



## AISD inquires about stimulus funds

By Angela Weatherford Associate Editor

February 27, 2009 06:54 pm

— Athens school administrators are hoping to get a little help from the federal government when it comes to possible construction projects.

Public schools are in line to receive money from the highly debated stimulus bill that recently passed. Some of the money will go to Title I and disabilities programs, but there is also a section of money that is being sent to the Texas Education Agency for construction projects.

It is the second category that school officials in Athens are waiting for. During a workshop meeting Tuesday night, Superintendent Dr. Fred Hayes informed school board members that it is unclear how the construction money would be dispersed.

“We certainly want to be the first in line,” he said.

With the possibility of a third bond on the horizon — which could happen in May — school officials are hoping to procure some of the money from stimulus package to ease the crunch a little.

“There are many schools out there that need help,” Hayes said. “In my mind us getting a significant amount of the money in not very likely.”

In a press release from Strategic Partnership, Inc., an Austin-based research and procurement consulting firm that is tracking the funding flows into Texas on the recently signed bill, Athens Independent School District could receive up to \$1,107,000.

Hayes told the Athens Review Thursday that officials from the district have been in contact with TEA almost every day this week. However, the Commissioner of Education was in Washington, D.C., on Thursday, and the odds are an announcement could be made as early as next week.

“It is hard to make a fund decision without knowing about the money,” Hayes said.

When the House of Representatives and Senate were initially discussing the stimulus bill, Athens was slated to receive \$2,668,800.

Why the change?

A representative of Strategic Partnership, Inc., J. Lyn Carl, said the difference probably happened when the bill was in conference.

“We are dealing with a different bill now,” she said. “The money in the pot has been reduced.

As for the Title I money, Hayes said the district is searching for a short-term project, so that when the money is no longer sent — after two years — hard decisions don’t have to be made.

“We don’t want to start a program that is great, and then when the funding runs out have to get rid of it or find something else to cut down on,” Hayes said.

School officials are slated to meet Monday at 5:30 p.m. to further discuss facilities issues. The meeting will be held at the District Support Center on Hawn Street.

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