

April 16, 2025

The Board of Trustees of Willis ISD met in Regular Business Session on April 16, 2025 at the Sharon Hill Jennette Administration Building in the Willis ISD Boardroom, 612 N. Campbell Street, Willis, Texas 77378, and the business to be conducted is listed below.

CALL MEETING TO ORDER

President Kyle Hoegemeyer called the Regular Business Meeting to order at 5:42 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: Cliff Williams, Scott Carson, Kyle Hoegemeyer, Paulett Traylor, Nikita Lagway, and Chad Jones

Member Absent: Charles Perry

President Kyle Hoegemeyer turned the meeting over to Superintendent, Dr. Kim James. Dr. James asked both Brabham MS and Roark Pre-K Center to come forward.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE AND INVOCATION – Brabham MS & Roark Pre-K Center

Brabham MS students led the Pledge of Allegiance and Invocation

ANNOUNCEMENTS / PROCLAMATION / RESOLUTIONS / RECOGNITIONS

Secondary Student of the Month- Brinlee Morris

Brabham MS Dean Chastity Simon announced 7th grader Brinlee Morris as Student of the Month, highlighting her bright, hardworking nature, excellent attitude, A+ average in science, and active participation and leadership in cheer, basketball, track, and soccer. She is described as a true leader academically and athletically, an all-around great student who excels in every sport, is respectful, kind-hearted, and always tries her best, embodying the spirit of a Fighting Bobcat.

Elementary Student of the Month – Jayce McFadden

Principal Lewis announced Jayce McFadden as the Roark Early Education Center Student of the Month. His teacher, Miss Bernal, described Jayce as exemplifying great character by being responsible (helping classmates, modeling good choices), safe (making choices that keep himself and others safe), respectful (showing respect to teachers and classmates), and always striving to be his best while motivating his classmates to do the same.

Communication Specialist, Kayla Bracota presented the PAWS of Pride awards for April to Dakotah Epple, Lindsey Moore, and Yolanda Nephew. Lindsey Moore makes learning fun and builds student confidence, Yolanda Nephew creates a safe and supportive classroom, and Dakotah Eppel is a supportive teammate with a positive attitude and fresh ideas.

Director of Federal Programs/Compliance & Grants, Meghan Ballard presented the Kats on Patrol award to Willis HS senior, Kalya Thomas, nominated by Mr. Kennedy for her instrumental role in coordinating campus safety patrols as the Patrol Division Commander in the Law and Public Service Academy. Kalya schedules patrols, manages volunteer opportunities, and applies her Level Two Security Officer certification from DPS. She plans to join the US Air Force as a security forces specialist.

Director of Athletics Trent Miller recognized his staff and athletes for their phenomenal achievements across Willis ISD athletics. The speaker is recognizing exceptional athletes from the recently concluded wrestling, powerlifting, and boys' and girls' soccer seasons, with awards to be presented. He also gave a shout-out to the baseball and softball teams heading to playoffs. Gratitude was expressed to Dr. James, the board, administrative staff, police, custodial, and maintenance for their support.

Acknowledgement of District Associate Principals, Assistant Principals and Deans of Instruction by Exe. Director of Elementary Education, Ivan Velasco and Exe. Director of Secondary Education, Noah Hollander. The assistant principals for their essential, often behind-the-scenes leadership. They are described as problem solvers, encouragers, and protectors of school culture who manage discipline, support instruction, and respond to challenges with grace, making an undeniable and lasting impact on schools and the district.

April 16, 2025

Dr. Larry Lewis presents Board of Trustees with certificate of completion of Lone Star Governance Training. He highlighted that Exemplar Cohort members, including the school board and superintendent, completed a required initial 16 hours of Lone Star Governance training over two long days (1 PM to 9 PM on February 27th and May 4th), emphasizing the significant time commitment and the rigorous, intense nature of the training.

Director of Fine Arts Ken Labonski presented "One Team One Purpose," an art project celebrating the district's first year with dedicated art teachers at every elementary campus, alongside the popular secondary program. Each art department received a 2x2 Masonite sheet with lines and was tasked with filling it in a way that expressed their department while maintaining line contrast. The collected pieces were assembled to represent the district coming together with individual artistic expression, mirroring Willis ISD's collaborative approach to planning, celebrating contributions, achieving success, and setting standards.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Board President Kyle Hoegemeyer announced that audience comments would only be heard during the public comment section, which is limited to 30 minutes total, with each speaker allowed a maximum of three minutes. Groups with the same viewpoint must appoint a representative. Speakers must respect privacy and will be referred to administrative channels if they haven't sought resolution there. Disruptions will not be tolerated, and the board will not respond during public comments.

