



**BOARD OF TRUSTEES
REGULAR BOARD MEETING
7:00 PM, AUGUST 11, 2020
VIDEO CONFERENCE**

MINUTES

I. Call to Order (7:02 PM)

President Rhonda Newhouse called the Regular Board Meeting of the Spring Independent School District Board of Trustees to order at 7:02 PM on August 11, 2020, via video conference, in accordance with Chapter 551 of the Texas Government Code.

Members Present:

Rhonda Newhouse, President
Dr. Deborah Jensen, Vice President
Donald Davis, Secretary
Winford Adams, Jr., Assistant Secretary
Justine Durant
Jana Gonzales
Kelly P. Hodges

Members Absent:

Others Present:

Rodney Watson, Superintendent of Schools (joined at 7:20 PM)
Ken Culbreath, Chief of Police
Julie Hill, Chief of Human Resources and Human Capital Accountability
Lupita Hinojosa, Chief Innovation and Equity Officer
Khechara Bradford, Chief Academic Officer
Mark Miranda, Executive Chief of District Operations
Ann Westbrook, Chief Financial Officer
Tiffany Dunne-Oldfield, Chief of Innovation and Communications
Jeremy Binkley, General Counsel
Jason Sheffer, Director of Board Services

II. Opening Remarks (7:39 PM)

A. Superintendent of Schools (7:39 PM)

Dr. Rodney Watson began his remarks by explaining that he had been delayed in logging on for the board meeting due to his participation in a virtual town hall sponsored by State Senator Carol Alvarado (Texas Senate District 6), where he had been sharing with members of the community about Spring ISD's back-to-school plans. "It was great once again to be able to share the plan that we have in place and how we're responding to COVID," Watson said, "but more importantly, what we're doing about making sure that we're continuing to educate our kids."

Dr. Watson noted that, with school set to begin virtually on Monday, August 17, one of his highest priorities has been communicating with parents and helping them understand how the online offerings this fall will differ from those developed as the COVID-19 pandemic unfolded during the spring semester. "Last Thursday night we did get a sneak peek at our curriculum and all of the great work that our curriculum team and teachers have been working to develop for our families," Watson said. "So we're excited to be able to offer that to all of our students starting Monday."

He went on to say the District already had plans in place to continue soliciting feedback from parents and families as the new school year gets underway, and that he and other district leaders would continue to apprise the Board and the community of the results of upcoming surveys.

Dr. Watson spoke briefly about ongoing professional development (PD) for teachers to ensure a strong start to online learning in the upcoming weeks. "Our teachers have been involved in training," Watson said. "Last Thursday night you heard as well about the training that was developed by teachers for teachers. This week we've had PD training that has been developed by our curriculum and instruction department, delivered through Workforce Development, and it has gone off extremely well – and extremely well organized – to make sure that our teachers have the supports that they need."

Dr. Watson concluded his remarks by entreating the goodwill of the entire community as teachers and district staff work to educate students even as the pandemic continues. "We know that this is an uncharted time that no one in the country has ever experienced before," Watson said. "So there will be times that we'll make some mistakes, but as you know – and you know us well – that when we make a mistake, we will admit it, but we will work to rectify it to make sure that it does not hurt our students and our parents."

Acknowledging the uncertainty and the ongoing need to balance health and safety with the educational needs of students, Watson ended his remarks by asking "for grace and mercy as we implement and lead during this uncommon time."

B. Board of Trustees (7:12 PM)

President Newhouse invited the Board to make remarks.

After beginning the official meeting with a presentation honoring Spring ISD's Elementary and Secondary Teachers of the Year, Rhonda Newhouse proceeded to open the remarks section by acknowledging the two winners – Reynolds Elementary School Special Education teacher John Martinez and Roberson Middle School Math teacher Jo'NeQui'a Powers. With both Martinez and Powers present for the online board meeting, Newhouse acknowledged how difficult social distancing and safety requirements had been for the Trustees, who normally enjoy celebrating the accomplishments of district teachers and staff in person. "We miss being with our Teachers of the Year, we miss our Employee Recognition Banquet," Newhouse said. "I tell you, the Board says we have just been lonesome in not being able to see our employees from Spring ISD."

President Newhouse went on to thank the two teachers for participating in the Board Meeting and Work Session, and wished them continued success. "We are most appreciative, Ms. Powers and Mr. Martinez, for all of your work that you did in 2019-2020, and we know you're going to be just as successful in the next school year."

