

SPRINGBOARD

A Publication of the Spring ISD Board of Trustees

Vol. 25 No. 3 / October 2015

The **Springboard** e-newsletter is provided as a community service to inform the public of actions during the monthly meeting of the Board of Trustees. The official minutes from the meeting will be posted online at www.springisd.org once approved by the Board.

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Public Participation is Welcomed

Citizens who want to speak at a Board meeting are asked to register at least 15 minutes prior to the time when the meeting is scheduled to begin.

For more information, go online at www.springisd.org and click on the Public Participation at Board Meetings link under General Info.

The next regular Board meeting will be at 7 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 10 at Gordon M. Anderson Leadership Center, 16717 Ella Blvd.

The Spring ISD Board of Trustees met at 7 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 13 at the Gordon M. Anderson Leadership Center to address items on the agenda. President **Rhonda L. Faust** called the meeting to order. Spring High School Navy JROTC Cadet **Mikah Campbell**, Cadet Ensign **Jonely Perez**, Cadet Chief **Brittany Garcia**, Cadet Chief **Briana Garcia** and Cadet Seaman **Jose Rivera** led the pledges of allegiance.

Superintendent's Report

Superintendent **Dr. Rodney E. Watson** commented on a report by Education Research Group that was presented at the board work session Oct. 8, and highlighted regular board meeting agenda items.

Regarding the report from ERG, Watson said Spring ISD is excited about the gains that have been made, however, the district recognized there is still much work to be done to continue implementing the five-year strategic plan **EVERY CHILD 2020**.

He touched on the campus improvement plans that were presented at the work session and applauded campus principals for their energy and commitment.

In addition, he said the district is moving forward with a targeted school improvement plan for Bammel Elementary School. "Everyone affiliated with Bammel knows that staff members need the tools necessary to be able to achieve and get results."

He finished his report with positive news about the district's proposal to decrease the tax rate for the second consecutive year. "We're excited about being able to decrease the tax rate while still keeping all the board goals of increasing salaries, expanding transportation and developing an in-district DAEP program."

In conclusion, Watson shared a video about Dueitt Middle School's Meet in the Middle Program that will be highlighted during the organization's national convention in Ohio later this month. Meet in the Middle is a Special Olympics initiative that stresses inclusion among students at the middle school level. [See Video](#).



Rodney E. Watson, Ph.D.

President's Remarks

Board President **Rhonda Faust** thanked the parents and students who attended the meeting. This included students from across the district who were there to receive awards and recognition for their participation in the district's Hispanic Heritage Month Art and Essay Contest, as well as Westfield High School students from the cast of "Dreamgirls." The Westfield theater troupe performed several musical selections before the board meeting convened to promote their upcoming show. [See Dreamgirls](#).



Rhonda L. Faust, J.D.

Recognition

Hispanic Heritage Month Art and Essay Contest Winners Announced

This month's spotlight was on 22 students who took top honors in the district's Languages Other than English (LOTE) Art and Essay Contests recently in honor of Hispanic Heritage Month. The multilingual department hosted the contests to allow secondary students to describe the Hispanic culture through their eyes. The students were front and center as they were presented with medals and certificates before walking the horseshoe to accept congratulations from board trustees and district administrators.

First-place essay winner, **Kelly Hernández**, Carl Wunsche Sr. High School, and second-place essay winner, **Ángel González**, Westfield High School, read their essays to the board of trustees.

Hernández's essay describes why Thanksgiving is such a special day to her family. "Nineteen years ago, my parents emigrated from El Salvador in search of a better life. They came to Houston on Thanksgiving Day, and I imagine that night they felt grateful to have been able to reach the United States and finally be able to start a family together." [See Full Essay](#).

Ángel González, a recent immigrant who is celebrating his one-year anniversary of living in the U.S., said, "For me, being Hispanic is everything in the whole sense of the word, because the word "Hispanic" can mean many things." [See Full Essay](#).

Essay winners and their awards are:

Spanish I – **Cesar López**, Wunsche, first; **Erika Reyes**, Wunsche, second; and **Melvin Spicer**, Wunsche, third.

Spanish for Spanish Speakers I – **Allison Rodríguez**, Wunsche, first; **Jocelyne Velásquez**, Wunsche, second; and **Caroline Romo**, Roberson, and **Luis Lazo**, Wunsche, tied for third.

Spanish II – **Stella Castillo**, Wunsche, first; and **Juan Hernández**, Wunsche, second.

Spanish III – **Azly Trejo**, Wunsche, first; **Ángel González**, Westfield, second; and **Yahaira Martínez**, Wunsche, third.

Spanish IV AP – **Sayra Moreno**, Wunsche, first; **Aarón Rocha**, Wunsche, second; and **Jimena Alamina**, Westfield, third.

Spanish V AP – **Kelly Hernández**, Wunsche, first; **Katerine Ponce**, Spring, second; and **Hellary Garces**, Wunsche, third.

