

Pipeline news holds up Pumphrey library build

Posted: Wednesday, September 3, 2008 12:00 am

By Tara Sullivan

http://baytownsun.com/news/article_bcc96d9a-9565-519e-96cc-67b44a8c46e3.html

For nearly a decade, Jessie Lee Pumphrey Elementary School students have had to walk about 100 feet from their school, under a canopy, to get to the library. In 2005, voters set aside \$900,000 to build an 82,000-square-foot library onto Pumphrey. But district officials have said there is a delay in the project, with no definite building start day in site. For now, it is uncertain when Pumphrey students will reap the rewards of the money their parents have allotted for the new facility.

Though at one time the school had a library in the building, classroom expansion needs changed that.

In the early 1990s, Goose Creek CISD purchased the an old shopping strip now known as the "west town facility." The strip backs up to Pumphrey and currently houses the Advanced Learning Program, Special Education and more. When classrooms were expanded and computer labs added to Pumphrey, the library also was moved into the west town facility.

Pumphrey students are now the only GCCISD students that have to walk outside campus to get to the library. The location of the facility has posed significant challenges for educators, as library time must be carefully planned and allotted. Pumphrey students can't simply walk down a hallway to check out their favorite book.

Though need for the project has been realized, it is Pumphrey's positioning near numerous pipelines that has thrown a wrench into the new library's construction.

Executive Director for Support Services at GCCISD, Pete Cote, said the question now is "where do these lines lie."

When those overseeing the project asked companies where their pipelines are buried, they were met with more questions.

"There is some varying opinion as to where these pipelines are," Cote said.

Without knowing where the pipelines are buried, construction cannot begin.

Currently, the district is working diligently to determine where in fact the lines are, though a timeline could not be placed when an answer will be found.

In a best-case scenario, the district will determine that the pipeline is not located under the prospective build site.

At worst, the project will be further delayed as the district figures out what can be done to move, or move around, a line.

For now, Pumphrey students and parents can only wait.

GC board votes to close Pumphrey, West Town

Posted: Tuesday, March 31, 2009 12:00 am

By Luke Hales

http://baytownsun.com/news/article_5e3b79ac-a8fd-55cf-8545-61908bec8bfc.html

Just a few minutes into Monday night's Goose Creek CISD school board meeting, the trustees voted unanimously to relocate the campus personnel and students of Jessie Lee Pumphrey Elementary School and the district's West Town Complex at the beginning of the 2009-2010 school year.

Though there was no discussion on the action Monday night, district documents indicate that Goose Creek administration considers the sites to be safe. However, they recommend that future use of the schools be put under review and the students and staff be placed elsewhere in the district.

A meeting will be held at 6:30 p.m. tonight at Baytown Junior School for parents and students from the two affected campuses, where further details will be provided.

According to a school board media release, the board voted to close the 39-year-old elementary school and West Town complex, which includes the School Community Guidance Center, the Alternative Learning Program and Child Care Center, the print shop, food service personnel offices, the warehouse, and special education personnel offices, following a risk-analysis study that was done for the district.

While emphasizing there is no immediate danger to students and staff, the continued use of these two sites between two pipeline corridors is not in the best interest of the district long term, the Board decided.

Board President Carl Burg said a plan to relocate Pumphrey students and staff for next year, the ALP and SCGC students and staff, the ALP Child Care Center, and West Town staff and equipment, would be announced hopefully by the end of school this spring.

Why now? Goose Creek CISD interim Superintendent Dr. Toby York said the district must start this massive undertaking by April 1 in order for the relocations to be in place for the start of the school year in August.

"The Board and Administration consider the Pumphrey and West Town sites to be safe," Dr. York said. "However, after many years of use of these sites, the Board and Administration now recommend that future long-term occupancy of these sites be reviewed and that the students and staff should be relocated to another site or sites."

Dr. York asks that Goose Creek students, parents, and staff work together in an effort to meet the challenging task of relocation.

"Although this change will be demanding on many, we are confident that in the long-term, this decision will benefit our students and staff," Dr. York said.

A risk-analysis study commissioned by the district in 2008 (see above) concluded that should an incident — such as a leak or rupture — occur to a pipeline near the school or complex, there is a high potential that an undesirable action will accompany the incident.

