



Always Innovating

**South
Texas ISD**

RIO GRANDE VALLEY | GRADES 6-12

Minutes of Regular Meeting

The Board of Directors South Texas ISD

A Regular Meeting of the Board of Directors of South Texas ISD was held October 24, 2023, beginning at 7:00 PM in the Central Office Teaching and Learning Center, 7001 E. Expressway 83, Mercedes, Texas 78570.

1. Welcome.

Henry LeVrier, Board President, welcomed the guests, staff and fellow Board members.

2. Board Meeting called to order.

The meeting was called to order by Henry LeVrier, Board President at approximately 7:00 p.m., at which time he was assured by Superintendent Dr. Marco Antonio 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 were present:

David Briones	La Feria
Douglas E. Buchanan	Raymondville
Abiel J. Cantú	Raymondville
Eduardo L. “Larry” Cantu	Los Fresnos
Sasha Crane	McAllen
Adrian Garcia	Brownsville
Margarita Garcia	San Juan
Sylvia Sánchez Garza, Ph.D.	Edinburg
Hector Gonzales	Lyford
Yolanda Kamel	McAllen
Robert J. Lerma	Brownsville
Henry LeVrier	Brownsville
Sylvia S. Lopez	Brownsville
Sandra Garza Ochoa, Ph.D.	Weslaco
Israel G. Quintanilla	Raymondville
Natividad Sosa	Mission
David Torres	Edinburg

Rick Villarreal, DDS
Ruth Villarreal

Rancho Viejo
Mission

The following Board members were absent:

Javier Farias	McAllen
Noel Garza, DDS	Mission
Rodolfo “Rudy” Ramirez	Edinburg
Eduardo Roberto Rodriguez	Brownsville
Jaime R. Solis	Edinburg

The following staff members were present:

Marco Antonio Lara, Jr., Ed.D.	Eric Gutierrez
Efrain Garza	Michele Guajardo, Ph.D.
Lissa Frausto	Cynthia Chairez, Ed.D.
Marla Knaub	Reynaldo Rodriguez, Ed.D.
Amanda Odom	Jose Lucio
Marcos Flores	Marco Zamora
Nereyda Trevino, Ed.D.	Maribel Valdez
Brenda de la Garza, Ed.D.	Frank Trevino
Vanessa Rivera	Carmen Noriega
Sandra Torres	Ramon Longoria
Mathew Maciel	

3. Pledges of Allegiance & District Call to Action.

The pledges were led by Sasha Crane.

4. Moment of Silence.

The Board held a moment of silence.

5. Public Comments for Agenda Topics.

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

6. Public Audience for Non-Agenda Topics.

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

7. Public Hearing on the 2022-2023 Financial Integrity Rating System of Texas (FIRST) Report.

Marla Knaub, Assistant Superintendent for Finance & Operations, provided an overview of the

Financial Integrity Rating System of Texas report for South Texas ISD. The FIRST report included the following disclosures as per Title 19 Texas Administrative Code:

- Superintendent’s employment contract is posted on the district’s website.
- Reimbursements received by the Superintendent and Board Members for the twelve-month period ended August 31, 2022 (Page 8 of FIRST Report).
- The Superintendent had no outside compensation for Professional Consulting and/or other Personal Services in Fiscal Year 2022 (Page 9 of FIRST Report).
- Gifts received by the Executive Officer and Board Members (and First-Degree Relatives, if any) in Fiscal year 2022 (Page 9 of FIRST Report).
- Business Transactions between School District and Board Members for Fiscal Year 2022 for the twelve-month period ended August 31, 2022 (Page 10 of FIRST Report).

For the 16th year in a row, South Texas ISD received a rating of “Superior Achievement” under Texas’ school finance accountability rating system. Board Members expressed congratulatory remarks to Ms. Marla Knaub and staff for a job well done!

