

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 will be at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, Nov. 10 at the Gordon M. Anderson Leadership Center, 16717 Ella Blvd.

The Spring ISD Board of Trustees met at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, Oct. 13 at Gordon M. Anderson Leadership Center to address items on the agenda. The meeting was a hybrid of in-person and virtual, with trustees together in person, while most other participants and members of the public joined the meeting via Zoom. President **Rhonda Newhouse** called the meeting to order and Trustee **Donald Davis** led the pledges to the flags.

## Points of Pride Awards and Other Recognitions

Since January 1984, the Board has recognized students and staff for major accomplishments beyond the District with Points of Pride awards. ABCD awards are presented to individuals or groups that go Above and Beyond the Call of Duty.



Spring ISD Visual Arts Coordinator Amanda Byers, from left, and Director of Performing and Visual Arts Dr. Joe Clark stand with the awards celebrating Spring ISD's win as a 2020 District of Distinction.

### Spring ISD Wins Second-Annual 'District of Distinction' Award from Texas Art Education Association

The evening's first board recognition, a Point of Pride, celebrated the Texas Art Education Association (TAEA) naming Spring ISD among the winners of its 2020 District of Distinction Award for the second year in a row. The award, given to just 20 Texas school districts for the first time last year, recognizes a commitment to providing a well-rounded curriculum that supports strong visual arts education across all schools and grade levels.

Out of more than 1,000 districts eligible for the 2020 award, only 42 met the standard – putting Spring ISD in the top 4% of districts in the state, according to a statement released by TAEA.

"This award is made possible by the awesome work of our Spring ISD Performing and Visual Arts Department and the district's incredible team of campus art teachers," said Chief of Communications and Innovation **Tiffany Dunne-Oldfield** during her remarks. She then introduced Director of Performing and Visual Arts **Dr. Joe Clark**, who announced a special gift for the trustees – a lapel pin from TAEA celebrating the District of Distinction win.

Visual Arts Coordinator **Amanda Byers**, who also addressed the board members, praised the district's team of 55 campus art teachers who collectively teach more than 21,000 students studying art throughout Spring ISD. Byers introduced three teachers who had received special invitations to virtually attend the meeting – **Frances Taylor** of McNabb Elementary School, **Ariel Keller** of Springwoods Village Middle School, and **Adrian Kane** of Spring High School.

"This award would not have been possible without their leadership and the dedication and the perseverance that they have shown," Byers said.

Several of the trustees spoke briefly in response to the award, including **Winford Adams Jr.**, who thanked Clark and the superintendent for preserving the importance of the arts in schools.

"There's a lot of talk about 'STEAM' and integrating art into the other academic disciplines," Adams said, "but I just want to shout out to Dr. Clark for providing art for our students for the sake of the art – as its own discipline. I think we undervalue that in our society, and I really appreciate the emphasis that, Dr. Watson, your team puts on the arts. So, thank you for that." [Read more.](#)

### Board of Trustees Recognizes Two Employees for Four Decades of Service to Spring ISD

Trustees had the unique opportunity of honoring two Spring ISD employees each celebrating 40 years of service in the district as of 2020.

**Mary Sneed** retired this year from Northgate Crossing Elementary School, where she served as campus librarian. She first joined Spring ISD in 1979 at Bammel Elementary School, proceeding to teach across several elementary grade levels at Bammel and later in Jenkins Elementary School, where she transferred in 1983.

In 2007, Sneed joined the staff at Northgate Crossing Elementary School as the school librarian. She initially retired in 2012, only to answer the call to return to Northgate Crossing as the school's part-time librarian after a short hiatus. There she put in five-and-a-half additional years before again retiring earlier this summer.

"We are so proud of you and thankful for your service," said **Mark Miranda**, Spring ISD's executive chief of district operations.

Sneed's principal at Northgate Crossing Elementary, **Kristi Brown**, also spoke to her commitment to children over her long career and her passion for inspiring students to read. "Mary is the kind of employee that a principal dreams about having," Brown said. "She was our librarian but she was so much more than the keeper of the books."

The meeting's other employee service award went to **Pamela Kirby**, who also first came to the district as a member of the faculty at Bammel Elementary School, which she joined in 1980. Following Bammel, she went on to spend time on the staff of Winship, Clark and Anderson elementary schools before making the transfer to special services as a dyslexia teacher in early 2000.

