

Superintendent Dr. Paul Cruz | Austin Independent School District
Honorable Board Trustees | Austin Independent School District
Equity Officer Dr. Stephanie Hawley | Austin Independent School District

November 3, 2019

Regarding: AISD School Changes Proposal | Pease Proposal- Community School for Early Civic Engagement

Dear Dr. Cruz, Board Trustees and Dr. Hawley,

We took your request to be engaged and co-create to heart. After hearing from you about the challenges Pease (as a building and a community) needs to focus on **to address AISD's goals**, we worked with many people and groups in the downtown community **to gather input**. **Our proposal to AISD for the future of Pease was twofold:**

1. Building expansion to accommodate 520+ students
2. Curriculum for Early Civic Engagement

The Pease and downtown community believe these two key pillars could **benefit AISD as a whole and strengthen the East Austin vertical teams**. We hope to have the opportunity to explore this further with AISD and other Eastside campuses and schools— **we simply ask for more time and not be closed down this year**.

Building Expansion

Working with a **licensed Architect** (and AISD & Pease parents), we developed an **expansion plan** for the Pease campus based on the **adopted AISD Educational Specs for 21st century** educational facilities. The plan is quite functional, efficient and very possible. We were asked by AISD to co-create and AISD has raised some valid concerns of what works on the unique Pease property that we would like to address (see Exhibit A). In short, we believe our expansion plan:

1. Satisfies impervious cover limitation
2. Realistically addresses parking requirement limitations
3. Meets fire access challenges
4. Does not conflict with COA code requirements for protecting Pease's beautiful trees
5. Takes into account AISD's concerns on slope, gradient and emergency access limitations
6. Addresses parent and bus drop off transportation requirements for an expanded campus

However, building expansion was only one item we proposed. If AISD does not want to expand this historic campus, we are flexible to work with alternatives, including finding a suitable campus on the East Side. **We simply ask our proposal is taken seriously and is allowed time for real engagement between AISD and the broader community.**

Curriculum for Early Civic Engagement

The other pillar of our proposal is a **Curriculum for Early Civic Engagement (“CECE”)**. Before we discuss CECE further, we’d like to highlight how this specific curriculum came about.

When asked by AISD to co-create, the Pease community took a step back and asked ourselves, “why do families from all over the City choose to go to Pease”. The two main reasons are:

1. It’s a small school that creates an intimate, diverse community of families from all over Austin, and
2. The proximity to the Capital and City Hall gives downtown working families and those passionate about civic engagement an opportunity to be more involved with children’s education.

The Pease community realized we needed to give AISD solutions that meet its expansion needs — thus we’ve accepted (but respectfully disagree) that small schools do not fit with the future vision of AISD (as noted above). We then turned our focus on the importance (today and in the future) of children and their families taking collective action to participate in public policy and address issues of inequality. And CECE was born!

AISD has real budgetary concerns, and we believe a pro-growth model, rather than a scarcity model, addresses these budget issues. Cuts cannot happen forever — there needs to be passion and vision that brings and retains students into AISD, and builds and strengthens communities. That is where our evolving CECE proposal lies. Key facets of CECE are:

State Capital Partnership

We have received commitment from State Representative Gina Hinojosa, to work with our students at the capitol building and at our campus. We believe offering such an attractive Partnership as part of the CECE program will help keep AISD attractive and retain students.

Socioeconomic Diversity

In an effort to increase our socioeconomic diversity, we proposed changing the admittance program to give preference to, first, in-district low-socioeconomic students, and then extend it to out-of-district students. This will bring more money into AISD and is similar to how Eanes ISD grew their district until they hit capacity numbers.

Furthermore, adapting to the demand for PK-4 as well as the need to better align with HB3, we propose changing the Pease model to PK-4 through 5th grade and marketing it to state employees which are a large part of the City commuters.

These efforts will achieve more funds, greater socioeconomic diversity and will not strain already under-enrolled schools elsewhere in AISD. This can begin at the Pease campus next fall (2020/2021), with simple changes easily done over this (2019) summer.

