



# WESLACO INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

319 W. Fourth Street  
Weslaco, TX 78599-0266

**W**inners. **I**nnovators. **S**cholars. **D**oers.

*Dr. Priscilla Canales, Superintendent*

## BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Meeting:  
Place:  
Location:  
Date:  
Time:

Public Hearing  
WISD Board Room  
319 W. Fourth Street  
September 25, 2017  
5:36 P.M

## MINUTES

- I. The Public Hearing was called to order by Erasmo Lopez, Board President.
- II. A quorum was established. All board members were present.

Erasmo Lopez, President  
Oscar Caballero, Vice President  
Isidoro Nieto, Secretary  
Andrew Gonzalez, Trustee  
Patrick Kennedy, Trustee  
Dr. Richard Rivera, Trustee  
Dr. Jaime Rodriguez, Trustee

- III. Public Hearing on Proposed 2017-2018 Tax Rate

Superintendent Dr. Canales informed the Board that district staff had created a parent survey that was sent home with students and an electronic survey for staff. In addition, the administration held two (2) town hall meetings last week to inform the public on the possibility of a 2 cent tax increase. The following presentation was provided to the public.

# Weslaco Independent School District

“Enhancing Educational Opportunities for Students”



TRADITION OF EXCELLENCE:  
ACADEMICS, ARTS, & ATHLETICS

## 2017-2018 DISTRICT GOALS

- 1 STUDENT SUCCESS LITERACY FOCUS**  
High quality, innovative, technology-heavy programs
- 2 POSITIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS**  
Safe, secure, technology-rich schools and facilities
- 3 PARENT-COMMUNITY-BUSINESS-INDUSTRY RELATIONS**  
Superior customer service, positive community focus, and collaboration for student success
- 4 CAPACITY-BUILDING/ LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**  
Quality, customized professional development for all employees
- 5 FINANCIAL STRENGTH**  
Responsible planning, management, and accountability



I&S 2 Cent Increase Recommendation to the Board  
September 25, 2017  
WISD Board Room

## Surrounding Cities Tax Rates

### WHAT IS I&S?

The Interest and Sinking (I&S) tax rate provides funds for payments of bond debt. Weslaco ISD voters approved bonds in 1996, 2000, 2006, and 2008, for new facilities and facility upgrades.

#### WHAT WILL 2 CENT TAX INCREASE GIVE US?

\$400,000 from Weslaco Citizens  
+ \$600,000 from the State

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\$1,000,000 Revenue

WISD has not had a tax increase in **8** years!

### CURRENT SCHOOL DISTRICT TAX RATES (ROUNDED)

WESLACO ISD	*THE LOWEST TAX RATE IN RV	\$1.14
MCALLEN ISD		\$1.16
LOS FRESNOS CISD		\$1.19
EDINBURG CISD		\$1.24
DONNA ISD		\$1.26
EDCOUCH ELSA ISD		\$1.26
LA JOYA ISD		\$1.31
HARLINGEN CISD		\$1.32
MISSION CISD		\$1.35
SHARYLAND ISD		\$1.38
MERCEDES ISD		\$1.38

- Weslaco ISD has the lowest tax rate (\$1.14) in the Rio Grande Valley compared to surrounding cities who have a tax rate as high as \$1.38.
- A 2 cent tax increase will generate \$400,000 from the citizens and the state will contribute \$600,000; for a total of \$1,000,000.
- Weslaco ISD has not had a tax increase in the last 8 years.

**Taxes will NOT increase for anyone age 65+ and disabled veterans.**

## HOUSE VALUE

If your current home value is...	You will only pay this much more taxes...
50K	\$5.00 per year
75K	\$10.00 per year
88K	\$12.16 per year
100K	\$15.00 per year
150K	\$25.00 per year
200K	\$35.00 per year
250K	\$45.00 per year



ARE YOU FINANCIALLY ABLE TO CREATE ADDITIONAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR OUR CHILDREN?

ARE YOU WILLING TO HELP CREATE ADDITIONAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR OUR CHILDREN?

- The average house value in Weslaco is \$88,000. With the 2 cent increase, taxes for a home owner will increase by \$12.16 per year.