This fall, after 40 years spent in the district, Kirby switched to half time for the 2020-21 school year, but she remains a current employee and a dedicated advocate on behalf of students with special learning needs.

"She doesn't really like accolades, but I would like to say, as her supervisor, she's vital and valuable," said **Ty Bailey**, the district's coordinator of dyslexia services. "She's very dedicated to student learning. As a dyslexia teacher, she's very passionate about struggling readers. She's all about the students, and we appreciate her as a teammate. I'm so, so blessed to be able to work with her."

### Roberson Middle School Named a 2020 National Blue Ribbon School by U.S. Department of Education

The meeting's second Point of Pride was a recognition for Edward Roberson Middle School, which was one of only 367 schools in the country named a 2020 National Blue Ribbon School by the U.S. Department of Education.

The prestigious honor, awarded to just 26 Texas schools this year, recognizes academic achievement and the closing of student achievement gaps. The Texas Education Agency nominated Roberson for the award based on both overall student performance and the school's work promoting greater equity and closing achievement gaps for lower-income and minority students.

Roberson was one of only three Texas middle schools to earn the honor this year and the only one in the Houston area. With the announcement of this year's winners, Roberson became the district's first Blue Ribbon honoree since 1993, when Spring High School earned the award. Anderson Elementary has also previously won, in 1990.

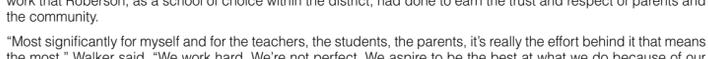
"With its unique math, science, and fine arts pathways that balance high academic expectations with real-world applications, the programs at Roberson cultivate a sense of collaborative ownership and a close-knit academic community among students and staff," said Dunne-Oldfield during her remarks. "The National Blue Ribbon Award for Roberson is the result of the extraordinary efforts of so many people associated with the school – teachers, administrators, counselors, support staff and others."

She then welcomed two representatives from the school's leadership team – Principal **Tracey Walker** and Roberson's Associate Principal and 8th Grade Assistant Principal **Cecelia Brumsey** – who joined the board meeting via Zoom.

"Both of them have poured a lot of their heart and soul into making this award possible," Dunne-Oldfield said, "and I'm happy they could be with us tonight to help celebrate the school winning this incredible national honor."

When she learned of the school's nomination, Walker said she didn't fully understand at first the magnitude of the work that Roberson, as a school of choice within the district, had done to earn the trust and respect of parents and the community.

"Most significantly for myself and for the teachers, the students, the parents, it's really the effort behind it that means the most," Walker said. "We work hard. We're not perfect. We aspire to be the best at what we do because of our students. We're excited about the award, but we really want to just be able to offer what's best – and unique – for our scholars." [Read more.](#)



Roberson Middle School Principal Tracey Walker stands with the Point of Pride award recognizing Roberson's win as a 2020 National Blue Ribbon School.

## Superintendent's Report

Superintendent **Dr. Rodney E. Watson** began his brief remarks by reminding everyone about the discussion held at the Oct. 8 board work session on the Campus Improvement Plans and the "processes we go through to develop the plans and set the goals."

He previewed the evening's presentations, noting that they would give a deeper look into the work happening at the individual campuses to develop their specific improvement plans. Watson also noted the ongoing follow-up to the staff survey, which concluded earlier this month and was presented to the Board of Trustees at their work session.

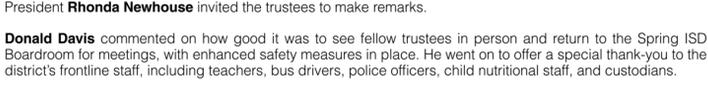
"We received a lot of what we call gifts from our teachers, letting us know the high points and the low points and the things they need support on," he said. The data collected from the survey will be brought to the district's Advisory Committee on Education later this month as part of a collaborative process to determine strategies to support teachers, 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.

**Donald Davis** commented on how good it was to see fellow trustees in person and return to the Spring ISD Boardroom for meetings, with enhanced safety measures in place. He went on to offer a special thank-you to the district's frontline staff, including teachers, bus drivers, police officers, child nutritional staff, and custodians.

"You know, we always recognize our leadership staff and our administrators," Davis said, "but these are the folks that are the heart and soul of a school district, and I want to just recognize them, and tell them thanks for all their efforts and their work they do every day for the success of our students in Spring ISD."