8. Awards & Recognitions.

- A. Recognition of South Texas ISD Virtual Academy for being recognized as an Apple Distinguished School for the 2023–2026 program term.
- B. Recognition of the district and campuses for a decade of ranking among the best in the state and nation in the Niche Best Schools Rankings.
- C. Recognition of Medical Professions, Science Academy and the district itself for their selection as 2022-2023 School and District of the Year finalists for the growth and achievements of their Emergent Bilingual (EB) students.
- D. Recognition of Human Resources Staff in honor of Texas Education Human Resources Day, October 11.
- E. Recognition of principals in honor of Principals' Month.

On behalf of the Board, Amanda Odom recognized and congratulated Virtual Academy for being recognized as an Apple Distinguished School for the 2023-2026 program term; campus principals and superintendent in recognition of the district and campuses having ranked consistently in the Niche Best Schools and District Rankings for a decade; Human Resources staff in honor of Human Resources Day, which was celebrated in October; STISD Principals were recognized and celebrated during National Principals Month; and Medical Professions, Science Academy, and STISD were recognized by the Board and administration for being named 2022-2023 Campus and District of the Year finalists for growth of their Emergent Bilingual Populations.

9. 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 Hector Gonzales, seconded by Abiel J. Cantú, approving the consent agenda. The motion passed unanimously.

10. *Action: Review and act on the September 26, 2023 Board Meeting Minutes.

Approved with the consent agenda.

11. Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment Committee - David Briones and Rick Villarreal, DDS, Co-Chairs, Co-Chairs

Dr. Rick Villarreal reported on the following items:

A. *Report on STISD Leader Monthly Newsletter.

Approved with the consent agenda.

B. *Action: Review and act on proposed admission qualifications for students and campus target populations for 2024-2025 school year.

Approved with the consent agenda.

C. Report on the Bilingual ESL Program Evaluation for 2022-2023.

Marcos Flores, Director for Student Support, and Dr. Brenda De La Garza, Special Programs Director, provided the Board with a report on the Bilingual ESL Program Evaluation for 2022-2023.

D. Action: Review and act on the 2023-2024 Gifted/Talented Manual.

A motion was made by Dr. Rick Villarreal, seconded by E. Larry Cantu, approving the 2023-2024 Gifted/Talented Manual. The motion passed unanimously.

E. Action: Review and act on the 2024-2025 Campus Course Offerings.

A motion was made by Dr. Rick Villarreal, seconded by Abiel J. Cantú, approving the 2024-2025 Campus Course offerings as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

F. Action: Review and act on the school calendar for the 2024-2025 school year and legend.

A motion was made by Dr. Rick Villarreal, seconded by Yolanda Kamel, approving the 2024-2025 school calendar and legend. The motion passed with one against (Adrian Garcia).

12. Buildings and Grounds Committee - E. Larry Cantu and Ruth Villarreal, Co-Chairs

E. Larry Cantu reported on the following items:

- A. Report on the following projects:
 - 1. Preparatory Academy Pavilion
 - 2. Cameras and Access Controls

Frank Treviño provided a report on the Preparatory Academy Pavilion and the Cameras and Access Controls District-wide project. This was a report only.

- B. Action: Review and act on approving the contract with Gomez Mendez Saenz, Inc. for the 2023-2024 Capital Projects and authorize the Board President to sign the contract.

A motion was made by E. Larry Cantu, seconded by David Torres, approving the contract with a revision to hold twenty percent until the completion of the project if fulfilled. The motion passed unanimously.

- C. Action: Review and act on approving the construction documents for the following:
 - 1. Health Professions Parking Lot project
 - 2. Health Professions Gymnasium project

A motion was made by E. Larry Cantu, seconded by Israel Quintanilla, approving the construction documents for the Health Professions Parking Lot project and the Health Professions Gymnasium project. The motion passed unanimously.

- D. Action: Review and act on proceeding with the 2023-2024 Capital Project: Athletic Fields for Mercedes & Edinburg Complexes project.

