



Always Innovating

**South  
Texas ISD**

RIO GRANDE VALLEY | GRADES 7-12

## **Minutes of Regular Meeting**

### **The Board of Directors South Texas ISD**

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A Regular Meeting of the Board of Directors of South Texas ISD was held on August 24, 2021 beginning at 7:00 PM and was conducted via Video/Audio Conference Pursuant to Governor Greg Abbott's Temporary Suspension of Open Meetings Laws issued on March 16, 2020. The board meeting was audible to the Board and public and allowed for two-way communication.

1. Welcome.

Doug Buchanan, Board President, welcomed the guests, staff and fellow Board members.

2. Public Budget Hearing for the 2021-2022 fiscal year.

Assistant Superintendent for Finance & Operations Ms. Marla Knaub, reviewed the projected revenues and the projected expenditures by function, object, and location for the 2021-2022 proposed budget.

Ms. Knaub reported the budget was prepared based on a tax rate of \$0.0492/\$100 valuation. The tax rate has not been increased since 2007.

3. Pledges of Allegiance & District Call to Action.

The pledges were led by Mr. Doug Buchanan.

4. Moment of Silence.

The Board held a moment of silence and remembering Mr. Pete Garcia, Irma Perez-Treviño and Mr. Pedro Lopez.

5. Board Meeting called to order.

The meeting was called to order by Board President Doug Buchanan at 7:00 p.m. at which time he was assured by Superintendent, Dr. Marco A. Lara, Jr. that notices of the meeting were posted properly according to the laws of Texas and that a quorum of the board was present.

The following board members participated:

Douglas E. Buchanan

Raymondville

Abiel J. Cantú	Raymondville
Eduardo L. “Larry” Cantu	Los Fresnos
Martin Castillo, DC	Edinburg
Sasha Crane	McAllen
Javier Farias	McAllen
Richard Fleming, MD	Mission
Adrian Garcia	Brownsville
Margarita Garcia	San Juan
Sylvia Sanchez Garza, Ph.D.	Edinburg
Hector Gonzales	Lyford
Henry LeVrier	Brownsville
Robert J. Lerma	Brownsville
Sylvia S. Lopez	Brownsville
Ricardo Ochoa, MD	Weslaco
Jaime R. Solis	Edinburg
Natividad Sosa	Mission
David Torres	Edinburg
Rick Villarreal, D.D.S.	Brownsville
Ruth Villarreal	Mission

The following Board members were absent:

Yolanda Kamel	McAllen
Eduardo Roberto Rodriguez	Brownsville
Irma Perez-Treviño	Harlingen
Israel G. Quintanilla	Raymondville

The following staff members participated:

Marco Antonio Lara, Jr., Ed.D.	Jeff Hembree
Marla R. Knaub	Nereyda Treviño
Lissa Frausto	Sonia E. Rodriguez
Marcos L. Flores	Criselda R. Flores
Efrain Garza	Eric Gutierrez
Janie Ortiz	Ramon Longoria
Maribel Valdez	Janis De Luna, Ph.D.
Amanda Odom	Ana Castro

#### 6. Approval of Consent Agenda.

In order to promote efficient meetings, the Board may act upon more than one item by a single vote through the use of consent agenda. Consent items shall be items placed on the Agenda marked with an asterisk (\*) for which no Board discussion is anticipated and for which the Superintendent recommends approval. Prior to the meeting, at the request of any member of the Board of Directors, any item on the consent agenda shall be removed and given individual consideration. Requests for individual consideration are made at least a half-hour prior to Board meetings and requests must be directed to either the Board President or the Superintendent.

A motion was made by Mr. A. J. Cantu, seconded by Mr. Solis approving the consent agenda items as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

7. \*Action: Review and act on the August 3, 2021 Board Meeting Minutes.

Approved with the consent agenda.

8. Public Comments for Agenda Topics.

The Board did not receive requests to address the Board of Directors on agenda topics for this meeting.

9. Public Audience for Non-Agenda Topics.

The Board received one written statement from the following individual on non-agenda topics for this meeting.

Lora Lara, Mask Mandate

10. Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment Committee - Sylvia S. Lopez & Rick Villarreal, DDS, Co-Chairs

Dr. Rick Villarreal reported on the following committee items:

- A. \*Action: Review and act on 2021-2022 school calendar for the STISD Virtual Academy.

Approved with the consent agenda.

- B. \*Action: Review and act on the administrators to hold ARDs for the 2021-2022 school year.

Approved with the consent agenda.

