

# Spring Independent School District

16717 Ella Blvd. • Houston, Texas 77090 • Tel. 281.891.6000



**BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
REGULAR MEETING  
7:00 PM, OCTOBER 13, 2020  
BOARD ROOM  
GORDON M. ANDERSON LEADERSHIP CENTER  
16717 ELLA BOULEVARD, HOUSTON, TEXAS 77090**

## **MINUTES**

### **I. Call to Order (7:00 PM)**

President Rhonda Newhouse called the Regular Meeting of the Spring Independent School District Board of Trustees to order at 7:00 PM on October 13, 2020, 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  
Dr. Deborah Jensen, Vice President  
Dr. Donald R. 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 (via video conference)  
Julie Hill, Chief of Human Resources and Human Capital Accountability (via video conference)  
Lupita Hinojosa, Chief Innovation and Equity Officer (via video conference)  
Khechara Bradford, Chief Academic Officer  
Mark Miranda, Executive Chief of District Operations  
Ann Westbrooks, Chief Financial Officer (via video conference)  
Tiffany Dunne-Oldfield, Chief of Innovation and Communications (via video conference)  
Jeremy Binkley, General Counsel  
Jason Sheffer, Director of Board Services

### **II. Flag Pledges (7:01 PM)**

The Pledge of Allegiance and the Texas Pledge was led by Trustee Donald Davis, a retired captain of the U.S. Army.

### **III. Moment of Silence (7:02 PM)**

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

### **IV. Opening Remarks (7:03 PM)**

#### **A. Superintendent of Schools (7:03 PM)**

Superintendent Dr. Rodney Watson began his brief remarks by reminding everyone about the

discussion held at the October 8, 2020 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. Dr. 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.

**B. Board of Trustees (7:05 PM)**

President Newhouse invited the Trustees to make remarks.

Trustee Davis commented on how good it was to see fellow Trustees in person and return to the Spring ISD Board Room 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.

President 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.”

Trustee Adams echoed President 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.”

**V. Recognitions (7:08 PM)**

**A. Points of Pride - Spring ISD District of Distinction for 2020 by the Texas Art Education Association (7:08 PM)**

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, 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.

**B. Recognition of Outstanding Employee Service (7:16 PM)**

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 at 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.

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 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.

**C. Recognition of Roberson Middle School for Being Named a National Blue Ribbon School (7:22 PM)**

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.

**VI. Public Agenda Participation (7:30 PM)**

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

**VII. Public Hearing for the Spring Independent School District's State Financial Accountability Rating (7:31 PM)**

A Public Hearing was held for the Spring Independent School District's State Financial Accountability Rating. The Financial Integrity Rating System of Texas ("School FIRST") was created when the 77th Legislature (2001) directed the Commissioner of Education, in consultation with the Comptroller's office, to develop and implement a financial accountability rating system for school districts in Texas. These results were released by the Texas Education Agency for the year ended June 30, 2019. School districts are required to prepare an annual financial accountability report and present it in a public hearing.

Members of the public did not register to speak to the Board regarding this item.

**VIII. Spring Independent School District 2020-2021 Campus Improvement Plans (7:34 PM)**

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 followed a lengthy discussion of the Campus Improvement Plan process during the Board Work Session on October 8th. 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.

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 LeDay, 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.

Trustee Davis moved that the Board of Trustees approve the Spring Independent School District 2020-2021 Campus Improvement Plans, as presented by the administration. Trustee Hodges seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

#### **IX. Chief Financial Officer (8:36 PM)**

##### **A. 2020 Tax Rate (8:36 PM)**

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 homeowner in Spring ISD will pay approximately \$2,035 in school district taxes this year, not including homestead exemptions. Although the newly adopted tax rate is an overall decrease from last year's rate, it does exceed the no-new-revenue tax rate, meaning it is effectively an increase of 4.32%.

Trustee Gonzales moved that the Board of Trustees approve that the property tax rate be increased by the adoption of a tax rate of \$1.384300, which is effectively a 4.32 percent increase in the tax rate, and that the Board approve the 2020 Tax Rate Ordinance and Resolution. Trustee Adams seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

**B. Interlocal Agreement with Harris County to Participate in Project 10Million (8:44 PM)**

The Board considered approving the Interlocal Agreement with Harris County to Participate in Project 10Million. The project is an initiative 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.