Art Winners and their awards are:

Jonathan Castillo, Roberson, first; **Yessenia Ixpatá**, Wunsche, second; **Adriana Matos** and **Kelley Sánchez**, Roberson, tied for third, **Gloria González**, Roberson, honorable mention; and **Ashley Galindo**, Wunsche, honorable mention.



Action Items

2015 Tax Rate of \$1.47 Continues District Trend of Decreases Over Last Two Years

The Spring ISD Board of Trustees approved a 4-cent property tax rate decrease on Tuesday, during its regular board meeting. The vote continues the district's two-year trend of tax decreases. The 2015 total tax rate of \$1.47 per \$100 valuation includes a maintenance and operation (M&O) tax rate of \$1.04 and an interest and sinking (I&S) tax rate of \$0.43.

"We are very pleased to be able to decrease the school district's tax rate – helping offset the increase in appraised values and resulting increase in property taxes that the Spring community has recently seen," said Spring ISD Chief Financial Officer **Ann Westbrook**. "While property owners may not see a decrease in their overall tax payment, they will see a decrease in what they pay to Spring ISD. The district's ability to reduce its tax rate is largely due to a new priority-focused budgeting process that was implemented this past year. Re-evaluating how every district dollar is spent, Spring ISD advanced several priority projects as well as increased teacher salaries while also bringing forward a budget that did not require it to request additional resources from the public."

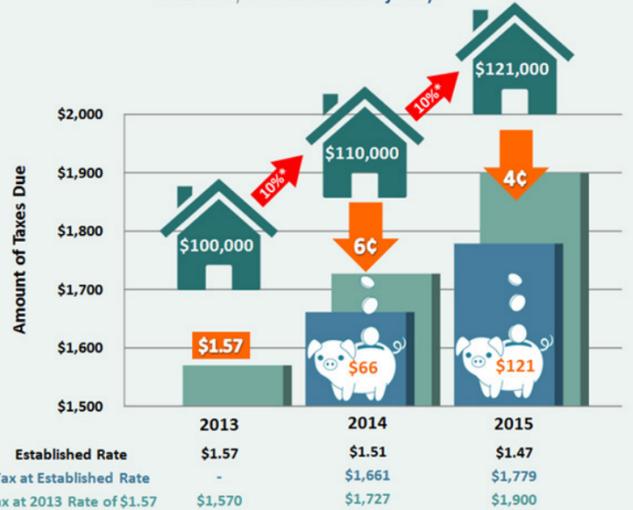
In June, The Board of Trustees adopted the 2015-16 operating budget that included increased salaries for teachers, expanded transportation services and the development of an in-district Disciplinary Alternative Education Program. Funds were also set aside for various other priorities, including improved curriculum and a strengthened technology infrastructure.

According to Westbrook, the two-year savings to property owners with a house valued at \$100,000 in 2013 would be \$187. Individual increases in values may adjust the total savings taxpayers actually see.

Naturally, the increased property values seen in Spring have also influenced the district's ability to propose a reduction in the tax rate. Year over year, Spring ISD has seen a 17-percent increase in overall property values, including the increased taxable value from ExxonMobil, which completed its relocation into the Spring community this year.

The Harris County Appraisal District suggests that the value of residential property in the county rose 15 percent and almost 90 percent of the homes in the county increased in value since 2014.

Assuming a home with an appraised taxable value of \$100,000 in 2013, whose value increased on average by 10% in 2014 and 10% in 2015, taxpayers have experienced total savings of \$66 and \$121 in 2014 and 2015, respectively, in comparison to the 2013 tax rate of \$1.57 (Spring ISD has reduced its tax rate by a total of 10¢ over the last two years).



In Other Action the Board Approved:

- Targeted school improvement plan for Bammel Elementary School;
- Contract with Bayes Achievement Center, Inc. to provide services for students with special needs;
- Request for Proposal to hire a Construction Manager-at-Risk to supervise the transformation of building on T.C. Jester into a fully functioning administrative center;
- Resolution amending authorized representatives for the Texas Local Government Investment and BBVA Compass Bank to allow two new staff members access;
- 2015 Appraisal Roll Certification for taxable values within the district – totals 10.7 billion, an 18 percent increase over last year, which includes contested tax appraisals;
- Designation of Trustee Chris Bell as an alternate delegate to the Texas Association of School Boards;
- Second reading of TASB Local Update 102 - Proposed revisions affecting the following local board policies: CDA, DBB, DEA, DEAS, DEAB, DFFA, DHE, FNC and FO;
- Campus improvement plans;
- Nomination of Toni Trumbull to the Harris County Appraisal District board of directors;
- Taxpayer refunds; and
- Requests for Proposals for alternator and starter parts, and benchmark assessment writers.



Spring Independent School District is an equal opportunity employer. The Board of Trustees and its agents, officers and staff members shall not discriminate on the basis of gender, race, disabling condition, age, color, religion, national origin, military status, or any other legally protected status in making decisions regarding staff members or students.