



Blue Ribbon Bond Committee

June 13, 2022 Minutes

The Blue Ribbon Bond Committee of the City of Abilene, Texas met in a Regular Meeting on June 13, 2022 at 7:00 p.m. at the Downtown Library, Upstairs Auditorium, 202 Cedar, Abilene, Texas.

Commissioners Present:

Jay Hardaway, Chair
Thomas Murray (arrived at 7:20 p.m.)
Sue Thomesen
Rosten Callarman
Lourdes Carter
Aida Pantoja

Staff Present:

Robert Hanna, City Manager
Shawna Atkinson, City Secretary
Michael Rice, Assistant City Manager
Lesli Andrews, Director of Parks & Recreation
Julee Hatton, Library Director

Commissioners Absent:

Regi McCabe Gossett

CALL TO ORDER

The Blue Ribbon Bond Committee convened in a regular meeting and was called to order at 7:00 p.m. Chair Hardaway led the Pledges of Allegiance.

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**
- 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?**
- 3. Considering each of the projects, does the scope of work being considered address the needs of the community as we understand them?**
- 4. Are the probable costs for the capital improvements identified by the City reasonable given current known market conditions?**

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?

City Manager Hanna started with a general overview of the 5 projects. The fire station and the reasons it is needed were discussed. Chair Hardaway questioned if this new station had been in place at the time of the Mesquite Heat Fire last month, would have had an effect on the fire. Mr. Hanna does not think it would have affected it, maybe only for mutual aid. We currently have more fire fighters per truck than most communities and this will only help that.

The two recreation centers were discussed and the scope of work on both of those projects.

For the Kirby Lake Trail, there have been a number of citizens advocating for this trail.

The animal shelter was discussed, but it will not need to be included in a bond election. All Kind Animal Initiative is on board for the project and land has been acquired already. The non-profit can raise the rest of the funds needed.

The board discussed getting people out to vote and that it would be concerning to have these great projects on the ballot and no one showing up vote for them. It will help that it's on the November election, as more people will show up to vote. The language on the proposed ballot was discussed, as well as possible voter turnout. The 2015 bond election was discussed. The board questioned if the bond election could be passed on to the May ballot. Mr. Hanna's concern is it getting caught up in the Mayoral election, it would also potentially change all the proposed numbers as far as construction costs.

The limitations on promoting the bonds with public funds were discussed at length.

Keeping each item as a separate bond proposition was discussed, with the exception of possibly combing the two recreation centers into one proposition. The board recommends the ballot propositions be lumped into the Fire Station, the Rec Centers and the Kirby Lake Trail System.

The consensus of the board is to postpone the majority of the decision making until the next meeting, which is July 18th, in order to get more public input, since no members of the public or media have been attending the meetings. The board would like City staff to try and publicize that meeting more than these have been. Mr. Hanna will put out a press release and promote it on social media. The board can advocate on their own social media for the public to come, as well. Mr. Hanna dissuaded them from participating in any dialogue. The board would also like staff to contact the newspaper to see if they can do a piece on the proposed bond election to drum up some interest from the community. That is the consensus of the board.

Questions 2 and 3 were discussed. Chair Hardaway asked for a little more information in between now and the next meeting in order to understand those questions better and be able to answer questions better if any arise from the public.

The way the money will be spent was discussed. Writing the bond language to be very broad was considered, so if there was money leftover it could be used still was discussed. The bond counsel will ultimately write the language though.

Public Comment at the next meeting was discussed and allowing participants 3 minutes once in the beginning, or three minutes on each item being discussed.

The city typically prepares a facts sheet with the costs and what all is included in it. In 2015 there was a PAC formed in support of the bond and they did all the advertisements and the like for that. It was all done with private funds. The 2015 bond process was discussed at length and how it was promoted.

Once the election is called, Council will not be able to discuss it. Attempting to promote specific programs in the city ahead of time that will potentially tie in to these bonds were discussed. The Parks Master Plan Open House is coming up on the 16th and they will get a lot of feedback from that meeting, as well as a survey that will be going out soon too. There will be a huge push on parks soon.

Discussing these bond propositions at various community events was discussed.

The board would like a brief summary of all the items again at the beginning of the next meeting. Then opening up the public comments on each of the items. People have been pretty silent about these bonds so there might not even be anyone that comes to speak.