Earlier this month, the Board voted to move the ALP and its Child Care Center after this school year into the former REL annex at the corner of Garth and Decker.

Where to house the district's School Community Guidance Center, print shop and other West Town personnel and equipment is still in the works. The District is researching other sites in the community as well as evaluating space within the District for the students and staff at Pumphrey.

The basis for the Board's decision began when contractors uncovered pipelines too close to where the new library for Pumphrey was to be built.

The library project was halted, and a risk-analysis study was commissioned under the direction of the District's legal counsel, Rick Peebles.

GC board stands by decision to close school

Posted: Friday, April 3, 2009 12:00 am

By Dave Mathews and Luke Hales

http://baytownsun.com/news/article_98c3c2f6-b2a9-5d32-af40-242a4d4dc48b.html

While the risk analysis score in a report about the pipelines adjacent to Pumphrey Elementary School could have been improved with further data, the improvement would not have been enough to change the school board's decision to close the campus.

Even if the risk score had been perfect, GCCISD school board president Carl Burg said, "the fact still remains there still is a pipeline there."

On Monday, the board announced it would close Pumphrey Elementary and relocate the students to other campuses next school year, along with the West Town complex, which houses several support services.

The report said that the conservative nature of the score was due to the "minimal amount of information available from the respective pipeline owners."

In its recommendations, the risk-assessment report suggested obtaining more information from the companies operating and maintaining the pipelines.

Company officials said they were aware of the report and of GCCISD's decision.

"We've heard about the report," said TEPPCO Director of Public Relations Rick Rainey. "We have not seen the report."

Officials from the companies that operate the pipelines pointed out Thursday that the lines are very strictly regulated by both federal and state agencies.

The companies are required to do internal testing every five years and do visual site inspections on a daily or weekly basis, Rainey said.

TEPPCO has five of the eight pipelines adjacent to the school and Rainey said all of those lines have had internal tests within the past two year, with two of those being performed in 2008.

Louis Dreyfus Energy, which operates the two pipelines closest to the school, responded to a “one-call system” request last year, said Joe Rothbauer, vice president of midstream operations.

Pipeline markers note the approximate location of the lines, Rainey said. Those markers are used to inform people there is a pipeline in the vicinity and to contact the one-call system to get the exact location of the line before starting any construction project.

“That’s pretty standard,” Rainey said.

In addition to marking their pipelines, Goose Creek officials also requested data from Louis Dreyfus Energy as part of their assessment. Included in the requests, Rothbauer said, were figures on pipeline diameter, pressure, date of construction, a pressure history, and a maintenance history, along with other data.

When contractors began looking at the site for the school’s new library, they discovered the pipelines were too close to the campus for continued construction. The project was halted and the risk-assessment report was commissioned.

The board’s decision

Goose Creek officials contend that any risk — however small — is too great to take with the district’s students.

“When you send your child off to school,” Interim Superintendent Toby York said, “you expect them to come home safe.”

During interviews and in the public meeting Tuesday, the board emphasized that, based on the findings of the report, they did not think there was current threat to the school or the neighborhoods surrounding it. In fact, Burg said at the special school district meeting, “We (the board) believe there is no imminent danger to anyone within the site. We don’t see a problem today or next week, but we can’t predict what may happen in the future.”

He added that, “This action was taken in the interest of moving the students and staff from a safe site to a safer site within the district boundaries.”

However, they said that continuing to send students into a school next to pipelines was not in the best long-term interest of the district.

“Incidents continue to happen,” Burg said.

According to the U.S. Department of Transportation Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration, the United States had 38 pipeline accidents or incidents in 2008 that involved a fatality or an injury that required a hospital stay.

All totaled, there were an additional 236 incidents that involved: \$50,000 or more in total costs, measured in 1984 dollars, highly volatile liquid releases of 5 barrels or more or other liquid releases of 50 barrels or more, or liquid releases resulting in an unintentional fire or explosion.

The companies

Representatives from the four companies said Thursday that the pipelines are safe. Rainey said that from what he's read, he did not feel the board was saying there was an immediate safety issue.

The risk analysis report noted that some of the pipelines were "more than four decades old (approaching the typical design lifetime.)"

But, Rainey said, "There is no way to tell what condition these pipelines are in without our data."

He said that as with other structures, much is dependent upon the maintenance and upgrade of the structures.