Trustee Jensen moved that the Board of Trustees approve the Interlocal Agreement with Harris County to participate in Project 10Million and authorize the Superintendent to sign any necessary agreements and related documents. Trustee Adams seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

**C. Interlocal Agreement with Aldine ISD for Software Pilot (8:47 PM)**

The Board considered approving an Interlocal Agreement with Aldine ISD for a Software Pilot. Spring ISD is using Schoology as our Learning Management System to facilitate remote learning and track student attendance. That attendance information must be transferred to our Student Information System, eSchool. Currently, that transfer is being performed manually. Aldine ISD has developed a software to transfer the data and is allowing Spring ISD the opportunity to participate in piloting the software.

Trustee Hodges moved that Board of Trustees approve the Interlocal Agreement with Aldine ISD, as presented by the administration and authorize the Superintendent to sign any necessary agreements and related documents. Trustee Durant seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

**X. Consent Agenda (8:54 PM)**

The Board approved the Consent Agenda items that were discussed in detail at the October 8, 2020 Board Work Session.

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

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

1. September 3, 2020 Board Work Session
2. September 8, 2020 Regular Meeting

**B. Second Reading of Proposed Revisions to Board Policy BBA(LOCAL) - BOARD MEMBERS - ELIGIBILITY/QUALIFICATIONS**

The Board will consider approving the second reading of proposed revisions to Board Policy BBA(LOCAL).

C. Second Reading of TASB Local Update 115 - Proposed Revisions Affecting the Following Board Policies

The Board will consider approving the second 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

D. Memorandum of Understanding with Lone Star College for College Preparatory Mathematics and English Language Arts Courses

The Board will consider approving the Memorandum of Understanding with Lone Star College for Preparatory Mathematics and English Language Arts (ELAR) Courses.

E. Notice of Grant Award - Spring ISD's 21st Century Community Learning Program

The Board will consider Board approving the Grant Award for Spring ISD's 21st Century Community Learning Program.

F. Child Care Local Match Contribution Agreement with Gulf Coast Local Workforce Board for the 2020-21 School Year

The Board will consider approving the Federal Fund for Child Care services for eligible teen parents and staff of Spring ISD.

G. 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.

H. Memorandum of Understanding Between Spring ISD and the Texas A&M Engineering Extension Service (TEEX)

The Board will consider approving the Memorandum of Understanding between Spring ISD and the Texas A&M Engineering Extension Service (TEEX).

I. 2020 Appraisal Roll Certification

The Board will consider ratifying the 2020 Appraisal Roll Certification.

J. Taxpayer Refunds

The Board will consider ratifying taxpayer refunds.

K. 2020-2021 Application for General Pregnancy Related Services On-Campus Compensatory Education Home Instruction (CEHI) Waiver

The Board will consider approving the 2020-2021 Application for General Pregnancy Related Services On-Campus CEHI Waiver.

L. Membership Continuation with OMNIA Partners

The Board will consider approving the Membership Continuation with OMNIA Partners.

M. Request for Proposal # 21-002 - District-Wide PK-12 Equity Audit Services

The Board will consider awarding a contract for District-Wide PK-12 Equity Audit Services to the

provider recommended by the administration.

**N. Request for Proposal # 21-003 - Global Culture Competency Development**

The Board will consider awarding the contracts for Global Culture Competency Development Services to the providers recommended by the administration.

**XI. Closed Session (8:56 PM)**

President Newhouse recessed the open session at 8:56 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
- 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, 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

**XII. Action on Closed Session Items (10:09 PM)**

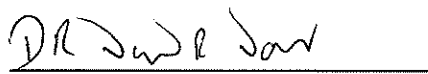
President Newhouse reconvened the open session at 10:09 PM.

- A. Trustee Durant moved that the Board approve the Superintendent's recommendation to propose the termination of the Probationary contract of the following employee: Jarvis Harry, as presented in Closed Session and to authorize the Superintendent or designee to provide the employee notice of the Board's action and his rights pursuant to Chapter 21 of the Texas Education Code. Trustee Gonzales seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.
- B. Trustee Adams moved that the Board render a final order to terminate the contract of Ericka Thomas, as presented in Closed Session and to authorize the Superintendent to provide notice of the Board's action to the impacted employee pursuant to Chapter 21 of the Texas Education Code. Trustee Jensen seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

**XIII. Adjournment (10:21 PM)**

On a motion by Trustee Durant, seconded by Trustee Gonzales, the Board unanimously adjourned the meeting at 10:21 PM.

  
Rhonda R. Newhouse, President

  
Dr. Donald R. Davis, Secretary