

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.**
President
- Deborah Jensen, Ph.D.**
Vice President
- Donald Davis**
Secretary
- Winford Adams Jr.**
Assistant Secretary
- Justine Durant**
- 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 will be at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, Oct. 13 at the Gordon M. Anderson Leadership Center, 16717 Ella Blvd.

The Spring ISD Board of Trustees met at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, Sept. 8 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.

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.

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Assistant Athletic Director Named President of Hispanic Texas High School Football Coaches Association

The Board recognized Spring ISD Assistant Director of Athletics **Armando Jacinto**, who was recently selected as the inaugural president of the Hispanic Texas High School Football Coaches Association. Jacinto was chosen by the recently formed group's board of directors to serve a three-year term and help guide the organization as it establishes itself and grows.



Spring ISD Assistant Director of Athletics Armando Jacinto stands with his Point of Pride award.

During her presentation at the meeting, Chief of Communications and Innovation **Tiffany Dunne-Oldfield** noted Jacinto's many years in the coaching profession and longstanding commitment to supporting fellow coaches.

"With more than 30 years' experience as a coach, athletic coordinator and administrator in Waco, Austin and Houston-area schools, Coach Jacinto is no stranger to helping others succeed," said Dunne-Oldfield, going on to list several programs Jacinto oversees for coaches in Spring ISD. "We are thrilled to share his talents as he makes an impact across the state with this exciting new organization."

Director of Athletics **Willie Amendola** was also on hand to congratulate Jacinto on behalf of the district and wish him success as president of the new Hispanic coaches group.

"Armando is just always there for everybody and he'll do anything for anybody," Amendola said. "With his vision and his leadership, they couldn't have picked a better leader. So I'm just proud of him and happy for him." [Read more.](#)

Special Presentation



Spring ISD Education Foundation Presents Grant Funds for Mobile Hotspots

Members of the Spring ISD Education Foundation presented a check for grant funds recently awarded by the Education Foundation of Harris County and the Harris County Department of Education. The \$15,000 grant will enable the district to provide mobile hotspots to the families of high school students without home internet access.

"The COVID-19 pandemic, with social distancing, has presented a major need here within our district," said Spring ISD Education Foundation President **Ken Grays**. "We set out to try to do our best to try to rectify that, and in cooperation with the Harris County Education Foundation, we were able to secure a grant for \$15,000 that would be able to fully support 63 hotspots and a year's worth of service of each of those hotspots."

The Partners in Education grant program is administered by the Education Foundation of Harris County and sponsored by Harris County Department of Education (HCDE). The partnership helps fund programs in schools and districts across the region, according to **Steven David**, who serves on the board of the Education Foundation of Harris County and also addressed Spring ISD trustees during Tuesday's meeting.

"As you all know, HCDE exists to support the districts across Harris County, and we're thrilled that the Education Foundation of Harris County partnership has allowed us to find yet another way to help our local districts through the Partners in Education program," he said.

The district will focus the hotspot distribution on families with high school students, helping to ensure as many students as possible remain on track to graduate, while also targeting families with multiple students in the district to help provide adequate internet access to as many students as possible. [Read more.](#)

Board of Trustees Approves 2019-20 Grand Prize Winner of Employee Excellence Award

The Board of Trustees on Tuesday circled back to make a very special presentation to honor the 2019-20 grand prize winner of the Employee Excellence Award.



The grand prize winner is usually recognized during the Employee Recognition Banquet in May, but this year's event was canceled because of the COVID-19 pandemic. So to make sure they didn't lose the opportunity to celebrate a stellar employee, the trustees made the presentation during their September meeting.

In describing the winner, Board President **Rhonda Newhouse** cited the employee's dedicated work in ensuring the reliability of Spring ISD student data and supporting the day-to-day work of a wide range of employees across the district's campuses and administrative departments who depend on the timeliness, security and accuracy of the information in the system.

"She's the cheerleader of the technology department and she deserves to be recognized," said Newhouse in announcing the winner, **Sherry Osgood**, who serves as a system analyst for the district.

In selecting Osgood for the honor, the Board reviewed all the employees who had been honored for the monthly award during the 2019-20 school year. Osgood was awarded the Employee Excellence recognition for April 2020. The award, given monthly during the school year, recognizes Spring ISD employees who model the district's guiding principles and core values.

