

December 11, 2024

The Board of Trustees of Willis ISD met in regular business session on December 11, 2024 at the Willis ISD Performing Arts Center, 10101 HW 75 North, Willis TX 77378

CALL MEETING TO ORDER

President Kyle Hoegemeyer called the Regular Business Meeting to order at 5:31 p.m. and announce that a quorum was present and that notice of the meeting had been posted for the time and manner required by law. Board Secretary, Chad Jones called the roll.

Members Present: Kyle Hoegemeyer, Paulett Traylor, Chad Jones, Nikita Lagway, Charles Perry, Scott Carson, and Cliff Williams

Member Absent:

Board President, Kyle Hoegemeyer turned the meeting over to Superintendent, Dr. Kimberley James. Dr. James announces that Parmley Elementary is conducting this board meeting.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE AND INVOCATION - Parmley Elementary School

Principal Allie Wilkins introduced third grader, Juan Gonzalez to lead the pledge and fourth grader, Victoria Walsh to lead the prayer.

ANNOUNCEMENTS / PROCLAMATION / RESOLUTIONS / RECOGNITIONS

Principal Wilkins show cased our fifth grade, Student Ambassadors. These students were nominated by their Teachers to participate in this group because of their great behavior and leadership skills. The students meet once a month. They assist the Teachers in the hallways and car rider line daily. This year they are working on a legacy project. They assist other students to feel more comfortable and safe. They also conduct fund raisers to assist with school supplies.

Elementary Student of the Month – Waylon Harper a first grader from Parmley Elementary. Waylon's teacher was unable to attend the board meeting but she did send a letter that was read by Principal Wilkins. This student is such a joy and honor to have in class. He shows incredible effort and kindness in everything that he does and brings a very positive attitude to school. He is Parmley proud and it shows in all that he does. His teacher is proud of the effort he displays daily. His teacher apologizes for not being at the meeting to celebrate his moment but will be waiting to greet him at the classroom door with a big hug and celebrate with him all over again. She is proud to be his teacher. Secondary Student of the Month – Stacy Jaramillo-Madrid, Lynn Lucas Middle School, was presented with her award from Principal, Dr. Kelly Moore. She is an exceptional student and role model. She is dedicated to her studies, show empathy to her peers, and displays unwavering resilience. This student takes pride in going over and beyond. She has a very deep understanding for passion and growth. She is always willing to share her knowledge. Because of her remarkable skills and leadership, she is a joy to teach. She is well on her way to a future filled

with success. Lynn Lucas is blessed to have her as a student. Congratulations! All eight of her teachers submitted information to honor and recognize her achievements.

Paws of Pride: - Jaime Fails, Director of Communication announced this award.

Kelly Locke has stepped up to take charge of the districts Wildkats Resource Center for the past two months. Our resource center has been without staff. She made sure that our Christmas giving program was a success. Jaime Fails honored our Board Vice President, Paulett Traylor for her service daily at the resource center. Kelly is one the kindest and hard-working employee, stated by the nominator. It was also stated that Kelly goes over and beyond. She is a pleasure to work with. She has taken on the demand to balance her primary role and manage the Wildkats Resource center. Our Christmas program serviced over a thousand families in our community. Thank you! Kelly Locke, Director of Council Services honored Board Vice President, Paulett Traylor for her daily help to ensure our families were serviced. Christmas would not happen without her endless efforts. We serviced 1220 families. She is tough as nails with a heart of gold. Thank you!

Dawn Trahan was selected based on her passionate, responsive, innovated, and dynamic. She has supported the new Science team by her willingness to learn and will to learn more in making sure Science is taught correctly. She cares about all of our students' learning. Her transition from Icoach to Science Coach has been nothing less than amazing. Someone commented that "with this transition she has assumed more responsibility". She is dedicated to assuring that teachers have an in-depth understanding of Science and a sound structured curriculum to follow. We are grateful for her efforts.

