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**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 August 27, 2024, beginning at 7:00 PM in the Central Office Teaching and Learning Center, 7001 E. Expressway 83, Mercedes, Texas 78570.

1. Welcome.

Mr. Henry LeVrier, Board President, welcomed 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
Abiel J. Cantú	Raymondville
Adrian Garcia	Brownsville
Sylvia Sánchez Garza, Ph.D.	Edinburg
Hector Gonzales	Lyford
Robert J. Lerma	Brownsville
Henry LeVrier	Brownsville
Sylvia S. Lopez	Brownsville
Sandra Garza Ochoa, Ph.D.	Weslaco
Israel G. Quintanilla	Raymondville
Eduardo Roberto Rodriguez	Brownsville
Jaime R. Solis	Edinburg
Rick Villarreal, DDS	Rancho Viejo

The following Board members were absent:

Douglas E. Buchanan	Raymondville
Eduardo L. "Larry" Cantu	Los Fresnos

Sasha Crane	McAllen
Margarita Garcia	San Juan
Noel Garza, DDS	Mission
Yolanda Kamel	McAllen
Rodolfo “Rudy” Ramirez	Edinburg
Oscar Salinas	Edinburg
David Torres	Edinburg
Ruth Villarreal	Mission

The following staff members were present:

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

3. Pledges of Allegiance & District Call to Action.

The pledges were led by Abiel J. Cantú.

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.

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 Budget Hearing for the 2024-2025 fiscal year.

A public hearing was held for the 2024-2025 fiscal year. Marla Knaub, Assistant Superintendent for Finance & Operations, reviewed the projected revenues and expenditures for the proposed 2024-2025 budget. The review covered expenditures by function, object, and location.

8. 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 Dr. Rick Villarreal, seconded by David Briones, approving the consent agenda. The motion passed unanimously.

The Board President made a recommendation to move the order of Agenda Item #13.P. Action: Review and act on Resolution adopting the tax rate for the 2024-2025 fiscal year after Agenda Item 13.Q. Action: Review and act on Resolution adopting the General Fund, Child Nutrition and Debt Service Budgets for the 2024-2025 school year. A motion was made by Jaime Solis, seconded by David Briones, moving the item as recommended. The motion passed unanimously.

9. *Action: Review and act on the July 30, 2024 Board Meeting Minutes.

Approved with the consent agenda.

10. *Action: Review and act on the August 7, 2024 Special Called Meeting minutes.

Approved with the consent agenda.

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

David Briones reported on the following items:

A. *Report on the 2024-2025 updated Virtual Academy Course Offerings.

Approved with the consent agenda.

B. Report on the 2023-2024 Preliminary A-F Accountability Ratings.

Dr. Nereyda Trevino, Chief Academic Officer, reported on the 2023-2024 preliminary A-F Accountability Ratings and projected an “A” rating for all campuses and the district. Mr. Henry LeVrier congratulated the Administration on a job well done.

C. Report on the STISD Fine Arts Academy.

Dr. Nereyda Trevino reported on the inaugural STISD Fine Arts Academy, which was held during the summer and shared highlights of the students’ performance at the district’s convocation.

12. Buildings and Grounds Committee - David Torres and Ruth Villarreal, Co-Chairs

Jaime Solis reported on the following items:

A. Report on the following projects:

1. Health Professions Gymnasium project

Nathaniel Perez from The Warren Group was present and provided the Board with an update on the Health Professions Gymnasium project.

2. Health Professions Parking Lot project
3. Roofing project

David Monreal from Gomez Mendez Saenz, Inc. was present and provided the Board with an update on the Health Professions Parking lot project and Roofing project.

- B. Action: Review and act on the facilities/capital improvement projects for the 2024-2025 school year, pending approval of budget.

A motion was made by Jaime Solis, seconded by Eduardo R. Rodriguez, approving the facilities/capital improvement projects, totaling \$66,496,000, for the 2024-2025 school year upon approval of budget. The motion passed unanimously.

- C. Action: Review and act on hiring Gomez Mendez Saenz, Inc. for the 2024-2025 school year projects or go out for Request for Qualifications (RFQs) for Architectural services.

A motion was made by Jaime Solis, seconded by Eduardo R. Rodriguez, approving Gomez Mendez Saenz, Inc. as the Architect of Record for the 2024-2025 school year projects. The motion passed unanimously.

- D. Action: Review and act on approving the contract with Holchemont for the Athletic Fields Edinburg project, and authorizing the Board President to execute the contract.

A motion was made by Jaime Solis, seconded by Hector Gonzales, approving the contract with Holchemont for the Athletic Fields Edinburg project, and authorizing the Board President to execute the contract. The motion passed unanimously.

- E. Action: Review and act on approving the contract with Gerlach Builders for the Athletic Fields Mercedes project, and authorizing the Board President to execute the contract.

