

Spring Independent School District

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



**BOARD OF TRUSTEES
REGULAR MEETING
7:00 PM, DECEMBER 8, 2020
BOARD ROOM
GORDON M. ANDERSON LEADERSHIP CENTER
16717 ELLA BOULEVARD, HOUSTON, TEXAS 77090**

MINUTES

I. Call to Order

President Rhonda Newhouse called the Regular Meeting of the Spring Independent School District Board of Trustees to order at 7:03 PM on December 8, 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
Winford Adams, Jr., Vice President
Kelly P. Hodges, Secretary
Justine Durant, Assistant Secretary
Jana Gonzales
Dr. Deborah Jensen

Members Absent:

Dr. Donald R. Davis

Others Present:

Rodney Watson, Superintendent of Schools
Ken Culbreath, Chief of Police
Julie Hill, Chief of Human Resources and Human Capital Accountability (via video conference)
Lupita Hinojosa, Chief Innovation and Equity Officer
Khechara Bradford, Chief Academic Officer (via video conference)
Mark Miranda, Executive Chief of District Operations (via video conference)
Ann Westbrook, 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 (7:04 PM)

The Pledge of Allegiance and the Texas Pledge was led by President Rhonda Newhouse.

III. Moment of Silence (7:05 PM)

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

IV. Opening Remarks (7:06 PM)

A. Superintendent of Schools (7:06 PM)

Superintendent Dr. Rodney Watson opened his remarks with a report on the 2021-2022 Education Planning Guides (EPGs) for middle schools and high schools, which were discussed at length during the Board Work Session on December 3rd. "These guides are a valuable resource for our students

as they work with their school counselors in selecting courses for the upcoming year and planning for the future, including graduation and post-secondary options," Watson said. He added that counselors would begin meeting with students after winter break to start that process. "We're excited to be able to bring these guides to our families earlier this year."

Next, Dr. Watson highlighted the numerous toys in the Board Room, part of an effort to bring holiday cheer to children across the northwest area, thanks to Northwest Assistance Ministries, which has been coordinating a toy drive. He reminded everyone that there is still time to participate in the effort and encouraged all of the Spring ISD community to drop off an unwrapped toy to any office or campus so that they can be distributed by NAM next week. NAM has challenged area superintendents, including Spring, Aldine and Klein, to see which district can collect the most donations. "We want to thank every one of our teachers, our community members that have been bringing in gifts," he said.

In light of the pandemic's impact on the district's enrollment, Dr. Watson continued his remarks by reminding everyone about the decision made after last week's Board Work Session to hold off on the planned high school attendance boundary changes to allow for more evaluation. "Our enrollment is down about five percent but we're hoping we'll see most of those students coming back this spring or next year, especially with the promise of vaccines against COVID-19," he said. He urged everyone, however, to stay vigilant until a vaccine becomes available, by wearing masks, washing hands, social distancing and staying home if ill. "Our teachers and our campus leaders are working very hard to keep a safe learning environment for our students. And we need our families to help us," he said.

Dr. Watson concluded his remarks by congratulating Chief Academic Officer Khechara Bradford, who was selected by Providence Public Schools in Rhode Island to become their new deputy superintendent. He thanked Ms. Bradford for all of her contributions to the district over the past 14 years and wished her well in her new position.

B. Board of Trustees (7:08 PM)

President Newhouse opened her remarks by congratulating Chief Academic Officer Khechara Bradford on her new position as deputy superintendent for Providence Schools in Rhode Island. She noted that she learned the bittersweet news last week. "I was so hurt, but I am so, so happy for you," she said. "You are most deserving. We wish you and your family well."

Trustee Jesen echoed the appreciation for Ms. Bradford's contribution to the district, highlighting what a wonderful job she did last spring, pulling the team together to provide instruction to students and support to teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

V. **Recognitions (7:13 PM)**

A. Spotlight - 2020 Superintendent's Holiday Card Contest Winners (7:13 PM)

The Board recognized the winners of the Superintendent's 2020 Holiday Card Contest. The three highest-placing students all attended the meeting virtually to be recognized for their work. Each student will receive a basket of art supplies to support their creativity, along with copies of their card to send to family and friends.

