

VICTORIA ADVOCATE



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SPORTS, B1

Weekend, June 6-7, 2026

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ENVIRONMENT

Residents push back on data center plans

LINDSEY PLOTKIN

PLACEDO — Concerned residents gathered Thursday evening at the Placedo Volunteer Fire Department to discuss ways to oppose potential data center development in the Crossroads, citing concerns over water consumption, environmental impacts and transparency from public officials.

Although no data center projects have been formally approved or announced by local governments, speculation about potential developments has fueled growing public concern in recent months.

The meeting was organized by residents Kenneth Schustereit and Joseph Napolitano, who described the effort as nonpartisan. Attendees identified themselves as Democrats, Republicans and independents, but emphasized that the discussion centered on protecting local resources rather than politics.

For many in attendance, water availability remains the primary concern.

“We’re talking nationwide, trillions of dollars, and they have something now that they didn’t have (in the past),” Schustereit said. “They have social media, and they have AI.

We all use AI, just about. We’ve got another AI. We don’t need any more, but they want more, and it’s worth trillions and trillions of dollars to them. At some point, we’ve got to stand up to them now. I’ve said this before. I don’t care whether you’re Democrat or Republican, progressive, conservative, I don’t care. We all got great water. We all got to have water to live.”

Residents expressed concerns about the large amounts of water often required to cool and operate data centers, particularly in a region that has faced recurring drought con-



Attendees listen while Kenneth Schustereit (center) speaks about how to oppose data centers potentially coming to the Crossroads. (Lindsey Plotkin/Victoria Advocate)

ditions and ongoing discussions about long-term water supply.

Much of the meeting focused on developing an

action plan aimed at increasing public involvement and encouraging greater transparency from local leaders and

developers.

“One strategy is to get with our county leaders

SEE CENTER, A3

INFRASTRUCTURE



A rendering depicts planned improvements to the Smith STEM Academy facility, which include a new façade, office area, accessibility upgrades and modernization of the campus’s 56-classroom building under Victoria ISD’s bond program. (Courtesy Photo)

NEXT PHASE

VISD shifts from bond vote to implementation

JAKOB GURLEY

The Victoria Independent School District has officially

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begun implementing its voter-approved bond program, taking the first steps toward a series of campus improvements, facility upgrades and demolition projects planned across the district.

Applications for the bond oversight committee opened Tuesday, according to VISD Trustee Micah Patton. The committee will provide community input and monitor the progress of bond-funded projects as they move through planning, design and construction.

Patton said the district has successfully utilized similar citizen committees

in the past, including during the construction of Mission Valley School.

“It gives everyone insight into the whole process and what’s happening,” Patton said. “It’s an important part of it, and the community is always happy to be involved.”

The committee will serve in an advisory role, reviewing projects and offering feedback throughout the implementation process. However, final decisions regarding construction contracts, expenditures and project approvals will remain with the VISD Board

of Trustees.

Patton said meetings will be open to the public and recorded, similar to the Bond Action Committee meetings held during development of the bond proposal.

While some maintenance-related projects have already entered the procurement process, Patton said most major bond initiatives remain in the planning stages.

District officials are preparing to select an architect who will help develop project designs and oversee the request-for-qualifications process for construction firms. Once hired, the architect will assist the district in determining how projects will be divided and bid.

A significant portion of the bond package is dedicated to maintenance and infrastructure improvements at existing campuses. Patton said those projects are expected to move forward first because they can be completed through the district’s existing procurement procedures.

“We were able to pass the resolution for reimburse-

SEE BOND, A3

EDUCATION

Scholarship proposal on agenda

JAKOB GURLEY

Victoria County commissioners will consider an economic development agreement with Texas A&M University-Victoria aimed at supporting local students pursuing careers in aviation and agribusiness when the court meets at 10 a.m. Monday.

Under the proposed Chapter 381 Economic Development Agreement, Victoria County would establish two endowed scholarships at Texas A&M-Victoria — one for students pursuing a Bachelor of Science degree in Aviation Science and another for students pursuing a Bachelor of Business Administration degree in Agribusiness. The county would contribute \$25,000 to each scholarship fund for a total investment of \$50,000.

According to the agreement, county officials determined that supporting educational attainment in aviation and agribusiness would help stimulate business and commercial activity while supporting economic development efforts in Victoria County. The resolution authorizing the agreement states the programs are considered essential to the regional economy.

Scholarships would be

available to students who were residents of Victoria County prior to enrolling at Texas A&M-Victoria and who meet additional eligibility criteria established by the university. Scholarship recipients could receive annual renewals if they continue to meet program requirements.

The agreement also requires Texas A&M-Victoria to provide updates on scholarship recipients, including photographs, thank-you letters or impact statements that may be shared with the county.

Commissioners previously approved the resolution creating the economic development program during a special meeting on May 18. The agreement was finalized and signed by County Judge Ben Zeller and Texas A&M-Victoria President Dr. Christian Hardigree.

The item is expected to be among several agenda items considered during Monday’s meeting as commissioners continue discussions on economic development, education and workforce initiatives.

Jakob Gurley is a multimedia journalist with the Victoria Advocate. He can be reached at jakob.gurley@vicad.com.



The Victoria County Courthouse, home of the Victoria County Commissioners Court, which is scheduled to meet Monday. (Jakob Gurley/Victoria Advocate)

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