"She comes in early, stays late and is always on call when something goes wrong," Newhouse noted. "She is one of those people who makes so much go right that you never know when it's going wrong because she was on top of it and taking care of whatever the issue might be."

Any employee, parent, or community member can submit a nomination for board consideration for the monthly award. [Learn more.](#)

As the grand prize winner for 2019-20, Osgood will receive a certificate and a check for \$1,000.

"Thank you very much," Osgood said. "I'm very surprised."

Superintendent's Report

Superintendent **Dr. Rodney Watson** began his remarks by thanking teachers who this week returned to campuses in preparation for the phased return of students, set to begin Sept. 14.



Rodney E. Watson

"Today, we entered our final phase of welcoming our teachers and staff back to their respective campuses," Watson said. "My cabinet and central office administration applaud all of our teachers and the awesome job they're doing providing remote instruction for the thousands of students enrolled in Spring ISD."

Watson noted the difficulties involved in transitioning back to offering on-campus, in-person learning, acknowledging the struggles and difficult choices many teachers face, while also expressing his continued commitment to both students and staff.

"I truly believe our teachers want what's best for our students," Watson said. "As the husband of a teacher in a neighboring district as well as the father of two kids who attend Spring ISD, I understand firsthand how difficult some of the decisions they have to make can be. We only ask that we continue to work together as we make our vision visible."

He continued by recounting the discussion held during the Board's Thursday, Sept. 3 work session. During that meeting, trustees and members of the district's administration considered the process of transitioning back to in-person learning for all families who selected that option and want to come back in September, taking into account a variety of factors including current COVID-19 data for the region.

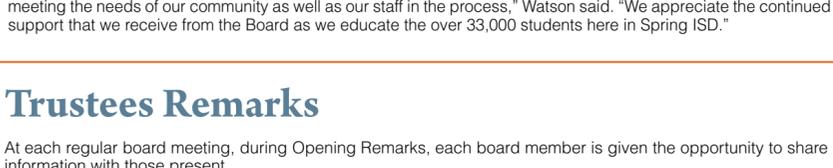
"We are encouraged by the positive trending we are seeing both at Harris County and within Spring ISD," Watson said. "We encourage everyone to remain focused on our health and safety protocols as we begin opening our schools for our first students as we start our transition process back."

He closed by thanking trustees for their leadership and ongoing commitment to the district through challenging times.

"As you can see, we've been extremely busy ensuring that we're doing the work of educating our students, but also meeting the needs of our community as well as our staff in the process," Watson said. "We appreciate the continued support that we receive from the Board as we educate the over 33,000 students here in Spring ISD."

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.

Dr. Deborah Jensen took the occasion to comment on the \$15,000 grant from the Education Foundation of Harris County that would enable the district to provide mobile hotspots to the families of high school students without home internet access.

"This is more than just hotspots for some kids," Jensen said. "This is really attacking the digital divide in our district, really making it a cultural norm that all students deserve to have a good connection to the internet and to the resources there."

Several of the trustees – including **Winford Adams Jr.**, **Justine Durant**, **Kelly P. Hodges** and **Donald Davis** – commented on the continued need to take the concerns of district teachers and other staff members into account when planning for the upcoming school year and the safe transition to in-person learning. They also discussed wanting to know more about the review process for employee accommodations and leave requests made through the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA).

"I do think it's really important that as we move forward into a process like this that we are listening to our teachers and taking into account their concerns," Adams said. "I just want to voice that, and let Dr. Watson know that I support him and the district, but I will be paying very close attention as I continue to hear from teachers that are very concerned as it relates to their health issues and whether the FFCRA is sufficient to handle that."

Several of the board members, including Trustee Durant, mentioned having been contacted directly by teachers and other staff who worried that their voices were not being heard and their needs not adequately being taken into account. She went on to raise the possibility of a "pulse" survey for staff similar to the recent survey taken to determine parents' comfort level with a return to in-person classes for students.

"I'm wondering, is it possible to perhaps send out some sort of a quick question survey to make sure that we capture that feedback that we didn't get from our teachers at this time?" Durant said. "It's never too late to address any concerns that may come from that feedback."

Rhonda Newhouse echoed her fellow trustees' sentiments and thanked them for relating them in the meeting.

"I think we all have that same concern and we will be addressing it," she said. "So thank you for your comments tonight."

