



CANEY VALLEY SCHOOLS

P.O. Box 410
Ramona, OK 74061
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June 10, 2026

Information from Monday night's meeting:

Continued questions from the 6/1/26 school board meeting.

1: Dr. Cantrell Violated the Open Meeting Act by informing perspective Construction Managers about the preference of Stout Construction.

According to Morgan Rinner, Attorney for the district's law firm Rosenstein, Fist, and Reingold, "We believe it is unlikely that a violation of the Open Meeting Act occurred. However, we do not recommend telling potential applicants and bidders who the selected entity is when Board approval has not yet occurred."

I fully admit that I should have worded my email to the other candidates to read "I am recommending we choose another CM." But there was never a time when I was trying to keep the board from voting and approving the choice for CM. As a superintendent, all I can do is make a recommendation to the board to vote on. The facts regarding the construction manager are:

- No contracts were signed prior to the board action.
- Three vendors presented at the April board meeting
- I gave the board my pros and cons for each of the vendors and asked for their input. I received replies from 3 members stating their preference.
- I sent the emails to the vendors for them to be able to make their plans for the summer.

In regard to the Construction Manager and the Architect, I do not personally care who the district chooses for either position. I have worked with many different construction companies and have no ties to any of them. I do not have a relationship with any of the entities involved with this or the last bond project. I do not go to hospitality events sponsored by an individual entity, or accept free dinners from companies for myself, our administrative team or board members. I don't ask vendors to pay for my golf teams in our fundraiser tournaments or seek out opportunities that could benefit myself or my family. There are many schools who do accept these. At CCOSA and OSSBA meetings in OKC, I have been invited to dinner at cocktail parties at Bricktown, and Happy Hours at numerous locations. All of these were sponsored by specific vendors thanking their clients. I choose not to go to these events because I do not ever want to be accused of being bought off for my recommendations.



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2: The architect is to blame for issues with the previous bond issue.

This is not true. The architect can only design the facilities based on the vision presented to them by the school district. It is my understanding for the 2021 bond issue that the vision was determined by a committee of a select community members. The desire was to build a practice gymnasium to relieve congestion and usage at the main gym. It was not intended to accommodate more than 200 spectators although it is a regulation basketball court.

Again, I am not privy to those decisions as they were made before I began my employment for Caney Valley. What I can tell you is that for the bond that was passed in February, I met with teachers, custodians, maintenance, principals and secretaries numerous times in an effort to determine exactly what the needs were for our district. When we determined the list of potential projects needed for our district we published a survey for our patrons to rank the importance of each of the projects. All of that information was presented to the board when it was voted on to hold the bond election. The information provided by the school district is what determines the design created by the architect.

3: Our fund balance has dropped significantly over the past 6 years.

This is true. Our fund balance in 2021 was over 2 million dollars. It is important to remember that federal COVID-19 funds staggered from 2021-2023 of 1 million dollars were included in spending amounts during those years. When I was hired I remember the board members specifically stating that their goal was for our school to be top 10 in all areas of the school. Some areas we have succeeded and some we have not. In order to meet the challenges set by the board, funds had to be spent. Many of these costs for the district revolved around security (\$190,000 in added security cameras, and \$331,000 for secure entrances and the bus loop in Ramona. These expenses revolve around our priority of ensuring student safety and security. When I was hired, students at the Ramona campus loaded and unloaded from cars and buses on the public roadway. In addition, all visitors entered the building at the back of the school right by the “trash truck” parked by the door. Both of these situations were huge school safety concerns. We utilized bond, general, and building funds to put in a secure front entrance to the school, along with a dedicated bus and car loading/unloading lane on campus and off the main road. In addition, we remodeled the secure entrance at the elementary.

After COVID-19 we hired additional staff members to help with the academic losses of our students from missing the entire 4th quarter of the 2020 school year and the 45 days of virtual instruction implemented due to quarantines. We bought air purifiers for every classroom and office (\$170,000). It is my understanding that the tornado safe room in the new gymnasium was proposed with the possibility of \$600,000 additional funds coming from FEMA. By the



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time the bond was passed there was no FEMA money available and I was not willing to postpone construction in the hope that a natural disaster would occur in Washington County.