Alignment with a sister campus — Zavala Elementary

We have not had the time to discuss this with the Zavala community as this has all happened very fast. We have had preliminary conversations with District 2 Trustee Jayme Mathias about an Eastside sister campus partnership. We hope to have the opportunity to explore this further with AISD and other Eastside campuses schools— **we simply ask for more time and not be closed this year.** Areas to explore are:

- The potential for a shared curriculum, where Zavala could have a humanities program of International Civics Engagement shared with our local and national Civics Engagement program.
- Utilizing Austin Parks and Rec busses not being used during school hours and taking advantage of City of Austin excess capacity in that regard to further save programming funds.
- Building these programs up together, sharing resources and taking advantage of the potential of both of our campuses
- And, if deemed more appropriate, we are open to first developing the pilot at Pease next year (2020/2021) and bringing it to another school after that.
- **We see this program aligning with and enforcing a shared vertical team at Martin Middle school and on to the new East Side Memorial campus.** This proposal would draw families to these schools. This could be a strong new vertical team benefitting East Austin in positive ways for the next 20+ years!

We have begun conversations with the many players and are looking for time from AISD to co-create what this could be. We hope the door for conversations has not been closed; we understand this has been a very fast timeline where you have not been able to fully engage all that is or has been proposed. We are genuinely interested in co-creation and hope our community will be afforded the same opportunity given to other campuses in the district.

If we could be provided an extension to stay open at least until the end of 2020-2021, we would love to take these ideas and evolve them with you and with the East Austin communities and schools. We are excited, open and flexible. We want to bring our passion to strengthen the district and we look forward to working with you.

Looking Forward,

The Pease Community

Please feel free to contact any of the following Pease Parents, we would love to schedule a meeting to discuss the possibilities!

Rose Guajardo, Pease Parent rosewalker@gmail.com

Kristine Garana, Pease PTA President kriseaca@gmail.com

Michael Wiggin, Friends of Pease President Organization michael.wiggin@gmail.com

Louisa Brinsmade, Friends of Pease Organization, lcbmami@gmail.com

April Clark, AIA Pease Parent april@clarkrichardson.com

Cc: Rep. Gina Hinojosa, John Donisi, Gilbert Hicks, Nicole Conley, Jacob Reach, Melissa Larsen, Beth Wilson, Lisa Goodnow, Fernando Medina, Kevin Schwartz, Raul Moreno, Craig Shapiro, Teyne Telles, Michelle Cavasos, Richard Hammett, Katy Escandell, Ali Ghilarducci, Maias Sagura, Celso Baez

School Changes 2019: Pease Community School of Early Civic Engagement

Pease serves as the heart of the downtown Austin community—where people learn, play, meet, share ideas, and access resources. Pease Elementary is a neighborhood school for a 21st century community, connecting all of Austin through public education and serving downtown institutions and employees.

Pease Community School Of Early Civic Engagement

Pease Elementary will become a district-wide model for Early Civic Engagement curriculum. The program will provide students with an understanding of the importance of history, community, and civic engagement. It will also serve students by enabling their ability to impact and initiate change by providing the tools to effectively and pro-actively engage government and communities.

Historic And Unique Location Serving Downtown Austin

Given the historic location—in the core of our capital city and as an all-transfer school—Pease will continue to connect Austin communities, provide unique opportunities for community partnerships, and offer increased opportunities for student participation. This experiential learning is due to the proximity of the following institutions and historic locations:

- Texas Capitol
- Courthouses
- Institutions of higher learning
- City Hall
- Historical museums
- Various community organizations and nonprofit entities

Meeting Guiding Principles

Pease will meet guiding principles by:

- **Ensuring all students have an opportunity** to apply for the all-transfer school.
- **Creating opportunities to engage in BOLD 21st-century real world learning environments** due to the historic location of Pease and the proximity to government and community institutions.
- **Reflecting the diversity of Austin.** In all of AISD, Pease most closely reflects the racial diversity of our city. Diversity and accessibility are embraced at Pease as an all-transfer institution providing ease of access to downtown where there are many transit options and close proximity to parents working in the urban core.
- **Minimizing fiscal impact on the district.** Pease will engage with the Texas Historical Commission and other entities to access available grant funding to assist with the maintenance of the historic building. Community partnerships will be strengthened to find funding opportunities to support the Early Civic Engagement curriculum. Addition of PK-4 grade level will provide additional state funding.
- **Serving as an example of a 21st century learning environment.** Pease will serve the capital city as an example of innovation and community partnership by leveraging the strength of its diverse community, proximity to downtown Austin, and significance as the oldest continuously running public school in Texas. Pease is living history and leading the future.

