

Spring Independent School District Board of Trustees Regular Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, October 12, 2021 at 7:00 PM

1. Call to Order (7:05 PM)

President Rhonda Newhouse called the Regular Meeting of the Spring Independent School District Board of Trustees to order at 7:05 PM on October 12, 2021, in the Board Room of the Gordon M. Anderson Leadership Center, 16717 Ella Boulevard, Houston, Texas, in accordance with Chapter 551 of the Texas Government Code.

Members Present:

Rhonda Newhouse, President
Winford Adams, Jr., Vice President
Kelly P. Hodges, Secretary
Justine Durant, Assistant Secretary
Dr. Deborah Jensen
Carmen Correa
Natasha McDaniel

Members Absent:

Others Present:

Rodney Watson, Superintendent of Schools
Mark Miranda, Executive Chief of District Operations
Ken Culbreath, Chief of Police
Julie Hill, Chief of Human Resources and Human Capital Accountability
Lupita Hinojosa, Chief of Innovation and Equity
Ann Westbrook, Chief Financial Officer
Jeremy Binkley, General Counsel
Jason Sheffer, Director of Board Services

2. Flag Pledges (7:06 PM)

The Presentation of the Colors was led by the Westfield Mustang Army JROTC.

3. Moment of Silence (7:08 PM)

President Newhouse asked the audience to join in a moment of silence.

4. Opening Remarks (7:09 PM)

4.1. Superintendent of Schools (7:09 PM)

Superintendent Dr. Rodney Watson opened his remarks by acknowledging the success of the recent College Night, which was held at Dekaney High School on October 6th.

Representatives from over 100 colleges and universities were on hand to help Spring ISD seniors and their parents with questions about higher education. In addition, several agencies attended to assist with disability services and other community resources. “Each year, this event brings a wealth of information to our families shopping for higher education opportunities, and it also answers a lot of the questions they have around financial aid, admissions processes and scholarship opportunities,” Dr. Watson said.

Dr. Watson continued with a recognition of the 2021-22 Advisory Committee on Education. The committee meets regularly to discuss district issues and concerns, from developing practical strategies to fulfilling the promises made by the Spring ISD strategic plan to budgetary questions. Dr. Watson welcomed the new members in attendance, and thanked them for their dedication to district students.

Next, Dr. Watson noted the upcoming Spring ISD Educational Foundation charity golf tournament, set for Monday, October 25th. The event will be held at Northgate Country Club and will include contests for longest drive, closest to the pin and hole-in-one, with cash prizes. A charity auction will also be held on-site. More information on the golf tournament can be found at SpringISDFoundation.org.

Dr. Watson also touched upon the overall decline of COVID-19 cases, both across the region and within Spring ISD, and encouraged ongoing vigilance and cooperation to continue the decline. He reminded everyone of vaccination and testing sites available (free of charge) at locations across the district.

Dr. Watson then celebrated Spring ISD principals in recognition of National Principals Month, which takes place every October. He emphasized the need to remember the social-emotional needs of campus leaders, especially during the pandemic. “Although the pandemic has caused a lot of obstacles and issues in students’ education, our school principals have persisted and led their campuses through some very difficult times,” Dr. Watson said. “Our principals are the foundation of our schools. Despite the many challenges they have faced, which often fluctuate daily, they have continued to encourage and continue to lead strong.”

Dr. Watson ended his remarks by introducing and recognizing Pablo Resendiz, the new principal of Spring High School. Mr. Resendiz joins the high school with a host of experience at the high school and middle school level, most recently serving in the east area of the Houston Independent School District as principal of Holland Middle School. “There’s a lot of great things happening at Spring High School already, and I hope to build on that tradition,” Mr. Resendiz said. “I want to leverage that community support, come in and listen, learn more, and move the school in the right direction.”

4.2. Board of Trustees (7:14 PM)

Trustee Jensen shared about her recent experience attending Dueitt Middle School’s fall orchestra performance, and thanked Dueitt Head Band Director Robert Munoz and everyone at the school who helped make the concert a success. She concluded by encouraging the Dueitt students to keep up the good work, saying, “You’re just wonderful kids and developing wonderful talent. Thank you.”

Trustee Adams encouraged everyone to be on the lookout for examples of great leadership at every level of the district, and highlighted a way members of the Spring ISD community can celebrate individuals displaying positive leadership attributes. “I wanted to remind the community – teachers, parents, students – that we are trying to cultivate leadership

within Spring ISD,” Adams said, “and to that end, we have developed a new board recognition mechanism which is focused on the Leadership Definition that we’ve developed here in Spring. And so, I want to encourage everyone to be on the lookout for leadership in your building and your school, and to nominate someone for board recognition.”