Speaker Diane Hivnor focused on "garbage in, garbage out," specifically referencing school board position number five. She stated that a group of taxpayers has been investigating fraud and corruption allegations from the previous superintendent's and past board president's (current position five trustee) tenures. After extensive research, they are pursuing these allegations at the state and local levels, urging involvement from the Texas Rangers, Montgomery County law enforcement, and even the FBI to hold those involved accountable.

STANDING INFORMATIONAL AND AD HOC REPORTS & ITEMS

Student Enrollment/Attendance Report, Travis Utecht, Exe. Director of Student Services and CTE reported that as of April 14, 2025, district enrollment was 9,350 students, a 341 increase from the previous year (182 secondary, 159 elementary). District-wide attendance for March 2025 was strong, with five campuses improving year-over-year and ten improving from February to March. Cannan Elementary School was recognized as the "momentum maker" with a 2.3% attendance increase from February to March.

Financial / Bill Payment Report/Bond Summary, Chief Financial Officer, Garrett Matej reported that as of the end of March, the district collected \$66.8 million in revenues (95% of local revenue, 75% of total revenue with remaining mostly state aid) and had \$53.4 million in expenditures. March expenditures were slightly lower due to the district being off for a week. A tax report from Leslie Scotty with Purdue Brandon will follow.

Invest Report, Chief Financial Officer, Garrett Matej noted that the board books contained the quarterly investment report in its entirety for the second quarter, noting a slight decrease of 0.54% in the district's investment pool interest rates compared to the first quarter, with an anticipated continued downward trend. Despite this, the district still realized an average annual percentage yield of 4.54% for the second quarter, earning almost \$5.7 million in interest through March (\$3.65 million from construction/bond funds and \$1.7 million from general funds, projected to reach \$2.9-\$3 million by year-end). He will monitor rates for the 2025-2026 budget, anticipating lower interest earnings next year.

Delinquent Tax Report, Leslie Scotty with Purdue Brandon accompanied by new associate attorney Cooper Boger, presented a report on delinquent taxes through 2023 (excluding early 2024 personal property turnovers). The report detailed the status of delinquent accounts, with the largest portion "action pending" (mostly 2023), followed by "deferral" (over 65 homestead), "suit litigation," and "bad address." A dollar range chart helps prioritize collection efforts, noting most high-value accounts are deferred or in litigation. The 2023 tax year has the most delinquent accounts. Historical collection data shows increasing collection rates for older tax years. The last tax sale was April 1st, and the next online tax sale is scheduled for July 1st, with information available on the district website. They attend monthly dockets at the 284th District Court to manage litigation.

Director Meghan Ballard opened the 20-day public comment period for the 2025-2026 federal grant applications, explaining their aim to increase academic achievement, support teachers/leaders, and fund supplemental

April 16, 2025

programs. She highlighted the district's current state and federal program funds, noting the compliance measures involved. Ballard then briefly overviewed the intended grant applications: ESSA (Title I for low-income students, Title II for teacher/leader growth, Title III for English learners, Title IV for well-rounded education/safety/technology), Perkins (CTE), IDEA (special education services for ages 3-21 and preschool), state supplemental visually impaired funds, and the pending LASSO grant for instructional leadership. Public comments on these applications are welcome via phone or email.

Board Member Questions and Responses:

- A board member inquired about security-related grant programs, specifically for metal detectors, referencing past ballistic film grants. Ballard stated she hasn't seen specific metal detector grants, and current safety grants focus on infrastructure (related to Chapter 61) and often require significant matching funds, which she tries to avoid.
- Another board member asked about the two participating non-profit schools. Ballard identified them as Covenant Christian School and Lifestyle Christian Academy, explaining they will share a portion of the district's Title II and Title IV funding allocation as mandated by ESSA, without increasing the overall funding amount.