Trustee Adams spoke of the recent opportunity he had to participate virtually in the first ampED Tank, a “Shark Tank”-like online event, produced by the ampED National Fellowship, where young education professionals of color from all over the country took problems currently confronting the education sector and presented policy and initiative suggestions to an audience of school board members and other education leaders. “The idea was to be able to get some board member or some education influencer to bring one of their ideas that they had pitched back to their board,” Adams said. “It was particularly interesting because these folks only had a week to consider a challenge confronting the education sector, and then come up with a solution and then present it to us.” He described a presentation by a Stanford University graduate student hailing from Adams’ own hometown of Richmond, California, whose presentation touched on creating formal district policies and structures that support leadership development. “The policy that they took away – that I will be bringing to the governance board later on – is the codification of leadership development, which is something that we already are doing in Spring,” Adams said. “But the idea that it should be codified in policy is something I’d want to talk about.”

Trustee Davis, in his remarks, spoke about the annual State of Education event hosted earlier the same day online by the Houston Northwest Chamber of Commerce, where Spring ISD Superintendent Dr. Rodney Watson had made a presentation, along with the superintendents of other nearby districts. Davis described his pride in seeing that Spring ISD was leading the way in several important areas with proactive planning and forward-looking policies. “Dr. Watson, thank you for laying the foundation,” Davis said. “I think that we are a major force to deal with right now as far as the things we’re doing in our district, and our strategies and our initiatives. Thank you.”

Trustee Jensen began her remarks by also acknowledging the two Teachers of the Year recognized during the online meeting. “First of all, I’d like to compliment Mr. Martinez and Ms. Powers. You sound like two teachers I would just absolutely love to meet, and see how you work with students,” Jensen said. “Thank you so much for being part of Spring ISD.” She continued by discussing the drive-thru summer graduation ceremonies held on August 8, which several of the Trustees attended in person to congratulate students and their families. “It amazes me how many things that we are having to do for the first time in history, and yet somehow they’re working,” said Jensen, who stressed the importance for all students of having someone to encourage them and recognize their accomplishments. “You know, a lot of what we’re doing is not the slickest thing in the world, but it’s genuine,” Jensen said. “I get the feeling that Spring ISD is doing pretty well to keep the human element going through a very challenging, challenging time. So thank you all in Spring ISD, for all you do.”

Trustee Durant ended the remarks section by adding her congratulations to the two District Teachers of the Year. “I’d also like to congratulate Mr. Martinez and Ms. Powers. We were fortunate enough for you to share with us some of your engagement and work that you’ve done with your students in our Work Session, and I was very impressed.” She echoed other Trustees in looking forward to a time when she could visit classrooms again and get to see Martinez and Powers in action, working with students. “I’m excited that you are a part of the Spring team. I think it’s a very well-deserved recognition,” Durant said. “So once again, thank you very much, and congratulations!”

III. Recognitions (7:03 PM)

A. Elementary and Secondary Teachers of the Year (7:03 PM)

In a special presentation, Trustees recognized the two educators recently named Spring

ISD's 2020 Teachers of the Year – Reynolds Elementary School Special Education teacher John Martinez, who was selected as the Elementary Teacher of the Year, and Roberson Middle School Math teacher Jo'NeQui'a Powers, who received the Secondary Teacher of the Year honor.

Only in his first year teaching in Spring ISD, Martinez says his passion for teaching special education came at a very early age. "Education has been my passion for a long time, but what really pushed me towards special education was not only seeing my brother, but in high school, where I saw the students who were a little different than me and how they didn't have a voice being bullied," said Martinez. "I decided around 9th or 10th grade that I wanted to be that voice that they might not be able to have for themselves." Martinez says he was "over the moon" discovering he was recipient for the 2020 Teacher of the Year award. "Words can't even describe it," he says. "I wasn't expecting it – especially being a first-year teacher in the District and in special education. People in special education normally don't get this recognition, so I'd like to think that I made my impact."

Powers, who is entering her third year teaching at Roberson Middle School, says she credits the classic book, "Thank You Mr. Falker" by Patricia Polacco, as her inspiration into teaching. The story focuses on the author as a child with special needs and her teacher, who would not let his student fail. "This story lit a path for me and upon hearing it, God's purpose for me was confirmed: I am called to teach, to inspire, and to lead," said Powers. "Along with the book, I was fortunate to directly experience numerous teachers who cared and truly imprinted my idea of the ultimate educator in my heart."