Action Items

Board Approves 2020-21 Spring ISD Legislative Priorities

The Board approved three legislative priorities after hearing a report from its Governance Committee, chaired by Trustee **Justine Durant**, about its process to review and determine its top goals for the year.

To start, the Governance Committee shared a list of 10 priorities being promoted by the Texas Association of School Boards for the 2020-21 school year with the entire board. The committee then worked to narrow down that list to reflect the goals of Spring ISD. In presenting them on Tuesday, Trustee **Deborah Jensen** first shared last year's list of legislative priorities as a point of review, including school finance, assessment and accountability, student safety, school choice, and teacher benefits.

"These are not the vision and goals for the district," Jensen said. "These are priorities where we really think we need help legislatively from the state of Texas." She noted that school finance tends to be a perennial priority as well as testing.

She then outlined the three TASB priorities "that we think are particularly suited for our district and really deserve our strong legislative push" this school year. They are:

- **Retaining the Right for School Districts to Advocate for Themselves**
Jensen noted that there's a proposal that would limit the ability of school districts to advocate and lobby for the issues that they think are important, so this priority would be to ensure that districts have the same rights as businesses and other governmental agencies. "To me this is almost a First Amendment right for school districts," she said.
- **Leveling the Playing Field with Charter Schools**
Jensen noted that research is showing that sometimes twice as much of a charter school's budget goes to administration compared to a public school district and that charter schools tend to spend a large share of their budget on advertising and marketing. "We need transparency among the voters in Texas to see how charter schools do not, on an average, perform better than public schools. They have teachers with less experience and they can hire teachers with no certificates, except for bilingual and special ed ... there are many things we feel like we need to push."
- **Promoting Cultural Awareness and Diversity**
She said this priority would help ensure school districts across the state get the training and support they need to raise awareness on this issue. "We just feel this is an issue whose time has come and we all need to get behind it and we need to push it at local and state levels," Jensen said, noting that Spring ISD is also moving forward with its own Equity Action Plan.

Trustee **Winford Adams Jr.** who also sits on the Governance Committee, said he too was very committed to promoting equity as a cultural norm in the district. "I think Dr. Watson and his team are doing a really good job of that, but there are districts in the state where that is not a focus."

In reflecting on the priorities, Trustee **Donald Davis** said he was pleased that the Governance Committee took its priorities from goals set forward by TASB's legislative committee, on which he serves. "I feel excited to have your support," he said. "Thank you very much."

Board Approves First-Reading Revisions to BBA(LOCAL)

The Board approved the first reading of revisions to the board policy that sets out the requirements for a person to serve as a member of the Board of Trustees. The district's current policy states that "in addition to the requirement of law, a Board member shall remain current in the payment of school property taxes."

The new revision would add the following language: "To be eligible to be a candidate for, or elected or appointed to the Spring ISD Board of Trustees, a person must not have been convicted of a felony, pled guilty to a felony, entered into a plea bargain for a felony charge, or received deferred adjudication for a felony."

Trustee **Justine Durant** noted that 2019-20 Senate Bill 2283 was introduced by Sens. **Donna Campbell** and **Harold Dutton** to expand the criminal history screening requirements for trustees but that the final version "was not as strong as it could have been."

As state lawmakers continue to work on that, she said that the Governance Committee had proposed changes to its policy that would prohibit the ability to serve as a trustee with a felony in a background check.

Trustee **Deborah Jensen** cited their local school board. She said the requirements needed to be much more "robust in the education code."

In Other Action the Board Approved:

- The minutes from the Aug. 6, 2020 board work session and the Aug. 11, 2020 regular meeting.
- The Asynchronous Instructional Plan
- The resolution regarding school closures due to Hurricane Laura
- Modification to 2020-21 Instructional Calendar to close for Election Day
- First reading of TASB Local DMD Update 115 Resolution affecting the following policies: BF(Local), DE(Local), DIA(Local), DMD(Local), EI(Local), FB(Local), FD(Local), FEB(Local), FFG(Local) and FFF(Local); FMF(LOCAL); FNG(LOCAL); GF(LOCAL);
- Interlocal Agreement with Lone Star College System - North Harris;
- Taxpayer Refunds;
- Interlocal agreement for records storage services to Klein ISD;
- Interlocal agreement with Harris County regarding project connectivity.



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.