Mr. Hanna asked if the board wished to stick with what was done in 2015 with an FAQ?

In response to Item #5, Chair Hardaway moved to encourage the City staff to use all legal means necessary to educate the public about this bond election. Mr. Callarman seconded. Motion carried.

AYES (6): Chair Hardaway, Mr. Murray, Ms. Thomesen, Mr. Callarman, Ms. Carter, and Ms. Aida Pantoja

NAYS (0): None

ABSENT (1): Mr. McCabe-Gossett

In Response to Item #4, Chair Hardaway moved that the board agrees that the capital improvements identified by the City are reasonable given the current market conditions. Ms. Thomesen seconded. Motion carries.

AYES (6): Chair Hardaway, Mr. Murray, Ms. Thomesen, Mr. Callarman, Ms. Carter, and Ms. Aida Pantoja

NAYS (0): None

ABSENT (1): Mr. McCabe-Gossett

Everything else will be voted on at the last meeting.

Chair Hardaway's inclination is to recommend all the projects be put on the ballot, but with specific language that combines the two parks, and allows for excess funds to be used for other park related projects. He thinks all the projects are worthy of consideration given what he knows and doesn't think that punting them to the voters is a bad idea. Ms. Thomesen agrees that all these things improve Abilene and why would you not want to do that. Ms. Pantoja agrees that they are all beneficial projects for a growing City.

Chair Hardaway spoke about the last bond election when a large recreation center was proposed, that there was a lack of direction from the community on that project and recreation in general.

Mr. Callarman agrees with Chair Hardaway that all of them should go on the ballot, especially putting the two recreation centers together. He thinks that's the wisest course of action. He does want to see if there's any comment at the July meeting that could sway anything before voting though.

Ms. Carter agrees with what everyone has said. Mr. Murray thinks the Fire Station is a no-brainer and part of the social contract with the city, and that linking the two recreation centers together is a better course than keeping them separate and taking the chance that one doesn't pass. He remains skeptical of the walking trail though, and has only heard negative comments on that project. He is concerned that could be an albatross that drags the other projects down.

The study that Ms. Andrews provided on recreation and chronic disease was discussed. The chronic disease trend study showed the obesity in Taylor County is higher than state average, and the physical inactivity in Taylor county is below average. The city's average is 26% of the city's residents live within 10 minutes of a place to walk. When the questions were asked about Lake Kirby, 86% of those surveyed wanted a walking trail in that area. The Wylie schools on the east side have been open to the public but are limited in what they offer. Ms. Thomesen lives close to ACU and can testify that trail there is constantly packed and they come from all over town to use it. She thinks that people may not realize that if it is available, people will come.

Ms. Andrews had someone pull-her-aside-at-a-meeting that deals with cross-country in the area. He was in favor of this walking trail and has had people ask him for places like this in Abilene. The trails were discussed at length. Ms. Carter questioned what happens to the trail that is there if that part of the bond fails. Mr. Hanna stated that it could be brought up again at a later date or General Funds could be used to work on it later though.

Mr. Hanna stated his thoughts on the trail, and that he thinks this item needs to be on the ballot because it should be a decision the citizens should make. That is the point of the whole thing - for them to make the decision for themselves.

The flat fields were discussed again because the board members have been hearing from citizens everyday about the need for flat fields. On June 21st the parks board will have a meeting on that

topic to enter into an agreement with AYSA and Mr. Hanna encourages the board to tell people to attend that meeting. The flat fields were discussed at length.

Chair Hardaway questioned if staff is able to share the boards opinions with Council on the flat fields and if Council were in agreement on these items being discussed by the board. Council voted on every one of these items, and Mr. Hanna believes these were all unanimous, except the animal shelter which Councilmember Price asked to add in case they don't have enough money.

Chair Hardaway encouraged board members to share and promote what the city posts on social media.

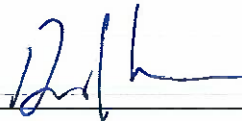
Mr. Murray brought up a game called "futsal" that McMurry University is doing, and encouraged people to look into it for our centers.

Chair Hardaway would like to have some history on the two recreation centers presented at the next meeting too.

Adjournment

There being no further discussion, Mr. Hardaway adjourned the meeting at 8:53 p.m.

APPROVED



Mr. Jay Hardaway, Chairman