Spring ISD Director of Performing and Visual Arts, Dr. Joe Clark, presented some of the best holiday card submissions from across the district – more than 50 in all – that were featured in a special virtual gallery, designed by the Spring ISD Performing and Visual Arts Department and curated in coordination with campus art teachers.

While students from across the district created holiday artwork, this year's official card contest was open to Spring ISD secondary students. Campuses hosted their own holiday card competitions

before each school submitted a pair of semi-finalists for judging in the districtwide event. The top three winners for 2020, listed together with their campus and art teacher, are as follows:

1st Place: Dennis T.
Grade: 7th
School: Bailey Middle School
Teacher: Keirsten Probst

2nd Place: Sheccid Ramirez
Grade: 9th
School: Spring High School
Teacher: Adrian Kane

3rd Place: Anh Dao
Grade: 8th
School: Claughton Middle School
Teacher: Bryce Johnson

B. Employee Excellence Award Winners (7:27 PM)

The Board recognized the September 2020, October 2020, and November 2020 Employee Excellence Award winners. The Employee Excellence Award is given by the Spring ISD Board of Trustees each month during the school year. The award recognizes district employees who exemplify the district's guiding principles and core values. One employee is selected for this prestigious award each month.

The September award went to Alex Sanchez, Spring ISD's multilingual compliance coordinator. Sanchez manages compliance including the coding, identification, testing and placement of more than 9,000 English Learners (EL) around the district. He was nominated for his tireless efforts on behalf of students, teachers and other staff, and for his dedicated support in ensuring everyone understands all the proper processes and procedures at all district campuses. "He is excellent in supporting all of these schools, and he is highly recognized," said President Newhouse.

The October award went to Marilyn Ocker, who teaches speech and debate as well as heading the theater department at Spring High School. In presenting her with the award, President Newhouse quoted a Spring High School parent whose nomination had helped earn Ocker the recognition. "With COVID, I can hear every teacher my daughter has and, hands down, Ms. Ocker is the best," Newhouse read. "She listens, allows them to ask questions and treats them with respect while doing so. My daughter absolutely loves her and looks forward to going to class each day because of her. As a parent, I also see the extra hours that she puts in, and I don't know how in the world she does it. Not only does she do it, but she does it with a smile."

The November award went to Dekaney High School teacher Jessica Cunningham, who was singled out for going above and beyond in making the transition to online and hybrid learning models during COVID-19. As noted during the presentation, many schools and teachers learned this year that traditional ways of delivering lessons and working with students were not sufficient to meet the complicated needs of teaching and learning during the pandemic. President Newhouse said that Cunningham had truly seen the opportunities embedded in those challenges. "It was in this that Ms. Cunningham rose to the challenge," Newhouse said, "and recognized a need to tackle this new issue in non-traditional ways that engaged and encouraged the students to achieve and keep them thriving."

C. Points of Pride - Spring ISD Procurement Services Department - 2020 Achievement of Excellence in Procurement Award (7:40 PM)

The evening's final recognition was a Points of Pride honoring the Spring ISD Procurement Services Department, which was named among the winners of the 25th Annual Achievement of Excellence in Procurement (AEP) for 2020 from the National Procurement Institute, Inc. Executive Director of Procurement Phillip Ellison attended the meeting virtually to help mark Spring ISD's 11th consecutive AEP win.

This year, Spring ISD was one of only 46 recipients in Texas and one of only 22 school districts across all of the U.S. and Canada to receive the distinction. The award criteria evolves each year as best practices in public procurement operations change, incorporating updated requirements on strategic planning and technology, e-procurement and purchasing cooperatives.

The AEP award is recognized as an accepted standard of best practices by public purchasing associations across North America, keeping Spring ISD on the front edge not just of organizations across Texas, but throughout the U.S. and in Canada as well. As mentioned during the Board presentation, the commitment to continued excellence in procurement has benefitted the district during this year's COVID-19 pandemic.

