

Letter to the Editor

Dear Longview News-Journal,

As the Superintendent of Schools for Spring Hill ISD, I have been following with some interest the “scoreboard” news and recent editorial as reported by the Longview News-Journal over the past few weeks. I would like to take this opportunity to address and clarify some confusion and misconceptions about the funding of and related benefits of the new digital multipurpose sign recently acquired by SHISD.

Based on community feedback, the SHISD Board of Trustees elected to pursue private funding for the multipurpose sign purchase. When it became known that SHISD would wait until private funds would be secured to move forward, a private donor, who desired and requested anonymity, in conjunction with the SHISD Athletic Booster Club, came forward with funds to purchase the sign. The private donor offered to pay for the sign with an agreement that the boosters pay him back over time from advertising dollars obtained related to the sign usage agreement with the school district. The booster club moved forward and a proposed agreement was approved by the school board in May of 2017.

Under this agreement, SHISD has no financial obligations to pay for this multipurpose sign. The boosters are solely responsible for fundraising and will give a percentage to the district as outlined in the agreement approved by the board on May 15, 2017. SHISD will not be responsible in any way to reimburse the donor or the booster club.

The donor wanted to pay for the sign, so it would be ready for this year’s students. He wanted to front the money for the sign to buy some time for securing advertisers and related sponsorship. He only asked that his name be kept anonymous. He did not want any attention brought to himself or his family. He wanted to help the school district. He did not want advertising, credit or any financial gain; he wanted to do something nice for the school district. Yet, regretfully, that simple request for anonymity was not sufficient for certain individuals or entities. In order to end the debate and focus on the future, the private donor has authorized me to share his name: Mr. Frank Bufkin.

We greatly appreciate Mr. Bufkin’s generosity, the work of the booster club, and the local community businesses that have a vision for the future of our students and the city of Longview by supporting this project. Those businesses will not just be

purchasing advertisement on a multipurpose sign, but will be providing needed funding for classroom technology, fine arts programs, innovative instructional programs, and athletic needs. SHISD will also save a small portion of the funds generated to pay for any future maintenance to the sign or the stadium.

In the coming weeks, the new multipurpose sign will be installed as the centerpiece of Panther Stadium. This centerpiece is not just a scoreboard, but a district marquee and vehicle to funding that previously was not available to the district. We also believe that Panther Stadium is a showcase for our district. It is a family facility that the community uses 365 days a year.

We greatly appreciate the Panther community and want every taxpayer, parent, and student to know that our doors are always open and we are grateful for their support. Thank you Panther community!!

With great pride,

Steven Snell, Superintendent – Spring Hill ISD