EB/ESL Program Overview, Bilingual Coordinator, Erika Del Rio presented information on the district's bilingual and ESL programs, noting a significant enrollment increase of 129 students in the past three years. She explained the Texas identification process for emergent bilingual students and detailed Willis ISD's one-way dual language immersion program (80/20 Spanish/English in Pre-K, gradually shifting to 50/50 by 3rd-5th grade) implemented at Hardy, Canon, and ROAR. The district employs 33 bilingual teachers, with 14 fully certified and 19 receiving district support for certification. The ESL program is a pullout model (language arts instruction by certified ESL teachers while students are in mainstream for other subjects).¹ Professional development efforts included a T-OL regional conference and upcoming Title III symposium, focusing on culturally responsive strategies and curriculum resources. Community involvement includes family engagement nights. Recruitment efforts for bilingual teachers are expanding beyond district job fairs to external events, facing challenges related to candidates not wanting to relocate.

[1. Bilingual / ESL - Willis Independent School District](#)



www.willisisd.org

Board Member Questions and Responses:

- A board member asked if the ESL program is pullout in 5th grade, and Del Rio clarified that the ESL certified teacher is typically the language arts teacher, which meets TEA compliance.
- Another board member inquired if the bilingual program is a late-exit model, which Del Rio confirmed (exiting around 5th grade). The board member then questioned why a late exit model is used, citing concerns about math scores in middle school after students transition from 50/50 instruction. Del Rio acknowledged the concern and agreed to further discussion about potentially transitioning to an early-exit model.
- A board member asked about recruiting efforts beyond job fairs. Del Rio mentioned outreach to other districts, word-of-mouth referrals, and attending external job fairs (like the one in Kingsville). She noted the challenge is convincing candidates to move from their current locations, and feedback suggests it's more about family ties than pay.

April 16, 2025

CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Approval of Minutes
- B. Approval of Conroe Regional Day School for the Deaf Shared Service Agreement
- C. Approval of Certification of Provision of Instructional Materials Survey 2025-2026
- D. Purchase of High Quality Instructional Material
- E. Selecting Winning Way as Authority having Jurisdiction (AHJ) for Elementary #7
- F. Delivery Method of CSP for WHS Parking Lot Expansion
- G. Select UES Professionals for Willis ISD Ninth Grade Center Geo Technical Testing
- H. Professional Services Contract with RL Townsend for the Construction Audit Elem. #7
- I. Selecting Terracon for Willis ISD Transportation Facility Material Testing
- J. 2025 -2026 Regular School Board Meeting Schedule

Motion by Cliff Williams and seconded by Paulette Traylor to approve the Consent Agenda items as presented.
Motion carried unanimously.

CLOSED SESSION

The Board entered into closed session at 6:52 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. Tex. Gov't Code 551.074
- B. Discuss and Consider Professional Chapter 21 Teachers and Administrative Contracts for 2024-2025. Tex. Gov't Code 551.074
- C. Discuss and Consider Professional Non-Chapter 21 Contracts for 2025-2026. Tex. Gov't Code 551.074

OPEN SESSION

The Board reconvened into Open Session at 8:10 p.m. President 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 professional personnel as listed. Motion carried unanimously.

Motion by Cliff Williams and seconded by Paulett Traylor to accept the Superintendent's recommendation on the professional Chapter 21 contracts listed. Motion carried unanimously.

Motion by Cliff Williams and seconded by Scott Carson to accept the Superintendent's recommendation on the professional Non-Chapter 21 contracts listed. Motion carried unanimously.

Board President Kyle Hoegemeyer announced the reclassification of the Executive Director of Student Services and CTE to the Executive Director of Human Resources, congratulating Travis Utecht.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ITEMS

Discuss and Consider Approval of the Acceptance of the 2025 – 2027 Interactive Online Learning Grant
The district has been awarded a \$499,926.20 Interactive Online Learning Grant for 2025-2027 to support social studies students in grades 6-12. The grant will fund the implementation of Newsela, an online learning resource shown to improve literacy and social studies knowledge. The funding covers the cost of Newsela for all secondary students for two years, as well as professional development and substitute costs for teacher planning. The board moved to accept the grant.

Motion by Paulett Traylor and seconded by Cliff Williams to accept the Superintendent's recommendation. Motion carried unanimously

Discuss and Consider Approval of an Additional Sergeant Position

The speaker requested the addition of a school resource sergeant to improve supervision and effectiveness of the SRO division due to increasing challenges. The current structure has one sergeant supervising 12 deputies across 11 campuses, exceeding recommended span of control. An additional sergeant would allow for better oversight, faster response times by dividing deputies into north and south zones, and enhanced effectiveness of the SRO program.