Following the initial announcement of this year's winners on August 3, Spring ISD Superintendent Dr. Rodney Watson congratulated Martinez and Powers on their outstanding leadership and excellence in teaching. "Due to unprecedented times, they did not get the opportunity to be honored at our Employee Recognition Banquet this year, but I know that will not slow them down," he said after the meeting. "They are the personification of one of our major core values, and that is to do what's best for our students."

IV. Board of Trustees (7:18 PM)

A. Appointment of One Delegate and One Alternate for the 2020 TASB Delegate Assembly (7:18 PM)

The Board will discussed appointing one delegate and one alternate to serve as Spring ISD's representatives at the 2020 TASB Delegate Assembly.

Trustee Adams moved that the Board of Trustees appoint Dr. Deborah Jensen as its delegate and Kelly P. Hodges as its alternate for the 2020 TASB Delegate Assembly. Trustee Durant seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

B. Board Governance Committee Update (7:21 PM)

The Board Governance Committee provided an update on its legislative priorities. Trustee Jensen asked the Board or review recently released priorities from the Texas Association of School Boards (TASB) and to pick 3-5 priorities that the Board can work to push forward at the legislative level. The Board will discuss their priorities again at a future meeting.

V. Executive Chief of District Operations (7:28 PM)

A. Resolution of the Board Extending Start-of-School Transition Period (7:28 PM)

The Board approved a resolution to request a waiver from the Texas Education Agency that will give the District the option to extend the start-of-school transition period for another four weeks - or until October 16 - if public health conditions warrant.

Under the approved resolution, some targeted student groups who would most benefit from in-person instruction and support will be able to access on-campus instruction during this time. "We are including criteria that would allow us to end the transition period," said Executive Chief of District Operations Mark Miranda.

Specifically, in deciding whether to reopen campuses for in-person instruction, the District will look at several public health indicators including:

- 14-day flat or decreasing trend in new COVID-19 cases in Harris County;
- 14-day flat or decreasing trend in daily COVID-19 hospital population in Harris County;
- 14-day flat or decreasing trend in daily COVID-19 ICU population in Harris County;
- 14-day flat or decreasing trend of COVID-19 cases in area zip codes within the District's boundaries; and,
- 14-day flat or decreasing trend of COVID-19 cases in the top 10 zip codes where District staff reside.

Superintendent Dr. Rodney Watson also provided some context for the latest TEA waiver, noting that there have been ongoing discussions about which entity has the authority to make decisions to close schools or extend remote learning. He noted that Texas Governor Greg Abbott tried to resolve that conflict by giving local elected school boards that power. "Things change and things are different based on zip codes based upon ISD," Watson said. "What may happen in one part of Houston may look entirely different in our particular zip codes and there's no better people to decide what happens than the individuals residing there and the individuals that have been selected to govern."

Trustee Jensen moved that the Board of Trustees adopt the Resolution of the Board Extending the Start-of-School Transition Period. Trustee Adams seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

B. Waiver Allowing 40% Campus Hybrid Instruction for 9th-12th Grade Students (7:42 PM)

The Board approved a resolution to request a waiver from the Texas Education Agency that will give the District the option to allow high school students to take part in a hybrid instruction model that includes two days of on-campus learning (40 percent) with three days of virtual instruction (60 percent). The goal of the waiver is to reduce the number of students on the campus at any one time. The District was already planning such an alternating day schedule when public health conditions allow students to return to campus.

"It would allow us to continue to offer a hybrid instruction model in our 9th through 12th grade campuses," said Executive Chief of District Operations Mark Miranda. "These hybrid models, as you're aware, will allow us to continue to socially distance our campuses through a combination of on-campus and remote instruction."

Trustee Adams moved that the Board of Trustees approve the Waiver Allowing 40% Campus Hybrid Instruction for 9th-12th Grade Students. Trustee Durant seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

VI. Chief Academic Officer (7:44 PM)

A. Spring Independent School District Student Code of Conduct (7:44 PM)

The Board approved several changes to the 2020-21 Student Code of Conduct that incorporates revisions and additions related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, the handbook now includes guidance around how students are expected to behave to promote

safety when health conditions permit in-person learning on the campuses, including maintaining social distancing procedures, handwashing, wearing masks and keeping mouth and nose covered while sneezing and/or coughing.