A motion was made by Jaime Solis, seconded by Adrian Garcia, approving the contract with Gerlach Builders for the Athletic Fields Mercedes project, and authorizing the Board President to execute the contract. The motion passed unanimously.

13. Finance & Operations Committee - Israel G. Quintanilla and Rudy Ramirez, Co-Chairs

Israel G. Quintanilla reported on the following 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 approving a donation in the amount of \$200 from Chris Chapman of the National Center for Education Statistics to Preparatory Academy.

Approved with the consent agenda.

- D. *Action: Review and act on Resolutions/Interlocal Agreements to participate in the following cooperatives:
 1. Harris County Department of Education Purchasing Co-op (Choice Partners}
 2. Houston-Galveston Area Council Buy Co-op (H-GAC)
 3. Purchasing Association of Cooperative Entities (PACE)
 4. Region 19 ESC Allied States Cooperative
 5. Region III ESC Purchasing Cooperative of America (PCA)
 6. Region VIII ESC TIPS Purchasing Cooperative
 7. Texas Association of School Boards Purchasing Co-op (BUYBOARD)
 8. Texas Department of Information Resources (DIR)
 9. Texas SmartBuy Membership Program
 10. Sourcewell Cooperative
 11. 791 Purchasing Cooperative (Region 15)

12. OMNIA Partners National IPA , US Communities Government Purchasing
13. Alliance & Region 14 ESC National Cooperative Purchasing Alliance (NCPA)
14. Good Buy (Region 2)
15. Equalis Group (Region 10)
16. Region One ESC School System Cooperative, Finance and Purchasing Cooperative, ESC Library, PEIMS, Cafeteria & Food and Transportation Co-ops, South Texas Cooperative – Child Nutrition Program, Human Resources and Personnel Services Cooperative, Region One ESC Counselor Cooperative.

Approved with the consent agenda.

- E. *Action: Review and act approving the use of MacKenzie Scott donation funds for CTE equipment at Science Academy and Health Professions in the amount of \$291,000.

Approved with the consent agenda.

- F. Report on Health Insurance options for 2025-2026 school year.

Marla Knaub, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations reported on options for employee health insurance for the 2025-2026 school year.

- G. Action: Review and act on the following budget amendment(s):
 1. General fund (final budget amendment)
 2. Child Nutrition

A motion was made by Israel G. Quintanilla, seconded by Dr. Sylvia Sánchez Garza, approving General Fund (final budget amendment) and Child Nutrition budget amendments. The motion passed unanimously.

- H. Action: Review and act on the following Change Orders:
 1. Change Order #1 to the contract in the credit amount of \$7,150 for the Health Professions Gymnasium project.

Administration announced an error in the agenda language; the change order is not a credit amount. A motion was made by Israel G. Quintanilla, seconded by Jaime Solis, approving Change Order #1 to the contingency fund in the amount of \$7,150 for the Health Professions Gymnasium project. The motion passed unanimously.

2. Change Order #1 to the contract in the credit amount of \$15,000 for the Health Professions Parking Lot project.

A motion was made by Israel G. Quintanilla, seconded by Adrian Garcia, approving change order #1 to the contract in the credit amount of \$15,000 for the Health Professions Parking Lot project. The motion passed unanimously.

I. Action: Review and act on the following payment applications:

1. Payment application #3 to Gerlach Builders, LLC in the amount of \$299,699.52 for the New Health Professions Gymnasium project.

A motion was made by Israel G. Quintanilla, seconded by Adrian Garcia, approving payment application #3 to Gerlach Builders, LLC in the amount of \$299,699.52 for the New Health Professions Gymnasium project. The motion passed unanimously.

2. Payment application #8 to The Warren Group in the amount of \$5,658.80 for the New Health Professions Gymnasium project.

A motion was made by Israel G. Quintanilla, seconded by Dr. Sylvia Sánchez Garza, approving payment application #8 to The Warren Group in the amount of \$5,658.80 for the New Health Professions Gymnasium project. The motion passed unanimously.

3. Payment application #3 to Gomez Mendez Saenz, Inc. in the amount of \$3,881.76 for the Roofing project.

A motion was made by Israel G. Quintanilla, seconded by Dr. Sylvia Sánchez Garza, approving payment application #3 to Gomez Mendez Saenz, Inc. in the amount of \$3,881.76 for the Roofing project. The motion passed unanimously.

4. Payment application #2 to TADCO in the amount of \$209,342 for the Roofing project.

A motion was made by Israel G. Quintanilla, seconded by Dr. Sylvia Sánchez Garza, approving payment application #2 to TADCO in the amount of \$209,342 for the Roofing project. The motion passed unanimously.

5. Payment application #7 to Noble Texas Builders in the amount of \$21,599.20 for the Health Professions Parking Lot project.