Kats on Patrol – Director of Federal Grants/Safety, Meghan Ballard and SRO, Deputy Hinkle presented Taliyah Raglin, a CC Hardy 3rd Grader with this reward. This is a former student of Deputy Hinkle. She was nominated by her Administrative Staff. She is the month's recipient because of her awareness not to allow another student to open an exterior door to let a teacher's husband enter the school. She reminded the student of the school rules that we do not open exterior doors for other adults.

Cross Country Girls Varsity Awards - Head Cross Country Coach, Aaron Breed presents the awards for our Cross Country Varsity Team for their achievements. These girls finished third in 6A district meets. After a nine year drought, they earned the opportunity to represent Willis in the twenty two Region meet.

Volleyball Varsity Awards – Coach Kayla Jenkins presents the awards for the Varsity Volleyball Team. What an honor and privilege it is to be honored here with this group of athletes. This is Coach Jenkins first coaching position. She has been in the district for a while teaching our elementary students. What a ride it has been. This is a wonderful program.

Football Awards – Coach Trent Miller presents the awards for the Varsity Football Team. Coach Miller spoke briefly about what this football programs means. We sold out every home game which speaks to the love and committee from our community. Thank you for showing up. Our boys hear you, see you, love you, and feeds off your energy. District 13-6A is a very competitive and not just football but every sport. We are blessed to do what we do here in Willis Texas. We wouldn't be who we are without the support of family, Board of Trustees, and Staff. It truly takes a village to have the success that we have had the past couple of years. With that we brought our town back to back district championships. Twelve and one and twenty two and two sounds real good in two years. It does not matter what district you plan in that is hard work. The commitment, dedications, blood, sweat, and tears started back in January and ending two days after Thanksgiving. Our athletes bleed purple each and every day they showed up. They gave their all. Even the athletic that are not being recognized tonight they too gave their all. We are thankful to be a part of this journey with this community. We will be back next year!

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There was one public comment by Matt Solomon. Mr. Solomon was at this meeting tonight as a parent and taxpayer in this district. He had two students to graduate from this school district and his grandchildren will soon be a part of Willis ISD. His profession is in the commercial HVAC/mechanical industry in which he has spent thirty years. These thirty years served as a union contractor consist of a chiller service technician, and current role as a manager. He presented some information about three contracts that were bid on for AR Turner Elementary, Cannan Elementary, and Willis High School. The first job walk was shut down by the principle due to the group being large and the school was in session. The job walk was rescheduled. The second job walk started at AR Turner Elementary at 5:00 pm on October 22, 2024. All were introduced to Daniel with EMA and the districts' Chief Officer of Construction and Operations. There was approximately ten to fifteen people walking the job including a few staff members for access purposes. During the walk it was mentioned that Lesos Mechanical was not there. The Chief Officer of Constructions and Operations acknowledged Letsos Mechanical's absence and proceeded to have a conversation in front of other people that he was once employed by this company. This seems to be a conflict of interest in a public money bidding process. While waiting in the hallway for other participants to complete their portion of the walk, the Chief Officer of Construction and Operations places a telephone call to Dain Luke, the sales manager at Letsos Mechanical. At a later date, Letsos Mechanical was given a private job walk by the Chief Officer of Construction and Operations accompanied by JCI Sales and an electrical subcontractor. Letsos Mechanical was awarded all three projects. It is Mr. Solomon's understanding that this is illegal when bidding on projects funded by public money. Harcon is the low bid on both the AR Turner and Canaan Elementary by \$501,300 less than Letsos. Both elementary schools' budgets are \$1,800,000 each and the High Schools is \$300,000. The surplus if the low bid was taken would be \$1,158,963. For several years, there have been bond issues on the ballots. There was just three bond issues that got voted down. Mr. Solomon would like to know that the money that was provided is being used efficiently. This

