



**BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
REGULAR BOARD MEETING  
7:00 PM, SEPTEMBER 8, 2020  
VIDEO CONFERENCE**

**MINUTES**

**I. Call to Order (7:01 PM)**

President Rhonda Newhouse called the Regular Board Meeting of the Spring Independent School District Board of Trustees to order at 7:01 PM on September 8, 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  
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 Westbrooks, Chief Financial Officer  
Tiffany Dunne-Oldfield, Chief of Innovation and Communications  
Jeremy Binkley, General Counsel  
Jason Sheffer, Director of Board Services

**II. Opening Remarks (7:02 PM)**

**A. Superintendent of Schools (7:02 PM)**

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 September 14th.

"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."

Dr. 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 first-hand 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, September 3rd 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."

B. Board of Trustees (7:14 PM)

President Newhouse invited the Board to make remarks.

Trustee 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 Trustee Adams, Trustee Durant, Trustee Hodges and Trustee 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."

President 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."

### **III. Presentation of Grant Funds from the Spring ISD Education Foundation (7:05 PM)**

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.

Trustee Jensen moved that Board of Trustees approve the proposed grant funds as presented by the Spring ISD Education Foundation. Trustee Durant seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

#### IV. Recognitions (7:21 PM)

##### A. 2019-2020 Employee Excellence Award Winner (7:21 PM)

The Board of Trustees made a special presentation to honor the 2019-2020 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.

In describing the winner, President Rhonda Newhouse cited her 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 who announced the winner, Sherry Osgood, who serves as a student support 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 to the board for consideration for the monthly award. To learn more, visit [www.springisd.org/employee-recognition](http://www.springisd.org/employee-recognition).

For being selected as the grand prize winner, Osgood will receive a check for \$1,000.

##### B. Points of Pride - Spring ISD Assistant Director of Athletics Armando Jacinto (7:27 PM)

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.

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."

#### **V. Board Governance Committee (7:40 PM)**

##### **A. Discussion and Decision on Spring ISD Legislative Priorities (7:40 PM)**

The Board discussed and 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 2020-2021 school year with the entire board. The committee then worked to narrow down that list to reflect the goals of Spring ISD. Trustee 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 District to Advocate for Themselves

Trustee 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

Trustee Jensen noted that research is showing that sometimes twice as much of a charter school's budget goes to administration than in 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. And there are many things we feel like we need to push."

- Promoting Cultural Awareness and Diversity

Trustee Jensen 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 Adams, who also serves on the Governance Committee, said he too was very committed to pushing 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 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."

Trustee Hodges moved that the Board of Trustees approve the Spring ISD Legislative Priorities as discussed. Trustee Gonzales seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

**B. Board Policy BBA(LOCAL) (7:52 PM)**

The Board approved the first reading Board Policy (BBA(LOCAL)). Revisions to the policy 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 felony, entered into a plea bargain for a felony charge, or received deferred adjudication for a felony."

Trustee Durant noted that 2019-2020 Senate Bill 2283 was introduced by Senators Donna Campbell and Harold Dutton to expand the criminal history requirement for trustee requirements 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 some changes to its policy that would prohibit the ability to serve as a trustee with a felony in a background check.

Trustee Jensen cited several examples across the state of trustees charged with felony crimes but not prevented from serving on their local school board. She said the requirements need to be much more "robust in the education code."

**VI. Consent Agenda (8:01 PM)**

The Board approved the Consent Agenda items that were discussed in detail at the September 3, 2020 Board Work Session.

