

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.

Trustees

Rhonda Newhouse, M.Ed.

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Deborah Jensen, Ph.D.

Vice President

Donald Davis

Secretary

Winford Adams Jr.

Assistant Secretary

Justine Durant

Vice President

Jana Gonzales

Kelly P. Hodges

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 is scheduled for 7 p.m. on Tuesday, Aug. 11.

The Spring ISD Board of Trustees met at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, June 9 via video conferencing, due to health and safety concerns related to the COVID-19 coronavirus, to address items on the agenda. President **Rhonda Newhouse** called the meeting to order.

Superintendent's Report

Superintendent **Dr. Rodney E. Watson** highlighted work that was done at the board work session on June 4 in terms of teacher compensation, in which trustees discussed how to make educator salaries in Spring ISD more competitive for recruitment and retention. He noted that the salary item would be coming up later during the meeting for a board vote.

He also previewed a special presentation on the agenda later in the meeting involving the awarding of scholarships from the **Mexican American School Boards Association**, of which the Spring ISD Board of Trustees is a member.

"Based on your leadership, we're going to be extremely excited to award some scholarships that you all have played a very instrumental role in joining the organization for us to achieve," he said. "We definitely thank you for your sacrifice of volunteerism, but more importantly making sure you represent all segments of our student population and demographics so we appreciate that."

In addition, Watson reported that the district had a very successful first-ever virtual graduation on Saturday, June 6, with five ceremonies from all of the district's high schools. "We knew it would be somewhat different but as I saw one of the previews and watched them on Saturday, it was amazing to see how it turned out," he said. "The feedback I received from parents was that they were pleased."

He noted that this weekend on June 12-14, the district will be hosting in-person graduation ceremonies at Planet Ford Stadium and urged everyone to stay hydrated throughout the events because of the weather. "I know it's going to be pretty hot out there so we're going to have to make sure we take care of ourselves," he said.

Watson also thanked the office of Houston Mayor **Sylvester Turner** for hosting a Class of 2020 Celebration for seniors across the Houston region, including Spring ISD, on Friday, June 5.

"It was so nice seeing all of our students and to receive the support of our mayor last Friday night," he said. "If any of you had the opportunity to see it on the news, Channel 2 did a really good job of showcasing our district and our students, and more importantly, the work the mayor has done to celebrate the graduates this year."

Below is the schedule of the in-person graduations at Planet Ford Stadium, which will also be livestreamed on the district's website at www.springisd.org.

Friday, June 12 at 7 p.m. - Spring High School

Saturday, June 13 at 8 a.m. - Carl Wunsche Sr. High School

Saturday, June 13 at 7 p.m. - Dekaney High School

Sunday, June 14 at 8 a.m. - Spring Early College Academy

Sunday, June 14 at 7 p.m. - Westfield High School



Rodney E. Watson



Trustees Remarks

At each regular board meeting, during Opening Remarks, each board member is given the opportunity to share information with those present.



Deborah Jensen Position 1, Kelly P. Hodges Position 2, Justine Durant Position 3, Winford Adams Jr. Position 4, Rhonda Newhouse Position 5, Donald Davis Position 6, Jana Gonzales Position 7

President **Rhonda Newhouse** invited the trustees to make remarks.

Dr. Deborah Jensen began her remarks by thanking President Newhouse for her dedicated presence at so many of the virtual and in-person events being held to mark the end of the 2019-20 school year. She went on to commend the 2020 virtual graduation ceremonies presented online the previous weekend.

"I was surprised at how much I enjoyed the virtual graduation," Jensen said. "It's really hard to hear people's speeches in that auditorium at the Berry Center, and I got to hear, in detail, the principals', Dr. Watson's, the valedictorians' and salutatorians', and it was just really nice. I'm just hoping that in future years we retain this as an addition to the in-person graduation." [Learn more here.](#)

Jana Gonzales thanked everyone involved in putting on the Smart Kid Cool Car event on June 7, which had to be reimagined in light of COVID-19 social distancing requirements. [Read story here.](#)

"It was exciting to see as many students come out and experience that," Gonzales said. "The young lady that won was so excited, and just really deserving of that honor."

Gonzales also made a point of thanking the program's sponsor, Honda of Spring, for their commitment to the event despite the unusual circumstances.

"Spring ISD did a great job of recognizing those students, and we want to thank Honda of Spring for putting that together," she said. "They're a great business partner and we truly appreciate it."

Justine Durant discussed how much she had enjoyed Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner's Class of 2020 Celebration, a multimedia collaboration among area school districts, for which Spring ISD seniors gathered at the district's Planet Ford Stadium to take part.

