

Bond Oversight Committee - Status Report 10/28/2014

All 2007 bond projects are expected to be completed by the end of 2014.

About 90 percent of the Group 1 Schools have entered into the Construction Documents phase and are working through the regulatory process and permitting with the city. The city of Houston has been a great partner in getting permits issued in a timely manner.

All schools in Group 1, as well as renovations at Butler and Barnett fieldhouses and middle school restrooms, are on track to begin construction work before the end of this year.

Group 2 schools are close behind, currently working on final design plans and preparing for the upcoming construction phase to begin.

Group 3 and 4 schools are ahead of schedule. All schools in these groups have entered in the planning and design phase, architects have been selected, and Project Advisory Teams (PATs) have been established and have held initial meetings.

Robert Sands, HISD's officer of construction, provided an update on the progress of bond programs at the quarterly meeting of the district's Bond Oversight Committee on October 28. The nine-member panel also heard from district staff on all aspects of the building projects, with a focus on third quarter months July, August, and September.

The committee discussed the dramatic increase in current and anticipated construction in the Houston area that is having a significant impact on the cost and availability of subcontractors, materials, and labor for construction projects in all sectors, including HISD projects.

Even though these developments are causing the price to build each school to increase, the project team remains committed to adhering to the approved budget.

In the fourth quarter, all projects will undergo a scope-to-budget review to reconcile the rising construction costs to the approved budget for each school.

The size of the anticipated budget challenges will become more certain later in the fourth quarter. The district is committed to providing updates to stakeholders as we better understand the impacts to each project.

Committee members asked questions about the phasing plans currently under consideration for Bellaire High School, and what other options had been considered. HISD project team members attended a recent Bellaire city council meeting and believe the phasing option is supported by the council and the community.

The committee discussed the importance of preserving architecturally and historically significant portions of school buildings. BOC member Phoebe Tudor suggested that HISD staff make this a priority on the front end of the planning and design phase at schools where parent groups may not be as organized to advocate for this as they are at some schools.

The district has selected architects who can work with the existing structure in these schools, and when possible, maintain the integrity of the old building while incorporating a new 21st century learning environment.

The district's award-winning Office of Business Assistance continues to show success with its program for Minority and Women-owned Business Enterprises (M/WBEs) with participating in the 2012 bonding program topping 51 percent to date.

The bond communications team continues to work with project teams and school principals to keep stakeholders updated about community and PAT meetings, designs, construction schedules, dedications and groundbreaking ceremonies.