Campuses In This Scenario | Vertical Team

The Early Civic Engagement curriculum will ensure students' success in Humanities, and the International High School at the respective feeder high school, **East Side Memorial High School.**

In the Humanities curriculum, emphasis is placed on critical thinking, creativity, and the rights and responsibilities of the individual in society. An Early Civics Engagement Curriculum supports this leadership and programmatic alignment.

Pease Elementary School—STEAM and Humanities programming align Sister Programming and shared resources with Zavala

Zavala Elementary School—STEAM and Humanities programming align Sister Programming and shared resources with Pease

Martin Middle School—STEAM and Humanities programming to align with East Side Memorial Early College High School

East Side Memorial Early College High School and International High School—STEAM and Humanities with a focus on a Civics Engagement Curriculum



School Changes 2019: Pease Community School of Early Civic Engagement continued

Serving Students And Community

Pease Early Civic Engagement program will leverage its proximity to government entities to create strategic partnerships in order to provide an understanding of the political process, demystify government operations, and reduce barriers to further engagement.

- 5th grade Capstone Project: Student must identify an issue in our society and develop an engagement plan to include: contacting elected officials, persuasive letter writing, effective campaigning to include social media campaign, etc.
- Grade-appropriate series of studies in civil rights movements and understanding how engagement by average citizens / grassroots movements have changed our society.
- Civics mentorship: Pairing of grades with a civics mentor / grassroots organizer / advocates (non-partisan)/ nonprofits to demonstrate actionable ways to initiate and impact changes in our society and public policy.
- Grade-specific focus on current events with a problem-solving component. (i.e., state bill tracking with a school impact in odd years; city or county issue in even years; courthouse mock trials).
- Volunteer/non-profit engagement program: students will learn about the importance of nonprofits and how they work in conjunction with government entities to provide much needed services.
- School-wide volunteer programs will connect meaningful community service experiences with academic learning; service learning has been shown to positively impact state assessment scores and reduce the achievement gap.

Preparing Students To Succeed By

- Encouraging civic engagement through a series of speakerships
- Pairing classes with elected officials in state and local government
- Unique experiential learning opportunities taking advantage of location and availability of local civic activities
- Competency in civic engagement and real world political advocacy
- Tools to initiate change through an in depth and real world understanding of challenges facing governments
- Creating a more just and equitable society by making government understandable and approachable to students
- Strengthening students' connections to their school and community through participation in student governance and simulated democratic processes

Academic Program Costs

Program cost will be minimal and will be guided through organized educator, community, government, and parent partnerships. Pease will begin by utilizing available curriculum and teacher training through the Speak Up! Speak Out! Innovative civic program: <https://moody.utexas.edu/centers/strauss/speak-up-speak-out>.

Federal grant funding is available for K-12 History and Civics Education through National Council for the Social Studies: <https://www.socialstudies.org/news/grant-funding-now-available-k-12-history-and-civics-education>. Other federal and state funding opportunities for civics education may be available.



School Changes 2019: Pease Community School of Early Civic Engagement continued

Reinventing the urban school experience.

Framework

Developed by Pease parents and supporters, the plan includes a school change scenario that fully supports AISD's vision of opportunity and access for all students. As a 21st century community, we refuse to accept the status quo. Working together with AISD, as one community, we can create opportunities for all, without the closure of Pease Elementary.

People

Pease is proud to have a racially diverse student population, but we want to be very intentional about increasing our socioeconomic equity with new enrollment criteria that builds on the successes at Ann Richards School.

- We would ensure that 75% of the student body comes from economically disadvantaged families.
- Build a model of acceptance that brings in those who qualify for the free or reduced lunch program first, as this program may better track those with greater need.
- We would actively solicit enrollment from those who commute in to central Austin, the downtown area or capital complex.
- Embrace a growth model, similar to how Eanes ISD grew their district. We would bring students into the district, taking advantage of additional state funding without putting a strain on other area elementary schools.