"It was a fantastic event, and one of the things that I enjoyed was watching the kids having an opportunity to interact with their friends that they haven't had a chance to see," Durant said. "It was really fun to see them doing the line dancing together on the football field, and just watching them enjoy themselves."

She thanked members of the district departments who had helped coordinate the event and make it safe for participating seniors.

"Despite the challenges that we're facing in our country today," she said, "I'm very proud of how Spring ISD is moving forward and still meeting the needs of our students. So kudos to everyone. Thank you."

Rhonda Newhouse echoed other trustees in offering her appreciation for the recent events held to help celebrate the end of the school year, adding that the event at the stadium had offered the district a helpful trial run leading up to the following weekend's in-person graduation ceremonies, where similar social distancing and sanitation rules will also be in place. She also commented on how well the Smart Kid Cool Car event had gone.

"I know it took a lot of effort and organization and work there," Newhouse said, "but you guys did a great job, and it was just nice to see our district celebrating our Class of 2020, so thank you."

Winford Adams Jr. took the opportunity of his remarks to thank the faculty and staff of Roberson Middle School, where his daughter just completed eighth grade.

"I had the opportunity, with my daughter, to create a float out of our car and drive through the line with hundreds of other parents – proud parents – for her to graduate from eighth grade," Adams said. "I just want to give kudos to the creativity and the commitment to the students that I saw from Principal Walker and her staff. It was very well done."

He said the Roberson event was a good example of the way schools around Spring ISD were working to support students despite the challenges posed by current events.

"I just want to put that out there and echo what you're saying about the great job we're doing of keeping things as normal as possible under very difficult circumstances," he said.



Special Recognition

In a special presentation, three Spring ISD students were honored for earning a scholarship from the **Mexican American School Boards Association (MASBA)**, of which the district's Board of Trustees is a member.

Each year, MASBA recognizes outstanding students with scholarships to help fund their postsecondary education. This year, Spring ISD had three students selected for the awards: **Nataly Benitez of Westfield High School, Olger Carcache of Spring High School and Kayla Oregon, also of Spring High School.**

The presentations were done live during the board meeting through Zoom, with the counselors of each of the students making a personal trip to their homes to present them with a certificate, scholarship check and distinctive graduation cords in red, green and white from MASBA.

"We're just really excited for our board to have joined our organization," said **Dr. Lupita Hinojosa**, chief of Innovation and Equity. She noted that MASBA is a historic group with roots in the civil rights movement in San Antonio. "Tonight we are recognizing three winners from our high schools and we're very, very excited."

The first recipient, **Olger Carcache**, who ranked number three in his class at Spring High School, is headed to the University of Chicago this fall on a full scholarship, where he hopes to study languages, international/global studies and public policy.

The second recipient, **Kayla Oregon**, is planning to attend the University of Texas at San Antonio, where she is interested in studying how the brain works, and hopes to specialize in neurology or neuroscience and to eventually become a nurse and then a doctor.

The third scholarship recipient, **Nataly Benitez**, plans to attend Houston Baptist University to study nursing. During the board's Zoom meeting, all three students said the scholarships were very much appreciated, especially as they prepare for university in the fall.

"Thank you," said Carcache, who was surrounded by family. "We were caught a little off guard. We didn't expect any of this."

"I just wanted to say thank you for giving me the opportunity to receive this scholarship," Oregon said, also acknowledging her mom for all her support. She will be the first in her family to attend university. "If it wasn't for her I most likely wouldn't be where I am today because she did push me my entire education career."

"I'm very thankful for this. I'm very happy that my whole family is with me now," Benitez said. "I sure wasn't expecting this."

The board president applauded all of the students' hard work. "We're very proud of you," Newhouse said. "Next year we look forward to hearing back from you on how well things are going for you."

Presentations and Board Action

Board Hears Update on the District of Innovation Designation

Trustees received a District of Innovation briefing from Chief of Human Resources and Human Capital Accountability **Dr. Julie Hill**. Specifically, Hill addressed several of the ways in which the district's status as a District of Innovation was helping Spring ISD to weather the challenges and demands of the coronavirus pandemic.

Hill stressed that, in Spring ISD, innovative thinking over the course of recent years – including both the district's **Local Innovation Plan** and its Every Child 2020 Strategic Plan – had helped it respond more quickly and effectively to the complexities of the current situation.

"The silver lining and surprise has been around our District of Innovation plan," she said. "While we passed it back in 2017, it is relevant today for some things that we've experienced now and will continue to experience in the future that we had no idea about."