April 16, 2025

Motion by Chad Jones and seconded by Scott Carson to accept the Superintendent's recommendation. Motion carried unanimously

Discuss and Consider Approval to adopt an Order Authorizing the Defeasance and Redemption of Certain Outstanding Obligations of the District; and Containing other Related Provisions

The speaker presented a plan to pay off just over \$4.75 million in existing 2016 bonds (from the 2015 election) early through an order of defeasance to save on future interest payments. This early payoff would eliminate \$7.2 million in scheduled payments through 2045, resulting in a net savings of over \$3.1 million in interest. A board member confirmed that the targeted bonds were from the 2016 issuance, and the speaker clarified that paying the \$4.75 million now would indeed clear the \$7.2 million debt and save the \$3.1 million in future interest.

Motion by Scott Carson and seconded by Paulett Traylor to accept the Superintendent's recommendation. Motion carried unanimously

Discuss and Consider Approval of Debt Service Fund Budget Amendments for 2024 – 2025 Budget Year

The speaker corrected the agenda order, then requested approval to amend the 2024-2025 debt service fund budget by just over \$1.2 million. Due to higher-than-projected revenues, they can now pursue a larger debt defeasance (early payoff) than initially planned. The amended \$27 million budget includes both the originally scheduled debt payments and the funds for the early payoff.

Motion by Paulett Traylor and seconded by Chad Jones to accept the Superintendent's recommendation. Motion carried unanimously

Discuss and Consider Approval of action to adopt an Order Authorizing the Issuance, Sale and Delivery of Willis Independent School District Unlimited Tax School Building Bonds, in One or More Series; and Containing Other Related Matters

The district seeks approval for a bond order to issue \$45 million from the remaining \$87.7 million of the \$102.7 million Proposition a bond approved in May 2024. This \$45 million will fund the transportation center, parking lot additions, and partial construction of the ninth-grade center. The remaining \$42.7 million is planned for issuance in summer 2026, potentially benefiting from lower interest rates, avoiding arbitrage, and allowing for more strategic debt structuring based on another year of property value data. The requested bond order sets parameters including a maximum amount of \$45 million, a maximum true interest cost of 5.5%, a maximum term of 30 years, and designates pricing officers.

Motion by Scott Carson and seconded by Paulett Traylor to accept the Superintendent's recommendation. Motion carried unanimously

Discuss and Consider Approval of District Wide Re-key JOC contract with Millennium Project Solution

Willis ISD conducted a JOC order contract walk for a rekey project on February 20th, with two vendors bidding. The project includes a key machine, grand master programming, cores, blanks, and hardware sets, with installation to unify the key system. Millennium submitted the lower bid at \$1,171,570.68.

Board Member Questions and Responses:

- A board member asked how often this type of district-wide rekeying is done, noting they don't recall it happening during their tenure. The response clarified that while individual rekeying occurs, this is a district-wide standardization effort to have one key work across all campuses due to different systems being installed as new schools were built.
- Another board member inquired about the funding source. The response explained it's a combination of partial general funding and a Safe Cycle grant, which will cover approximately \$400,000 specifically for exterior doors of instructional campuses, lessening the impact on bond funds.

April 16, 2025

Motion by Chad Jones and seconded by Scott Carson to accept the Superintendent's recommendation. Motion carried unanimously

Discuss and Consider Approval to select Gamma Construction as the General Contractor for the Ninth Grade Center. The district is in the final step of selecting a general contractor for the 9th-grade campus. Negotiations were conducted under Texas Government Code 2269.253. Gamma Construction was ranked highest by the evaluation team, with fees of 2.79% for general conditions and 1.49% for Construction Manager (CM) at Risk, totaling 4.19%, and pre-construction costs of \$20,000.

Motion by Chad Jones and seconded by Scott Carson to accept the Superintendent's recommendation. Motion carried unanimously

Discuss and Consider Approval to select Pyrotex as the Vendor for the Willis Multi-Campus Voice Evacuation System. Willis ISD needs to update fire systems at Cannan, AR Turner, and Brabham MS to include voice evacuation by the end of October. Two bids were received, and Pyroex was ranked the best value at \$349,817. While the goal is summer completion, potential part delays for one campus might push some work to the fall break.