A motion was made by E. Larry Cantu, seconded by Doug Buchanan, approving proceeding with the 2023-2024 Capital Project for the Athletic fields for Mercedes and Edinburg Complexes. The motion passed unanimously.

13. Finance & Operations Committee - Adrian Garcia and Rudy Ramirez, Co-Chairs Co-Chairs

Adrian Garcia reported on the following items:

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

Approved with the consent agenda.

- B. *Report on school district investments:
 - 1. Investments owned by the district.
 - 2. Investments held by Wilmington Trust for the South Texas ISD Public Facilities Corporation.

Approved with the consent agenda.

- C. *Action: Review and act on removing assets from the capital asset listing.

Approved with the consent agenda.

- D. Action: Review and act on approving a donation from Ruben Ventura of inflatable moon jumps and a slide valued at \$350 for the Class of 2025.

A motion was made by Adrian Garcia, seconded by Natividad Sosa, approving the donation from Ruben Ventura of inflatable moon jumps and a slide valued at \$350 for the Class of 2025. The motion passed unanimously.

- E. Action: Review and act on revising the STISD Professionals and Non-Exempt Compensation Plans for the following:
 - 1. Licensed Specialist in School Psychology
 - 2. Speech Language Pathologist
 - 3. Accounts Payable Specialist
 - 4. Payroll Specialist

A motion was made by Adrian Garcia, seconded by E. Larry Cantu, approving revising the STISD Professionals and Non-Exempt Compensation Plans for Licensed Specialist in School Psychology, Speech Language Pathologist, Accounts Payable Specialist and Payroll Specialist. The motion passed unanimously.

- F. Action: Review and act on the following payment applications:
 - 1. Payment application #21 to D. Wilson Construction Company in the amount of \$515,282.27 for the New Central Office Building Renovation project.

A motion was made by Adrian Garcia, seconded by David Torres, tabling payment application #21 to D. Wilson Construction Company in the amount of \$515,282.27 for the New Central Office Building Renovation project. The motion passed unanimously.

- 2. Payment application #3 to D. Wilson in the amount of \$127,234.93 for the Preparatory Academy Pavilion project.

A motion was made by Adrian Garcia, seconded by Yolanda Kamel, approving payment application #3 to D. Wilson in the amount of \$127,234.93 for the Preparatory Academy Pavilion project. The motion passed unanimously.

3. Payment application #3 to The Warren Group in the amount of \$207,740 for the New Health Professions Gym project.

A motion was made by Adrian Garcia, seconded by Doug Buchanan, approving payment application #3 to The Warren Group in the amount of \$207,740 for the New Health Professions Gym project. The motion passed unanimously.

4. Payment application #4 to TelePro in the amount of \$293,545.62 for the Cameras and Access Controls District-wide project.

A motion was made by Adrian Garcia, seconded by E. Larry Cantu, approving payment application #4 to TelePro in the amount of \$293,545.62 for the Cameras and Access Controls District-wide project. The motion passed unanimously.

- G. Action: Review and act on approving requisition #114229 to Thomas Bus Gulf Coast in the amount of \$535,600 for the purchase of four new buses.

A motion was made by Adrian Garcia, seconded by Dr. Sandra Ochoa, approving requisition #114229 to Thomas Bus Gulf Coast in the amount of \$535,600 for the purchase of four new buses. The motion passed unanimously.

- H. Action: Review and act on approving the cost analysis for the following:
 1. Health Professions Parking Lot project
 2. Health Professions Gymnasium project

A motion was made by Adrian Garcia, seconded by Dr. Rick Villarreal, approving the cost analysis for the Health Professions Parking Lot project and the Health Professions Gymnasium project. The motion passed unanimously.