information is being presented now because it is viewed as problematic while bidding on projects. Mr. Solomon go on to state that this issue might have gone unnoticed if he wasn't there bidding on these projects. He does not understand why a company with an impeccable reputation (Harcon) that has worked in this school district for many years, to his knowledge have not missed a deadline, or had a problem that was not resolved, and currently working on a project at Lynn Lucas Middle School can be graded so poorly on the district's SCP evaluation sheet. Mr. Solomon iterates that is not currently employed nor has ever been employed by Harcon. Also speaks highly of their reputation around Willis because of his position as a union contractor. Then states that he is not saying that Letsos mechanical is not a qualified company as they too does good work and have a great reputation. In his opinion the district should not be paying over \$500,000 premium for their services. It appears suspicious and odd that the engineer that was hired to oversee this project was not consulted on the selection of the mechanical contractors. Mr. Solomon posed the following question, "If I found this one, how many others is there like this one?" Mr. Solomon is asking the board to look into the legality of the special consideration given to the Letsos Company for the extra bid walk that no other contractor was invited to and what is to be believed as a conflict of interest between Lesos and the Chief Officer of Construction and Operations for Willis ISD. This taxpayer asked that feedback be received from the Board of Trustees with the findings and actions of on this matter. The findings and actions will determine his next step in this matter.

STANDING INFORMATIONAL AND AD HOC REPORTS & ITEMS

Michelle Bischoff, Education Foundation Liaison presents Board of Trustees and Dr. Kimberly James with an \$84,115.13 check for the Grant for Success program. Twenty nine grants were awarded. This is the largest grant that the Education Foundation has issued to the District.

Director Meghan Ballard Arthur presented the Safety Performance Report: This is the November Safety update. The fire Marshall was out conducting their annual inspections. Those schools that had findings from the audit are being addressed. Still working on the district vulnerability reports. We are 50% complete on our Region 6 audits. We are streamlining are safety protocols district wide. The safety campus walks have been completed with the Principals and they are composing a safety wish list. Also shared that we have doubled the number of safety drills being conducted throughout the district. We will be conducting fire drills the first ten days when we return from Christmas Break as required by the State of Texas.

Travis Utecht, Exe. Director of Student Services and CTE reported the student enrollment for December 11, 2024 was 9,333 students that is an increase of 362 over this same date from last year. This encompass 191 secondary students and 171 elementary students with a net gain of 15 since our last board meeting. An attendance update will now be included. As a district we are at 93.85% which is a half a point increase from last year.

Chief Financial Officer, Garrett Matej, discussed a summary of WISD's Business Office financial reports and bill payments for the month of November 2024. Our revenue is at \$20.78 million. The majority of this revenue is state aide. The tax revenue is just now starting to flow in. We have expensed about \$22.7 million and the vast majority is payroll. Debt services is at \$4.07 million total revenue and the first payment is due February 15, 2025. We are looking at paying some debt off as early as April of 2025. Paying off the debt early will save some interest. This will be presented to the Board early spring. There is still a small amount of the 2015 bond uncommitted. The majority of the 2015 bond funds should be cleared off the books by the end of this year. 2020 Bond is down to its final projects that was identified. The remaining balance of this bond is anticipated at around \$3.3 million. 2022 bond at \$57.5 million has been tied to middle school #3 and the remaining funds will be committed to elementary school #7. The audit process for the 2023-2024 fiscal year has been completed. The auditors are currently completing the draft of this report and this report will be presented at the January 15th board meeting. Also wanted to make a note that the depository contract is being reviewed. This is with the Willis Education Committee. There is a potential exemption that the district can apply for if the benefit is found to do so. This will also be presented in January if a benefit is found. Chief Financial Officer, Garrett Matej announced that the full time bus drivers, part-time bus drivers, and driver trainee's hourly rate increased to \$20.52. This will increase the pay rate scale \$1.25. All current employees will also receive this increase. This will cost the district around \$44K for the remaining of this school year. This new rate is effective January 6, 2025.