Place

Pease will continue to serve as living history, and as a reminder of the State's promise to support and maintain an "efficient system of public free schools."

- The feasibility plan includes an addition to the historic building on the Pease campus to increase the capacity of Pease to 522 students and to comply with current AISD Educational Specifications.
- The proposal also supports AISD's request to maximize opportunities to partner with facilities or shared sites. Through a potential partnership with AISD, the City of Austin, and ACC Rio Grande Campus these partnerships will allow for shared resources of excess capacities such as parking, community spaces and other unique opportunities.

Increasing State Funding

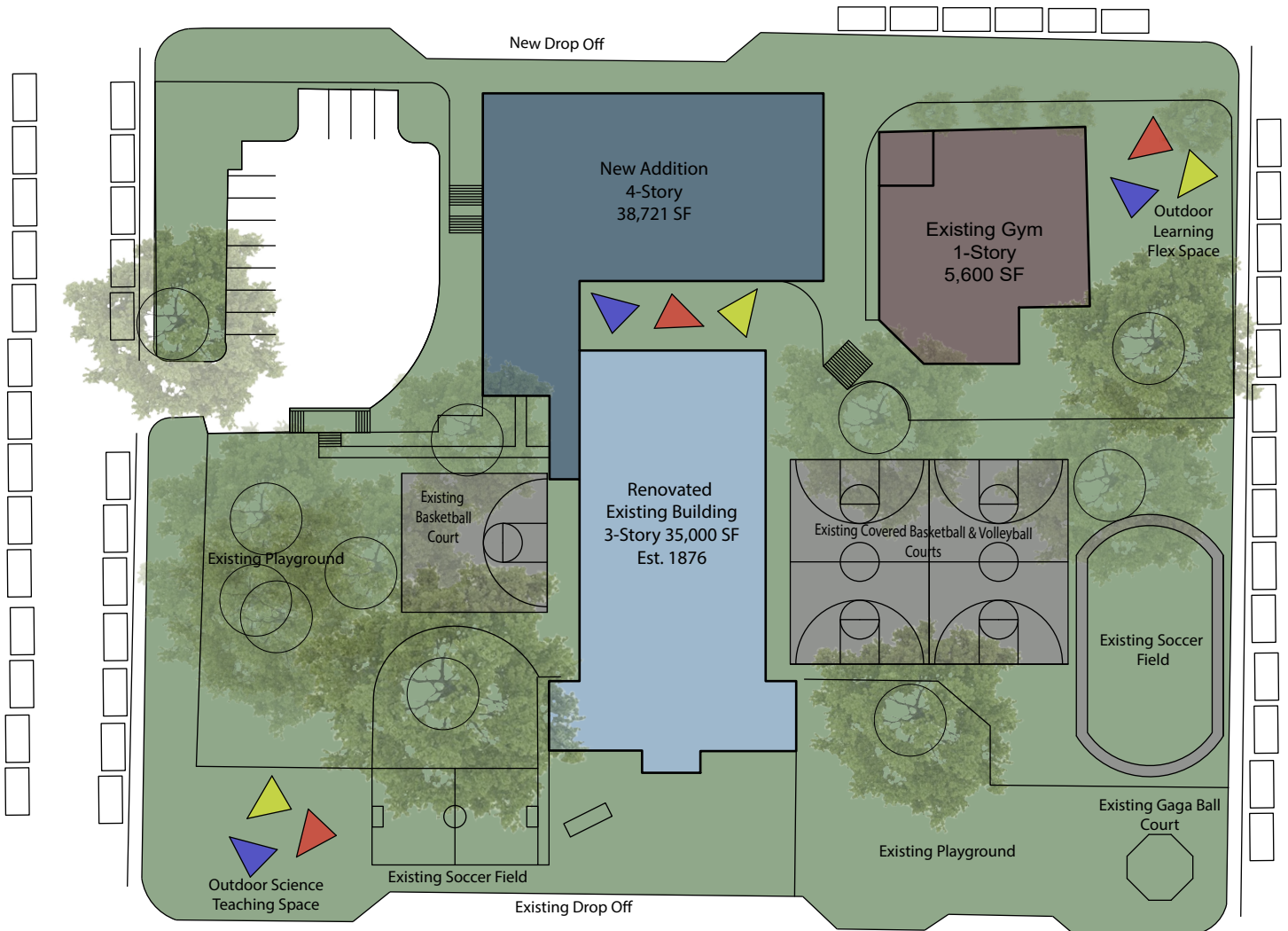
The proposal seeks to take advantage of increases in state funding for full day Pre-K4. We see this as an advantageous alignment for working families that commute to central Austin.

