

Title: Resource Allocation Advisory Committee Meeting

Date/Time: November 15, 2018 – 4:00 PM

Location: Hattie Mae White Building -- Room 2E02

I. Welcome — Glenn Reed, Officer of Budget & Financial Planning

Discuss the Google doc and recommendations that this committee wants to bring forward to the board in January 2019.

II. Group Discussion: RAAC White Paper Recommendations

—Tax Increase

- **RAAC Member Question:** I felt the need to research how Dallas ISD handled recapture. I figured some of the same conversations would have arisen about school closures. There were all of the same reasons why there was a recommendation to close schools. They were the same scenarios with respect to not just the size or enrollment but also the fact that there were high poverty communities. They did their research over a couple of decades looking at the decline or increased enrollment in different areas. There did come a time where there had to be that conversation about increasing taxes. I have to go back to what would be plan A, plan B and plan C because if we're going to say we're going to recommend closing schools, no matter who decides what school, it wouldn't be all of the small schools. Then the very next piece is going to be where do the students go and how do they get there so transportation comes into play. If the school in closest proximity is a struggling school, you just magnified the struggle. So, when was the last time that we had a tax increase and why wouldn't that be a viable option?
- **RAAC Staff Member Response:** 2014-2015 was our last tax increase. The challenge is, at that point of time, the board could make that decision. We're at the point now where we have to go to voters and ask them for the tax increase. So that's the big difference. Now, that's not off the table. That's one of three of our recommendations along with redistribution of dollars and finding new sources of revenue. Our source of revenue is getting kids back, tax ratification election or TRE, or closing/combining schools. I think it should be a recommendation for the board to look at the possibility of a tax increase.
- **RAAC Member Question:** What type of rating are we talking about?
- **RAAC Staff Member Response:** For TRE, the maximum you can go for is 13 cents.
- **RAAC Staff Member Question:** What does that look like per home in HISD?
- **RAAC Staff Member Response:** An average \$100,000 home is \$130.
- **RAAC Member Comment:** I would like to mention if you go for a tax hike, in our community where we are taxed pretty highly, so it could cause further gentrification. You'll have people wanting to sell their homes and get out from all the taxes that we have to pay. There's a lot of elderly people in my neighborhood that are on fixed incomes, and they're forced out of their homes because of taxes.

—School Closures/Consolidation

- **RAAC Member Question:** So, we would recommend school closures as a resolution and another group of people will recommend what schools would be closed?
- **RAAC Staff Member Response:** We wouldn't make any recommendations on what schools would be closed. If you were going to do that, it would be a recommendation to look at possibly closing/combining schools.
- **RAAC Member Comment:** Even if we thought to use IR as a reason to close schools, the majority of IR schools are not at capacity and have lower enrollment. It would appear like you're going back into the same communities and closing more schools in those communities again. Causing the children of those communities to have issues with

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transportation which causes them to not be actively involved in after school activities or things that keep children connected.

- **RAAC Member Comment:** This is the issue that really troubled me. I can remember when we were talking about closing schools 10 years ago. I can remember the superintendent at the time and it not working very favorably for the superintendent because the communities came together, and their voices were heard. It's one thing to propose it, but to not have a viable alternative is probably why we're at the table at this point right now. If I were going to close any schools and if I see the schools in closest proximity are an IR school or is struggling, I wouldn't look at relocating. Taking 300 that are IR here and 400 that are IR there and make 700 IR? What would the benefit be? I would say, let's take these 300 and let's go to this magnet campus or this small specialty school and see what happens. Let's give this group of students a greater opportunity. We have to go back to the community. As I'm speaking, I'm thinking about when we opened Sharpstown International, before Sharpstown Middle School was repurposed to become Sharpstown International. We knew there was no way possible we could combine Sharpstown Middle School and Long Middle School students together, even though both schools were overcapacity. There are different cultures within the communities, it's not your ethnicity or your race. We could not bring that group of students together or we would have had a disaster. If all of those things are not thought about well ahead of time, then we will create a larger problem than what we started with.
- **RAAC Staff Member Question:** So how do we change this recommendation?
- **RAAC Member Response:** I do know that a tax hike would be a generator of resources and anything else would take a second seat to that. Behind that, if they're going to be some school closures, some other tough decisions are moving the students to schools that are successful and to make them a part of the successful environment. At the same time, there are dilapidated buildings where we haven't been able to do our bond proposal. That's something else that's kind of been left on the backburner. That can be how we talk to our taxpayers and propose a tax hike to rebuild some of these schools in these communities.
- **RAAC Staff Member Response:** That would be a bond election. That's a whole separate thing. I don't know how we can reword this or if the committee doesn't want to make that recommendation. What's the other consensus?
- **RAAC Member Comment:** There needs to be some more direction around this. We're leading the conversation today with the closure issue and leaving off all the work that we talked about trying to come up with innovative ideas. Like partnering with outside of just the public school to help increase the capacity issues so that schools are able to function and run. How do we lead with these pieces and quantify what we mean by long term? Short term may be identifying the health flags for the buildings, a three-year period where you're letting the community know of the serious health issues with a school and how it could potentially lead to closure if we don't figure this out. I don't think I would be very comfortable with it as it is without having some real parameters around what we recommend and ensuring that we're not saying closures. You have to do X, Y and Z before you even think about closures and give the community plenty of notice and opportunity to try to turn those things around. How do you spell that out? If we just say that there needs to be procedures developed around a time frame, that would allow communities to have direct input into that. That's where we're going to generate the interest in trying to figure out how to do a better job for those communities to identify what they need and where they're at to attract them to HISD schools. Critical study shows that half of the students do worse in charter schools than they do in HISD, yet