- C. \*Action: Review and act on list of appraisers for the 2021-2022 school year.

Approved with the consent agenda.

- D. \*Action: Review and act on the Language Proficiency Assessment Committee (LPAC) Members for the 2021-2022 school year.

Approved with the consent agenda.

- E. Action: Review and act on 2021-2022 Campus Course Sequence for the Virtual Academy.

A motion was made by Dr. Villarreal, seconded by Dr. Garza, approving the 2021-2022 campus course sequence for the Virtual Academy as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

- F. Report on 2021 Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate scores.

Mrs. Nereyda Treviño reported on the 2021 AP & IB Scores as per the written report provided on agenda pages 24-93. The AP Summary Report included the AP Equity and Excellence reports for STISD and each of the high school campuses; students' performance by score and a comparison with AP Central exam score distribution. The IB summary report showed the continued development of the IB program and students at the STISD World Scholars campus. The Administration keeps striving for reaching the goal of 100% of graduates with a qualifying score in at least one subject area AP or IB exam.

- G. Report on State Assessment 2021 STAAR scores.

Mr. Efrain Garza reported on the 2020-2021 South Texas ISD STAAR Performance report. Due to COVID-19 Pandemic campuses & districts will not be rated this year nor will they receive A-F grades. *Campuses & Districts will be labeled Not Rated: Declared State of Disaster.* Mr. Garza reported, House Bill 4545 recently passed in the 87<sup>th</sup> Regular Legislative Session. The new statute is effective, as of June 16, 2021, with accelerated instruction practices required during the 2021-2022 school year for all students, based on results from Spring 2021. HB 4545 establishes new requirements for accelerated instruction for students who do not pass the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR). The administration has identified the students who may potentially be impacted by HB 4545 and have developed a plan of action at the District and Campus levels.

- H. Action: Review and act on the following proposed action(s):

1. 03200510 English Language Arts and Reading, Grade 6  
02810000 Reading, Grade 6  
02640040 Mathematics, Grade 6  
03060600 Science, Grade 6  
02660060 Social Studies, Grade 6  
02670060 Technology Applications, Grade 6  
02850000 Physical Education, Grade 6

A motion was made by Dr. Villarreal, seconded by Mr. Solis, approving the proposed action on the new courses as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

11. Finance & Operations Committee - Martin Castillo, DC & Henry LeVrier, Co-Chairs

Dr. Martin Castillo reported on the following committee items:

- A. \*Report on checks written since last report.

Approved with the consent agenda.

- B. \*Action: Review and act on removing assets from district inventory.

Approved with the consent agenda.

- C. \*Action: Review and act on the 2021-2022 school year stipends.

Approved with the consent agenda.

- D. \*Action: Review and act on designating \$8,300,000 from fund balance for future projects.

Approved with the consent agenda.

- E. \*Action: Review and act on the following budget amendments:

1. Budget amendment #8 (final) General Fund (199)
2. Budget amendment #1 for Carl D. Perkins (244)

Approved with the consent agenda.

- F. Action: Review and act on extending the TASB Risk Management Unemployment Compensation program.

A motion was made by Dr. Castillo, seconded by Mr. Solis, approving to extend the unemployment insurance with TASB Risk Management Fund for the 2021-2022 school year. The motion passed unanimously.

- G. Action: Review and act on the Resolution adopting the tax rate for the 2021- 2022 fiscal year.

A motion was made by Dr. Castillo, seconded by Mrs. Sosa, approving a Resolution adopting the tax rate for the 2021-2022 fiscal year at \$.0492. The motion passed unanimously.

- H. Action: Review and act on Resolution adopting the General Fund, Child Nutrition and Debt Service Budgets for the 2021-2022 school year.

A motion was made by Dr. Castillo, seconded by Mr. Solis approving a Resolution adopting the General Fund (199), Child Nutrition (240), and Debt Service (516) budgets as presented as a handout. The motion passed unanimously.

- I. Report on the following projects:
  1. Edinburg Bus Barn/Maintenance Facility
  2. Edinburg Exterior Restroom project
  3. Preparatory Parking Lot Expansion
  4. Science Academy CATE Building Renovation project
  5. New Central Office Building Renovation project

Mr. Eduardo Guerra presented a verbal report on the status of each construction project.