## WISD District Advisory Committee (DAC)

### Purpose and Goals

- Conducts needs assessments and makes recommendations
- Composed of campus and district staff and community

### Subcommittees

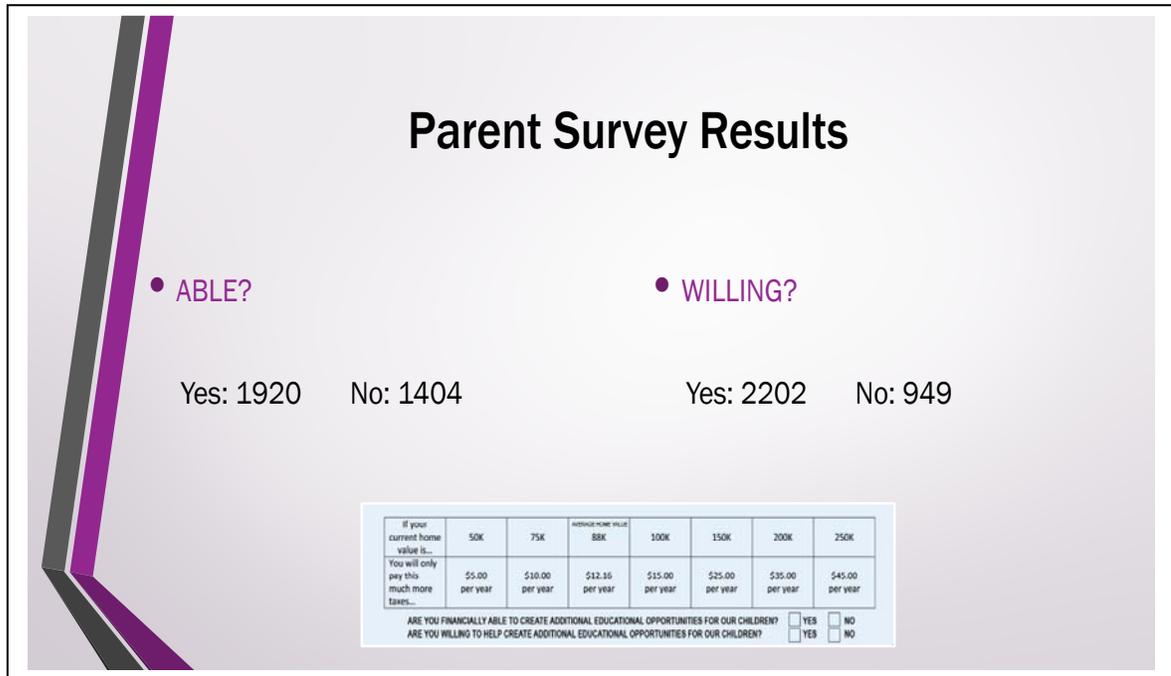
- Curriculum and Instruction
- College and Career
- Special Programs
- Parental Involvement
- Personnel
- Health and Safety
- Extra Curricular
- Technology