President Newhouse thanked the Spring High School parents who attended the recent town hall meeting at the campus, expressing her appreciation for their involvement, and encouraged all parents to actively participate in support of their schools and their students. “I know we are all busy people, but parents, it is very important that you participate and take part in your child’s schools,” Newhouse said. “So, the Board would like to welcome you to please feel free to come out at any time for any of our activities for parents.”

5. Recognitions (7:17 PM)

5.1. Point of Pride – College Board National African American and Hispanic Recognition Program Scholars (7:17 PM)

The Board recognized 20 Spring ISD juniors and seniors, representing all five of the district’s high schools, who were named among this year’s National Recognition Program Scholars by the College Board. The group included eight National African American Recognition Program Scholars and 12 National Hispanic Recognition Program Scholars.

To be eligible for the national award from the College Board, students must have a 3.5 GPA or higher and identify as African American or Black, Hispanic American or Latinx, Indigenous, or attend school in a rural area or small town. They must also meet one of the following requirements: take the PSAT 10 in the spring of their sophomore year and score in the top 10% in the state; take the PSAT/NMSQT in the fall of their junior year and score in the top 10% by state; or earn a score of 3 or higher on two or more AP exams by their junior year.

In addition to honoring the students' accomplishments, the program also helps create additional pathways to college. Students can include the award on college and scholarship applications, and colleges around the country use the list of College Board honorees to identify high-potential students from underrepresented groups and communities.

The Spring ISD students named College Board National Recognition Program Scholars are listed below by their home campus.

Dekaney High School

- Teon Golden, College Board National African American Recognition Program Scholar
- Cali Johnson, College Board National African American Recognition Program Scholar

Spring Early College Academy

- Micah Bryant, College Board National African American Recognition Program Scholar
- Berenice Contreras, College Board National Hispanic Recognition Program Scholar
- Nosakhare Iyoha, College Board National African American Recognition Program Scholar
- Mihael Mendo, College Board National Hispanic Recognition Program Scholar
- Alexis Santacoloma, College Board National Hispanic Recognition Program Scholar
- Devin Smith, College Board National African American Recognition Program Scholar

Spring High School

- Jeanna Edquist, College Board National Hispanic Recognition Program Scholar

Westfield High School

- Krystal Nuñez, College Board National Hispanic Recognition Program Scholar

- Edward Lindsay, College Board National African American Recognition Program Scholar

Wunsche High School

- Adam Bueno, College Board National Hispanic Recognition Program Scholar
- Alejandra Cozajay, College Board National Hispanic Recognition Program Scholar
- Fiorela Benitez, College Board National Hispanic Recognition Program Scholar
- Glenda Galo, College Board National Hispanic Recognition Program Scholar
- Robert Ventura, College Board National Hispanic Recognition Program Scholar
- Santiago Reyes, College Board National Hispanic Recognition Program Scholar
- Thomas Saenz, College Board National Hispanic Recognition Program Scholar
- Ariana Chappell, College Board National African American Recognition Program Scholar
- Douglas Ford, College Board National African American Recognition Program Scholar

5.2. Point of Pride – The Percussion Ensemble at the School for International Studies at Bammel (7:31 PM)

The Board recognized the members of the Bammel Percussion Ensemble, under the direction of Percussion Instructor Cam Simpson, who were named National Winners in the 2021 Mark of Excellence award competition sponsored by the Foundation for Music Education.

The Mark of Excellence project recognizes outstanding achievement in performance by high school and middle school bands, choirs and orchestras. This year marks the fourteenth year of the competition, with a total of 236 musical ensembles participating.

Ensembles enter the competition by submitting recordings for review near the end of the school year. The Mark of

Excellence program gathers entries from throughout the United States, which are then judged by specially invited music faculty from U.S. colleges and universities. The unique competitive environment – including detailed feedback provided to all entrants, together with compilation recordings made of each year’s winners – allows participating ensembles to compare their performance quality to some of the best groups from across the country.

Bammel’s head band director, Johnathan Alvarez, was in attendance to congratulate the students and to address the Trustees on behalf of the school’s music education program.

The members of the 2020-21 Bammel Percussion Ensemble recognized at the meeting were: Lisa Crosby, Rosalynn Molina, Dylan Phelps, Jayden Price, Beyonca Whitfield, and Dedrick Wilkerson.

6. Public Agenda Participation (7:41 PM)

Members of the public did not register to speak to the Board.