VI. Public Agenda Participation (7:44 PM)

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

VII. Board of Trustees (7:45 PM)

A. Swearing in Ceremony for Trustees Elected November 3, 2020 (7:45 PM)

Two incumbent trustees, Winford Adams, Jr., Position 4, and Rhonda Newhouse, Position 5, were sworn in for new terms of office. Jeremy Binkley, General Counsel, presented each with a certificate of election and Jason Sheffer, Director of Board Services, performed the swearing-in ceremony.

B. Election of Board Officers (7:53 PM)

President Newhouse recessed the open meeting at 7:53 PM for the purpose of entering into closed session under Texas Open Meetings Act Section 551.074.

President Newhouse reconvened the open session at 8:15 PM.

The Board conducted their Election of Board Officers. In accordance with Board Policy BDAA, the Board of Trustees elected a President, Vice President, Secretary, and Assistant Secretary.

Trustee Gonzales nominated Trustee Rhonda Newhouse for President. Trusted Durant seconded the nomination. The Board unanimously elected Trustee Rhonda Newhouse as President.

Trustee Jensen nominated Trustee Winford Adams, Jr. for Vice President. Trusted Hodges seconded the nomination. The Board unanimously elected Trustee Winford Adams, Jr. as Vice President.

Trustee Durant nominated Trustee Kelly P. Hodges for Secretary. Trusted Gonzales seconded the nomination. The Board unanimously elected Trustee Kelly P. Hodges as Secretary.

Trustee Adams nominated Trustee Justine Durant for Assistant Secretary. Trusted Jensen seconded the nomination. The Board unanimously elected Trustee Justine Durant as Assistant Secretary.

VIII. Board Governance (8:21 PM)

A. Letter to School Boards and Resolution in Support of Stricter Eligibility Requirements for School Trustees (8:21 PM)

The Board Governance Committee presented an update on its recent work including a resolution to support stricter eligibility requirements for school trustees. The Trustees voted to support legislation that would make a person ineligible to serve as a school board trustee if the person has been convicted of, pled guilty to, pled nolo contendere to, or received deferred adjudication for a felony. In

addition, the board voted to send a letter to other districts seeking their support on this bill as well.

Trustee Jensen moved that the Board of Trustees approve and adopt the resolution supporting stricter eligibility requirements for school board trustees and approve the letter to other school districts seeking their support in this matter. Trustee Adams seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

B. Letter to the Texas Education Agency Supporting and Requesting Extension of ADA Hold Harmless for Texas Schools (8:24 PM)

The Board Governance Committee also brought forth a letter to send to the Texas Education Agency asking them to extend the hold harmless provision related to funding through the end of the year.

Trustee Adams moved that the Board of Trustees approve the letter to the Texas Education Agency seeking an extension of the ADA hold harmless for Texas schools. Trustee Durant seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

IX. Chief of Police (8:27 PM)

A. COVID Update (8:27 PM)

Police Chief Ken Culbreath updated the Trustees on the ongoing response by the district to the COVID-19 pandemic, including ongoing data tracking as well as efforts to mitigate the spread of the virus in schools and buildings.

He walked the Trustees through the district's COVID Tracker, available to the public on the website. The goal is to keep everyone updated on current cases as well as total cases by campus and for the entire district. He noted the spike in cases in late November, related to the Thanksgiving break. He then discussed the district's response with its campaign to #StoptheSpread.

Since the start of the school year, the team has conducted nearly 120 safety walks within the schools to check compliance with protocols, including social distancing and mask-wearing. The district has also recently received antigen test kits from the state and is working on a plan to make them available to students after the winter break. In another move, the district is now using campus safety officers to help augment staffing in the contact tracing process. Since the start of the pandemic, he noted that the team has conducted nearly 3,000 contact tracing investigations.

On another note, Chief Culbreath said the district is currently working on establishing a threshold that would help provide a framework for when to transition classes, grades or schools to remote learning.

