

June 9, 2025

The Board of Trustees of Willis ISD met in Regular Business Session on June 9, 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 5:30 PM. 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: All members are present, Cliff Williams, Scott Carson, Charles Perry, Kyle Hoegemeyer, Paulett Traylor, Nikita Lagway, and Chad Jones

President Kyle Hoegemeyer turned the meeting over to Superintendent, Dr. Kim James.

### **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE AND INVOCATION**

Dr. James asked Executive Director of Human Resources, Travis Utecht to lead the Pledge of Allegiance and Invocation.

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS / PROCLAMATION / RESOLUTIONS / RECOGNITIONS**

Director of Athletics Trent Miller recognized his staff and athletes for their phenomenal achievements across Willis ISD athletics. While many of our student-athletes couldn't be here tonight due to other engagements, our community, school district, and athletic department are incredibly proud of their accomplishments. Coaches from both teams presented the athletes, recognizing their outstanding achievements on and off the field.

Our softball team earned a Bi-District Championship this season. Seven players were named to the All-District team for their on-field performance, and an impressive eleven student-athletes received Academic All-District honors.

The baseball coach extended a special thanks to his coaching staff for their unwavering commitment, dedication, and hard work. The baseball team proudly claimed back-to-back district championships, achieving the most district wins since joining 6A. Ten players received All-District honors, and fifteen players were recognized with Academic All-District honors.

### **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.

Diane Hivnor - The presenter stated that trustee number five should be "fired" based on a pattern of concerning behavior and a perceived lack of accountability.

Key highlights in the presentation included:

- **DWI Charge and Conviction:** On September 12, 2023, Trustee Number Five was charged with DWI. Despite this, and a subsequent guilty verdict by a jury on September 30, 2024, no action was taken by the board.
- **Allegations of Fraud and Corruption:** Throughout the year following the DWI charge, the board was reportedly provided with information concerning "possible fraud and corruption" involving the trustee. Again, no action ensued.
- **"Arrogant Outrage" at Board Meeting:** A critical incident on May 14, 2025, was cited as the "last straw." During this school board meeting, Trustee Number Five displayed "vicious, unprofessional and nasty

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demeanor," including an "uncontrolled angry outburst" toward a district employee. This behavior was deemed unacceptable and seen as intimidation and harassment.

The speaker asserted that the trustee's actions jeopardize the district's "new vision" for a "trustworthy and forward-thinking school district." The presenter emphasized that the continued inaction by the board undermines accountability efforts. The presentation concluded with a firm demand for the trustee's immediate dismissal.

Bob Holden - Presented several points, beginning by acknowledging positive legislative changes for the district. He suggested incorporating LifeVac devices into cafeterias, noting previous resistance and the former availability of free devices for schools. Bob Holden also discussed anti-blue light glasses and screen time warnings, referencing an online presentation. Shifting to a "cute fact," he mentioned recent NASA research indicating that a lack of pollution, leading to fewer cumulus clouds, is contributing to global warming, humorously labeling it the "great green hoax." For citizenship education, he proposed assigning summer reading on the Constitution using Hillsdale College's online presentations, followed by the Federalist Papers. The speaker then touched on the potential return to "real US money" via the GENIUS Act and stable coin, suggesting students learn about it. In education, he highlighted \$1 billion for private school choice and \$8 billion for teacher raises, especially for top performers. He urged emphasizing critical thinking over "emotional intelligence," which he called an oxymoron that trains "con artists." Lastly, he noted that parents can now opt out of vaccines online and that districts can remove dangerous students. The presenter provided hand-outs with key topic summaries.

Abby Yarbarough - Addressed the board, sarcastically thanking them for their "obstruction, slander, and defamatory tactics" against families in the community. She asserted that the board's refusal to prioritize children over personal interests fueled recent legislative victories. Yarbarough accused some trustees of complicity in "unchecked corruption and irresponsibility" which, she claimed, led to the district being named the "third worst performing district in the entire Houston area."

Expressing fatigue with supporting a district that "enables grossly negligent leadership" and prioritizes "image" over truth, Yarbarough demanded transparency before any tax increases. She stated that the era of "unchecked backdoor dealings and exploiting our 68% economically disadvantaged community" is ending due to community action. Yarbarough concluded by thanking allies in Austin for bringing about change and expressed hope for a better direction, specifically acknowledging the current superintendent and a few board members for their support of positive change.

## **STANDING INFORMATIONAL AND AD HOC REPORTS & ITEMS**

### Willis ISD Parent and Family Engagement

Director of Federal Prog. /Compliance, & Grants, Meghan Ballard presented the Parent Family Engagement Plan for the 2025-2026 school year, seeking its approval as part of the consent agenda. The plan is mandated by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), emphasizing that federal law requires it because family engagement demonstrably improves student academic and personal growth.

The presentation distinguished between mere parent involvement (attending events) and parent engagement (families actively partnering in their child's education through collaboration, mutual respect, and shared responsibility). Shifting to engagement yields powerful results like higher academic performance and increased student motivation. Given that over 85% of a child's waking learning hours are spent at home, equipping and engaging parents significantly multiplies the school's impact.

The presenter expressed gratitude to the IT&L team, campus principals, and instructional coaches for their efforts this school year, which led to more parents attending academic events and receiving resources to support learning at home.