- Bond funds could not cover all of the costs associated with furnishing the classrooms, gymnasium, and cafeteria, so we covered that \$600,000 from the General Fund.
- Only \$50,000 was originally budgeted for the Ochelata kitchen equipment, however, the cost of the new equipment, new tables and a walk in cooler/freezer ended up being over \$400,000.
- We also installed a new walk in cooler/freezer/dry storage unit at the Ramona campus costing \$296,000. This was done to remove the old coolers and freezers that were located in the eating area of the cafeteria. It is important to note that these units leaked Freon and had to be recharged quite frequently.
- Bond funds also did not cover the cost of new HVAC units in the remodeled SLAM building. The original vision called to keep the old units. However, it was discovered that one of the units did not work, and the unit that was working had caught on fire previously.
- Speaking of SLAM. The 21st Century Learning Grant which paid for SLAM ran out in 2022. In order for us to keep the after school program we spent around \$200,000.00 per year in 2023 and 2024. We had to cancel the program in 2025 because we could not afford to keep it. All of these expenses were made to benefit our students and provide them with the best education possible.

4: Dr. Cantrell has made mistakes during his tenure at Caney Valley.

Absolutely true! I have never professed to be perfect. In everything I have done I have worked diligently to provide the best possible atmosphere for our students, love every student who came on our campus, and treat everyone the same no matter who they were or their social status within the community. Along with the items mentioned above, we bought an additional route bus, activity bus, and Suburbans all outside of bond funds. We purchased new uniforms for our athletic teams and instruments for our band students. We started a golf program, and a cross country team because our students asked for them. They have also asked for a volleyball team. When the decision is made to implement that we will be ready, because during construction we had the holes for the volleyball standards built into our new gym. This also added extra money to the cost. Every bit of money that has been spent has been done so to better our students.

5: Dr. Cantrell is blaming others for this issue.

This is completely false. I have taken ownership in every decision made within the district. My goal for our district has always been to be better today than we were yesterday. We have met that goal in almost every area except for the finances. I own that and it ultimately falls on me. This is why I am working to correct the situation. As stated in a previous letter, there are many hands that work on the budget for our district. However, in the end, it was my



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responsibility to ensure that the numbers were correct. I may have made mistakes, but I have never blamed someone else for them. There was no benefit to myself by keeping our staff numbers as high as we did. I fully admit that I should have caught the discrepancy in the temporary appropriation and the actual appropriation, and removed staff last summer. That would have prevented this issue. And, that is the reason why I am working to ensure that the district nor the patrons are penalized for this mistake. I firmly believe that we will rise from this situation and continue our path forward.

6: Money was wasted on stipends, including mine.

Unfortunately, in many of these conversations, my integrity has been challenged. The salary schedule that is used to pay me is the same one used during previous administrations. I did not ask for the stipends in question. In addition, I have tried to make the stipends equitable to our administrators. When I was hired, I was presented with a contract that included a \$7,500.00 stipend for managing Federal Programs and a \$4,000.00 stipend for travel expenses. As I stated at the last board meeting, I have never used any equipment of the school for my personal use. Throughout the school year I have gone to numerous sporting events, academic meets, business meetings, workshops, conferences, etc. With all of those events, I only used a school suburban 4 times this past year. I drive my own vehicle almost exclusively to ensure that the school vehicles are available for our staff to use with students. This summer I asked the board to approve moving management of Federal Program to the Osage County Inter-local Cooperative. Even though this will remove salary from me, it will save the district money and will allow us to use federal funds to pay for this management.

The transportation stipend for Clinton Hudson has been questioned as well. Does Clinton use an old suburban of the schools? Yes, he does. But he also uses his own personal tractor and trailers many times throughout the year to help remove snow, sow seed on athletic fields, spray, move chairs, haul off debris, etc. He also is on call 24 hours a day 7 days a week. If we get a security call or a fire code at 2:00 in the morning, it goes to Clinton. He is the one who gets a call at 4:30 in the morning with a frozen, busted water line in Ochelata. In addition, the district does not currently, nor has it had any tools for school use. Clinton has had to use his own tools to solve most of the maintenance issues we have had at the school. And, he is not alone. Any time there is an abundance of snow fall, the maintenance crew along with the administration team is who removes the snow so we can have school as soon as possible. Mr. Fogle, Mr. Hudson, and I have all used our own personal equipment to help in snow removal. I would put the integrity of this group and their dedication to our students up against anyone else in the state.