The proposal allows for this as an opportunity starting next fall 2020 if AISD does not desire to add on to the building immediately.

The devised schematic plans for the building allow for a Civics Hall that can be rented out after hours for community projects. Current programs that take advantage of Pease already include YMCA summer camps and the Paramount Theater camps.



Feasibility Plan: Pease Community School of Early Civic Engagement



*Renovated Historic Building

- Expanded Admin. First Floor
- Expanded Library
- Flex Spaces
- 3rd-5th Grade (6 Studios)
- Special Studios
- Support Spaces

*New Building

- Food Services
- Sped Studios
- Flex Spaces
- Pk4-2nd Grade(8 Studios)
- Support Spaces

*Existing Gym

- Gym functions to remain
- House Park to be utilized for expanded views.

*Site Use

- 2 New Outdoor Teaching Spaces
- 60+ Reserved neighborhood & on-site parking
- 30 Reserved through Austin REC Center and ACC Partnership
- New Street-side drop-off zone
- Enhanced security, way-finding, & traffic patterns

*Figures

- Renovated square footage -35,000 sf
- New square footage -38,721 sf
- Existing square footage -5,600 sf

Three Complete Learning Neighborhoods.

Total square footage -79,321 sf

Total number of students -522 Learners



GINA HINOJOSA



STATE REPRESENTATIVE • DISTRICT 49

October 22, 2019

Superintendent Paul Cruz
Austin Independent School District
1111 W. Sixth Street
Austin, TX 78703

Dear Dr. Cruz,

I have been requested to provide you and the Board of Trustees with a letter of commitment regarding the 'Pease 2.0' proposal submitted by the Pease Elementary community to the District for consideration. This proposal would, among other things, establish Pease Elementary as a Center for Early Civic Engagement. The Pease community has asked me, in my capacity as a member of the Texas House of Representatives, to offer a component of engagement for Pease students with the State of Texas. I am pleased and eager to work with the Pease community to support this effort should the District so approve.

Specifically, my commitment would involve providing an annual on-site educational experience for the full 5th Grade class of Pease Elementary. During the Spring semester of odd-numbered years, this would involve placing each Pease 5th Grade student in an office of a member of the Texas Legislature to serve as a page for a day during the biennial legislative session. During the Spring semester of even-numbered years, this would involve a day of instruction for the full 5th Grade class at the Texas Capitol, including dialogue with members of the legislative, judicial and/or executive branches of State government. Both are intended to provide Pease students with an early introduction to public policy and engagement with leaders of the State of Texas, and may be tailored to meet specific, age-appropriate curricula on civic engagement.

Pease Elementary has long held a special and unique role in educating Austin's children due to its physical proximity to the Texas Capitol. It is a living embodiment of the aspirational commitment of both the Republic of Texas and the State of Texas to a system of free public schools. The thoughtful and innovative Center for Early Civic Engagement proposal offered by the Pease community gives us opportunity to strengthen and formalize the relationship between Pease and the State of Texas, for the betterment of future generations. I am proud and honored to be asked to play a part in what could be a dynamic new chapter in the life of Pease Elementary.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gina Hinojosa".

Gina Hinojosa
State Representative, District 49

Dear AISD Administration and Trustees,

I am a Pease parent and licensed Architect and have been working with the Pease Community in developing positive possibilities for the growth of AISD. I have extensive experience working with the City of Austin, on master planning campuses of higher education, and the design of educational facilities. I helped develop the expansion plan for the Pease campus based on the adopted AISD Educational Specs for 21st century educational facilities. The plan is quite functional, efficient and actually very possible. We were asked by AISD to co-create and AISD has raised some valid concerns of what works on the unique Pease property that I would like to address here.