A motion was made by Israel G. Quintanilla, seconded by Sylvis S. Lopez, approving payment application #7 to Noble Texas Builders in the amount of \$21,599.20 for the Health Professions Parking Lot project. The motion passed with one abstention (Eduardo R. Rodriguez).

6. Invoice #2384 to Tri County Communications for the ERRC DAS System and cell phone signal boost.

A motion was made by Israel G. Quintanilla, seconded by Dr. Rick Villarreal, approving invoice #2384 in the amount of \$1,040,000 to Tri County Communications for the ERRC DAS System and cell phone signal boost. The motion passed unanimously.

- J. Action: Review and act on approving the use of the General Fund budget to cover staff and student negative balances in the Child Nutrition Program, in the amount of \$75,673.14.

A motion was made by Israel G. Quintanilla, seconded by Sylvia S. Lopez, approving the use of the General Fund budget to cover staff and student negative balances in the Child Nutrition Program, in the amount of \$75,673.14. The motion passed unanimously.

- K. Action: Review and act on extending the TASB Risk Management Unemployment Compensation program for the 2024-2025 school year.

A motion was made by Israel G. Quintanilla, seconded by Adrian Garia, approving extending the TASB Risk Management Unemployment Compensation program for the 2024-2025 school year. The motion passed unanimously.

- L. Action: Review and act on designating fund balance for future projects.

A motion was made by Israel G. Quintanilla, seconded by Jaime Solis, approving designating \$1,000,000 to the fund balance for future projects. The motion passed unanimously.

- M. Action: Review and act on authorizing Administration to advertise Request for Qualifications for Real Estate Broker Services.

A motion was made by Israel G. Quintanilla, seconded by Jaime Solis, approving Administration to advertise Request for Qualifications for Real Estate Broker Services. The motion passed unanimously.

- N. Action: Review and act on authorizing Administration to advertise for Request for Qualifications for an architect for the New Rising Scholars Academy.

A motion was made by Israel G. Quintanilla, seconded by Abiel J. Cantú, approving Administration to advertise for Request for Qualifications for an architect for the New Rising Scholars Academy. The motion passed unanimously.

- O. Report on Financial Data Comparison.

Marla Knaub reported on financial data comparison for the last three years. This was a report only.

- Q. Action: Review and act on Resolution adopting the General Fund, Child Nutrition and Debt Service Budgets for the 2024-2025 school year.

A motion was made by Israel G. Quintanilla, seconded by Jaime Solis, approving the Resolution adopting General Fund (199), Child Nutrition (240), Title I Part A (211), Title I Part C (212), Title II Part A (255), Title III Part A ELA (263), Title IV Part A (289) budgets, and Special Ed Coop (437) budgets for the 2024-2025 school year. The motion passed unanimously.

- P. Action: Review and act on Resolution adopting the tax rate for the 2024-2025 fiscal year.

A motion was made by Israel G. Quintanilla, seconded by Adrian Garcia, approving a Resolution increasing the property tax rate by the adoption of the tax rate of \$0.0492, which is effectively a (1.600) percent increase in the tax rate. The motion passed unanimously.

- 14. Policy, Planning, Projects & Partnerships Committee -Abiel J. Cantu and Robert J. Lerma, Co-Chairs

Abiel J. Cantu reported on the following items:

- A. Report on Policy FFAC (LEGAL) Wellness and Health Services: Medical Treatment.

Marcos Flores, Executive Director for Student Support Services provided a report on Policy FFAC (LEGAL) Wellness and Health Services: Medical Treatment, specifically new guidelines on over-the-counter medications.

- B. Action: Review and act on changes to Policy DCE (LOCAL) Employment Practices: Other Types of Contracts.

A motion was made by Robert J. Lerma, seconded by Abiel J. Cantú, approving changes to Policy DCE (LOCAL) Employment Practices: Other Types of Contracts, regarding Non-Chapter 21 contracts. The motion passed unanimously.

- 15. Community & Governmental Relations Committee - Yolanda Kamel and Eduardo R. Rodriguez, Co-Chairs

Eduardo R. Rodriguez 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: Discussion and possible action to consider and approve the Superintendent's recommendation regarding designation of remaining nonbusiness Public Information Act days for Public Information Act requests during calendar year 2024.

A motion was made by Eduardo R. Rodriguez, seconded by Abiel J. Cantú, designating the following dates as non-business days for Public Information Act requests during the calendar year 2024: October 14; November 25, 26, and 27; and December 23, 27, 30, and 31. 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. Human Resources Report

Approved with the consent agenda.

- B. *Report on professional vacancies.

Approved with the consent agenda.