"There is no particular lifespan of a pipeline," said Rainey. "If a pipeline is maintained regularly, then its lifespan can be indefinite."

During Tuesday's special meeting, Burg mentioned another factor the board used in its decision: "The construction company (which was working on the new library on the Pumphrey campus) believed some of the pipelines had migrated onto the school's property," Burg said. "When the school board found this out, they requested that administration halt the construction." However, Rothbauer stated that migration of such magnitude is highly unlikely; "The pipelines don't move," he said. "They stay exactly in the same place."

The report also stated that the exact location of the embedded pipelines is unknown, as the pipeline markers are not consistent.

The report also claims that parts of the city's storm drainage network cross the pipeline right-of-way in close proximity to the Pumphrey campus, which has created washout around two drainage access points. This has contributed to a loss of soil integrity through erosion, which may lead to inadequate pipeline support.

Along with these statements, the report also states that, "Since the underground pipelines under study are not directly accessible by the analysis team, we must rely on a subjective risk assessment." Such an assessment takes into consideration, "opinion, experience, intuition, and other non-quantitative information" in the determination of a conclusion.

For more information on the risk analysis report, or to request a copy, contact the GCCISD administrative office at 281-420-4800.

The risk report's findings

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http://baytownsun.com/news/article_c0337a2e-b9c7-5af4-aceb-c9939b4a5108.html

According to the risk analysis report, produced and compiled for the Goose Creek school board by Leslie E. Olson of the Texas Transportation Institute and Martin A. Wortman, Department of Industrial and Systems Engineering of Texas A&M University, the calculated risk score could be improved if these issues were addressed:

1. Presently, the exact location of the embedded pipelines is unknown; the pipeline markers are clearly not self-consistent. While certain pipeline markers lie outside of the right-of-way, GPS mapping of these lines is not available. Accurately locating the embedded lines would be a straightforward matter for the pipeline owners.
2. This right-of-way contains pipelines that are more than four decades old (approaching the typical design lifetime). Corrosion studies for these lines are not available. It would be a straightforward matter for the respective pipeline owners to quantify corrosion effects.
3. Elements of the Baytown storm drainage network cross this right-of-way in very close proximity to Pumphrey Elementary School. There is visible evidence of substantial washout around two storm drainage points adjacent to the right-of-way, clearly compromising the soil integrity of the right-of-way. The loss in soil integrity is of considerable concern, inasmuch as pipeline soil support may be inadequate.
4. Third party incursions into this right-of-way are abundant. We note that the chain-link fence constructed by a neighboring apartment complex adjacent to Pumphrey Elementary ... encroaches into the pipeline right-of-way. A school goalpost has been erected on the right-of-way. There is clear evidence that heavy vehicles cross paved portions of the right-of-way in close proximity to the elementary school. Available data suggests that the embedded pipelines are buried approximately three feet below the soil surface. Hence, any of the aforementioned incursions could potentially compromise the integrity of the embedded lines. Limiting access to this right-of-way in close proximity to Pumphrey Elementary would raise the relative risk scoring."

— Source: Right-of-Way Adjacent to Pumphrey Elementary School,
Leslie E. Olson and Martin A. Wortman

GCCISD board responds to residents' questions

Posted: Sunday, April 5, 2009 12:00 am

From City Reports

http://baytownsun.com/news/article_9d9db393-3090-5ce8-aeba-a79462ae2c0b.html

Goose Creek officials responded Friday on its Web site to questions presented to board members during a Tuesday public meeting.

Below are the questions and answers posted on the site:

1. Why can't Pumphrey be housed at the Lee Annex with portable buildings used, and the ALP group housed at a different location, since there is already a cafeteria/eating area on site?

The 2005 Bond program approved by voters included a project to relocate the ALP students and staff to the site currently called the "Lee Annex."

2. Is this a way to get rid of a low-income school?

Absolutely not. The decision to close Pumphrey and West Town was made after a risk-analysis study indicated that the pipelines near the sites could be problematic down the road. Of course, the pipeline may never cause a problem, but we decided that in the long term, those Goose Creek CISD sites should be closed and the students and staff housed elsewhere.

3. Why can't the gas companies replace these gas lines or repair them?

That is a question for the pipeline companies and one we cannot answer. We can only do what we feel is best for the students and staff at Pumphrey and West Town, which is to move them.