- J. Action: Review and act on the following payment applications:
  1. Payment application #7 to D. Wilson for the Edinburg Exterior Restroom project in the amount of \$13,470.05.
  2. Payment application #5 to Gomez Mendez Saenz, Inc. for the Edinburg Exterior Restroom project in the amount of \$1,653.75.
  3. Payment application #6 to Gomez Mendez Saenz, Inc. for the Edinburg Exterior Restroom project in the amount of \$220.50.
  4. Payment application #12 to D. Wilson Construction for the Edinburg Bus Barn/Maintenance Facility in the amount of \$119,103.02.
  5. Payment application #10 to Gomez Mendez Saenz, Inc. for the Edinburg Bus Barn/Maintenance Facility in the amount of \$10,857.60.
  6. Payment application #1 to D. Wilson Construction for the New Central Office Building Renovation project in the amount of \$1,203,546.45.

A motion was made by Dr. Castillo, seconded by Mrs. Sosa, approving payment application #7 to D. Wilson for the Edinburg Exterior Restroom project in the amount of \$13,470.05; payment application #5 to Gomez Mendez Saenz, Inc. for the Edinburg Exterior Restroom project in the amount of \$1,653.75; payment application #6 to Gomez Mendez Saenz, Inc. for the Edinburg Exterior Restroom project in the amount of \$220.50; payment application #12 to D. Wilson Construction for the Edinburg Bus Barn/Maintenance Facility in the amount of \$119,103.02; payment application #10 to Gomez Mendez Saenz, Inc. for the Edinburg Bus Barn/Maintenance Facility in the amount of \$10,857.60; and payment application #1 to D. Wilson Construction for the New Central Office Building Renovation project in the amount of \$1,203,546.45 as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

- K. Action: Review and act on the facilities/capital improvement projects for the 2021-2022 school year, pending approval of budget.

A motion was made by Dr. Castillo, seconded by Mr. Solis, approving the facilities/capital improvement projects for the 2021-2022 school year (\$35 million for a New Rising Scholars Academy, \$3 million for a new gym for Health Professions, \$7 million for new wing addition at

Preparatory Academy and \$80,000 for new canopy for pick up/drop off at Preparatory Academy (funds were included in the 2021-2022 school year budget). The motion passed unanimously.

12. Policy, Planning, Projects & Partnerships Committee - Abiel J. Cantu & Larry Cantu, Co-Chairs

Mr. Larry Cantu reported on the following committee items:

- A. \*Action: Review and act on amending Policy BQB (LOCAL) Planning and Decision-Making Process Campus Level.

Approved with the consent agenda.

- B. Report on the August 2021 Review of Local Policies EB (LOCAL) through EMI (LOCAL)

The committee reviewed local policies EB (LOCAL) through EMI (LOCAL) and no changes or recommendations were needed. No board action was taken.

13. Community & Governmental Relations Committee - Sasha Crane & Jaime Solis, Co-Chairs

Mr. Jaime Solis reported on the following committee items:

- A. Report: Update regarding the current marketing campaign and future possibilities for student recruitment.

This was a report only.

14. Superintendent's Report - Marco Antonio Lara, Jr., Ed.D.

- A. \*Campus Reports
  - 1. Preparatory Academy - A. Castro
  - 2. Rising Scholars Academy - J. Ortiz
  - 3. World Scholars - J. De Luna, Ph.D.
  - 4. Medical Professions - C. Rodriguez
  - 5. Health Professions - M. Flores
  - 6. Science Academy - E. Gutierrez
  - 7. Virtual Academy - M. Valdez

Approved with the consent agenda.

- B. \*Report on professional vacancies.

Approved with the consent agenda.

- C. \*Action: Review and act on request to retroactively approve acting Finance Director and retroactive approval of salary adjustment.

Approved with the consent agenda.

- D. \*Action: Review and act on rescheduling the November 23, 2021, March 22, 2022 & June 28, 2022 board meetings.

Approved with the consent agenda.

- E. \*Action: Review and act on approval of Board delegates to attend the NSBA's Advocacy Institute (formerly Federal Relations Network) January 23-25, 2022, Washington, DC.

Approved with the consent agenda.

- F. \*Action: Review and act on proposed Education Foundation of South Texas ISD Memorandum of Understanding for the 2021-2022 school year.

Approved with the consent agenda.

- G. \*Annual report on the Education Foundation of South Texas ISD.

Approved with the consent agenda.

- H. \*Action: Review and act on the Highland Hustlers 4-H Club request for the extended use of Rising Scholars Academy facilities.

Approved with the consent agenda.