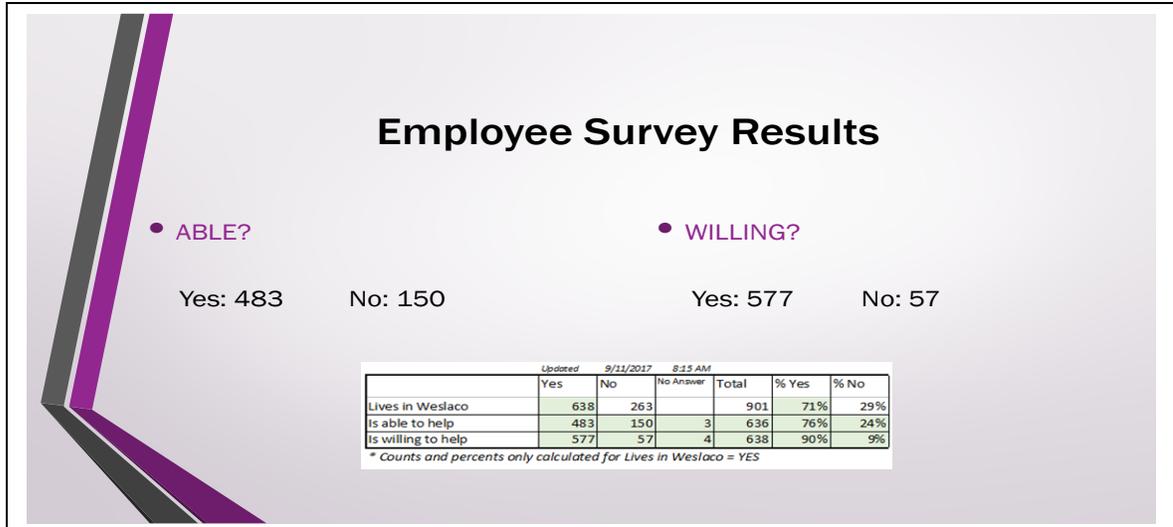


- The District Advisory Committee meets on a monthly basis and is facilitated by Janie Pena and Sue Peterson. The committee members look at data and discuss what they need to do to improve the overall program for kids.

- The results of the parent survey are listed below.



- The results of the employee surveys are listed below.



- Employees were allowed to make comments on the electronic survey (see below).

## Employee Feedback

- WE MUST SUPPORT OUR YOUTH!
- **SOUNDS LIKE AN EXCELLENT WAY TO GENERATE NEEDED REVENUE FOR OUR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS AT WESLACO ISD**
- I WOULD LIKE TO SEE OUR MONIES GO TOWARDS THE SCHOOLS, AND EQUIPMENT NEEDED, NOT FOR SPORTS OR ENTERTAINMENT.
- I WOULD LIKE TO SEE FURNITURE ON THE OLDER CAMPUSES REPLENISHED ALONG WITH CAMPUSES BEING EQUIPPED WITH ON-LINE RESOURCES FOR STUD
- WE NEED TO PROVIDE FREE WIFI TO ALLOW ALL STUDENTS WITHIN OUR DISTRICT INTERNET SERVICE
- WOULD LIKE TO KNOW WHAT THESE FUNDS ARE BEING USED FOR
- **I WOULD LIKE TO BE PART OF THIS COMMITTEE I THINK IT IS A GREAT IDEA TO START PLANNING ON WHAT ELSE WE CAN DO FOR OUR STUDENTS**
- **WE HAVE ONE OF THE LOWEST TAXES IN THE VALLEY. I THINK WE SHOULD INCREASE THE TAXES TO HELP MAKE OUR DISTRICT BETTER.**
- CAN YOU PLEASE SPECIFY HOW THE MONEY WILL BE USED TO HELP PROVIDE THESE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR MY CHILD?
- YES ON TAX INCREASE
- HURRICANE HARVEY CAUSES TEXAS HUGE FINANCIAL PROBLEM IN THE FUTURE. IT'S OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO PAY LOCALLY TO HELP OUT OUR SCHOOLS
- **WITH THE RECENT LOSS OF MY HUSBAND'S JOB, IT HAS PUT A FINANCIAL STRAIN ON US.**
- LET'S SET OUT OUR PROJECTS FOR THIS BOND AND STICK TO THE PLAN.
- **WHY NOT 3 CENTS?**
- WE NEED THIS TAX INCREASE
- **HOW WILL IT BE SPENT? NOW MY CAMPUS DOESN'T HAVE PROPER FACILITIES OR STAFF, YET HAVE A HIGH ENROLLMENT!**
- I AM FOR QUALITY EDUCATION FOR WESLACO KIDS.
- WHEN THE COMMITTEE IS FORM BY THE DISTRICT TO DETERMINE THE NEEDS, PLEASE INCLUDE 1 MEMBER FROM EACH CAMPUS.
- **SMALL AMOUNT! BIG PAYOFF IN THE END!**
- THIS TAX INCREASE WOULD BE A GREAT MOVE IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION FOR OUR DISTRICT.

## Town Hall Meeting Feedback

- Better communication to the public.
- Why just 2 cents? Why not 4 cents?

## Advisory Committee Recommendation and Presentation

- Proceed with the 2 cent I&S tax increase
- Transparency and accountability for the projects
- Showcase projects once completed

**I&S Tax Rate Advisory Committee Members**

- Johnny Cavazos
- Andy Noriega
- Rob Peterson
- Alan Smith
- Javier Sepulveda
- Greg Cano
- Juan Esparza
- Joe Garza
- Richard Voss

Dr. Canales acknowledged the committee members in the audience: Mr. Johnny Cavazos, Mr. Rob Peterson, and Mr. Andres Noriega. She thanked the Board for recommending these members to serve on the Advisory Committee.

