



# Blue Ribbon Bond Committee

May 16, 2022 Minutes

The Blue Ribbon Bond Committee of the City of Abilene, Texas met in a Regular Meeting on May 16, 2022 at 7:00 p.m. at the Downtown Library, Upstairs Auditorium, 202 Cedar, Abilene, Texas.

**Committee Members Present:**

Jay Hardaway, Chair  
Thomas Murray (came in at 7:30 p.m.)  
Regi McCabe-Gossett  
Rosten Callarman  
Aida Pantoja

**Staff Present:**

Robert Hanna, City Manager  
Mindy Patterson, Deputy City Manager  
Michael Rice, Assistant City Manager  
Mike Rains, Finance Director  
Cande Flores, Fire Chief  
Lesli Andrews, Director of Parks & Recreation

**Committee Members Absent:**

Lourdes Carter  
Sue Thomesen

## CALL TO ORDER

The Blue Ribbon Bond Committee convened in a regular meeting and was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

## AGENDA

1. **Review of Council Recommended Bond Projects**
  - a. **Fire Station No. 9**
  - b. **GV Daniels Recreation Center**
  - c. **Cesar Chavez Recreation Center**
  - d. **Kirby Lake Trail Improvements**
  - e. **Animal Shelter**

City Manager Robert Hanna gave a brief recap of what was discussed at the last meeting. Mr. Murray submitted questions to staff prior to this meeting and these questions were then answered by staff.

Lesli Andrews talked about the Recreation Centers and the feasibility study that was done in 2019 on the centers. The two centers up for discussion, GV Daniels & Cesar Chavez, were the two that were narrowed down to replace. Ms. Andrews discussed the public meetings and data that was gathered that led up to that decision. Mr. Murray had asked for numbers on the programs the Parks Department offers. Ms. Andrews gave the

average totals from 2019 for both Sears and GV Daniels, for seniors, leagues and reservations. There is not a center that gets the most usage, as it varies highly depending on the activity. They do not keep a breakdown of age on the activity. The Parks Master Plan that is currently being completed will be able to look at population density related to the recreation centers. People travel from all over to go to the recreation centers. The current FY 2022 Budget expenses were \$1,020,918 and the revenue was \$194,310, but the point of the revenue is to offset the cost of expenses.

Mr. Hanna went over the reasoning behind Nelson Park not being selected for the bond committee, as well as the flat fields. Neighborhoods and communities that have these facilities and utilize them need to take priority and that is why Council did not select those. Also, the Nelson project was very expensive. Ms. Andrews also discussed the various issues with each of the facilities.

Kirby Lake trails were discussed. Ms. Andrews went over the reasoning behind this project being brought forward for this committee's discussion. There is no place in our parks system that would have a trail this large. Ms. Andrews went over the demographics of the respondents in the study that indicated they wanted to see the Kirby Lake trail developed. The trail will be designed to be above the water line of the lake. None of it is in the floodway, but there is always a chance of a flood, and it would be constructed so it can withstand flood waters and would be usable once the water recedes. The 12% for basic and professional services is really just a placeholder for engineering, topography and state requirements. That number won't be exact until it is approved and awarded. We do not have a policy in place to go to developers and ask them for help in a project like this, however, there are a few organizations in town that have offered to help in some way. The trail system is a great opportunity for schools to take students to learn about the ecosystem there. We do not have an idea on the budget for maintaining the Cedar Creek Trail project at this time, and there are no other walking trail projects being undertaken around the City right now.

Cande Flores, Fire Chief, went over the proposed Fire Station #9 and the associated questions. The 4,000+ response increase in a 5 year period, it is split between stations and not just Station 8. Chief Flores went over the breakdown for 2021 for the stations' responses. There is a National Fire Protection Association that sets standards for fire services. In the majority of incidents, AFD complies with these standards, which are the same standards followed by ISO. An additional station would ensure that AFD meets the response criteria for every area within the city limits of Abilene. Adding Station 9 would ensure that AFD remain at an ISO-1 rating, translating into continued savings for insurers. There are not any legal obligations for a city to provide services within the city limits, but the Texas Local Government Code says we may organize a fire department. The only requirement for one is if we are annexation something. Annexation requirements were discussed. The Mutual Aid Agreement with Taylor County was discussed, and it is utilized frequently for situations like grass fires.

