

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](http://www.springisd.org) once approved by the Board.

## Trustees

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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](http://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, April 14.

The Spring ISD Board of Trustees met at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, March 17 at the Gordon M. Anderson Leadership Center to address items on the agenda. President **Rhonda Newhouse** called the meeting to order and led the United States and Texas pledges of allegiance.

## Board President Makes Special Remarks Regarding COVID-19

Following the pledges, Board President **Rhonda Newhouse** requested a moment to say a few words in relation to the ongoing COVID-19 crisis and its impacts on Spring ISD and area residents, relating a story she had seen posted online by a local family.

"We've all been watching the news very closely throughout this pandemic, since we're all trying to follow federal, state and local orders," Newhouse said. "Today I was scrolling through emails and news feeds, waiting on the next order. One particular email jumped out at me."

She recounted the story of a Spring ISD parent who had posted on the neighborhood site Nextdoor thanking Spring ISD for providing area students with breakfasts and lunches, available for pick-up at a number of district schools since the beginning of the closure. Unable to find basic items like milk on store shelves, the parent thanked the district for looking out for the needs of her children.

"As I kept reading the comments," Newhouse said, "on how grateful families were for the outpouring of love and support from Spring ISD, these posts filled my heart and actually brought tears. I had to just take a moment to cry, and it made me beam with pride and joy at the same time. It also made me think about the things that are most important."

While acknowledging the challenges ahead, Newhouse thanked the superintendent and his team for putting families first and leading the way with resolve and compassion.

"Your astute attention to detail and your focus on families and our community has been remarkable," Newhouse said. "We would like to give you and your team a standing ovation for your servant leadership through such irregular times."



Rhonda Newhouse

## Superintendent's Report

Superintendent **Dr. Rodney E. Watson** began his remarks by thanking both the trustees, for their ongoing communication with him throughout the developing situation related to COVID-19 and its impacts, and his leadership team for all their work to serve families and students during the closure.

"This has been an unprecedented time for the country, and so I do want to say a special thank-you to all the cabinet members – the ones that are here and the ones that are unable to be with us tonight. They have been working hard with their teams," Watson said. "They all have been working just tirelessly to make sure that our community is taken care of."

Watson also briefly introduced presentations scheduled later in the agenda, including Health and Safety Updates to the Board from Chief Operations Officer **Mark Miranda**, Chief of School Leadership and Student Support Services **Dr. Lupita Hinojosa**, and Chief of Curriculum and Instruction **Khechara Bradford**.

He concluded by once again acknowledging the board members for their care and concern on behalf of students and the Spring ISD community during the unfolding situation.

"Thank you all very much for your support and leadership," he said.



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.



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

**Jana Gonzales** thanked Dr. Watson and the district's administrative team, noting that strong, clear lines of communication – both internally and externally – had helped to calm the fears and anxieties of staff, students and members of the community during a difficult time.

"I would just like to echo President Newhouse: You guys have done a fantastic job," Gonzales said. "I don't think we ever have to worry about the communication – you guys are providing us everything we need, and I'm not getting phone calls from parents or employees saying 'What is going on?' They know."

She also voiced her appreciation for the difficult balance at this time between personal and professional needs, and acknowledged Watson and his team for their commitment.

"I know it's a tough job right now. You're here, and you're trying to deal with your own families at home, and we certainly appreciate that," Gonzales said. "It's a scary time, but you guys are doing a great job. Please take care of yourselves, and keep up the good work."

**Deborah Jensen** focused her remarks on the behind-the-scenes work undertaken by the district's curriculum team to get ready to begin offering remote learning opportunities for students.

"I would like to highlight what an incredibly wonderful job Curriculum and Instruction is doing," Jensen said. "We have never tried to do this kind of homeschooling and remote instruction before."

Jensen also praised Spring ISD teachers, many of whom she said had wasted no time in reaching out to their students' families, as well as posting helpful content to social media sites like Twitter to support families after the closures were announced.

"These are teachers who really care about students, are expert in what they teach, and they are daring and trying to find new ways to reach their students," Jensen said. "I commend your department and our teachers in Spring ISD."