4. Is there an option to leave this school open until the children currently enrolled can finish?

Not as things stand today. We feel that it is in the best interest of students and staff and the school district to move Pumphrey and West Town sooner rather than later.

5. Is Goose Creek planning on building a new elementary school?

Yes. Included in the 2005 Bond project approved by voters was the site acquisition and design fee for Elementary No. 15.

6. Why was the ALP your first priority?

It is not. The 2005 Bond program included a project to relocate the ALP students and staff to the site currently called the "Lee Annex."

7. How many buildings (schools) do you plan to use?

At this time there are no definite plans for where any of the students and staff will be beginning next school year. We expect to advise parents and staff before the summer break where they will be for the next school year.

8. How or will they be transported?

Any Pumphrey student needing transportation to a new school site will be taken by Goose Creek school buses. We will do all we can to ensure that the students of Pumphrey are transported in the same way as all students are taken to and from school.

9. Is this a temporary thing or is it a permanent thing?

The decision to close Pumphrey and the West Town complex is permanent because the situation involving the pipelines on the property is unlikely to change.

10. How are they going to be treated?

All students in the Goose Creek school district will be treated the same whether they come from Pumphrey, Walker, or Austin. Goose Creek CISD is committed to "Success for All Students."

11. Is this another Louisiana thing?

Unsure what this question is getting at, but the decision to close the school was made solely on what is in the best interest of the students and staff and the district as a whole.

12. Can the pipelines be repaired in the summer?

That's a question for the pipeline owners to answer. As for Goose Creek, we maintain that the sites are safe but not in the best interests of the students and staff and the school district over the long term.

13. If the school system moved, what will happen to the 600 plus residents?

We are only responsible for the students and staff in Goose Creek. The Board decision was based solely on what is in the best interests of students and staff.

14. Is there a maintenance program on the pipelines?

Yes, and the responsibility lies with the pipeline companies.

15. Can you (the Board) answer questions about the report?

We will do our best to answer all questions about this issue. Send questions about the report to <<mailto:ngarcia@gccisd.net>>ngarcia@gccisd.net. Copies of the report are available at the Goose Creek Administration Building, 4544 Interstate 10 East. Please call 281-420-4800 for more information.

16. Why was the meeting not held at Pumphrey Elementary?

The size of the group that the Administration and the School Board anticipated for the meeting on Tuesday evening was considerably larger than what occurred. The facilities at Pumphrey could not handle the size of the group we anticipated.

17. Are you putting these students' needs first?

Be assured that the needs of Goose Creek CISD students — at Pumphrey or anywhere in the district — are our first priority in any decision.

18. Why are you doing this?

The School Board considers the safety of its students and staff to be of paramount importance. While the Board considers the site a safe site, long term they believe it is in the best interests of the district to relocate these students and staffs to safer sites within the district.

19. If the area is safe for homes, why not students?

We cannot speak for homeowners. The school board's responsibility is to the students and staff. The Board decision to close Pumphrey and West Town was based solely on what is in the best interests of students and staff and the school district as a whole.

20. Have you taken this problem up with the gas companies?

Board members have spoken to the pipeline companies involved and informed them of the decision to close the two sites.

21. Since this is a neighborhood school and there are plans for it to be moved, are we going to have to take them to school? If so, what about our jobs?

Any Pumphrey student needing transportation to the new school site will be taken by Goose Creek school buses. We will do all we can to ensure that the students of Pumphrey are transported in the same way as all students are taken to and from school.

22. Have you checked with the Railroad Commission or DOT?

Several members of the Board of Trustees are aware that the Texas Railroad Commission and the DOT regulate pipeline companies. However, the fact remains that there are leaks from pipelines all across the country every year.

23. This campus has a majority of low-income students. If we bus students to various areas, how are the low-income families going to be as involved?

The district will work with parents to see that they can be involved in their childrens' schools; we know parent involvement is key to ensuring student success.

24. Why does the school have to worry about the pipelines? I live two minutes from Pumphrey. Do I have to move?

We cannot speak for homeowners. The school board's responsibility is to the students and staff. The Board decision to close Pumphrey and West Town was based solely on what is in the best interests of students and staff and the school district as a whole.