The details below will show Pease can expand, meet the adopted Ed Specs, retain its heritage, and be done in phases to reduce cost impacts for AISD. The Pease expansion plans also give AISD the flexibility to incorporate a media and social justice center (which we heard from you may be a priority for AISD), without the risk of losing the building to the State of Texas Reverter Law (giving the Pease property back to the State if the definition of an “Educational Purpose” gets tied up in the courts).

I (through my architecture firm) conducted a preliminary feasibility study on the Pease campus regarding the issues AISD notes as site complexities, and reasons not to consider expansion. The timeframe from which AISD received the Pease Community’s proposal has been short, so I understand if AISD has not been able to do a thorough study. Focusing on just one campus, we were able to conduct such a study and hope to meet with you to discuss our findings and your concerns.

Impervious cover limitations:

Current zoning is UNZ – Un-zoned future Zoning is P public. Impervious cover restrictions require a determination from the City of Austin (“COA”), though most sites in the Central Business District (“CBD”), even the northern CBD, have a much higher impervious coverage limitation than Pease will be meeting. Additionally, the proposal builds on top of already existing impervious coverage which if COA determines the site has less impervious coverage than needed, COA allows for a legal non-compliant use. **The proposal satisfies impervious cover limitations.**

Parking requirement limitations:

Parking in the downtown CBD is complex, rather than discourage density and development in this area the COA has allowed for several ways to meet the requirements which our proposal takes into account.

This is how it all breaks down. Per Matias Segura Chief Operations Officer, AISD has a standing agreement with the COA that the parking requirements for schools be calculated at 1 spot per each full-time staff. Based on our research, a school of this size would be roughly staffed with 80 full time personnel. This would require 80 parking spaces. Due to the location in the urban core and downtown area, there are numerous parking reductions we can apply for in addition to submitting an application with the transportation department for shared parking at the largely unused Austin Rec Center at House Park that is located just down the road.

Per City of Austin Land Development Code 25-6-478:

1. We can reduce the parking requirements by 10% if we provide showers and changing rooms for full time staff, (8 spaces)
2. We can reduce parking requirements by 1 space for each adjacent public parking spot, as we are located on a full city block this can be as many as 40 parking space reduction.
3. We can reduce by 20 spaces for every space we dedicate for an approved Car Sharing vehicle space, (20-40 space reduction)
4. City of Austin Department of Transportation does work with urban sites, but would still like to only reduce parking numbers by no more than 40% to be realistic with needs. We can easily reach that reduction with the steps above bringing our number down to 48 required spaces. We can accommodate 12-14 spaces on site which only leaves us with a shortage of 34 spaces. Our proposal for that is to solicit an agreement with the City of Austin for a parking share at the Austin Rec Center House Park just down the road. They have significant parking area that is largely unused during school hours, as their primary functions serve afternoon and weekend events. The City encourages these types of partnerships to encourage density in the core so we feel this type of agreement would be permissible. The Austin Community College also has a parking garage across the street and we could reach out to them as well.
5. The above options show our ability to meet the requirements without spending the excess capitol of building a new parking garage but if AISD deems this option as too inconvenient we could build a small parking garage that is 2-3 levels to accommodate all the parking on site at the location of our proposed reduced parking area shown on the site plan. This has been done recently at some other AISD campuses in West Austin.

Fire access challenges:

For Fire Safety the fire marshal requires that all areas of the exterior of the building be reachable with 250' of fire hose with an NFPA 13 Sprinkler system. Our proposal satisfies this requirement. Additionally, we have had the Fire Marshal at Fire Engine One evaluated our understanding of the life safety codes for k-2 grades and he agrees with our interpretation. We meet Fire Access Challenges.

Potential for heritage trees removal:

There are a great many heritage trees on our site including one that Governor Ann Richards signed historic educational legislation into law! Our proposal does not disturb ANY protected tree root zones and canopy impacts will be within allowable percentages (25% max). The location of our addition is below the existing grade of these protected trees to the west of the main building and separated by an existing retaining wall so no root structure extends to the west past the retaining wall. That wall coincides with the proposed addition to the building. Our proposal does not conflict with COA code requirements for protecting these beautiful trees.