- I. Request for new Professional Positions for 2021-2022 school year and approval of Announcement of Vacancy.
  - 1. South Texas ISD Virtual Academy: (2) Teachers

A motion was made by Mr. Solis, seconded by Dr. Castillo, approving the request for 2 teacher positions for the Virtual Academy and approval of the announcement of vacancy as recommended. The motion passed unanimously.



- J. Action: Review and act on endorsing a candidate for the TASB Board of Directors, Region I, Position A.

A motion was made by Mr. Larry Cantu, seconded by Dr. Garza endorsing Mr. Jesus Amaya as candidate for the TASB Board of Directors, Region I, Position A. The motion passed unanimously.

- K. Action: Review and act on awarding architectural services RFQs for the 2021-2022 Capital Improvement Projects.

Dr. Lara reported eight architectural firms submitted RFQs for architectural services for the 2021-2022 capital improvement projects. The committee composed of Dr. Lara, Superintendent of Schools, Eduardo Guerra, Maintenance Coordinator, Marla Knaub, Asst. Supt. for Finance & Operations and Marissa Vaiz, Purchasing Agent reviewed, evaluated and ranked the proposals received (agenda page 120).

Board members expressed concern and cautioned to look at architectural firms that stay within the budget, the design is within the price range, and avoid change orders. Board members recommended getting someone to provide an independent construction cost estimate.

Dr. Lara recommended to select the top two ranked firms (The Warren Group & Sam Garcia Architect) and have the administration meet/interview with them and select the architectural firm for each project based on the best design. A motion was made by Mr. Larry Cantu, seconded by Mr. Gonzales, approving the superintendent's recommendation as presented. The motion passed with 2 against (A. Garcia & S. Lopez).

Mr. John Shergold, attorney for Dr. Juan De Leon Jr. asked the Level III Grievance be heard in open session.

The Board went into executive session at this time to discuss other items under Executive session.

15. **EXECUTIVE SESSION:** The Board of Directors met on August 24, 2021 at 8:00 p.m. in a closed meeting or executive session as pursuant to the Texas Government Code Section, 551.071, 551.072, 551.074, 551.082, 551.084 and 551.001, The Presiding Officer served to record the minutes of the closed session to discuss the following:
- A. 551.074, 551.071 Personnel Matters and consultation with school attorney regarding Personnel Matters: Closed Meeting
    - 1. Recommendation of professional staff for the 2021-2022 school year.
      - a. Teacher(s)
      - b. Assistant Principals

- B. Pursuant to Section 551.071 of the Texas Government Code, consultation with attorney concerning possible legal issues in connection with DGBA Level III grievance of JDL.
  - 1. Consideration and possible action regarding DGBA Level III Grievance of JDL

The Board of Directors ended the executive session at 8:28 p.m.

- 16. OPEN SESSION: Action on any Item Deliberated in Closed Meeting
  - A. 551.074, 551.071 Personnel Matters and consultation with school attorney regarding Personnel Matters:
    - 1. Action: Review and act on recommendation of professional staff for the 2021-2022 school year.
      - a. Teacher(s)
      - b. Assistant Principals

Dr. Tony Lara, Superintendent of Schools, recommended the employment of the following professional staff retroactive to start date for the 2021-2022 school year: Catarina Stevens, Teacher (10 months) and for the remainder of the 2021-2022 school year Jose Angel Sanchez and Anerey Yerena, Assistant Principal (11 month contract); Jose Armando Estrada, Jennifer Angela Underhill, Lirio D'Yanira Arredondo, Alfredo Castañeda Jr., and Elizabeth Galnares as teachers (10 months).

A motion was made by Mr. Gonzales, seconded by Mrs. Sosa, approving the superintendent's recommendation of hiring the professional staff as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

- B. Pursuant to Sections 551.074 of the Texas Government Code, consideration and deliberation of DGBA Level III Grievance of JDL.

The Level III Grievance Hearing was held in open session as requested by Dr. Juan De Leon's legal counsel. An audio recording of the proceedings was made. Each side made their presentation within a specified time of 10 minutes. After each presentation the Board went into closed session for consultation with legal counsel regarding legal issues involving the grievance. The Board of Directors went into closed session at 9:07 p.m.

The Board of Directors ended the executive session at 9:19 p.m. In open session, the Board President asked for a motion regarding Dr. Juan De Leon's Level III Grievance. No Board action was taken in which case the administration's decision was upheld and Dr. De Leon's grievance was denied. The Board President stated the Level III Grievance Hearing was concluded.

#### 17. Adjournment.

A motion was made by Mr. Gonzales, seconded by Mrs. Sosa, adjourning the board meeting at 9:21 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.