25. May I have a copy of the report?

Yes. There are copies at the Goose Creek Administration Building, 4544 Interstate 10 East or one can be emailed to you. Please call 281-420-4800 or email Board secretary Noemi Garcia at <<mailto:ngarcia@gccisd.net>>ngarcia@gccisd.net for more information.

26. Would this happen in the same way at another campus?

If the circumstances were the same, then the Board would make the same decision.

27. Will the playground stay in place for the neighborhood children?

No decisions have been made on what would remain long term at the site.

28. Is a voucher to go toward private school an option for Pumphrey students?

No.

29. What is the product in the lines in question? How far have the lines migrated?

The pipelines are transporting gasoline, diesel, propane, butanes, and natural gas. At the nearest point, the 100-foot-wide right of way, hosting eight embedded pipelines, lies within 80 feet of the Pumphrey school building complex.

30. Do you mean to find jobs for the Pumphrey staff?

The teachers and staff at Pumphrey will still be needed to teach and work with Pumphrey students. Closing the school does not mean work force reduction, just relocation.

31. Do you know where the students will go?

Not yet. We are actively researching other sites in the community as well as evaluating space within the District for the students and staff at Pumphrey.

32. Are you willing to find a building to house us as Pumphrey Elementary School?

We are exploring the option of keeping the entire campus together at another site. No decision has been reached, however.

33. If we raise money, will this help from closing the school?

No. The decision to close the school is not based on a financial consideration; it is based on a long term safety concern. The decision is final and in the best interest of all involved.

34. What will bond money be used for?

Unused bond funds originally earmarked for the Pumphrey Library and renovations at West Town will not be used for “new” projects. The Board of Trustees must approve all bond expenditures.

35. If there is no imminent danger, why couldn't the relocation be postponed until a new school could be built for Pumphrey.

While emphasizing there is no immediate danger to students and staff, the continued use of these two sites between two pipeline corridors is not in the best interest of the district long term, the Board decided.

36. Is Exxon gaining the property back?

Exxon Mobil is not involved in this process or decision in any way. None of the pipelines in the two right-of-ways at Pumphrey and the West Town Complex are currently owned and operated by Exxon Mobil.

37. When will the next Board meeting on this subject be held?

Whenever the administration is ready with a recommendation concerning the original decision to relocate the students and staffs, the Board will have an agenda item for that discussion and decision. An agenda for any Board of Trustees meeting will be posted on the front door of the building and on the school district Web site (<<http://www.gccisd.net>>www.gccisd.net) three days before the meeting.

38. Will the new elementary already scheduled to be built be Pumphrey?

There is no new elementary school to be built in the near future. The 2005 Bond Program included the purchase and design for an elementary school. However, the site chosen for that school in late 2005 is on state Highway 146 just north of the Cedar Bayou Bridge. There are no bond funds available for another new elementary school out of the 2005 Bond program.

39. If this decision was just made last night, why was security scheduled two weeks ago?

Planning ahead for extra security before a public meeting is standard operating procedure. While the decision was made on March 30, the Board had been discussing the matter with their legal counsel for at least two months. Security was advised that there might be a meeting on Tuesday evening, March 31, pending the outcome of the Board meeting on Monday evening, March 30.

40. What are the long-term plans for the utilization of these facilities? What will the district do with them after that?

The facilities will be closed at the end of the school year. No discussion on that matter has taken place as yet.

41. Who is responsible for the maintenance of the pipeline?

The pipeline companies are responsible.

42. Will certified teachers replace uncertified teachers in our field?

It is the district's goal to have all of its teachers certified. However, the decision to close Pumphrey and the West Town complex is not expected to affect staffing at our schools.

43. How long will the school be closed?

We are planning that the current Pumphrey and West Town sites will be closed for good at the end of the year.

44. What about the name and the building over the school?

The Board of Trustees typically asks for citizen input on the name for all new schools and they will more than likely ask for input for the next elementary school to be built.

GCCISD answers further Pumphrey questions

Posted: Thursday, April 23, 2009 12:00 am

From City Reports |

http://baytownsun.com/news/article_6f5208ea-1e41-578a-a53f-e35064b223c1.html

Goose Creek CISD officials have responded to a third batch of questions posed during a recent public meeting concerning the closure of Pumphrey Elementary and the West Town Complex. This list of questions and answers, as well as the original list posted last week, are available for viewing on the school district's Web site, <<http://www.gccisd.net>>www.gccisd.net. The school board will meet tonight at 6:30 at the Administration Building at 4544 I-10 East.

