

## **NEWS RELEASE**

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

#### **SBISD Board of Trustees Approves Series of Resolutions to Address \$35 million Budget Shortfall**

November 7, 2023 (Houston, Texas) In their Special Meeting on Monday, November 6, 2023, the Spring Branch ISD Board of Trustees approved a series of resolutions to address the district's \$35 million budget shortfall for the 2024-25 school year.

These include resolutions changing the staffing ratios for high schools, aligning high school schedules, increasing Pre-K tuition and adjusting Pre-K Center boundaries, and pausing the bond program for the four remaining 2017 Bond Program elementary school rebuilds. The total impact of the approved budget considerations is \$2.9 million.

Trustees postponed until November 27 their vote on resolutions to close Panda Path School for Early Learning and Treasure Forest Elementary School beginning with the 2024-25 school year.

In her opening comments, Superintendent of Schools Jennifer Blaine addressed concerns by some that the district is bringing forth budget considerations in phases, rather than presenting the entire plan now.

She said, "The magnitude of what we are addressing is significant. Thirty-five million dollars doesn't just come in programs; it comes in salaries. Every single part of our school district is going to be impacted by the time this is all said and done."

Dr. Blaine continued, "While district administration has developed a plan to fully address the shortfall, there are portions of our plan we cannot publicly address. What I can tell you is that the district will be reducing personnel numbers that are very similar to that of the budget cuts in 2011 that were so horrific for our system. The majority of those decisions will come from central office."

Dr. Blaine further affirmed these types of budget reductions would be included in the district's budget presented to Trustees for approval next spring, in alignment with the district's annual budget calendar.

In a joint letter to the community, Board President Chris Earnest and Superintendent Blaine stated, "We can say, unequivocally, these are the hardest decisions amidst the most challenging financial situation our district has faced since 2011, the last time the state's funding for public schools caused such challenges."

Last night's decisions followed a series of meetings held to review the first phase of budget considerations to address the shortfall.

In anticipation of last night's meeting, Dr. Blaine and Board President Chris Earnest shared their disappointment in the lack of action taken by state legislators.

“We all hoped for and even anticipated that adequate funding for Texas public schools would be proposed and passed in the 88th Legislative session (and subsequent called sessions). Not only is this funding required by our state constitution, but it is also needed to address the 19 percent inflation impacting our collective bottom lines since 2019,” Blaine and Earnest noted.

They continued, “In short, the state has kept our revenues flat for four years while our costs have skyrocketed. All while the state has had a record budget surplus of more than \$33 billion.”

Despite strong advocacy by SBISD Trustees, staff, families and community, no increase to the basic allotment was approved by the 88th Legislative Session, nor has any new money for public schools been passed through three subsequent special legislative sessions, the latest of which concluded today.

SBISD leaders remain guardedly optimistic that a fourth special session will be called. However, there is no announced timeline as of this writing.

Superintendent Blaine thanked the SBISD community for their engagement and advocacy, ultimately noting state leaders have left SBISD no choice but to move forward with these difficult decisions.

The district has created a Closing the Budget Gap [webpage](#) where community messages, presentations and other related information will be housed. SBISD also continues the 88th Legislative Session [webpage](#) where, information and advocacy information will be posted should a fourth Special Session be called.