Chief Officer of Construction and Operations, Robert Eaton states that we have lost multiple drivers due to the lower pay rate. He is confident that this rate increase will help retrieve the eight drivers that was recently lost. This new pay rate puts us ahead of both Conroe and Montgomery ISD but still lacking behind Cleveland ISD. At the recent job fair, we had nine people apply that have never driven a bus and one with a cdl. We are currently drivers that left to Conroe and Montgomery ISD to return to Willis with this new rate increase. Board Secretary, Chad Jones asked is there any way to speed this process up and will there be training during the Christmas Break. Robert Eaton responded that yes training can take place during the break however we only have one trainer and is only allowed to train five trainees at a time. It can take up to six weeks to get a driver trained and they must be 100% certified before they are allowed to run a route. The goal is to hire fifteen drivers by the end of January 2025. His department is pushing very hard to eliminate these double runs. Board Secretary, Chad Jones how many bus drivers are needed to stop the double runs from being ran. Robert Eaton responded we will need twenty two drivers to alleviate these double runs. Vice President, Paulett Traylor asked if we can tap into Region 6 to assist with training so we do not lose the trainees waiting to be trained and Robert Eaton stated he would look into that. Board Member, Scott Carson asked about the process of getting a bus driver trained. Robert Eaton explained that we will get a driver trained but they will still have to take and pass their test for certification. Board Member, Scott Carson followed up with a statement that the trainees will receive the new pay increase. Robert Eaton replied yes and also stated that trainees pay was an issue in the past and we were not retaining trainees. Board President, Kyle Hoegemeyer

states that it is important for our students to get home before 5:00 pm and the district decided a few years back that we would not limit the range for a students to provided transportation services for. The district was uncomfortable with not provided services for students that live within a mile radius and cares for the safety of our students.

Tracy Jackson, District Testing Coordinator discusses the fall 2024 TEA interim assessments as it will relate to the spring interims. Both test covers the same TEKS. This testing serves as a data point in time to assess our students' performance. Interims is not to be used as daily or classroom instruction, quizzes, or assignments. TEA has determined for Math and RLA these are more of adaptive tests due to the shorter length of the test. The first level of this test determines where the student will test at the second level. Tracy Jackson gave an in depth overview of the district's fall interim assessment and comparison of the MAP assessment results. There are district activities that are going to be pushed out. We have are focus on writing as it is not covered in our assessment testing. We use a writing program that will provide students with feed-back and opportunities to correct their work. We also utilize middle and end of chapter assessments that are created by the district. These assessments are being monitored and there are weekly meetings to discuss the data coming in. Then feed-back is provided back to the Principals to work on those areas of need. Vice President, Paulett asked if we all campuses have access to IXL or is this program only offered at specific campuses. Tracy Jackson replied I believe all campuses will have access unless she is mistaken. Dr. Ivan Velasco responded that not all campuses however all campuses will receive access. Board Secretary, Chad Jones states we cannot sugar coat anything we have to get test scores up. It was good to meet with the Principals and here them take accountability to improve and cannot wait to see the scores of the upcoming test. Dr. James states she definitely appreciate seeing the growth in the upper levels. What comes to mind when reviewing this data and she knows the Principals look at it daily, is that how our students at the lower end are improving in the red. Are other students are increasing significantly. We are doubling in our green areas. This is amazing but we are not meeting the needs of the lower level students. We have to really dig into this and address this need. Thank you Tracy for the presentation and Principal's for your hard work. Dr. Kimberley James, Superintendent discusses her entry plan report. Over the past few months, Dr. James has been meeting with the community and staff. Every conversation has reinforced how special our community is. This report will highlight what we accomplished so far, what we have learned and how we plan to use this information to develop a strategic plan. We will use these second and third phases to build a stronger school district. Dr. James has focused on listening, learning, and strengthening relationships. Her passion is student success and I am committed to leading with purpose and dedication. This strategic plan is built on three phases. We have just completed phase one, listening and learning. Phase two is to analyze and data collaborate. Reviewing what has been learned and implementing a plan. Phase three is to use the results gathered and turn them into a meaningful plan.

Every step taken is to create a thriving learning environment for our students. Dr. James' stated during her interview process she listened closely to the needs of this district and these needs are student achievement, governance team, family and community engagement, organization capacity and alignment, and talent, operations, and finance system that she classifies as the five pillars. Dr. James shared the data that was collected from the staff, students, and community concerning how to better support our students and improve this district. The next update will be around March 2025.

CONSENT AGENDA

Approval of Minutes.