7. Public Hearing on Spring Independent School District’s State Financial Accountability Rating (7:42 PM)

A Public Hearing was held on Spring Independent School District’s State Financial Accountability Rating. Chief Ann Westbrook reported that the district once again received an “A” rating with a score of 94, or “superior achievement” – the highest possible from the Financial Accountability Rating System of Texas, for the district’s 2019-20 fiscal year.

Commonly referred to as School FIRST, the objective of the rating system is to hold school districts accountable for the quality of financial management in Texas public schools. “It is designed to encourage better management and better oversight of financial resources in order to provide the maximum allocation possible for direct, instructional purposes,” Westbrook said.

The School FIRST rating system, which was used to assess the 2019-20 year, consists of 20 base indicators that analyze trends related to financial management efficiencies. The first four 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 four. Failure to comply with any of these four indicators results in an automatic failure.

Chief Westbrook said the report will be posted on the district's finance webpage. She drew attention to page 14 of the document where the indicators are explained, and also noted that there are new indicators and ceiling requirements this year. 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 board members and the district, if any.

Members of the public did not register to speak on this item

8. Chief Financial Officer (7:48 PM)

8.1. 2021 Tax Rate (7:48 PM)

The Board approved a 2021 total tax rate of \$1.3128 per \$100 valuation, marking a 7 cent decrease from last year's tax rate and introducing the lowest rate in 22 years.

The amount is based on the combined .9028 Maintenance and Operations tax rate and 41-cent Interest and Sinking tax rate, which is used to pay the debt service requirements on outstanding bonds.

Last year, Spring ISD approved a tax rate of \$1.3843 per \$100 valuation, also a decrease from the 2019 total tax rate of \$1.43 per \$100 valuation.

According to Chief Ann Westbrook, the tax payment on the average home with the \$25,000 homestead exemption would be \$1,785, which is \$97 less than what would have been paid at last year's rate of \$1.3843.

The 5.17 percent tax rate decrease follows the 2019 Texas Legislature's passage of House Bill 3, which includes tax compression based on the extent to which property value growth estimates exceed 2.5 percent.

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.

Trustee Adams noted that “it looks like we are raising the tax rate when the Legislature was patting themselves on the back for lowering everybody’s taxes. That’s really unfortunate, I think. I just want to be clear, the way this motion reads, we are required by statute to move that the property tax is being increased. That’s disturbingly political and unfortunate so I just want to put that on the record as having said that.”

Trustee Adams moved that the property tax rate be increased by the adoption of a tax rate of 1.31280, which is effectively a 2.44 percent increase in the tax rate, and that the Board approve the 2021 Tax Rate Ordinance and Resolution.

Trustee Durant seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

9. Public Hearing for the Optional Flexible School Day Program (OFSDP) “Achieving Success Alternative Program – ASAP” (7:57 PM)

A Public Hearing was held for the Optional Flexible School Day Program (OFSDP) “Achieving Success Alternative Program – ASAP”.

The Board had previously heard a detailed presentation at the Board Work Session on October 7th regarding the program, which aims to improve graduation rates for students who are in danger of dropping out of school, have dropped out, or who are behind in core subject courses.

At the Work Session, the Trustees received an overview of “ASAP” from Chief Lupita Hinojosa, who explained how the program would provide flexible hours and days of attendance for students in grades 3-12 who meet one of the following criteria: the student is at risk of dropping out of school; the student, as a result of attendance requirements, will be denied credit for one or more classes in which the student has been enrolled; or the student is attending a campus with an approved early college high school program designation.

Trustee Jensen moved that the Board of Trustees approve the Optional Flexible School Day Program - “Achieving Success Alternative Program–

ASAP". Trustee McDaniel seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

10. Chief of Innovation and Equity (8:00 PM)

10.1. Acceptance of Grant Funds Awarded by the Harris County Department of Education and the Education Foundation of Harris County (8:00 PM)

Chief Lupita Hinojosa presented the Board with information regarding grant funds awarded by the Harris County Department of Education and the Education Foundation of Harris County to the Spring ISD Education Foundation in the amount of \$20,000. Grant funds awarded will be used to purchase Swivl robots for Bailey Middle School, Claughton Middle School, Dueitt Middle School, Twin Creeks Middle School, Spring Leadership Academy and Wells Middle School.

In accordance with Board Policy, all grant funds in aggregate of \$10,000 or more must be approved by the Spring Independent School District's Board of Trustees.

Trustee Hodges moved that the Board of Trustees accept the grant funds awarded by the Harris County Department of Education and the Education Foundation of Harris County, totaling \$20,000. Trustee Correa seconded the motion and the motion carried with 6 in favor and 1 abstention (Trustee Adams). Trustee Adams abstained due to his employment relationship with Harris County Department of Education.