Motion by Chad Jones and seconded by Scott Carson to accept the Superintendent's recommendation. Motion carried unanimously

Discuss and Consider Approval of Willis ISD Facility Assessment Contract to Huckabee

The district is seeking approval to hire Huckabee for \$49,500 to conduct an Educational Facility Assessment (EFA) across elementary, middle, and high schools, as well as support areas. The EFA will measure the quality, sustainability, functionality, and educational effectiveness of the facilities, providing a priority list for the district. Seven vendors submitted proposals.

Board Member Questions and Responses:

- A board member asked for more detail about the assessment's scope, emphasizing its role in understanding the current state of facilities for future long-range planning. The response clarified that the EFA will be the first phase of long-range planning, involving a comprehensive evaluation of the interior, exterior, systems (electrical, roofing, foundation), and overall condition of every district-owned building using scanners and detailed assessments. This will help determine repair needs, potential for expansion, and whether renovation outweighs rebuilding costs, providing the necessary information for the subsequent long-range plan.
- Another board member asked if the assessment includes the old Roark building. The response clarified that it will include the back portion (new addition) of the ROAR building but not the original classroom building.
- A board member pointed out a discrepancy, as the agenda mentioned updates for two years. The response clarified this was a mistake; the EFA is a one-time assessment with a 90-180 day completion timeframe, after which Huckabee's contract is fulfilled. It was further explained that the resulting report will be a "living, breathing document" for the district to update as repairs and replacements occur.
- A board member pointed out a discrepancy, as the agenda mentioned updates for two years. The response clarified this was a mistake; the EFA is a one-time assessment with a 90-180 day completion timeframe, after which Huckabee's contract is fulfilled. It was further explained that the resulting report will be a "living, breathing document" for the district to update as repairs and replacements occur.
- A board member expressed strong support for the EFA, echoing the need for a roadmap and long-term plan, especially with newer administrative staff. They believe this assessment will be crucial for future bond elections, allowing the district to strategically plan upgrades for specific campuses. They also thanked the vendors for their competitive bidding.

April 16, 2025

Motion by Scott Carson and seconded by Chad Jones to accept the Superintendent's recommendation. Motion carried unanimously

Discuss and Consider Approval of the Change Order for the Hellas Yates Field Landscape Turf Project
The district is seeking board approval for a \$39,200 change order with Hellas for additional turf work at Yates Stadium. This work, near the new handicap ramp, was initially believed to be under the \$25,000 threshold not requiring board approval but has since been recognized as exceeding it.

Motion by Chad Jones and seconded by Scott Carson to accept the Superintendent's recommendation in the amount of \$39,200.01 the new contract amount will be \$768,720.01. Motion carried unanimously

A board member commented that the change order would be a "lifesaver," saving the district the expense and effort their maintenance department was incurring by power washing the dirt in that area.

Discuss and Consider Approval of the Change Order for the Hellas WHS Track Extension

The district is requesting board approval for a \$6,815 change order to Helas for the high school auxiliary field track extension project. During soil removal, an unexpected electrical junction box was discovered underground, requiring Helas to stop work, relocate the box, and pull new wiring. This change order brings the total contract amount to \$121,040.

Motion by Scott Carson and seconded by Chad Jones to accept the Superintendent's recommendation which will be paid out of 2015 bond funds. Motion carried unanimously

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS:

A board member thanked all teachers, principals, and staff for their tutoring efforts in preparing students for the STAAR test, acknowledging their hard work. Dr. Lewis apologized for previously omitting the Superintendents' Administrative Assistant and Clerk, thanking them for their significant work in preparing, negotiating, and coordinating the Lone Star Governance training, admitting it was a challenging process.

SUPERINTENDENT COMMENTS

Superintendent James thanked Dr. Lewis for recognizing the board's grueling 16-hour Lone Star Governance training, emphasizing its importance for future student achievement-focused board goals. She also acknowledged the STAAR testing, likening it to a playoff game where the hard work of teachers and staff will hopefully result in positive outcomes, noting the positive changes in adult behaviors.

FUTURE BUSINESS / MEETINGS: May 14, 2025 Strategic Planning Workshop @ 4:30pm and Regular Board Meeting @ 5:30 pm

May 30, 2025 Special Board Meeting @ 8:00 am

ADJOURNMENT OF REGULAR MEETING

Motion by Cliff Williams and seconded by Paulett Traylor to adjourn. Motion carried unanimously.
The meeting adjourned at 8:42 pm.