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

- A. Review and Approval of Minutes from the Following Meetings:
1. August 6, 2020 Board Work Session
  2. August 11, 2020 Regular Meeting
- B. Asynchronous Instructional Plan  
A presentation will be made on the Asynchronous Instructional Plan.
- C. Resolution Regarding School Closures Due to Hurricane Laura  
The Board will consider adopting the Resolution Regarding School Closures Due to Hurricane Laura.
- D. Modification to Instructional Calendar to Close for Election Day  
The Board will consider approving the modified instructional calendar as presented by the administration.
- E. First Reading of TASB Local Update 115 – Proposed Revisions Affecting the Following Board Policies  
Jeremy Binkley will present the first reading of Local Policies revised in TASB Update 115.
1. BF(LOCAL) – BOARD POLICIES
  2. DED(LOCAL) – COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS – VACATIONS AND HOLIDAYS
  3. DIA(LOCAL) – EMPLOYEE WELFARE – FREEDOM FROM DISCRIMINATION, HARASSMENT, AND RETALIATION
  4. DMD(LOCAL) – PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT – PROFESSIONAL MEETINGS AND VISITATIONS
  5. EI(LOCAL) – ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT
  6. FB(LOCAL) – EQUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY
  7. FD(LOCAL) – ADMISSIONS
  8. FEB(LOCAL) – ATTENDANCE – ATTENDANCE ACCOUNTING
  9. FFG(LOCAL) – STUDENT WELFARE – CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT
  10. FFH(LOCAL) – STUDENT WELFARE – FREEDOM FROM DISCRIMINATION, HARASSMENT, AND RETALIATION
  11. FMF(LOCAL) – STUDENT ACTIVITIES – CONTESTS AND COMPETITIONS
  12. FNG(LOCAL) – STUDENT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES – STUDENT AND PARENT COMPLAINTS/GRIEVANCES
  13. GF(LOCAL) – PUBLIC COMPLAINTS
- F. Interlocal Agreement Between Lone Star College System - North Harris and Spring Independent School District  
The Board will consider approving the proposed Interlocal Agreement with Lone Star College System - North Harris.
- G. Taxpayer Refunds  
The Board will consider ratifying taxpayer refunds.
- H. Certification of Anticipated Collection Rate for Spring Independent School District  
The Board will consider approving the Certification of Anticipated Collection Rate for Spring Independent School District.

- I. Interlocal Agreement Between Spring Independent School District and Klein Independent School District for Records Storage  
The Board will consider approving the interlocal agreement for records storage services to be provided by Spring ISD to Klein ISD.
- J. Interlocal Agreement with Harris County Regarding Project Connectivity  
The Board will consider approving the Interlocal Agreement with Harris County Regarding Project Connectivity.

**VII. Closed Session (8:02 PM)**

President Newhouse recessed the open session at 8:02 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 regarding the granting of a proposed sidewalk easement to Harris County consisting of a 0.5867-acre of land situated in the Manual Tarin Survey, Abstract 778, Harris County, Texas, along Bammel Road at Carolee Booker Elementary School.
  - 2. The Board will deliberate regarding the granting of a proposed easement to Harris County for the purpose of road, drainage, and other related purposes, consisting of a 0.0262-acre of land situated in the Manual Tarin Survey, Abstract 778, Harris County, Texas, at the corner of Bammel Road and Imperial Valley Drive.
- 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

**VIII. Action on Closed Session Items**

President Newhouse reconvened the open session at 10:05 PM.



A.. Trustee Jensen moved that the Board approve the Superintendent's recommendation to terminate the contract of Erika Thomas upon finding that the employee failed to perform her contract without good cause, and authorize the Superintendent or designee to notify the employee of the proposed termination pursuant to Chapter 21 of the Texas Education Code.

Trustee Jensen further moved that the Board authorize the Superintendent or designee to notify the State Board for Educator Certification that the employee failed to perform her contract without good cause, and of the action taken by the Board.

Trustee Durant seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

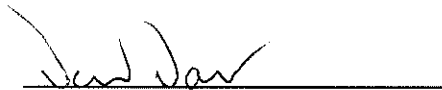
B. Trustee Adams moved that the Board grant Sidewalk and Traffic Movement Easements along Bammel Road to Harris County as discussed in Closed Session. Trustee Hodges seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

C. Trustee Jensen moved that the Board approve the first reading of BBA(LOCAL) as presented by the Board Governance Committee. Trustee Adams seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

**IX. Adjournment (10:14)**

On a motion by Trustee Durant, seconded by Trustee Hodges, the Board unanimously adjourned the meeting at 10:14 PM.

  
Rhonda R. Newhouse, President

  
Donald Davis, Secretary