

# VICTORIA ADVOCATE

Sandcrabs win area championship

SPORTS, B1



Weekend, April 18-19, 2026

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## ELECTIONS

### VISD leaders push transparency, urgency ahead of \$240M school bond vote

JAKOB GURLEY

Victoria Independent School District leaders say a proposed \$240 million bond aims to address decades of aging infrastructure and position the district for long-term growth, while pushing

back on concerns about transparency and communication following a public forum held Wednesday where community members heard competing views on the proposal.

School board president Micah Patton said discussions about potential

school closures, consolidations and demolitions have been ongoing for years in public meetings.

"I just wish people would look back," Patton said. "There's clearly a record of conversation about these facilities that are slated for demolition, and

it's been on the proposal."

The bond, developed by a 43-member community Bond Action Committee, includes projects impacting 18 campuses and focuses on major infrastructure needs such as roofs, HVAC

SEE VISD, A3



Shields Elementary School, slated for demolition under VISD's proposed bond. (Jakob Gurley/Victoria Advocate)

## RETAIL



Walmart's longest tenured employee, Teresa Clifton, center, who has worked for the store for 45 years, cuts the ribbon to officially reopen the Walmart Supercenter on North Navarro surrounded by coworkers. (Lindsey Plotkin/Victoria Advocate)

# GIVING BACK

## Walmart reopening in Victoria celebrates community, new upgrades

LINDSEY PLOTKIN

The beat of drums and the rhythm of a dance team set the tone as the Walmart Supercenter

welcomed the community back for its grand reopening — a celebration that blended fresh upgrades with decades of local ties.

With the Victoria West High School band and Legacy Dance Team on hand, the reopening of Store No. 330 felt less like a retail event and more like a community gathering. Shoppers stepped into a redesigned space featuring a new fashion section, expanded grocery options — including in-house sushi and torti-

llas — and an updated vision center.

The renovation marks the 68th Walmart store in Texas to undergo similar upgrades, but for those gathered, the focus extended beyond the physical changes.

Walmart presented four community grants during the event, reinforcing its investment in local organizations. The Victoria West Warrior Band and Legacy Dance Team each received \$1,500, along with Warriors Weekend, while

the Victoria Police Department received \$2,500.

The celebration also turned attention to the people behind the store's longevity. Long-tenured associates were recognized, including Teresa Clifton who has worked at the location for 45 years — a reflection of the store's deep roots in the community since opening in 1993.

Store manager Francisca "Kika" Lopez welcomed guests with a message cen-

SEE WALMART, A3



Walmart employees presented the Victoria Police Department with a grant of \$2,500, one of four grants the store gave out. Police Chief Clay Fetters and Deputy Chief Eline Moya were among the officers there to receive the donation. (Lindsey Plotkin/Victoria Advocate)

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## EDUCATION

### Victoria ISD reviews special education updates, student performance data



VISD Superintendent Sheila Collazo, Board President Micah Patton and Trustee Rick Jones, from left, discuss district updates during a school board meeting. (Jakob Gurley/Victoria Advocate)

JAKOB GURLEY

Victoria Independent School District (VISD) trustees unanimously approved a memorandum of understanding with Nursery Independent School District that will allow Nursery's ninth through 12th grade students to attend Victoria West High School beginning in the 2026-2027 school year.

District officials said the agreement remains unchanged from the version approved the previous year and continues an existing partnership between the districts.

"This is the first year that Nursery ISD is bringing their 9th through 12th grade students to Victoria ISD," Superintendent Sheila Collazo said. "The MOU did not change from the original version."

The agreement was part of a broader consent agenda that also included budget amendments, donations and gifts, certification of instructional materials for 2026-2027, remote conferencing waivers, non-business instructional days, and multiple bid awards for district goods and services, including food products, maintenance work, internet access and network services. Trustees also approved May 8,

2026, as School Communicators Day.

District officials also presented a detailed update on special education services, reporting that VISD currently serves 2,545 students receiving special education services and 820 students receiving services under Section 504.

Kelli Cotton, executive director of special services, outlined program capacity across the district, including 18 early childhood special education classrooms, 14 life skills classrooms, nine therapeutic behavior settings known as RISE classrooms and three RISE Academy classrooms designed for students requiring more intensive behavioral support. The district also operates three regional schools for the deaf program sites.

Cotton reported that 1,141 students currently receive direct speech therapy services, the highest number recorded in recent years.

"There are over 1,000 students receiving direct speech therapy," Cotton said. "That is by far the largest number we've ever had."

District data also showed 566 students in mainstream settings receiving special education services within general education class-

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