## Presentations

### Board Receives Health Services Update on the District's Ongoing Response to COVID-19

Trustees received a briefing from Chief Operations Officer **Mark Miranda**, Chief of School Leadership and Student Support Services **Dr. Lupita Hinojosa**, and Chief of Curriculum and Instruction **Khechara Bradford** related to the district's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects on district operations and community members.

Miranda briefed board members on the status of the district's facilities, and gave an overview of the district's drive-through breakfast and lunch program, which began offering **free to-go meals** for area children at 11 district locations on Monday, March 16. Hinojosa briefed the trustees on how the district was addressing the social and emotional needs of students and families, as well as how district nursing staff are monitoring health concerns and preparing to combat COVID-19 cases in the district. Bradford, meanwhile, related work underway to allow district teachers to begin facilitating and supporting home-based learning over the weeks to come, including plans to support high school seniors nearing graduation and special needs students who may need additional support.

"It's forcing us to think differently, and to use people in different ways," said Watson. "We're constantly reminding each other that this is a different time and a different situation, and that calls for us to really think outside of the box."

The home-learning framework – termed Empowered Learning At-Home – will be rolled out in stages so as not to overwhelm families already wrestling with a variety of disruptions resulting from the spread of COVID-19. The behind-the-scenes planning has involved district leaders, principals and campus administrators, content-area specialists and teachers, all of whom Bradford said have been crucial to the work's success.

"It's definitely been a whole-team effort," Bradford said, "and principals and teachers are really ready to go. They're very, very excited."

## Action Items

### Board Approves Resolution on Emergency Procedures Due to COVID-19

The Board approved a special resolution on emergency procedures to help the district address impacts resulting from the unfolding COVID-19 pandemic.

The resolution covered several areas, including employee pay for the work days missed as a result of the temporary closing of Spring ISD campuses and facilities in the interest of public safety.

"What we're really talking about is not a district closure; it is a disruption in normal operations," said General Counsel **Jeremy Binkley** during his presentation and discussion with board members regarding the special resolution. "Employees are still going to be expected to work and to perform their duties, especially as we continue offering more instructional opportunities, and the district does need to operate. It's just a different manner of operation than we're used to."

In supporting employees of the district, the resolution will in turn allow them to continue offering their support for the community as a whole during the interim period of ongoing regional and national uncertainty.

"We want to pay our employees for the days that they've had to miss, so that they don't hurt financially for that, and so that we can retain those employees, continue morale," Binkley said.

The resolution further reflects Texas Gov. **Greg Abbott's** move to temporarily suspend certain provisions of the Texas Open Meetings Act, allowing Texas school boards to meet via live online teleconferences during the period when large public gatherings are not allowed. It also allows the superintendent and district leaders some latitude for emergency procurement procedures, when such procedures are necessary to protect students, provide required instruction, or ensure the safety of facilities once students are allowed to return to their campuses. [See resolution.](#)

### Board Approves Motion Not to Oppose Variance Request for New Area Restaurant

The Board approved a motion stating that Spring ISD would not oppose a variance request from the Chacho's restaurant chain to offer alcoholic beverages for sale at their proposed new restaurant location at 2025 FM-1960 West, formerly a Taco Cabana restaurant, near Major Elementary School. After the board's request, an online survey was sent out to all Major Elementary School families asking whether they were in favor of allowing the new restaurant to open. Of those who responded, approximately 60 percent were in favor, 5 percent had no strong opinion, and approximately 35 percent were opposed.

In weighing its decision not to oppose the variance request, the board considered a variety of factors, including the potential benefit to the community of not having the building remain vacant.

### In other action the Board approved:

- Second reading of proposed revisions to Board Policy BE local regarding board meetings;
- First reading of TASB proposed revisions to Board Policy BED local regarding public participation at board meetings;
- First reading of TASB proposed revisions to Board Policy FL local regarding student records;
- Acceptance of grant funds from Good Reason Houston for prekindergarten enrollment publicity;
- Cooperative agreement with Prairie View A&M University for providing training and support for first-year teachers; and
- Taxpayer refunds.



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