

MEETING MINUTES

Austin Independent School District Environmental Stewardship Advisory Committee

Ann Richards School for Young Women Leaders | 2309 Panther Trail | Austin, TX 78704
September 6, 2023 | 5:30-7:30 pm

The AISD Environmental Stewardship Advisory Committee met at Ann Richards School for Young Women leaders on September 6, 2023 to consider, discuss, and take action on the items listed in the agenda below. These meeting minutes are supplemented by the meeting materials, which can be accessed on the [ESAC website](#).

Attendees

Members in Attendance

Amanda Braziel
Ana Echeverria
Antonio Ross
Ariana Colasanti
Ashleigh Cibelli-Pettus
Bill Schnell
Bobby Sandoval
Eileen McGinnis
Jacqui Willis
Jeff Wacker *
Jen Cregar *
Katie Cane
Kevin Lanza
Kindal Keen
Kir Kraus
Lauren Langford
Laykha Chopra
Matthew Garland
Melody Alcazar
Meredith Clarke
Michael Eggen
Nishtha Verma
Rey Torres
Rica Sunga-Kwan
Rue Nava
Sahiti Karempudi
Shaun Auckland
Tamera Tate
Tracy Geraldez
Yasmine Anderson

Visitors in Attendance

Carinne Maravilla
Catherine Martinez
Christine Steenport
Colleen Garland
Cristiano Monsalves
Mary Petrovich
Mike Berryman
Juliana Auckland

Staff Coordinators in Attendance

Darien Clary
Lucia Sewing Cole

Members Not in Attendance

Elizabeth Harper **
Greg Behl
Jen Evans
Mike Griffin
Monique Beacham **
Nicole Howard **

Citizens Communion

Jessica Wilson

* Indicates Committee Co-Chair

** Indicates excused absence

Minutes

I. Welcome & Intros

Jen Cregar, ESAC Co-Chair, called the meeting to order at 5:48 pm and facilitated a brief icebreaker activity. At 6:10 pm, Jen Cregar opened up the meeting to announcements. Katie Cane shared that the Travis County Binder Resuse Program would be at the AISD Showcase. Carinne Maravilla and Lauren Langford shared that Keep Austin Beautiful is still registering for their green programming.

II. Public Comments

At 6:11 pm, Jen Cregar read a public comment submitted by Jessica Wilson, a parent and community member:

“As the District moves forward with spending the \$2.44 Billion bond on new and renovated spaces, it's crucial that ESAC serve its advisory role and send a letter with recommendations asap to the full Austin ISD Board of Trustees and Interim Superintendent. They rely on your expertise and passion to help guide AISD. Some key items that I would like you to consider including in your letter to AISD decision makers:

CATs and hired engineers should meet with campuses that have been redone with previous bonds to apply lessons learned to new bond builds and renovations.

Some lessons learned from the new building that my kids go to school in:

Gardens should be quickly accessible from classrooms. The vegetable garden is on the other side of campus, which means that teachers don't have enough transition time to visit it to use it as a teaching space and the youngest students struggle to use the space because it's so far away from the school building's restrooms.

Community access needs to be considered so families and neighbors can help with maintenance of gardens and taking care of campus animals, like hens. The gardens that require an AISD badge to access quickly fell into disrepair and the wildlife ponds dried up.

Gardens need soil. The butterfly garden was built on top of hard, compact fill dirt so almost nothing will grow there, and it requires too much water. The vegetable beds were filled with sandy loam and required a lot of time and grant writing for money to improve the soil enough to support vegetables.

Construction zones need to be decompacted and old foundations/concrete/tracks/parking lots should be removed and not buried. At our school you need a jack hammer to plant trees in the veggie garden area because the ground is so compact. We have to resort to doing everything in raised beds. On the playground there was an area where no soil would grow in a big oval pattern. We dug down and buried under a couple inches of soil there was the old concrete track.

Plants need water to establish their root systems. More than 20 containerized trees died at this new bond built school because the irrigation system only had a one year warranty, it broke and large trees need at least 3 years of irrigation to grow strong roots.

Plastic erosion netting should only be used in areas where you have very steep slopes and it's an absolute necessity. The track and field area is completely covered with plastic erosion netting, which is a trip hazard for kids and also trapped wildlife like a very large rat snake that one of the 2nd grade teachers helped to cut out of the netting.