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7: How can we be assured that no money was stolen from the district?

We have implemented a rigorous process for spending within the district. The steps for spending from our main spending accounts (General, Building, Bond, etc.) are as follows:

1. A paper requisition is filled out and signed by the individual requesting to spend money.
2. The paper requisition is approved by a direct supervisor.
3. The encumbrance clerk enters that request into our ADPC accounting software program.
4. The requests for requisition are sent to either the Superintendent or the District Treasurer for approval and conversion to a purchase order.
5. The purchase orders are approved each month by the Board of Education
6. The purchase order is returned for ordering purposes.
7. Upon receipt of the item purchased, a receipt and copy of the shipping label are turned in to the encumbrance clerk for processing payment.
8. Checks are cut with approval of the District Treasurer.

The same process is utilized for payroll except instead of the encumbrance clerk initiating the digital footprint it is done by Payroll Services. From there the transactions are approved in the same manner.

No one person can initiate and complete a transaction without the oversight of others within the office and by the school board. Activity Accounts are conducted with the same process except that transactions do not have to be board approved.

In regard to Activity Accounts, we have initiated policies for activity clubs and booster organizations which require the board approval of all activity accounts every year and booster clubs have to turn in financial documents each year to ensure that no money can be taken from them without express approval from the members of the organization. All these steps which are taken is how I can confidently claim to you that no money has been stolen from the district or from our students.

In addition, every year we have had a clean audit from our 3rd party auditors, Patton and Odom. We intentionally chose an audit firm with a reputation for being strict and by the book.



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8: How do we proceed for next year?

We had 10 staff members voluntarily resign and 4 retire from their positions at the end of the 2026 school year. Out of those 14 staff members we will only replace 3 staff members. This will result in a savings to the district of \$700,000.00. In addition we had 4 temporary certified staff members who were not retained for an additional savings of \$279,000.00. These teachers were on a temporary contract and not guaranteed a contract for next year. One of those temporary teachers has since been rehired to fill a need within our special education department. Finally, we did reduce our support staff by 6 staff members. These cuts included staff from Physical Education, Library Services, Maintenance, and Para-professionals. This savings will be \$170,000 for the district. The projected savings for next year from salaries and benefits for the general fund are expected to be \$1,150,000.00. We are working to move the percentage of appropriations for salaries and benefits closer to 85% which has been recommended by our auditors.

9: Is the architect recommended at the board meeting the same architect from the previous bond?

Yes, it is. The last bond issue used Tri-Arch Architecture out of Tulsa. The reason why this architecture company was proposed for this bond issue is because this is mainly a refurbishment bond issue. By utilizing the same company, we can keep a consistent design standard in place for flooring, paint, gym bleachers, classroom cabinetry, etc. This will ensure that we have a seamless transition between the past project and the new project at the elementary. There was discussion at the board meeting about how the previous bond was sold to the general public. I was not part of that marketing plan. I do not know the specifics of what information was given to the public or how the bond projects were described. When I arrived to Caney Valley in July of 2020 everyone was hired for the project and most of the planning was complete. I established the election date and changed a small percent of the project to include remodeling restrooms and initiate secure entrances at both campuses. I am not aware of how big the occupancy was stated regarding the gym in Ramona or the cafeteria in Ochelata. However, the gym and cafeteria were built to the maximum occupancy allowed by the State Fire Marshal and current building codes.



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10: The Competitive Bidding Act was violated by not having more than one architect submit a proposal.

This is untrue. According to Brandon Carey, staff attorney for the Oklahoma State School Board Association,

“Selection of architects and construction managers are not subject to competitive bidding. For architects, you basically ask them to submit proposals and take the one you like best. For construction managers, you’re supposed to select people from the OMES list and interview them.”

The majority of this bond project is refurbishment of existing buildings and structures. The only new component is the classroom for Agricultural Education extending from the current show barn. As stated earlier, by utilizing the same architect we are guaranteed that our school will not be a patchwork of different designs, colors, or concepts. This architect knows that we want the best structures possible without all of the curves and non-essential items that add to the construction costs. Our kids deserve the best facilities we can give them, but we do not need curved walls or fancy bell towers.