**Rhonda Newhouse** continued by commenting on how excited she had been to be at Roberson Middle School during the official announcement of the 2020 winners of the National Blue Ribbon School Award from the U.S. Department of Education.

"It was a wonderful moment for Roberson Middle School. I commend their principal, **Tracey Walker**, and her staff of teachers for the outstanding job that they are doing at that school."

**Winford Adams Jr.** echoed Newhouse's praise and said that, as a Roberson parent, he was happy to see the school in the national spotlight for winning the award. He concluded his remarks by calling on the Spring ISD community to take an active part in this year's local, state and national elections.

"I also want to, in this last meeting before Election Day, encourage all members of our community to educate themselves about the candidates that are running for office this election season and get out there and vote," Adams said. "I recognize that it might be difficult at this time, given the circumstances with the pandemic, but it's really important that you get out there and vote."

## Public Hearings

### District Receives School FIRST 'Superior' Rating for Financial Accountability

Chief Financial Officer **Ann Westbrook** reported that the district received an "A" rating, the highest possible, from the Financial Accountability Rating System of Texas for the district's 2018-19 fiscal year.

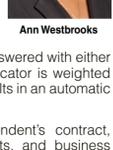
Commonly referred to as School FIRST, the objective of the rating system, as outlined by Westbrook during her presentation, is to hold school districts accountable for the quality of financial management in Texas public schools.

"It is designed to encourage better management of financial resources," Westbrook said, "in order to ensure the maximum amount of funds are made available for direct instructional purposes."

The School FIRST rating system used to assess the 2018-19 year consists of 15 base indicators that analyze trends related to financial management efficiencies. The first five indicators are answered with either a "yes" or "no" answer while the remaining indicators are assigned a point value. Each indicator is weighted equally, with the exception of the first five. Failure to comply with any of these five indicators results in an automatic failure.

Westbrook said the report also includes specific disclosures including the superintendent's contract, reimbursements received by the superintendent and trustees, outside compensation, gifts, and business transactions between the board members and the district, if any.

She added that a copy of the report will be placed on the district website this week. "The community will have the opportunity to read through it," she said.



Ann Westbrook

## Board Approves 2020-21 Campus Improvement Plans

The Board of Trustees approved the district's Campus Improvement Plans after a presentation outlining the specific work of three campuses – Marshall Elementary School, Spring High School and Bammel Middle School.

The presentation on Tuesday followed a lengthy discussion of the Campus Improvement Plan process during the board work session on Oct. 8. During that meeting, Spring ISD Chief of Innovation and Communications **Tiffany Dunne-Oldfield** noted that the Texas Education Agency offered districts a beginning-of-year assessment (BOY) for the first time this year. That assessment is being used as a diagnostic tool and blueprint to see how students can grow as they head toward the end-of-year STAAR exams.

"We are in a challenging year, but we do need to grow our students," Dunne-Oldfield said during the Oct. 8 work session. "The BOY, which gives us a look at where our students are at this school year, provides a baseline so we can set goals for learning growth."

While the work session presentation provided a high-level overview of the district's Campus Improvement Plan (CIP) process, including goals and areas of focus, trustees on Tuesday got a deeper look at how some campuses are using their CIP to drive student achievement this year.

Marshall Elementary Principal **Mike Walker** outlined the specific strategies his campus plans to take for 2020-21 to boost student achievement, including making both students and parents aware of each child's specific goals for the year.

"Students need to engage with their own growth goals," he said. In addition, by laying out the data for parents, he noted that parents will be more involved in the process.

At Spring High School, principal **Diaka Melendez** discussed how her campus has done a lot of work to truly understand what students need. She noted that the pandemic has made clear that there are technology issues. "Our students are app savvy versus tech savvy," she said. "We often assume that students, because they are millennials or growing up in the 21st century, know how to navigate technology. Well, they know how to navigate the apps on their phone but not always the technology that is needed."

She thanked the trustees for all of their work to ensure students have access to Chromebooks and internet to ensure accessibility. Specific instructional strategies her campus is taking include establishing virtual interactive notebooks in English classes for students and making sure the co-teach model is working for virtual Special Education students. "It's no secret, we definitely have room to grow on our campus in Special Education performance," she said.