Students could face disciplinary action for purposefully trying to cough or sneeze on another person, refusing to adhere to social distancing standards, and removing personal protective equipment like a mask with the goal of trying to harm or threaten another person with bodily fluids.

Students who show up to school without a mask or refuse to wear one during the school day may face a dress code violation. All schools will have extra masks should a student occasionally forget. The expectation is that all students come to school wearing a face covering, just as they would adhere to dress code.

Other updates in this year's Code of Conduct include more specific language around vaping. Although e-cigarettes are already banned, students will now face disciplinary action for using a vaping device or pen, which are often disguised to look like flash drives or other harmless products. The new language also allows for disciplinary action regardless of the substance in the vaping device.

Trustees discussed the importance of making sure the Code of Conduct is administered in a way that promotes equity and does not penalize any specific groups of students.

In another change, the Board agreed to allow for the electronic distribution of the Code of Conduct, rather than paper copies, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. The entire Code of Conduct can be found at <https://www.springisd.org/codeofconduct>. Parents without ability to download the Code of Conduct may request one in print by emailing Thomas Graham, the Director of Student Affairs at tgraham@springisd.org.

Trustee Durant moved that the Board of Trustees approve the Spring ISD Student Code of Conduct, as presented by the administration. Trustee Jensen seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

VII. Consent Agenda (8:06 PM)

The Board approved the Consent Agenda items that were discussed in detail at the August 6, 2020 Board Work Session.

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

A. Review and Approval of Minutes from the Following Meetings:

1. June 4, 2020 Board Work Session
2. June 9, 2020 Regular Meeting
3. June 23, 2020 Special Called Session
4. June 29, 2020 Special Called Session
5. June 30, 2020 Special Called Session

B. Order for and Notice of Trustee Election on November 3, 2020

The Board will consider approving the Order and Notice of Trustee Election.

C. Internal Audit - Year End Progress Report FY 2019/2020, District Risk Analysis FY 2020/2021 and Internal Audit Plan FY 2020/2021

The Board will consider approving the Internal Audit –Year End Progress Report FY 2019/2020 and Internal Audit Plan FY 2020/2021.

D. 2020-2021 Spring ISD Staffing Guidelines – Revised

The Board will consider approving the revised Spring ISD Staffing Guidelines for the 2020-2021 school year.

E. 2020-2021 Spring ISD Compensation Manual

The Board will consider approving the Compensation Manual for the 2020-2021 school year.

F. PSAT/SAT Universal Testing Contract with College Board for Grades 8-12

The Board will consider approving the PSAT/SAT Universal Testing Contract with College Board for Grades 8-12.

G. Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Between Texas A&M University and Spring Independent School District

The Board will consider approving the MOU between Texas A&M University and Spring Independent School District.

H. Ratification/Approval of the Operation Connectivity Interlocal Acquisition Agreement with Region IV

The Board will consider approving the Operation Connectivity Interlocal Acquisition Agreement with Region IV.

I. Taxpayer Refunds

The Board will consider ratifying taxpayer refunds.

VIII. Closed Session (8:09 PM)

President Newhouse recessed the open session at 8:09 PM for the purpose of entering into closed session pursuant to the following provisions of the Texas Open Meetings Act:

A. 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

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

1. The Board will deliberate on the ratification of a temporary construction easement for Harris County

C. 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

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

2. The Board will deliberate on employees nominated for special recognition

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

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

5. 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, recommendations for the proposed nonrenewal of employees on term contracts, recommendations for termination at the end of the year for employees on

probationary contracts, and final orders for employees on term and probationary contracts previously proposed for termination and/or nonrenewal

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


IX. Action on Closed Session Items (9:13 PM)

President Newhouse reconvened the open session at 9:13 PM.

- A. Trustee Adams moved that the Board of Trustees issue a school district teaching permit to the following employee: Stanley Idlebird, Jr., for the purpose of teaching noncore career and technology courses and to authorize the Superintendent or designee to notify the Commissioner of Education of the Board's action. Trustee Davis seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.
- B. Trustee Gonzales moved that the Board of Trustees ratify the Temporary Construction Easement, granted to Harris County, for sidewalk installation along Kuykendahl Road. Trustee Durant seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

X. Adjournment (9:18 PM)

On a motion by Trustee Durant, seconded by Trustee Jensen, the Board unanimously adjourned the meeting at 9:18 PM.


Rhonda R. Newhouse, President


Donald Davis, Secretary