- I. Action: Review and act on approving the procurement method and authorize administration to advertise for the following projects:
 1. Health Professions Parking Lot project
 2. Health Professions Gymnasium project

A motion was made by Adrian Garcia, seconded by Dr. Rick Villarreal, approving using the job order contract for the Health Professions Parking Lot project and using the request for Competitive Sealed Proposals for the Health Professions Gymnasium project. The motion passed unanimously.

14. Policy, Planning, Projects & Partnerships Committee - Douglas Buchanan and Noel Garza, DDS, Co-Chairs

Doug Buchanan reported on the following items:

- A. Report on the district's current 5-year Strategic Planning sessions.

Mr. Efrain Garza, Deputy Superintendent, provided an update on the district's current 5-year Strategic Planning sessions. This was a report only.

- B. Action: Review and approve the 2023-2024 Physician's Standing Orders.

A motion was made by Doug Buchanan, seconded by Sasha Crane, approving the 2023-2024 Physician's Standing Orders for Ricardo Ochoa, MD. The motion passed with one abstention (Adrian Garcia).

15. Community & Governmental Relations Committee - Sasha Crane and Yolanda Kamel, Co-Chairs

Sasha Crane reported on the following items:

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

Approved with the consent agenda.

- B. Action: Determine the time of the year to host STISD's 60-year anniversary celebration.

A motion was made by Sasha Crane, seconded by Yolanda Kamel, approving November 2, 2024 or November 9, 2024 as the date for the STISD 60-year celebration event. The motion passed unanimously.

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

- A. *Campus and District Reports
 1. Preparatory Academy - M. Zamora
 2. Rising Scholars Academy - R. Rodriguez, Ed.D.
 3. World Scholars - C. Chairez, Ed.D.
 4. Medical Professions - J. Lucio
 5. Health Professions - M. Guajardo, Ph.D.
 6. Science Academy - E. Gutierrez
 7. Virtual Academy - M. Valdez
 8. Enrollment & Attendance Report

9. Human Resources Report

Approved with the consent agenda.

- B. *Report on professional vacancies.

Approved with the consent agenda.

- C. *Report on the proposed date for the required Annual Team Building training for the South Texas ISD Board members and Superintendent.

Approved with the consent agenda.

- D. *Action: Review and act on board members to attend TASB's Fall Legal Seminar, November 18, 2023, South Padre Island, TX.

Approved with the consent agenda.

- E. Report on South Texas ISD Board member training continuing education credit report.

Board President Henry LeVrier publicly announced the continuing education training credit status of each individual board member for the period beginning November 1, 2022 through October 24, 2023 for the following training areas: Local District Orientation (New Board Members), Open Meetings Act (New Board Members), Public Information Act (New Board Members), Orientation to the Texas Education Code (New Board Members), Post-Legislative Update to the Texas Education Code (Experienced Board Members), Team Building (annual with entire board and superintendent), Additional Continuing Education (10 hours for New Board members, 5 hours, experienced), Evaluating Student Academic Performance and Setting Goals, Identifying and Reporting Abuse and Trafficking, School Safety, and Cybersecurity.

- F. Report on the hiring process for the position of Chief of Security and Police Services.

Lissa Frausto, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources, provided the Board with information on the hiring process for the position of Chief of Security and Police Services and a current status of the applications received. This was a report only.

- G. Action: Review and Act on approving the request for a New Professional and Non-Professional Position(s) for the remainder of the 2023-2024 school year and the Announcement of Vacancy for the following:
 - 1. Professional:
 - a. Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA) Coordinator (1)
 - b. Payroll Supervisor (1)

- c. Special Education Coordinator (1)
 - d. Speech Language Pathologist (1)
 - e. Occupational Therapist (2)
 - f. Educational Diagnostician (1)
2. Non-Professional:
- a. Custodian (2)

A motion was made by Dr. Sandra Ochoa, seconded by Natividad Sosa, approving the request for New Professional Positions: Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA) Coordinator (1), Payroll Supervisor (1), Special Education Coordinator (1), Speech Language Pathologist (1), Occupational Therapist (2), Educational Diagnostician (1) and Non-Professional Positions: Custodian (2) and the Announcement of Vacancy for the remainder of the 2023-2024 school year. The motion passed unanimously.

