

# ON BOARD

June 2011

BY - T H E - M I N U T E S R E P O R T

## Board approves \$15M budget and tax rate

After considering cuts to pass a balanced budget all spring, the Commerce ISD Board of Trustees easily approved the \$15,015,340 budget presented by administrators. A \$0.0014 (less than one cent) tax increase in the payment of principal and interest was also approved for the fiscal year beginning July 1.

Superintendent Blake Cooper said property owners should not see an increase in property taxes for 2011-2012 because of declining property values and the small amount of the increase.

"We had tough decisions to make this spring – the hardest I've ever had to make in my twenty-eight years in education. With over \$900,000 in budget cuts, we will be able to operate in the black and also add to our fund balance, which we have dipped into the last three years," Cooper said.

The District anticipates a six percent decrease in funds from the state although the legislature has not finalized the school funding issue.

The budget and taxation formula is set by the state and since the district had already received approval from the voters for the 13-cent increase in maintenance and operations, the state formula required a tax increase in principal and interest payments.

## District open to out-of-district transfers

Beginning immediately, students who want to attend Commerce schools but live in another school district may apply to transfer into Commerce ISD and be considered for admission at any time. Factors principals will consider before allowing a transfer include academic performance, attendance and conduct.

Previously, parents had to apply for student transfers by May 1 for the next school year. Only after two weeks of the new school year began would others be considered for entrance and then only until the end of the first six weeks.

Board action added academic performance as a consideration for transfer where previously it was not.

New requirements for attendance, academic achievement and conduct are as follows for student seeking to transfer into Commerce ISD:

- Absences will not be allowed to exceed 10 percent of the total days in a semester.
- Satisfactory academic progress is defined as maintaining a 70 percent for each report card grading period and passing scores in all sections of the student's state assessment, such as the TAKS/STAAR test.
- Placement in a Discipline Alternative Education Program (DAEP), expulsion, assignment to in-school suspension more than two times/ days or assignment to out-of-school suspension more than two times/ days are defined as serious or persistent misbehavior and will cause a transfer applicant to not be accepted and also revoke the transfer of a current student.

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## *Out-of-district transfers con't...*

If a transfer student does not continue to maintain academic performance, attendance and conduct set by guidelines, transfer can be revoked.

“We are opening our doors to area students who see the benefits of our excellent teachers, administrators, facilities and programs,” Cooper said.

Transfer applications and agreements are available online at [www.commerceisd.org](http://www.commerceisd.org) and at the CISD Administration Building.

## **In other action...**

The Board approved Trident Insurance as the carrier for the district property and casualty insurance. The local agent is Duncan Insurance.

Director of Finance John Walker said other carriers inquired about district coverage, but Trident was the only carrier to turn in a bid. He said the other carriers declined because they could not compete with the rates and coverage offered by Trident.

## **In informational reports...**

Julia Robinson, Director of Curriculum, Special Programs and Grants, reported the latest TAKS testing results showed scores remained the same or increased in 19 of 25 categories that includes all students in five tested areas and African American, Hispanic, White and economically disadvantaged student subpopulations.

She expects the District rating will be Acceptable when it is released later this summer.

Mr. Cooper was pleased with the scores saying that improvement was not only seen in the passing rates but also in commended performance.

Mrs. Robinson said this year was the first year to include special education students in the performance calculations.

“Everyone worked hard to ensure student performance improved. Our special education teachers met with me throughout the year to ensure we were using modifications to help students do their best on the test and their hard work shows in our students’ scores,” Robinson said.

The next Board meeting was set for July 18.