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nobody in this district talks about it. We allow ourselves to be decimated as the ones doing bad for kids and they're doing so much better when the truth is completely different. How do we translate that, so parents can understand it? We know every day parents are making choices for their children that are not as informed as they should be. How do we get that data out to them? I think they will make better choices if it's presented in a way that is accessible.

- **RAAC Member Comment:** We need to look at the small schools that we have and see where they rate on accountability. Are they doing a better job with the children who are not doing well at the bigger schools? Because if South Early College can do very well and are recognized up there with HSPVA and Debakey, then small schools have a purpose. These big campuses that we have, we need to think more about breaking them up to smaller campuses versus merging bigger campuses together into one school.
- **RAAC Member Comment:** The thing about the small schools is that we are subsidizing. Not all small schools could be comprehensive. The challenge with that is schools like Early College don't have a sports program like a comprehensive school.
- **RAAC Member Comment:** Instead of us wanting this to be easy work, we need to hold people accountable for doing some hard work to achieve something different.
- **RAAC Member Comment:** It depends, I mean those are small specialty schools which are the Carnegie's and Early Colleges, their sole focus is mainly academics. HSPVA is fine arts. We are having to pay for that. So, we've gone from I think 6 original schools to 88 and the numbers continue to increase. Part of our charge here is to understand that we have a fine amount of dollars and we have to distribute those in an equitable manner. How do we go about doing that realizing that we are going to continue to deal with recapture for an additional three to four years? I know this talk about not closing schools and tax rates are important to discuss but, yet we are still going to have to come up with a recommendation by December, so they can present it in January. How are we going to do this in a balanced way? The fact is we will continue to lose students. We don't know what our final numbers are going to be, and our ADA is down from previous years, as well.
- **RAAC Staff Member Response:** The RAAC is divided on this issue of school closures. When we first started talking about this three to four weeks ago, there was momentum behind a proposal related to consolidating small campuses. As some of you thought about it more, there is a need to kind of peel back from that. One suggestion could be, if the group is split, we can tell the board the group is split. We can explain the nuance behind why one side of RAAC feels this way and the other side of RAAC feels another way. I think that's fair because that gives them guidance on what could blow up if they decide to go with a consolidation proposal. Is that okay?
- **RAAC Members:** Agreed
- **RAAC Staff Member:** Okay, we'll put that in the draft.
- **RAAC Member Comment:** Part of that report where we're talking about division, hopefully it highlights if there's going to be a discussion about that, that it has to be only after every other alternative has been attempted.
- **RAAC Staff Member Question:** Since you're kind of on the side that we must look at efficiencies and it's unsustainable to keep small schools over the years, given the situation. Do you agree with him, that there should be a thorough analysis before closures are done?
- **RAAC Member Response:** Yes, you can't make informed decision without having that. I mean let's face it, no one would ever come about this policy without having all the facts. I'm not saying I'm against it. I'm a former businessman. When I look at this I realize I

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have X amount of dollars and you continue to increase your subsidies which increases your cost to the district but, yet your assets are fixed. At some point, you have to be able to balance that budget. Right now, that curve is going the wrong way at this point.