Slope and gradient on west side limits emergency access:

Great observation. We took this into account by building our new proposed addition into the grade making the new addition accessible at grade from West. This would give us emergency access on three sides from three different levels not only making our site more accessible for mobility limited students and guests but increasing the emergency access.

Parent and bus drop off transportation requirements:

Our Civics Engagement proposal looks to increase greater socioeconomic diversity, as such we recognize the need for safe accessible bus and parent loading and unloading zones. As such our proposal added on a new bus drop off zone. Bringing our total up to three loading and unloading zones where the grade levels can be split at peak times, reducing traffic and lifting the load from our teachers.

Height setback for multi-level building:

Current COA does have what is called Compatibility Setback Cones to residential properties of SF-5 or more restrictive zoning. There are no properties in the surrounding eight blocks that are SF use or zoning. Therefore, there is no height setback cones. Our max height is within limits.

Full Planning for Revised Design by Floors:

We have prepared, as part of our due diligence for this proposal, schematic floor plan studies for all floors of the renovation of the existing building and the new addition which are available for review upon request.

Other Community Responses:

Working with engaged community partners such as John Donisi, former Pease Parent, Lawyer specializing in government and real estate law and Husband of State Representative Gina Hinojosa, we have also been informed the following in response to AISD statement that Pease cannot be added to. It bears discussion for further opportunities for growth at Pease:

“I don’t believe Pease would be subject to any of these site development regulations. First, Pease is currently unzoned, but could pursue zoning consistent with neighboring Central Business District tracts (w/ no impervious cover or on-site storm water detention or parking requirements). Second, they are likely grandfathered under state law from any of these requirements. And third, AISD regularly argues in court that they are not subject to limitations imposed by municipal zoning that impact their core purpose (most of their land use restrictions are self-imposed via Interlocal agreements with the City of Austin, and are primarily focused on development over environmentally sensitive recharge zones). In fact, the leading Texas Supreme Court case on the limits of municipal zoning on schools was brought by AISD, where they prevailed over restrictions imposed by the City of Sunset Valley. “

Projected Pease Expansion and Renovation Construction Costs

Regarding the cost to complete this we offer the following working budget based on AISD current projects:

Based on AISD Construction Cost Summaries

Budget Information obtained from Bond Summary Reports, Sqft obtained from Bonds or Architects when not listed.

Brown ES

Capacity 522

Construction Budget \$30,842,000 – New Construction

Size 69,000 sqft

Cost per sqft: \$447/sqft

Menchaca ES

Capacity 870

Construction Budget \$33,351,000 – New Construction

Size 98,000sqft

Cost per sqft: \$338/sqft

Govalle ES

Capacity 522

Construction Budget \$32,565,000 – New Construction

Size: 77,368sqft

Cost per sqft: \$420/sqft

Casis ES

Capacity 870

Construction Budget \$35,216,000 – Renovation and Addition

Size 77,700sqft

Cost per sqft-\$453/sqft

Averages

District average cost for new construction: \$402/sqft

District cost for full renovation/addition: \$453/sqft

Pease Civics Engagement Expansion – Feasibility Budget

Budget for Pease Re-Imagined Renovation and Addition: total 73,721 renovated and new sqft

- Renovated sqft: 35,000 x \$453/sqft = \$15,855,000 per Casis numbers
- Addition 38,721sqft x \$402/sqft = \$15,565,842 per district current averages for new construction
- Less allocated bonded amount from 2017 bond \$640,000

\$31,420,842.00* - \$640,000

Total: \$30,780,842** *less than what AISD paid for Brown ES at the same capacity*

**Budget does not account for grants Pease ES is eligible from the RTHL, COA Heritage Grants or National Preservation grants which Pease would qualify for.*

***Additionally, this would also have the deferred maintenance cost avoidance of \$7.02 million, And get more funds from HB3 for PK-4 classrooms and increases in socioeconomic diversity and out of district transfers while AISD grows its programs.*

**** This plan will avoid possible legal fees of proving to the state of Texas that the function is still serving an “educational purpose” which the state may not agree a “Center of Social Justice and Archive storage” meets.*