11. Board of Trustees (8:09 PM)

11.1. Reading of the Trustees' Continuing Education Credit Hours (8:09 PM)

Board President Rhonda Newhouse reported on whether each Trustee has met or is deficient in meeting the continuing education requirements.

Local District Orientation

The following Trustees were required to complete and have completed the local district orientation training: Kelly P. Hodges, Carmen Correa, and Natasha McDaniel.

Orientation to the Texas Education Code

The following Trustees were required to complete and have completed the Orientation to the Texas Education Code training: Kelly P. Hodges, Carmen Correa, and Natasha McDaniel.

Open Meetings Act

The following Trustees were required to complete and have completed the Open Meetings Act training: Kelly P. Hodges and Carmen Correa.

The following Trustees have scheduled training to timely complete the Open Meetings Act training: Natasha McDaniel.

Public Information Act

The following Trustees were required to complete and have completed the Public Information Act training: Kelly P. Hodges and Carmen Correa.

The following Trustees have scheduled training to timely complete the Public Information Act training: Natasha McDaniel.

Evaluating Student Academic Performance and Setting Goals

The following Trustees have completed the biennial training on evaluating student academic performance and setting goals: Dr. Deborah Jensen, Kelly P. Hodges, Justine Durant, Winford Adams, Jr., Rhonda Newhouse, Carmen Correa, and Natasha McDaniel.

Post-Legislative Update to the Texas Education Code

The following Trustees have completed the Post-Legislative Update to the Texas Education Code training: Dr. Deborah Jensen, Kelly P. Hodges, Justine Durant, Winford Adams, Jr., Rhonda Newhouse, Carmen Correa, and Natasha McDaniel.

Cybersecurity

The following Trustees have completed the Cybersecurity training: Dr. Deborah Jensen, Kelly P. Hodges, Justine Durant, Winford Adams, Jr., Rhonda Newhouse, and Carmen Correa.

The following Trustees have scheduled training to timely complete the Cybersecurity training: Natasha McDaniel.

Identifying and Reporting Abuse, Trafficking, and Other Maltreatment of Children

The following Trustees have completed the biennial training on identifying and reporting abuse and trafficking: Dr. Deborah Jensen, Kelly P. Hodges, Justine Durant, Winford Adams, Jr., and Rhonda Newhouse.

The following Trustees have scheduled training to timely complete the biennial training on identifying and reporting abuse and trafficking: Carmen Correa and Natasha McDaniel.

Team Building

The following Trustees have completed the annual team-building training: Dr. Deborah Jensen, Kelly P. Hodges, Justine Durant, Winford Adams, Jr., and Rhonda Newhouse.

The following Trustees were not members of the Board at the time of the annual team-building training and therefore did not attend the training for the year: Carmen Correa and Natasha McDaniel.

Additional Continuing Education

The following Trustees have completed the additional continuing education requirements: Dr. Deborah Jensen, Kelly P. Hodges, Justine Durant, Winford Adams, Jr., Rhonda Newhouse, Carmen Correa, and Natasha McDaniel.

Exceeding Required Continuing Education

The following Trustees have exceeded the required continuing education requirements: Dr. Deborah Jensen, Kelly P. Hodges, Justine Durant, Winford Adams, Jr., Rhonda Newhouse, Carmen Correa, and Natasha McDaniel.

11.2. Continuing Education Conference Attendance (8:11 PM)

The Board considered approving Trustee attendance to the 2022 NSBA Equity Symposium and 2022 NSBA Advocacy Institute.

The NSBA Equity Symposium will be held on January 22, 2022 in Washington, D.C. This one-day symposium will focus on understanding the root causes of inequities in our nation's schools and how school board members can work to ensure that all students are given the best opportunity to succeed.

The NSBA Advocacy Institute will be held on January 23-25 in Washington, D.C. This event will provide board members the opportunity to influence the new legislative agenda and shape the decisions made that directly impact students.

Trustee Durant moved that the Board of Trustees approve Trustee attendance to the 2022 NSBA Equity Symposium and the 2022 NSBA Advocacy Institute. Trustee Adams seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

12. Consent Agenda (8:19 PM)

The Board approved the Consent Agenda items that were discussed in detail at the October 7, 2021 Board Work Session.

Trustee Hodges moved that the Board of Trustees approve and adopt all of the items listed on the Consent Agenda. Trustee Adams seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

- 12.1. Review and Approval of Minutes from the Following Meetings:
 - September 2, 2021 Board Work Session
 - September 7, 2021 Regular Meeting
 - September 20, 2021 Special Called Session
 - September 27, 2021 Special Called Session

- 12.2. Northwest Harris County Municipal Utility District No. 23 – Easement for Spring ISD Roberson Middle School Campus

The Board will consider approving and executing the Storm Water Quality Easement between Northwest Harris County MUD 23 and Spring ISD Roberson Middle School campus.