Motion by Cliff Williams and seconded by Scott Carson to approve the Consent Agenda items as presented. Motion carried unanimously, 7-0.

CLOSED SESSION

The Board entered into closed session at 7:07 p.m. for the purpose of considering matters for which closed sessions are authorized by Title 5, Chapter 551, Texas Government Code Sections (.071 - .084): 551.074

A. Discuss Teacher Resignations and Consider Approval of Teacher Appointments. Texas Government Code 551.074

B. Real Estate: Pursuant to Texas Government Code 551.072

OPEN SESSION

The Board reconvened into Open Session at 9:23 p.m.

Board President, Kyle Hoegemeyer asked if there are any motions from closed session.

Motion by Cliff Williams and seconded by Paulett Traylor to accept the Superintendent's recommendation on the professional personnel listed. Motion carried unanimously, 7-0.

Motion by Cliff Williams and seconded by Nikita Lagway to accept the Superintendent's recommendation to extend James "Trent" Miller, Athletic Director/Head Football Coach contract for three years. Motion carried unanimously, 7-0.

Dr. Kimberley James introduces our Principal for Calfee Middle School, Dr. Gerald Schattle. Dr. Schattle is looking forward to serving Willis ISD.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ITEMS

Discuss and Consider Approval of the Mentor Program Out of State Trip.

Kelly Locke, Director of Guidance Counseling states that Leigh Ann Elmore, Lead Mentor Coordinator and new hire Tiffany Moore, Mentor Program Facilitator would like to attend the National Mentor Institute in Washington DC January 30th – February 1st 2025

Motion by Paulette Traylor and seconded by Scott Carson to accept the Superintendent's recommendation to approve the Mentor Program out of State Trip. Motion carried unanimously, 7-0.

Discuss and Consider Approval of Willis ISD 2025-2026 Course Catalogs

Executive Director of Student Services and CTE, Travis Utecht, the following new courses: Advanced Floral Design; Plumbing Technology II; Orchestra (3 levels); Personal Financial Literacy; PFL and Economics. This course catalog has been redesigned to be more intuitive and easier to navigate to find the information needed to make decisions concerning the courses needed. These programs of study and courses align with the needs/request and have been updated to match the state. Vice President, Paulett Traylor asked if this updated information was sent out. Travis Utecht responded yes and elaborates further on the courses listed

Motion by Scott Carson and seconded by Paulette Traylor to accept the Superintendent's recommendation and approve the 2025-2026 Willis ISD Course Catalog including the new course as listed. Motion carried unanimously, 7-0.

Discuss and Consider Approval of Campus Improvement Plans

Executive Director of Accountability, Research and Evaluations, Dr. Susan Clardy, discussed that the Board of Trustees approved the District Improvement Plan (DIP) at the October 9th, 2024 board meeting. The formative assessment took place November 8th – November 15th, 2024. This plan was presented to the Willis Education improvement Council (WEIC) on November 19th, 2024. The next formative review is on January 21st – January 24th, 2025. The Campus Improvement Plan for the 2024-2025 School Year was also presented to the Board of Trustees at the October 9th, 2024 board meeting. Each campus principal shared three areas of content for approval. The Board of Trustees asked that these campus improvement plans be revised and presented at a later board meeting for approval. Each campus was assigned a District Administrator to collaborate with on revisions.

The Principals and District Administrators met with the Campus Educational Improvement Council (CEIC) for each campus to review and revise. Principals and District Administrators conducted reviews with Board of Trustees (no more than 3 members per review) between November 19th – November 22nd, 2024. The Campus Improvement Plans are being submitted for Board of Trustee Approval.

Motion by Paulett Traylor and seconded by Scott Carson to accept the Superintendent's recommendation and approve the Campus Improvement Plan for the 2024-2025 School Year. Motion carried unanimously, 7-0.