#### IV. Public Comments on Proposed 2017-2018 Tax Rate

- Andres Noriega, Jr., 509 Clifford Drive

Mr. Noriega is a member of the Advisory Committee and attended two presentations provided by district staff. He was happy to be asked to participate in this committee. He made the following statements.

“Being knowledgeable in school finance, I think it’s real important for the community to know that our district is a property poor school district. We depend a lot on state funding, but we have to do our part. If we don’t levy our part of taxes we are not going to get state funding. Here’s an opportunity; in fact, the committee was one of the one’s who said why not more than 2 cents. We understand that the Board feels a need to re-establish some trust with the community. We got trashed on the past bond issue - why? There’s many reasons, but I think it’s a good opportunity now to start at ground zero, get everything back in order, and let the community know what our needs are. All of us in our community want the best education for our children and I think all of us want to pay for it if we see the results. I understand the budget for local funds runs about \$179 million and the amount of money we’re talking about tonight, 2 pennies, will give us about \$1 million to put back into our maintenance program. We realize this Board can raise the I&S rate; it’s too late now, but you could have raised it up to 7 and a half cents without having the voters vote on this. We have looked at everything, we think we have the best district around and we want to stay ahead of everybody else, so it was unanimous for the committee in saying, ‘Let’s go for it’ but by the same token, let’s let the community know our needs, make sure the money is well spent, that the waste is eliminated if there is any, I’m sure there is, but I think we all stand behind you, the Board and the Superintendent in doing what we need to do to give our children the best that we can afford.”

- Rob Peterson, Jr.

Mr. Peterson pointed out that he and Mr. Noriega had questioned why the District was not asking to increase the tax rate to \$7.5 pennies.

He stated, “We need to go for a lot more money than this. I can’t go on my household income for 8 years without increasing my spending. After one term of being invited on the school board, we did a lot of raising the taxes during that time, but we needed to. We had enough money for 10 years after that. You can’t stay at the same place you’ve always been, you have to raise the taxes. Nobody likes to do that and you know who really doesn’t like to do that – the people that are 60 years old, five years before my taxes get frozen. I don’t want to get my taxes raised, but worse than that, I don’t have any kids in the district, but I don’t want my kids to suffer. You have a charge to do what’s best; you don’t have a charge to get yourselves reelected. You have a charge to do what’s best for the district and that’s gonna require you to raise the taxes.”

Board Trustee Isidoro Nieto also said that he did not have any kids in the district, but he still has to pay taxes because he resides in Weslaco. He stated, “We have to build a trust and that’s the reason we went with the two pennies. We could have gone for 7.5 pennies or more, but if we do it in the best interest for our students and staff in the next few years, I think we’re headed in the right direction.”

Trustee Andrew Gonzalez thanked Mr. Peterson for being his voice and taking time to attend the meetings. He stated, “No one wants to increase our taxes, but it’s a need, and it’s a need that we must fill; otherwise, we continue to fall behind.”

Board President Erasmo Lopez made the following comments:

“I don’t have any children attending school in Weslaco but they all did and therefore I feel an obligation to maintain and make sure that this district thrives and grows and succeed in every manner. Nobody likes raising taxes, but with inflation and the way things are going in this world, it’s almost impossible to keep up with the level and the standard that we have to make sure that our kids succeed in this world, not only today, but in the future. Like Dr. Rivera has always said, ‘We are second to none’ and we will be second to none, and that is the standard we have to set ourselves up to. I feel this Board is moving forward and I know I will support it.”

Superintendent Dr. Canales thanked the Board of Trustees on behalf of staff for coming back and valuing the input of the community. She stated, “We sent surveys to parents and employees and we did town hall meetings. Thank you for believing in team.”

Mr. Lopez commented that all the schools that have been built in Weslaco have gone through bonds. He stated, “It would be impossible for a school district to set aside monies for a construction project and still keep the level of education that we have for our children. There is no way to move forward unless we go out for bonds. In looking at the future, the school has needs; there’s roofing needs and all kinds of needs and everyday our schools have a little bit of wear and tear on them and we need to renew, we need to upgrade, and we need to make sure that we do have the best facilities. At present point, we don’t have the best facilities here in Weslaco, but we need to keep on working so that we do have the best facilities around.”

He concluded by thanking everyone for their comments on the tax rate.

## V. Adjournment

The Public Hearing adjourned at 5:52 p.m.