a train-the-trainer kit would be helpful to those who want to help get the word out about the School Changes process, including principals. Teachers and staff may also be good target groups since principals may have a lot on their plates.

Mr. Segura noted that the budget discussion that was prominent during the previous years allowed this process to take place. We learned in the 2016 Facilities Master Planning process that consolidation made sense from some perspectives (resource efficiency). Now, the City of Austin and AISD recognize that they can work together to find solutions for these spaces that still add a community benefit.

IV. Awards

Members with perfect attendance for the year’s ESAC members were recognized: Aimee Aubin, Alecia Casper, and Dr. Sherry Lepine. Subcommittees were also recognized for the AISD Sustainability Plan strategies they helped advance during the year. In total, over 62 strategies were advanced.

V. Action Area Updates

AISD Zero Waste Specialist and ESAC member, Amanda Mortl Walker, provided the Action Area Update for Food and Waste & Procurement. AISD is now providing compostable cutlery in its school cafes. Also, the Nutrition and Food Services Department received a grant through the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation that enabled them to contract with a food services consultant to help advance the District’s work with the Good Food Purchasing Program. Plant-based food will also be featured in upcoming school menus, and bulk milk will be piloted to reduce wasted milk and packaging (milk cartons). Ms. Mortl Walker also showed the sorting video that was made by Blanton Elementary students. Additionally, she featured TEKS alignment with Recycling-themed education across a variety of subject areas. This overlap was identified by AISD Career and Technical Education staff, and presents an opportunity to communicate how sustainability-related topics are already being integrated into AISD curriculum. Austin Creative Reuse is also working with Webb Middle School and Lee Elementary School to reuse and redistribute supplies throughout the school. This reduces waste while saving money since the school/teachers do not have to purchase new supplies.

The ESAC member, Melody Alcazar, provided information about the Green School Park program at Wooldridge, Barrington, and Sanchez. The City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department is also assessing all AISD/PARD jointly-owned sites to identify gaps and

opportunities to increase access to nature-based recreation and education. The ESAC member, Kate Martin, shared information about the Emeril Lagasse Foundation grant that was awarded to PEAS. It is partially funding the design and construction of a teaching kitchen teaching kitchen. The total cost of the construction project is approximately \$500,000. The grant covers \$300,000 and AISD is putting in approximately \$200,000. Once complete, students will harvest from the PEAS farm at Cunningham Elementary School and use their produce in the adjacent teaching kitchen. AISD Sustainability Manager, Darien Clary, updated the members about the AISD tree inventory. Thanks to the City of Austin Urban Forest Grant, a total of 10,054 trees have been inventoried and mapped so far. The inventory is expected to be completed in winter 2019. Eight schools requested maps that were generated using the inventory data. They used the maps for earth day activities at their school.

The Energy & Water Action Area update was presented by the ESAC member, Dub Taylor. Mr. Taylor shared that AISD has seen a 4.5% reduction in electricity and water use over the past year and has seen \$1,000,000 saved compared to last year. Total utility costs were \$2.2 million less than two years ago. Many factors have resulted in reduced usage and costs, including school closures for Bond modernization (ALC, TA Brown, Doss, Norman) and improving maintenance. The energy and water management team has also contributed to this reduction by closely monitoring performance, finding causes of problems, and then correcting issues. Mr. Taylor also shared that initiatives at Crockett High School and Anderson High School have a combined predicted savings of \$78,000/year. Additionally, cooling tower water treatment is helping save water at Martin Middle School and Pickle Elementary (approximately 1,700,000 gallons of water conserved total). AISD also hopes to have an energy leadership program in place in the upcoming year through a contract with Performance Services. It will include a behavioral change program, led by a forthcoming Energy and Water Conservation Engagement Coordinator. At Reilly Elementary, green stormwater infrastructure project being designed and managed by the City of Austin Watershed Protection Department continues. This project includes twelve cisterns, five raingardens, and garden-based learning (PEAS).

The Transportation and Air Quality subcommittee had no updates.

For additional information, see the presentation slides in the meeting materials.

VI. Sustainability Manager Update

AISD Sustainability Manager, Darien Clary, shared information about the March Green Schools Conference and Expo which took place in St. Paul. Several ESAC partner organizations were present, and Ms. Clary presented about the District's inclusion of green building and outdoor learning in the 2017 Bond modernization projects. TA Brown was featured in the presentation since it will become "A Green School Rooted in STEAM and Outdoor Learning." Ms. Clary also presented about the ESAC during the post-conference leadership summit, and is serving as a mentor to other school districts interested in starting their own sustainability-related district advisory committees. During the summer, AISD Sustainability staff will continue to work towards integrating sustainability into the Campus Improvement Plans. The ESAC subcommittee leaders and Tri-Chairs will meet over the summer to set goals and priorities for the next 2019-2020 school year. New ESAC meeting dates will be shared afterwards.

For additional information, see the presentation slides in the meeting materials.

VII. Requests for Future Meeting Topics

An ESAC member requested more discussion and engagement around school changes and review of sustainability features included in 2017 bond schools and modernization projects.

The ESAC Tri-chair, Dr. Sherry Lepine, motioned to adjourn the meeting. The ESAC member, Dub Taylor, seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 7:37pm.