- **RAAC Staff Member Question:** Conversely, since others would oppose a consolidation proposal at this point, how do you feel about presenting to the board?
- **RAAC Member Response:** It's not that I oppose a consolidation concept, I agree with everything that my friend is saying. Consolidation from an efficiency point of view is essential, however, consolidation without hard thinking involved that is beyond the scope of this route means that we're going to have less money and more people who are looking for other alternatives. I guess from a business point of view, we are going to be looking at closing a site that people love and that's going to create competition or invite competition.
- **RAAC Member Response:** It will. You can't do this without the thought of community involved. You can't look at it as closing a school for the sake of efficiency. The loss of opportunity cost associated with that, might be greater than the actual closure. Basically, I'm agreeing about the fact that you can't just make decisions on this type of thing. You have to look at the community.
- **RAAC Member Comment:** I have to speak from the heart about combining schools or school closures because it's not just something that you put on paper. It impacts what time the child wakes up in the morning, whether or not they need to depend on transportation, and more than likely they will. You may have a child that needs to rise at 5:30 to get up to get to another campus. If you get to the campus late, you might not get breakfast. If you have to hurry to get on the bus, even though the campus offers dinner, you might have to rush out and not have that as an option. These examples that I'm giving you are real time. A few weeks ago, a student says, well my dad said we have to eat at school because if we don't eat at school we don't have that much to eat at home. This is their reality. When I think about closures and combining schools, all of these things come into play. Is that what we really stand for? If I'm trying to build trust, if I'm trying to make sure that we are reviving our communities after all of the horrific events that we have experienced, then I have to take all of these things into consideration like what's best for the children. What I don't want to happen is that we lose sight of what is best for children because in the long run, they are the ones who will have the greatest need. Their education, their quality of education, their safety and all of those things have to be at the forefront and I know that you can't assign a dollar amount to that, but you have to take it into account as you are making these kinds of decisions.

—Marketing and Communication

- **RAAC Member Comment:** When we first started, we talked about equity and how we can bring equity to all our neighborhood schools. I'm a parent and I look at what is best for my child. A lot of times, I see parents in the community take their kids to KIPP or YES Prep and they're not happy there. Like what we said last time, we need to take our gloves off and do a better job of publicizing some of the best programs that are in our public schools, and we don't do that. So, what happens is that a parent comes back to the elementary/middle school and says that they don't really like it. We need to go back and create good programs at all schools. Our community needs to be aware of what is really at the heart of this, which is the fact that public education is probably the best. Increasing taxes, as a parent don't mind because they should have the opportunities that I had.

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- **RAAC Member Comment:** In the beginning, what charter schools do that HISD doesn't do that well is the marketing and customer service approach that they do upfront. Then once you lock in and your child is in six weeks, they have a way of making you believe, what you see is not what you see. They're only marketing. Whereas when you go to HISD, from the time you walk in the door and you're dealing with people at the front desk that will confuse the conversation. Then you go to the counselor and the conversation is even more confusing and then the principal. It can be something as simple as where do I get a uniform from or how do I get uniforms because I can't afford uniforms. We can't even figure that out. The customer service side, what we do as a district made me go to the charter school. When I came back from the charter, I was angry and bitter because I knew that HISD had the resources that I needed. I had to fight real hard to make HISD do what they needed to do for my child. I just think we do a bad job from the customer service aspect of delivering what we have to deliver. We don't market our schools very well. The school in my community has 1,750 high school students but still has the old principal on the website and doesn't have any programs. Whereas our middle school, the principal at Lawson was able to turn the school around in less than two years and I know she doesn't have all the resources, but she has great partnerships with everybody throughout the city. She is very hands on and takes care of the families but that's not what you see at other campuses.
- **RAAC Member Question:** You brought up a really important point which was why families are leaving. We've talked about customer service. Do we believe that by combining schools, that will help us compete with charter schools that are showing up?
- **RAAC Member Response:** That's not the factor, it's the deliverance of the service that you are giving families or stakeholders.
- **RAAC Member Comment:** So by combining schools, we will actually be worse off financially.
- **RAAC Member Question:** How exactly?
- **RAAC Member Response:** We will aggravate folks and create opportunity for charters to sit right in the neighborhood because we are essentially giving poor service to a population that will look for choices and opportunities. We, as a district, do not think of ourselves in a competitive environment and we are. As if every decision it makes is a message about how they are going to compete. With IDEA coming into town, I can assure you they're not going to come in and be disrespectful. They're going to be extraordinarily sensitive and listening to everything that a parent says and providing that service. So, I don't think I can support the recommendation to close schools. I can't recommend something until I know what the process is going to look like and if the process is likely to build credibility, then I can support it. If the process will not build credibility, then it's going to aggravate and push people into other programs. Until that decision is made, the idea of recommending closure is hard for me to accept.