On the topic of remote learning, Chief Culbreath then transitioned the presentation to the Chief of Innovation and Equity, Dr. Lupita Hinojosa to discuss the impact of COVID-19 on the learning environment and how the district is responding. Chief Hinojosa discussed the collaborative work with the district Advisory Committee on Education as well as with principals and representatives from the American Federation of Teachers (AFT). The goal of the work has been to address concerns among teachers related to concurrent instruction. "It's challenging and it's becoming very exhausting for our teachers," Hinojosa said. She said the team looked at alternative instructional delivery strategies, including split staffing and split scheduling, as well as all virtual.

She noted that principals will be working with their teachers and administrators to look at the instructional delivery models that will best serve their students and teachers and then work to implement those new models for the spring semester.

In another effort to bring relief to campuses, the district will be asking families to select their preferred learning option - either in-person or remote - by Friday, January 8th. Any changes would then only be allowed at the end of a grading cycle. "Our teachers need that consistency, so they can best

implement the instructional delivery model,” she said.

Concluding her presentation, Chief Hinojosa explained how the district is planning to embed asynchronous remote learning days once a month into the calendar to allow for remediation, enrichment and make-up work.

X. Executive Chief of District Operations (9:31 PM)

A. Interlocal Contract Between Harris County Department of Education and Spring ISD - 21st Century Cycle 9 Year 5 Grant (9:31 PM)

Chief Mark Miranda presented the Board with information regarding an Interlocal Contract Between Harris County Department of Education and Spring ISD - 21st Century Cycle 9 Year 5 Grant.

Pursuant to the Interlocal Cooperation Act, Chapter 791 of the Texas Government Code, this Interlocal Contract is entered into by and between Harris County Department of Education (HCDE) and Spring Independent School District for the purpose of providing Nita M. Lowey 21st Century Community Learning Centers/Texas ACE Cycle 9 Year 5 (afterschool program) at select site(s) within the ISD. Spring ISD agrees to provide quality after-school programs at the sites.

Trustee Hodges moved that the Board of Trustees approve the Interlocal Contract Between Harris County Department of Education and Spring Independent School District – 21st Century Cycle 9 Year 5 Grant, as presented by the administration. Trustee Gonzales seconded the motion and the motion carried with 5 in favor and 1 abstention. Trustee Adams abstained from the vote due to his employment relationship with Harris County Department of Education.

XI. Consent Agenda (9:34 PM)

The Board approved the Consent Agenda items that were discussed in detail at the December 3, 2019 Board Work Session.

Trustee Jensen 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.

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

1. November 5, 2020 Board Work Session
 2. November 10, 2020 Regular Meeting
- B. 2021-2022 Education Planning Guide**

The Board will consider approving the Education Planning Guide for the 2021-2022 school year.

C. Internal Audit – Mid-Year Progress Report

The Board will consider approving the Internal Audit – Mid-Year Progress Report.

D. First Reading of Proposed Revisions to Board Policy BDB(LOCAL)

Jeremy Binkley will present the first reading of proposed revisions to Board Policy BDB(LOCAL).

E. Acceptance of Grant Funds - Texas Education Agency (TEA) School Action Fund (SAF) Grant and Additional Day School Year (ADSY) Grant

The Board will consider accepting the TEA awarded grant funds for the School Action Fund (SAF) grant and the Additional Day School Year (ADSY) grant and authorize the Superintendent of Schools to execute the projects as outlined in the grants.

F. Taxpayer Refunds

The Board will consider ratifying taxpayer refunds.

XII. Closed Session (9:35 PM)

President Newhouse recessed the open session at 9:35 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
 - 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
 - 6. The Board will deliberate on an amendment to the Superintendent's contract
- D. Under Section 551.076 - To consider the deployment, or specific occasions for implementation, of security personnel or devices

XIII. Action on Closed Session Items (10:00 PM)

President Newhouse reconvened the open session at 10:00 PM. The Board took no action.

XIV. Adjournment (10:01 PM)

On a motion by Trustee Adams, seconded by Trustee Durant, the Board unanimously adjourned the meeting at 10:01 PM.


Rhonda R. Newhouse, President


Kelly P. Hodges, Secretary