AISD needs to have a plan in place for what to do with purple irrigation pipes. At our school they were left on top of the ground and quickly broke due to mowers going over them and the sun damaging the plastic. AISD didn't pick them up so school volunteers did in order to reduce the amount of purple pipes that were getting broken and plastic scattered around campus.

There are lots more lessons to learn from people who are trying their best to make these spaces work.

I would also like ESAC to consider making a statement about the importance of Joint Use Agreements, so AISD's outdoor learning spaces can be used more fully by the community. As we work to create a stronger and safer school district, we need to bring more joy and community into our schools, not reduce it.

Thank you for highlighting this for Trustees and the Interim Superintendent so our investments in bond funding truly supports work that is sustainable, long term and reflects the goals of ESAC and our community.”

III. Approval of Minutes

Jacqui Willis motioned to approve the minutes from the March 8, 2023 ESAC meeting, Meredith Clarke seconded the motion, and a majority of ESAC members passed the motion at 6:21 pm.

Jeff Wacker motioned to approve the minutes from the May 10, 2023 ESAC meeting, Rey Torres seconded the motion, and a majority of ESAC members passed the motion at 6:22 pm.

Meredith Clarke motioned to approve the minutes from the August 22, 2023 ESAC Strategic Planning meeting, Lauren Langford seconded the motion, and a majority of ESAC members passed the motion at 6:23 pm.

IV. New Member Highlights

At 6:24 pm, Jeff Wacker, ESAC Co-Chair, shared new member highlights including open positions and demographic data. See slides 8-12 of the Meeting Materials for more information.

V: Overview of ESAC Membership

At 6:33 pm, Jeff Wacker, ESAC Co-Chair, reviewed ESAC membership requirements, including attendance requirements and meeting dates. See slides 13-17 of the Meeting Materials for more information.

VI: Working Groups & Subcommittees

At 6:44 pm, Jec Cregar, ESAC Co-Chair, introduced the concept of working groups and explained the difference between subcommittees and working groups, how to join or form a subcommittee or working group, and the expectation that members participate in at least one subcommittee or working group per year (see slides 18-20 of the Meeting Materials for more information). ESAC members Eileen McGinnis and Melody Alcazar shared examples of ESAC working groups they've led. Then Jen Cregar invited attendees to brainstorm working groups and subcommittees that they would like to participate in or lead. Attendees walked around the room and wrote ideas on post-it notes. The ESAC coordinators will follow up after the meeting with next steps for the working groups and subcommittees.

VII: Joint Use Letter Discussion & Possible Vote

At 6:10 pm, ESAC member Melody Alcazar presented a [draft letter](#) to the Superintendent and Board of Trustees, written by the Joint Use Access working group, which Melody leads. The letter asks that the Board take a formal stance against the recent decision to terminate the joint-use status of nine school parks slated for modernization. Prior to taking a vote on whether to support the letter, ESAC members asked questions and engaged in discussion about the letter. Some of the questions included whether schools would be eligible for ACL grants, whether the City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department (PARD) would maintain water fountains, whether this would affect the City of Austin wanting to work with AISD, why this is happening now, whether members of the public would be arrested for using schoolyards that were not school parks outside of school hours, whether AISD would be responsible for security after hours, how the money transfer would happen, and what other ways ESAC members could support. Another point of discussion included the suggestion that the ESAC work with the Equity Advisory Committee on this issue. Christine Steenport, AISD Chief of Operations, said AISD needs to do a better job with communication but is not trying to take back the land, and clarified that there would not be any arrests.

Bobby Sandoval made a motion to vote on the letter at this ESAC meeting as opposed to waiting until the next ESAC meeting. Sahiti Karempudi seconded the motion, and a majority of ESAC members passed the motion at 7:37 pm.

Bobby Sandoval made a motion that the Joint Use Letter be sent to Superintendent Segura and the Board of Trustees on behalf of the ESAC. Kevin Lanza seconded the motion, and a majority of ESAC members passed the motion at 7:37 pm.

VIII: Closing & Adjourn

At 7:39 pm, Jeff Wacker, ESAC Co-Chair, wrapped up the meeting by stating that the ESAC staff coordinators would follow up with next steps about working groups and subcommittees, and with a reminder to help recruit for two open ESAC positions for teachers. Jen Cregar, ESAC Co-Chair, adjourned the meeting at 7:40 pm.