**2. Should the 2022 November Bond Election ask the Voters to Approve all Five Projects as One Ballot Proposition, or should the projects be combined into multiple ballot propositions?**

Mr. Hanna asked the Committee their thoughts on the above question. Chair Hardaway said he would like to split them up, as it is the most fair thing for the constituency. Mr. McCabe-Gossett questioned if there was more information on the animal shelter to help make their decision. Mr. Hanna stated that he did not think bond money would be needed for that project, at this time. Ms. Pantoja agreed that they need to be separate propositions. Mr. Callarman questioned if this was typical to break them out like this. Mr. Hanna stated that yes, we did in 2015, and most cities do it that way. Mr. Callarman is concerned with putting them all together and citizens getting sticker shock for the high total amount. Chair Hardaway also suggested that splitting it up would help with PACs supporting certain issues, like the recreation centers, instead of the whole package. Mr. McCabe-Gossett questioned if street improvements are being considered. Mr. Hanna stated that no, Council did not ask the committee to consider that. Mr. Murray agrees with splitting the propositions up, especially because the fire station is the top priority. Mr. McCabe-Gossett also agrees that splitting them up is best. He would probably table the Kirby Lake Trail if he needed to. Mr. Hanna does not anticipate any other items being discussed by the Council. Chair Hardaway does not want to see any of the items grouped together, even the two recreation centers. He also expressed his disappointment that there has not been more public input at these meetings, and asked if we can encourage more news stations and public comments at the next meeting.

Mr. Murray questioned why Council refused to discuss flat fields. He does not think people will show up to support other items when the most pressing item, flat fields, is ignored. Mr. Hanna stated that Council is committed to seeing flat fields, have a desire to see a public-private partnership on that, and hope to see a step in that direction in the near future. Chair Hardaway asked if Mr. Hanna would share with Council that the flat fields came up in discussion.

Ms. Andrews stated that there will be a public meeting for the Parks Master Plan coming up in June and encouraged both the committee members here and the public to attend for their input.

Mr. Murray asked again if it was better to provide one central recreation center that serves all the North side of town instead of breaking it up into two. Mr. Hanna stated that that would probably be the most cost effective yes, but for program effectiveness, the two separate facilities meet the better needs of the community. It will also create a difficult situation between the two communities that frequent the centers. The possibility of one passing and not the other was discussed, and it is a possibility. That is why Mr. Callarman would like to see those two items put together so the city isn't seen as playing favorites. Cobb Park was discussed, but it is in the floodway.

The consensus of the committee is to split all the propositions up, unless Council decides that the two recreation centers need to be done as one proposition.

**3. Considering Each of the Projects, Does the Scope of Work Being Considered Address the Needs of the Community as We Understand Them?**

Mr. Hanna went over the process for coming up with the projects that have been presented to this committee. The stakeholders that were surveyed were people that used the recreation centers, as well as a citizen survey. There were also focus groups at each of the recreation centers that gave input, as well as others in the community like the YMCA, AYSA and private gyms. Mr. Murray would like to see the survey results. Numbers for the after school care program were discussed. Mr. McCabe-Gossett stated that data and presentation will be key to presenting these to the citizens as an opportunity for growth. Mr. Hanna emailed the group the citizen survey, but the Comprehensive Plan and the Parks Master Plan are not close to being done. The committee made it clear that they wanted as much information available to the public before the election as possible. Chair Hardaway asked to discuss this item further at a later date to allow for more community involvement.

**4. Are the Probably Costs for the Capital Improvements Identified by the City Reasonable Given the Current Known Market Conditions?**

Mr. Hanna talked about the 2015 bond projects and that in his opinion, the City did not do a good job of putting those numbers together ahead of time and explained why. Chair Hardaway said that no direction was given to staff or the bond committee at that time about what was wanted, and the process was just different than it is now. Restrictions placed on ballot propositions by the state and how the funds work once they are approved were discussed at length. The possibility of factoring in 10% for construction and related costs to the proposed numbers was discussed, as well as ways to possibly scale down the various projects.

**5. Given the Legal Constraints on Promoting or Advocating for a Bond Election, What is the Best Methodology for Educating the Public on the Proposition or Propositions on the Ballot?**

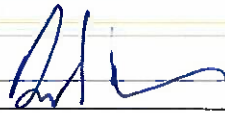
Mr. Hanna explained that once an election is called or considered, a City employee or Council member cannot go out and advocate for or against the proposition, since it's using tax dollars. We can only educate the public on what they are voting on. An advocacy group can form a political action committee to promote a proposition though. Chair Hardaway questioned if PEG funds can be used for marketing. Mr. Hanna says that yes that can be done, as well as airing the Council discussion on the bond propositions on television. The media here need content so they are generally accepting of airing things like that. Mr. McCabe-Gossett asked if the education piece could be started early. Mr. Hanna wants to avoid trying to convince people the need for something, but only explaining what the project is. The committee members are free to speak on the issues as they like, since they are not spending public dollars on

anything. The committee would like to see promotions of projects like summer care statistics be pushed out now, just so people start to see nuggets of information already out there to plant seeds in people's minds. July is Parks & Recreation Month so it was suggested to start tying things in that way.

**Adjournment**

There being no further discussion, Chair Hardaway adjourned the meeting at 8:46 p.m.

**APPROVED**



Mr. Jay Hardaway, Chairman