

Bond Election Advisory Committee
August 31, 2005, 2:00 p.m.
Upstairs Conference Room – Civic Center

The Bond Election Advisory Committee met Wednesday, August 31, 2005 at 2:00 p.m. in the Upstairs Conference Room at the Civic Center, 1100 North Sixth, Abilene, Texas 79601. Mike Waters, Chairman of the Board was present and presiding with other Committee members present including Leigh Black, Seaton Higginbotham, Mike Schultz, Mike Walls, Mike Hernandez, Bob Gomez, Petty Hunter, Gary McCaleb David Lynn, Harold Preston and Nelson Wilson. Committee members absent were: Bruce Bixby, Liz Nunez, Gary Galbraith and David Green.

Mike Waters called the meeting to order. Jill Frizzell-Flores took roll call. The Committee members viewed the latest edition of the *Abilene City Magazine*.

The Committee stated no corrections to the minutes. Petty Hunter made a motion to approve the minutes and Bob Gomez seconded the motion. The Committee then unanimously approved the minutes for the August 15th meeting.

Chairman Waters stated that there would be two public comment periods during this meeting. The first would be at this time and the second at 3:15 p.m.

Pete Acosta, an Abilene citizen, stated that he would like work done to North 18th street and for a sidewalk to be added. The Principal at Fannin Elementary is supporting his efforts as well as many residents in the area who have signed a petition that was given to the City Manager. He believes that the street is unsafe for children and can damage cars. There was no other public comment at that time.

Brad Fitzer, Fire Chief, presented the Fire Departments six proposed projects to the Bond Committee. The first project is the construction of a Live Burn Facility. The existing facility is 35 years old and the roof is collapsing. The facility “fails to comply with minimum standards” therefore a new facility is needed to continue to train and educate firefighters. The second proposed project is to replace three fire engines. The current engines have exceeded the general life span by two years and have consistently had mechanical problems. The Fire Department would like one engine and two 65’ water towers. The third proposed project is the construction of two Fire Stations, one in South East Abilene and the other to replace Fire Station #3. The fourth proposed project is Apparatus for New Fire Station including one ladder truck and one engine. The fifth project is a New Apparatus Maintenance and Storage Facility, which could be located at the training site at 4242 East Lake Road. The current maintenance facility was not built as a maintenance facility and is not large enough. The sixth proposed project is Relocation of Fire Administration to the former Fire Station #1 at 140 Mulberry because the current location for Fire Administration has reached its maximum capacity. This project has the potential to receive grants due to the building’s age and its use for public education.

Chairman Waters stated that a tour of facilities would be scheduled and asked how many new employees would be needed with the completion of these projects. Chief Fitzer stated that there would be 36 new employees needed for the South East quadrant Fire Station and the cost would be 1.68 million. Mr. Gilley stated that this is not in the budget but if approved will have to be added to the budget. Chairman Waters asked how many current Fire Department employees there are and Chief Fitzer answered 176. Bob Gomez asked how big our region is and Chief Fitzer answered 19 county region. Harold Preston asked about the dollar amount with the two new stations. Chief Fitzer stated that 1.6 million does not include furnishings just construction. Mr. Preston asked about the costs to revitalize the building on Mulberry and Chief Fitzer stated \$125,000 to \$200,000 but a large portion of those funds can come from grants. Mike Walls asked if the training at the Live Burn Facility had been suspended. Chief Fitzer stated yes, the building was condemned this year and there was not money in the budget for a new facility. Mr. Walls asked if there was a fire apparatus fund in the budget. Chief Fitzer stated no that C.O.'s are sold for cost of 2 to 3 million. Mr. Walls asked if Fire Station #3 could be remodeled and Chief Fitzer stated no, it is not conducive to housing firefighters. Seaton Higginbotham asked about a project qualifying for a bond election because of the life span. Chief Fitzer stated that it might not but they want to let the Bond Committee know of all possible projects. Mr. Higginbotham asked how many trucks are in use at this time. Chief Fitzer stated that there are three ladder trucks and one in reserve. Mr. Higginbotham asked how many miles are on the trucks and Alan Plumlee, Assistant Fire Chief, stated that there are about 170,000 miles on each truck. Mr. Higginbotham asked about the response time for the North East quadrant. Chief Fitzer stated that the average response time is a little over four minutes and calls to Lake Fort Phantom area do not cost benefit to add a station in that area. He stated that in seven years the growth in Abilene would result in a need for a Fire Station near Dyess Air Force Base. Mike Hernandez asked about not replacing the southern Fire Station. Chief Fitzer stated that there is a need to maintain this Fire Station due to the population density surrounding it. Mr. Higginbotham stated he would like a breakdown of the calls. Chief Fitzer stated that there were 12,000 emergency calls last year and 76% are EMS. David Lynn asked what the expected life of a Live Burn Facility is. Alan Plumlee stated that the current facility has no interior protection and the new facility will hopefully last 50 years while replacing interior protection and therefore the facility having a longer life span. David Lynn asked if the Capital Improvements are budgeted. David Wright stated that in the 1992 Bond Election the only item that passed was for three fire trucks. Mr. Wright stated that the City does not fund depreciation. Mike Schultz asked if the Live Burn Facility would be a manufactured building and Chief Fitzer stated yes that it would be a turnkey operation. Mr. Schultz asked if the Abilene Fire Department has a HAZMAT truck and Chief Fitzer stated that a City Link bus is being remodeled for that purpose. He stated that in the future hopefully a grant would be received to cover the cost of a HAZMAT truck. Gary McCaleb asked a question regarding the construction of the new South East Fire Station and Chief Fitzer stated that it will be the same at Station #5. Dr. McCaleb asked if the area around Station #9 is where the growth is. Chief Fitzer stated that the demographics, most of all age and density are the reasons for the new South East station. Dr. McCaleb asked about the forecasting growth in 7 to 10 years. Chief Fitzer stated that the growth will be by Dyess and they will continue to measure call volume. Dr. McCaleb asked how the Fire Department determines vehicle replacement funds. David Wright stated that

most cars are in the fleet replacement program but the high cost for fire trucks would tie up large sums of money in the operating budget. Dr. McCaleb asked if the projects were listed in priority and Chief Fitzer stated yes.