—Priorities

- **RAAC Member Comment:** We are supposed to be working through this as the RAAC committee and I have yet to see in this report anywhere, discussion about prioritization of resources and recommendations. The RAAC committee should come up with saying A B and C should be funded first before anything else. Before consideration of what PUA is, before any program or contract. Then you figure out what you've got left for the rest.
- **RAAC Staff Member Question:** On the piece of prioritization, in your executive summary for instance, what are the key takeaways that you want the leadership to be aware of? Is there some kind of key fact that you found out in this discovery process?

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What are the essential things that you think should be prioritized in our schools? What are the top three or four things that you all that our schools are missing?

- **RAAC Member Response:** Prioritization should be every school must have a tool by which they define and prioritize what that community says is most important to them and must be included or that is going to attract them to that school so that we can stop the bleeding as much as possible. Priority number one has to be that level of focus for that school, that community and those parents telling us that because ultimately, that should be what's setting the budget. That where you're going to get people more engaged and coming back to the school. Not because the principal thinks this is exactly what we need.
- **RAAC Member Comment:** If I may respond to your statement, particularly in priority number one. Site based decisions are critical to student performance. Principals and SDMC's must be able to decide what services and positions are best for their individual campuses. If we're really talking about community, there must be true community. I hear the second priority. Some of this is how we do a better job at informing around, not just performance, but the entire educational experience. I mean I don't know how to encapsulate that in the right way but it's not just about test scores or how well we define it.

—Local Partnerships

- **RAAC Member Comment:** I want to speak about bringing the community in. I think that there's a little bit of frustration on the principal ranks around being able to streamline the process of getting resources into your school by having to go through a MOU process that is very tedious and long. Let's say I identify a need for counselling in 9th grade and I want to bring in some counselors, I've got to wait three months in order for me to go through all the different channels and that takes a long time. There are a lot of great community resources that are willing to come in, in a way to supplement our budget for the things that we may not pay for, but the process in doing that takes forever.
- **RAAC Member Comment:** When you look at some of these small schools where the community may be dying, and you don't have all the resources on the campuses, then you're in a position where the principal and SDMC can meet to determine what the needs are but to access those needs is a whole other situation. We have an outstanding community partnership with Westbury Baptist Church for about nine years. Even with the change in pastor, that partnership has continued to grow. We have volunteers at our campus every single day. We use Communities in Schools for wraparound services through Communities in schools. We have a counselor from Houston Galveston Institute and Memorial Herman that are on campus one day a week each, so we have counseling services for boys and girls. Communities in Schools cost me about forty thousand dollars, but I have a full-time program manager on campus Monday through Friday and the two counselors. For me that's best forty-two thousand dollars that I've spent. Those partnerships have really helped us to be able to grow our school and it's a constant collaboration with the parents. One of the best things we've done that I would recommend any school to do is to take parents on a tour of classrooms during the school day and they were amazed. When they came back and knew that kindergartners were using iPad's all the way up through fifth grade. We put a lot of money into technology. Our scores, we really stopped focusing on scores and started focusing on quality of education. Our scores have really increased phenomenally. But it really involved the community, the community really matters.

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- **RAAC Member Comment:** Can I pick up on a comment by the principal. She said something that's real important and I think it may have slipped by us. When we talk about marketing, marketing is about selling something. What she talked about was informing folks how to read and how to understand what happens in a school and that's a completely different thing than marketing. What that does is, it builds trust. When you're marketing, you're trying to sell something, you won't mention what is bad. If you're doing what she described, you were going to say well that's not how schools work, this how it's supposed to work. If we thought about building trust rather than marketing, I think that's going to go a long way.