At the middle school level, trustees heard from Bammel Middle School Principal **Corey Steddy**, who discussed how he's been trying to implement a cultural shift on the campus that involves students, staff and parents. He noted that the pandemic has only exacerbated some of the challenges facing Bammel.

"We are looking forward to changing those challenges into opportunities," he said. LeDay outlined some of the steps his campus has been taking to address those challenges, including making sure students have access to technology, getting parents involved in all aspects of their students' lives, and creating leadership opportunities for students. Another area of focus has been providing extra support and professional development to teachers on the campus with two years or less of experience.

"I believe all of these strategies will yield great results," LeDay said.

Trustees throughout the presentations asked questions and in some cases sought more details about the specific goals in the plans. Trustee **Winford Adams Jr.** emphasized the importance of creating goals that close achievement gaps, not just those that meet growth targets.

He emphasized that equity should be foundational to all of the plans and the goals, especially since teachers will be asked to meet those expectations.

Superintendent Watson assured the trustees that all of the plans will again be reviewed with an eye to ensuring equitable outcomes for students and to address achievement gaps. He also noted that the plans are "living" documents that will be tweaked throughout the year, and he pledged to keep the Board updated on the progress and outcomes at future meetings.

### Board Approves 2020 Tax Rate

The Board unanimously approved a 2020 total tax rate of \$1.3843 per \$100 valuation – marking a decrease from last year's tax rate and introducing the lowest rate in 21 years.

The amount is based on the combined .9343 Maintenance and Operations tax rate and 45-cent Interest and Sinking tax rate, which is used to pay the debt service requirements on outstanding bonds.

The new tax rate of \$1.3843 per \$100 valuation is a decrease of about 4.5 cents from last year's tax rate of \$1.43 per \$100 valuation.

Based on the district's median home value of \$147,022, the average household in Spring ISD will pay approximately \$2,035 in school district taxes this year, not including homestead exemptions.

Annually, the district proposes a tax rate when the next year's general operating and debt service budgets are approved in the spring, but the tax rate is not approved until fall, after the Harris County Appraisal District provides the certified property appraisal rolls.

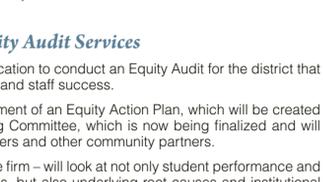
Tax bills are expected to be sent out by the end of the week.

### Trustees Approve Agreement with Harris County to Participate in 'Project 10Million'

Trustees gave the green light to an initiative being sponsored by T-Mobile to supply internet hotspots and laptop devices to school districts across the nation.

By participating in the program in collaboration with Harris County, the district will receive up to 5,297 hotspots and 5,297 laptops.

The goal of Project 10Million is to give eligible households up to 100GB of data per year and a free mobile hotspot for five years in order to ensure internet access is not a barrier to education.



### Board Approves Awarding a Contract for Equity Audit Services

The Board approved awarding a contract to Cambridge Education to conduct an Equity Audit for the district that will help Spring ISD identify barriers and solutions to student and staff success.

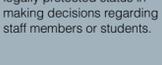
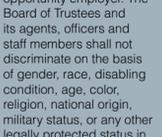
The equity audit is a key component of the district's development of an Equity Action Plan, which will be created over the next year with the leadership of the Equity Steering Committee, which is now being finalized and will include district staff, as well as leadership leaders, local ministers and other community partners.

An equity audit – to be conducted by the independent outside firm – will look at not only student performance and trends in areas such as discipline and educational outcomes, but also underlying root causes and institutional structures that might be unintentionally contributing to those outcomes.

The trustees discussed the audit at their work session on Oct. 8. It is tentatively slated to begin in late November with a report being delivered to the Board by the spring semester.

"We are honored to have the opportunity to improve resource and educational equity in our district by assessing the current state of equity and excellence through a districtwide equity audit," said Chief of Innovation and Equity **Dr. Lurita Hinojosa** after the meeting. "District leaders, working together with community members and equity-minded advocates, will be able to address and begin the work to eliminate any gaps in equity and excellence in our district."

The audit will include collecting data through means of districtwide perceptual surveys, focus groups, interviews, document reviews, and through the use of offsite staff that will compile, disaggregate and analyze data. "Ultimately, we will receive a report that will provide a clear narrative and description of the inequity in our district, review findings, and provide recommendations on next steps," Hinojosa said.



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