H. Action: Review and act on submitting nominees by Resolution for the following Appraisal district's Board of Directors:

- 1. Cameron County

A motion was made by E. Larry Cantu, seconded by David Briones, nominating Gloria Casas by Resolution to the Cameron County Appraisal District's Board of Directors. The motion passed unanimously.

- 2. Hidalgo County

The Board did not nominate any individual for Hidalgo County due to the deadline.

- 3. Willacy County

A motion was made by Doug Buchanan, seconded by Israel Quintanilla, nominating Mayor Gilbert Gonzales, John Solis III, Elizabeth Barnhart, Ricardo Solis, and Albert Cavazos by Resolution to the Willacy County Appraisal District's Board of Directors. The motion passed unanimously.

- I. Discussion, consideration, and possible action on approving the selection of Board delegates and travel to attend the NSBA Advocacy Institute or TASB's Texas Federal Advocacy Conference.

A motion was made by Dr. Sylvia Sánchez Garza, seconded by Natividad Sosa, selecting Dr. Sylvia Sánchez Garza, Sasha Crane, Yolanda Kamel, and Eduardo R. Rodriguez as delegates to attend the TASB Federal Advocacy Conference in Washington, DC. The motion passed unanimously.

- J. Discussion, consideration, and possible action on the creation of a hiring committee for the newly created position of Chief of Security/Police to include administration,

contracted service representatives, Board members, and, if available, local law enforcement leadership, as requested by Board member, Natividad Sosa.

The Board held a discussion on the hiring for the position of Chief of Security/Police. No action was taken.

Sasha crane left the meeting at 9:30 p.m. and was not present for Executive/Open Session.

17. **EXECUTIVE SESSION: The Board of Directors met on October 24, 2023 at 9:30 p.m. in a closed 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 Board Secretary, Israel G. Quintanilla served to record the minutes of the closed session to discuss the following:**

- A. 551.071 Consultation with legal counsel regarding Cause No. CL-22-2425-G: Closed Meeting
- B. 551.071 Consultation with attorney regarding pending or contemplated litigation: Closed Meeting.
 - 1. Ryan Busse, Josh Klostermann, Russell Klostermann, Mitch Thomas, Olivia Rincones, Robert Rincones, Ruben Rincones, Enrica Rincones, Adelaida Garcia, Gary Busse, Alison Savage and Lyford Consolidated Independent School District vs. South Texas Independent School District, Elizabeth Barnhart, Willacy County Tax Assessor-Collector in her Official Capacity, and Willacy County, Texas, Cause No. 2023-CV-0282-A.

The Board ended the Executive Session at 10:15 p.m.

18. OPEN SESSION: Action on any Item Deliberated in Closed Meeting
- A. Discussion, consideration and possible action regarding Cause No. CL-22-2425-G

A motion was made by Dr. Rick Villarreal, seconded by E. Larry Cantu, authorizing legal counsel to proceed as discussed in Executive Session. The motion passed unanimously.

- B. Discussion, consideration, and possible action regarding pending or contemplated litigation: Ryan Busse, Josh Klostermann, Russell Klostermann, Mitch Thomas, Olivia Rincones, Robert Rincones, Ruben Rincones, Enrica Rincones, Adelaida Garcia, Gary Busse, Alison Savage and Lyford Consolidated Independent School District vs. South Texas Independent School District, Elizabeth Barnhart, Willacy County Tax Assessor-Collector in her Official Capacity, and Willacy County, Texas, Cause No. 2023-CV-0282-A.

No action taken on this item.

19. Adjournment.

A motion was made by Dr. Sandra Ochoa, seconded Natividad Sosa, adjourning the meeting at 10:18 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.