There was a ten-minute break.

Chairman Waters stated the next meeting times would be September 8th at 6:30 p.m., September 12th at 8:30 a.m. Police and Fire facilities tour and October 4th at 6:30 p.m.

Harold Preston stated that the Finance Sub-committee met on September 23rd and David Wright educated the group on Bond Election scenarios.

Chairman Waters stated that it was time for the second public comment.

Chris Seale, President of Funeral Directors Life Insurance and Abilene Youth Sports Authority Chairman, stated that they are working on a project for youth ages 5-18 and would like 30 minutes of time at the next meeting to tell the Committee about the Youth Sports Complex.

There was no other public comment.

Leigh Black asked how many employees were in Fire Administration and if they would all move to Mulberry. Chief Fitzer stated that there are 14 employees and they would all move and the offices at Mulberry would also allow room for EMS employees. Chairman Waters asked about the number of years for fire apparatus and David Wright stated that those that don't have a 20-year life are appropriate for the C.O. program. Chairman Waters stated that he was surprised that 75% of the calls were Medical and 25% Fire. Chief Fitzer stated that this is also the national average. The Fire Department responds to calls with a fire engine and can provide intermediate level care. Chairman Waters asked if a different vehicle could be used for medical emergencies. Chief Fitzer stated that there are four firefighters staffed per engine, sixteen people on scene for fire and there are two additional people per station. The crews cannot be split up. Mr. Higginbotham asked about funding for the additional costs associated with the Fire Departments proposed projects. Mr. Gilley stated that there would be more burden on the operating funds for overhead costs. Petty Hunter asked if it would be more cost effective to send a smaller unit to an EMS call. Chief Fitzer stated that it would be but the more personnel would be needed. Currently, MetroCare is the EMS provider for the City. Bob Gomez asked about Metro Care's response time. Chief Fitzer stated that the Fire Departments average response time is 4 minutes and 24 seconds. Metro Care's response time is as follows: 70% of the calls are a 9 minute response time, 21% of the calls the Fire Department is 1 minute and 21 seconds ahead of MetroCare and 3% of the time the crews are there at the same time. Mr. Gilley stated that there is a long-range strategic plan for EMS care in Abilene and it is not subsidized but the first respondents are paid for. Mike Walls asked if the City would have a reduction in cost if it invested in a two-man response team. Chief Fitzer stated that in the event of a catastrophe, the number of trucks and manpower would be needed to protect the City. David Lynn stated that he

would like more information on the new South East Station's operational/overhead costs. He also asked for the number of fire stations and population served from comparable cities. Mr. Gilley stated that information can be provided on how Abilene's response time compares to the ten comparative cities in Texas. Mike Schultz asked a question about reserve status. Chief Fitzer stated that trucks could be traded in for a new truck and that volunteer fire groups could purchase old trucks. Mr. Schultz stated that new fire trucks would be needed for the new station. Nelson Wilson asked if the Dyess area and North part of Abilene was seeing the same growth as the Southeast side of Abilene. Chief Fitzer stated yes, that with the new Wal-Mart and new commercial growth in that area, protection will be needed. Petty Hunter asked a question regarding the expansion around Hwy 351 and if Fire Station #5 could handle that area. Chief Fitzer stated yes, that station has expansion capacity and could hold HAZMAT equipment and another ladder engine. Mike Walls asked a question regarding the last Bond Election's passing of the new fire station and administration building. Mr. Gilley stated that there is no growth capacity at that building and that administration grows with our community growth.

Chairman Waters told the Committee about the street prioritization sheet that must be filled out by each committee member and signed for public record. The street project with the lowest score will be the top priority and the highest score will be rated the least priority. This is the first pass at prioritizing and this scoring might have to be done again.

Chairman Waters opened the floor for comments from other Committee members about other projects that need to be considered by the Bond Election Advisory Committee.

Nelson Wilson stated that Northway Drive floods easily and residents are troubled with access to their homes when it rains. Chairman Waters stated that Mr. Gilley will look into that area.

Seaton Higginbotham stated that the Committee should look at the roads and infrastructure at Lake Fort Phantom. He said that the Lake Fort Phantom Association would like to make a presentation. Mike Walls added that the Association would need help from the City staff to prepare dollar amounts for street repair around the lake. Chairman Waters stated that the Committee would be open to any presentation from the community if the Committee sees it as a possible Bond Election item. Mr. Gilley stated that the first phase at the lake has been completed regarding water quality. The second phase has not yet begun which will look at development scenarios. Mr. Walls stated that there is a lack of public recreation facilities at the lake and public and private funded projects need to be done.

Chairman Waters stated there would be a press conference on Friday, September 5th at 11:00 a.m. to encourage public to attend the September 8th meeting.

Chairman Waters adjourned the meeting at 4:28 p.m.