Discuss and Consider Approval of Grant Applications

Director Meghan Ballard Arthur presented the following competitive grant applications for approval:

1. Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEARUP) – This is a 7 year federal discretionary grant program designed to increase the number of low income students who are prepared to enter and succeed in post-secondary education. Meghan Ballard stated that she was notified by TEA yesterday that this grant is no longer available.
2. 2025 Patrick Leahy Farm to School Grant – This grant promotes agricultural education and increases the amount of local food served. The district will have to provide a 25% match for an award range of \$5k - \$50K. This is a 24 month grant.
3. Middle School Collaborative Language Acquisition Strategies for Success – This grant is a part of an education innovation and research at no cost to the district. MS Class is a one year project that integrates evidence based teacher professional learning and mentoring activities to improve outcomes for Emergent Bilingual students in grades 6th – 8th grade. The award amount will be based on the number of Bilingual Teachers and students

Board Member, Scott Carson asked for clarification of the grants dollar amount. Meghan Ballard replied the district could receive up to \$50K and the school district would have to match 25%

Motion by Scott Carson and seconded by Paulett Traylor to accept the Superintendent's recommendation and approve the grant applications as listed. Motion carried unanimously, 7-0.

Discuss and Consider Approval of General Contractor for Elementary #7

Coordinator Hughes-Shropshire discussed that Durotech was ranked number one but due to not being able to negotiate agreed upon terms, the district ended negotiations in writing and begin negotiations with Stewart Builders, ranked number two. The district was successful with negotiating the following: GC: 2.6% and CM 1.83% a total of

Board Secretary, Chad Jones asked when the bid goes out, the contractors will have 24 hours in advance and the answer was yes. Also told Kelly Hughes-Schropshire great job

Motion by Chad Jones and seconded by Charles Perry to accept the Superintendent's recommendation and award the contract to Stewart Builders as the General Contractors of Willis ISD Elementary School #7 as presented. Motion carried unanimously, 7-0.

Discuss and Approve the selecting of a contractor for the Willis High school Locker Room Privacy Screens

Chief of Construction and Operations, Robert Eaton, discussed that the Board of Trustees approved the JOC delivery method in May 2024. The district received three bids from the following companies:

1. Stewart Builders
2. B&C Constructors
3. Nash Industries

This project will be funded from the 2015 Bond, \$25,519. If the \$5K contingency is not used it will be returned back to the district.

Motion by Chad Jones and seconded by Scott Carson that the Board accepts the Superintendent's recommendation and approve the selection of Stewart Builders for the Willis High School Locker Room Privacy Screen Walls as presented and authorized the Superintendent to issue a contract to Stewart Builders. Motion carried unanimously, 7-0.

Discuss and Consider Approval of FF&E Vendor for Lynn Lucas Middle School Fine Arts Addition

Chief of Construction and Operations, Robert Eaton, discussed at the June 2024 board meeting the board approved the cooperative delivery method for the FF&E 2022 Bond Projects. The District received the following three bids:

1. Educator's Depot
2. Wenger
3. Melhart

Wenger was selected to have the best value for the district. This project will be funded from the 2022 Bond. Board Secretary, Chad Jones asked for clarification for the dollar amount listed in the motion as \$65,529.57 and should be \$66,529.57. Robert Eaton states this was a typo.

Board President, Kyle Hoegemeyer state this was a typo with the correct amount being \$66,529.57, Motion by Chad Jones and seconded by Scott Carson to accept the Superintendent's recommendation and approve the selection of Wenger for the FF&E vendor for the Lynn Lucas Fine Arts Addition. Motion carried unanimously.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS:

President Hoegemeyer thanks Trent Miller for his record of 22-2

SUPERINTENDENT COMMENTS

Dr. James wished everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Board Member, Chad Jones it was really nice to sit down with each Principal and this has given him a positive outlook in the direction we are heading.

FUTURE BUSINESS / MEETINGS: Dr. James announces the following:

The regular January Board Meeting will be held on January 15th, 2025 at 5:30 p.m. in the Sharon Hill Jennette Willis ISD Administration Building at 612 N. Campbell Street in Willis.

ADJOURNMENT OF REGULAR MEETING

Motion by Cliff Williams and seconded by Nikita Lagway to adjourn. Motion carried unanimously, 7-0.

The meeting adjourned at 10:03 pm.