- C. *Action: Review and act on the following out-of-district staff/student travel:
 - 1. 2024 Annual PLC+ Conference, September 22-24, 2024 in Las Vegas, NV.
 - 2. HOSA Leadership Academy, September 27-30, 2024 in Washington, D.C.
 - 3. AASA National Conference on Education, March 6-8, 2025 in New Orleans, LA.
 - 4. NSBA 2025 Annual Conference, April 4-6, 2025 in Atlanta, GA.

Approved with the consent agenda.

- D. *Action: Review and act on the following out-of-district Board travel:
 - 1. TASB Texas Federal Advocacy Conference, January 27-28, 2025 in Washington, D.C.
 - 2. NSBA 2025 Annual Conference, April 4-6, 2025 in Atlanta, GA.
 - 3. NALEO 42nd Annual Conference, July 22-24, 2025 in Atlanta, GA.

Approved with the consent agenda.

- E. *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.

- F. Report on progress toward Superintendent's Goals.

Dr. Lara reported on the progress towards the Superintendent's Goals. A monthly report will be provided to the Board, detailing the items on the agenda that contribute to achieving these goals.

- G. Action: Review and Act on approving the request for New Professional and Non-Professional Positions for the 2024-2025 school year and the Announcement of Vacancy for the following:
 - 1. Technology Applications/STEM teacher (1) – Rising Scholars Academy
 - 2. Classroom Aide (1) – Health Professions
 - 3. Classroom Aide/SPED (1) – Health Professions
 - 4. Executive Director Special Programs Secretary (1) – Special Programs
 - 5. Custodians (6)
 - 6. Child Nutrition Worker (1)

A motion was made by Eduardo R. Rodriguez, seconded by Abiel J. Cantú, approving the request for New Professional and Non-Professional Positions for the 2024-2025 school year and the Announcement of Vacancy for the following: Technology Applications/STEM teacher (1)Rising Scholars Academy, Classroom Aide (1) Health Professions, Classroom Aide/SPED (1) Health Professions, Executive Director Special Programs Secretary (1) Special Programs, Custodians (6), and Child Nutrition Worker (1). The motion passed unanimously.

- H. Action: Review and accept the Certification (Election Code 2.052) of Unopposed Candidates for Election to the office of South Texas ISD School Board of Directors:
 - 1. Sylvia S. Lopez, Cameron County Precinct 2
 - 2. David Briones, Cameron County Precinct 4
 - 3. Zachary I. Zamora, Hidalgo County Precinct 3
 - 4. Andrea E. Loya, Willacy County Precinct 3

A motion was made by Jaime Solis, seconded by Hector Gonzales, approving the Certification (Election Code 2.052) of Unopposed Candidates for Election to the office of South Texas ISD School Board of Directors for the following: Sylvia S. Lopez, Cameron County Precinct 2; David Briones, Cameron County Precinct 4; Zachary I. Zamora, Hidalgo County Precinct 3; and Andrea E. Loya, Willacy County Precinct 3. The motion passed unanimously.

- I. Action: Review and act on a Resolution declaring each unopposed candidate, as per certification, elected to the office of School Board of Directors, ordering the cancelation of election, and authorize an issuance of election to each candidate (Election Code 2.053).

A motion was made by Jaime Solis, seconded by Hector Gonzales, approving the Resolution declaring each unopposed candidate, as per certification, elected to the office of School Board of Directors, ordering the cancelation of election, and authorize an issuance of election to each candidate (Election Code 2.053). The motion passed unanimously.

17. **EXECUTIVE SESSION: The Board of Directors met on August 27, 2024 at 8:09 p.m. 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. 551.074, 551.071 Personnel Matters and consultation with school attorney regarding Personnel Matters: Closed Meeting
 1. Recommendation of professional staff for the remainder of the 2024-2025 school year.
 - a. Occupational Therapist Co-Op
 - b. Special Education Counselor Lead
 - c. School Nurse
 - d. Teacher(s)
 - B. 551.071 Consultation with attorney regarding pending or contemplated litigation regarding Cause No. 2023-CV-0282-A: Closed Meeting.

The Board ended the Executive session at 8:26 p.m.

18. 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 remainder of the 2024-2025 school year.
 - a. Occupational Therapist Co-Op
 - b. Special Education Counselor Lead
 - c. School Nurse
 - d. Teacher(s)

Dr. Tony Lara, Superintendent of Schools, recommended the retroactive employment of Priscilla Nicholson as Teacher retroactive (10 months) for the remainder of the 2024-2025 school year. He also recommended the employment of Arnolito Pineda as Occupational Therapist Co-Op (11 months), Michelle Villapando as Special Education Counselor Lead (11 months) and Ariana Villarreal as School Nurse (10 months) for the remainder of the 2024-2025 school year.

A motion was made by Abiel J. Cantú, seconded by David Briones, approving the employment of professional staff as recommended. The motion passed unanimously.

19. Adjournment.

A motion was made by David Briones, seconded by Abiel J. Cantú, adjourning the meeting at 8:30 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.