I'm new to the Baytown area and would like to know what direction Goose Creek CISD will take regarding the relocation of students zoned to Pumphrey Elementary. I live in Country Club Estates subdivision with a 5-year-old that will be starting indergarten in the fall of this year. Since Pumphrey Elementary is one of the oldest Elementary schools in the Baytown area, the school district made a wise choice to close the school. Please provide what options my child has regarding what school they will be attending this fall.

The students and staff of Pumphrey Elementary School will be sent to other Goose Creek elementary schools next year. The Board of Trustees will vote today on the recommended action from the administration to form a committee to revise the attendance zones of Pumphrey Elementary School to send those students to other schools. After reviewing data and looking at possible sites in the district, the administration realized that it could not relocate Pumphrey Elementary students and staff in one location because of instructional program and support services needs. Where Pumphrey students and staff will go next year will be announced hopefully by the end of school.

I realize the tasks that lie ahead of you as you deal with the decisions to close Pumphrey and West Town are daunting. I do not disagree with the closings as I have first hand knowledge of what can transpire during an explosion and the subsequent damages that can result. I would love for our students to be able to be housed in a new building that is safer for all concerned and am willing to work towards that end as a teacher here at Pumphrey. The question I have is regarding the logistics of an actual move. Is there any possibility that the faculty and staff here at Pumphrey can receive answers as to where we will be housed before the end of the school year? I am sure you can understand, not only the logistics of moving everything in our building, but also the need for teachers to be able to prepare for the new school year. I want to be prepared well in advance to meet the students' needs for the coming year. My desire is that you will be able to keep the current students, faculty, and staff together wherever we need to be placed in order to reach the goals of a safe and enriching educational environment.

The Board of Trustees will vote today on the recommended action from the administration to form a committee to revise the attendance zones of Pumphrey Elementary School to send those students to other schools. What school Pumphrey students and staff will go next year will be announced hopefully by the end of school.

There are even more pipelines near Sterling High School than there are near Pumphrey. Have you looked into the safety of these pipelines? If not, why? It was stated, "If the circumstances were the same, then the Board would make the same decision." How safe are the pipelines near Sterling?

There are no other district buildings that sit right next to a pipeline right-of-way. Athletic fields at Sterling High School are very close to the right-of-way north of the school buildings. The Victoria Walker Elementary School building is located approximately 1000 feet from the pipeline right-of-way that crosses Garth Road just south of the intersection of Garth and Seabird.

The Board knew of the intentions of the Pumphrey staff before spring break. If we chose not to teach at Pumphrey next year, you would already know. I feel you owe it to us to tell us your intentions. There are possibilities you are considering right now, yet the staff and Mrs. DeLeon have no clue what those might be. We don't want to know after a decision is made because we saw how that works and we will have no say in it at that point. When will we be involved in these discussions? If not all of us, at least include Mrs. DeLeon.

The Board of Trustees will vote today on the recommended action from the administration to form a committee to revise the attendance zones of Pumphrey Elementary School to send those students to other schools. What school Pumphrey students and staff will go next year will be announced hopefully by the end of school. Mrs. DeLeon was made aware of the possibility of a Board vote to close the West Town and Pumphrey sites on the morning of Monday, March 30. She was advised of the pending Board action for this coming Thursday, April 23 Board agenda item on Monday, April 20.

Are there any other district buildings sitting right next to pipeline right-of-ways?

There are no other district buildings that sit right next to a pipeline right-of-way. Athletic fields at Sterling High School are very close to the right-of-way north of the school buildings. The Victoria Walker Elementary School building is located approximately 1000 feet from the pipeline right-of-way that crosses Garth Road just south of the intersection of Garth and Seabird.

How much 2005 Bond money is left for the renovation work at West Town and the Pumphrey sites?

The 2005 Bond program had \$3,999,512 million for Pumphrey improvements including the new library and \$662,831 for the West Town complex for a total of \$4,662,343 million out of the \$240 million Bond program. Of this total \$1,355,618 million has been spent leaving \$3,306,725 million that will not be spent.