Established by the 84th Texas Legislature, the District of Innovation distinction gives traditional independent school districts in Texas access to many of the flexibilities offered to Texas' open enrollment charter schools. During her presentation, Hill mentioned several exemptions included in Spring ISD's own Local Innovation Plan that had proven especially valuable in recent months, including the following:

- An exemption related to curriculum and instructional methods that had empowered Spring ISD to adapt especially well when campuses shut down mid-March and instruction moved to the Empowered Learning At-Home model.
- An exemption related to staff development that had allowed Spring ISD to shift from simply offering campus-based professional development to designing more collaborative, cross-curricular and districtwide development opportunities for all staff.
- An exemption related to teacher planning and preparation requirements that had allowed Spring ISD to strengthen teacher Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and to maximize the amount of time teachers could spend working together in their PLCs.
- An exemption related to the first and last day of instruction that had allowed Spring ISD to move forward quickly in considering innovative calendar options for the 2020-21 school year in preparation for continuing ramifications from the pandemic.

"We could see that the strategies that we were trying to achieve – support teaching through technology practice, expand team- and project-based learning opportunities, create interactive learning environments, and foster cross-cultural competencies – all sounds like what we've been doing over this past spring," Hill told board members, "and what have planned for next year for our students."

The district's designation as a District of Innovation is currently in place through the 2021-22 school year, and Hill explained that the designation would continue to serve the district well over the upcoming years as the impacts of COVID-19 continue to be an important factor in its ongoing strategic planning.

"The forward thinking of the Board and of the administrators and the teachers and the principals that all worked together for our District of Innovation plan is really paying dividends for us," she said, "and we'll be able to use it and leverage it with the next couple of years that we still have left, as well."

Board Approves 2.5 Percent Raises for Teachers in Push to Stay Competitive

The Spring ISD Board of Trustees approved 2.5 percent raises for the district's teachers as part of an effort to ensure their salaries are competitive with other districts in the Houston region.

"I want to thank our trustees for their leadership in moving forward with these pay increases that will help recruit and retain our educators, especially amid the challenges posed by the pandemic," Watson said after the meeting. The vote on Tuesday followed a lengthy work session the previous week in which the board reiterated its support for ensuring equity for Spring ISD teacher salaries relative to other districts in the region.

Earlier this year, the district commissioned a study to look at how Spring ISD compares to other districts in the area with regard to teacher pay. That analysis confirmed that the district lost ground last year after many nearby districts issued significant salary increases as a result of House Bill 3, passed by the Texas Legislature in 2019. In fact, Spring ISD's 2019-20 salaries were the lowest in the area for new teachers.

The 2.5 percent salary increase offers a big step forward for Spring ISD teachers, and also includes additional one-time equity pay increases for those with up to 11 years of experience. The plan's goals include improving consistency between steps on the pay scale and closing the salary gap for teachers with more years of experience. "This would assist with recruiting, also with retaining our teachers," said Chief Financial Officer **Ann Westbrook** before the vote on Tuesday. "It would help put the district in a more competitive position and close the gap in comparison with many of our surrounding districts."

For example, under the plan, a teacher with five years of experience will receive a pay raise of 2.5 percent (about \$1,700) plus an equity increase of \$1,047, for an overall salary of \$57,700, up from \$54,953 this year. A new teacher will receive \$56,500, up from last year's starting hiring salary of \$54,000.

Board members indicated at the work session on June 4 that more work needs to be done to align Spring ISD salaries with those of other districts in the area, and their goal is to continue to make those adjustments in future budget years. Additionally, Spring ISD teachers will have the opportunity to earn up to \$4,000 in additional compensation during the 2020-21 school year through the district's Spring Rewards program, which will award teachers based on the achievement of their students and their campus.

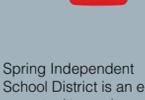
The board is set to consider 2.5 percent raises for all other employees, including classroom paraprofessionals who support teachers, at a special called session later this month. The full budget is slated to be presented to the board at a June 23 public hearing.

"I would like to thank all of our staff for their hard work and commitment to the district," Watson said in an email sent to all staff following the vote. "The coming months will be challenging and we have high expectations for everyone as we seek to educate our students in new ways – online, in-person or a blend of both. Now is the time for everyone to do their part to ensure the success of every student in our care."

Action Items

The Board approved:

- Missed School Day Waiver for Days Missed Due to COVID-19
- 2020-21 Work Calendar
- Summer 2020 projects, Second Guaranteed Maximum Price in the amount of \$359,271;
- Contract with Camelot-Education-Texas, LLC;
- Actual expenditures for April 2020;
- Taxpayer refunds;
- The contract for Before and After School Child Care and Enrichment Services to the provider recommended by the administration;
- The contract for School Health and Related Services Medicaid Reimbursement Services to the provider recommended by the administration.
- The contracts for Mental Health Support and Intervention to the providers recommended by the administration.



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