12.3. 2021-2022 Child Care Local Match Contribution Agreement with Gulf Coast Local Workforce Board

The Board will consider approving the local match contribution agreement for the federal funds received annually for Child Care services.

12.4. 2021-2022 Workforce Solutions Memorandum of Understanding

The Board will consider approving the 2021-2022 Workforce Solutions Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

12.5. Texas A&M AgriLife Extension

The Board will consider approving the resolution that 4-H will be considered as an extracurricular activity and that the Board will recognize the Extension Agents as adjunct staff.

12.6. Resolution Regarding School Closures Due to Hurricane Nicholas

The Board will consider adopting the Resolution Regarding School Closures Due to Hurricane Nicholas.

12.7. Consideration and Approval of Bid Offer for Tax Resale of Property

The Board will consider approving the bid offer for tax resale of property.

12.8. 2021 Appraisal Roll Certification

The Board will ratify the 2021 Appraisal Roll Certification.

12.9. Taxpayer Refunds

The Board will ratify taxpayer refunds.

12.10. Request for Proposal (RFP) #22-002 – 21st Century
Enrichment Services

The Board will consider awarding a contract for 21st Century
Enrichment Services to the providers recommended by the
administration.

13. Public Participation (8:20 PM)

J.R. Garcia spoke to the Board regarding the district's mask policy.

14. Closed Session (8:26 PM)

President Newhouse recessed the open session at 8:26 PM for the purpose
of entering into closed session pursuant to the following provisions of the
Texas Open Meetings Act:

14.1. Under Section 551.071 - For the purpose of a private
consultation with the Board's attorney on any or all subjects
or matters authorized, including any item posted on this
agenda.

14.2. Under Section 551.072 - For the purpose of discussing the
purchase, exchange, lease, or value of real property.

14.3. Under Section 551.074 - For the purpose of considering the
appointment, employment, evaluation, reassignment, duties,
discipline, or dismissal of a public officer or employee or to
hear complaints or charges against a public officer or
employee.

The Board will deliberate regarding the Superintendent's
evaluation and goals.

The Board will discuss and consider the Superintendent's
contract.

The Board will deliberate on employees nominated for special
recognition.

The Board will deliberate on a recommendation for the
termination and finding of no good cause for an employee's
abandonment of contract.

The Board will deliberate on the issuance of school district teaching permits for noncore career and technology courses.

The Board will deliberate on employee resignations, recommendations to withdraw prior actions taken, recommendations to void employee contracts, recommendations for the proposed termination of employees on probationary and/or term contracts, and final orders for employees on term and probationary contracts previously proposed for termination and/or nonrenewal.

The Board will deliberate on a recommendation to propose the termination of David Mason's Chapter 21 Term Contract.

- 14.4. Under Section 551.076 - To consider the deployment, or specific occasions for implementation, of security personnel or devices.

15. Actions on Closed Session Items (10:26 PM)

President Newhouse reconvened the open meeting at 10:26 PM.

Trustee Adams moved that the Board approve the Superintendent's recommendation to terminate the contracts of Elanor Wilson, Ann Sanchez Andrade, Sandra Resendiz, Kelsey Bain, Kellyn Radler, Mickey Reed, and Jessica Rosales, upon finding that the employees failed to perform their contracts without good cause, and authorize the Superintendent or designee to notify the employees of the proposed termination pursuant to Chapter 21 of the Texas Education Code. Trustee Adams further moved that the Board authorize the Superintendent or designee to notify the State Board for Educator Certification that the employees failed to perform their contracts without good cause, and of the action taken by the Board. Trustee Durant seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

Trustee Jensen moved that the Board render a final order to terminate the contracts of Cania Russell, Jeffrey Alexander, Frederick Chambers, Ollie Holley, Crystall Lee, Desirae Mayo, Patrick Wesley, and Gloria Smith, as presented in closed session and to authorize the Superintendent or designee to provide notice of the Board's action to the impacted

employees pursuant to Chapter 21 of the Texas Education Code. Trustee Correa seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

Trustee Hodges moved that the Board approve the Resignation and Release Agreement between Dalila Soracco and Spring ISD as presented in closed session. Trustee McDaniel seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

16. Adjournment (10:32 PM)

On a motion by Trustee Hodges, seconded by Trustee Durant, the Board unanimously adjourned the meeting at 10:32 PM.



Rhonda R. Newhouse, President



Kelly P. Hodges, Secretary