The 2025-2026 policy focuses on collaborative planning, effective communication, support and training, partnership building, staff development, community coordination, and annual evaluation. The policy was presented to the WEIC on May 6th and received no edits or disapproval.

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**Board Member's comment:** "We can definitely see a big difference. Great job."

#### Student Enrollment/Attendance Report

Exe. Director of Secondary Education, Noah Hollander reported that On May 24th, 2025, the district's enrollment reached 9,350 students, a gain of 345 students from the previous year, split between secondary and elementary levels. Attendance percentages for May 2025 show eight campuses improved from May 2024. Brabham Middle School also received the Momentum Maker Award for attendance.

#### Financial / Bill Payment Report/Bond Summary

Chief Financial Officer, Garrett Matej reported that he is confident about the current fiscal year's budget, with over 97% of local revenues collected through May and a projected 100% collection by the end of August. Remaining state aid will be received over the summer, with a September settlement. Current expenditures are under \$90 million, with projections indicating they won't exceed that amount.

#### Construction Update Report

Chief of Constructions and Operations, Robert Eaton provided a monthly construction update focused on bond projects, with an emphasis on Calfee Middle School, opening in August. Despite a 45-day delay, the project reached substantial completion on schedule. They also presented plans for a new Transportation Center, designed by VLK, which includes a training room and dispatch area, located on 42 acres at the north end of town. The facility will have space for 80 additional buses and on-site driver training. Furthermore, they discussed Willis High School parking lot expansions (Lots EH and I) to be completed before school starts to compensate for a removed parking area. Finally, the Lynn Lucas Middle School fine arts addition was highlighted, showcasing a new band hall that was added to a renovated existing one.

#### Board Member Questions and Responses:

- Question: What is the schedule for the Transportation Center?
- Response: The contractor, Gamma, has been selected, and the GMP (Guaranteed Maximum Price) is expected by the July or August board meeting. Groundbreaking is slated for late August or September, with the facility aiming to open for the 2026-2027 school year, allowing for a full transition over the summer of 2026.

#### 2024-2025 SHAC Annual Report

Director of Nursing, Hailey Dobraski reports the School Health Advisory Council (SHAC) met four times during the 2024-2025 school year, focusing on student well-being. They unanimously approved substance use prevention curriculum materials and launched a SHAC newsletter, which was published on their website. The council also collaborated with the Child Nutrition Department to implement healthier menu options, including a "grab and go" apple and sun butter choice, based on feedback from SHAC members. Additionally, a high school student presented on Type 1 diabetes, and discussions covered mental health resources and potential student advisory involvement for the upcoming year.

#### 2024-2025 Willis ISD MAP Assessment Report

Assessment Coordinator, Tracy Jackson reports that the latest data shows significant student achievement and growth from the beginning to the end of the year. In math, all elementary grades, particularly first and second, demonstrated double-digit growth, with some exceeding projected targets. While middle school math growth tapered as expected, it remained strong, especially in eighth and sixth grades. Reading also saw substantial double-digit growth in elementary grades, with second grade surpassing expected growth, likely due to the implementation of Hagerty in the classroom. Spanish language learners showed impressive gains, especially in first and second grades. Science data was particularly positive, with fifth grade nearly meeting and eighth grade exceeding projected growth. Moving forward, the district will compare MAP and STAAR data, plan summer support for students and teachers, emphasize small group instruction, and evaluate instructional materials like Hagerty to close achievement gaps and foster continued growth.

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## **CONSENT AGENDA**

- A. Approval of Minutes
- B. Foreign Exchange Student Admission Waiver
- C. Adoption of HQIM – Supplemental Foundational Language Support
- D. Approve the 2025 – 2026 Parent Family Engagement Policy
- E. Approval to Accept the MCLASS Grant Award
- F. Approval of Special Education Buses – Longhorn Bus Sales
- G. Delivery Method – Cannan Elementary Expansion as a CMAR
- H. Delivery Method – Turner Elementary Expansion as a CMAR

Motion by Scott Carson and seconded by Paulett Traylor to approve the Consent Agenda items as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

## **CLOSED SESSION**

The Board entered into closed session at 6:09 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 Employee Appointments. Tex. Gov't Code 551.074
- B. Pursuant to Texas Government Code section 551.071, 551.129, attorney consultation regarding legal issues pertaining to Board Operating Procedures, Code of Ethics and related matters.
- C. Pursuant to Texas Government Code section 551.074, consider and discuss Board member duties, performance and conduct.
- D. Pursuant to Texas Government Code Sections 551.071 and 551.129, consultation with school attorney concerning pending litigation concerning a special education student and possible settlement of matter styled *TEA Docket No. 284-SE-0525; Travis J., b/n/f Maria and Eleazar J. v. Willis ISD* (Before a Special Education Hearing Officer)
- E. Pursuant to Texas Government Code Sections 551.0821, deliberation concerning a public-school student wherein personally identifiable information will necessarily be revealed.

## **OPEN SESSION**

The Board reconvened into Open Session at 7:45 p.m. President Hoegemeyer asked if there are any motions from closed session.

Motion by Cliff Williams and seconded by Scott Carson to accept the Superintendent's recommendation and the School District's Attorney and to direct the Superintendent and the School District's Attorney to proceed, as discussed in closed session, in the matter styled TEA Docket No. 284-SE-0525: Travis J., b/n/f Maria and Eleazar J. v. Willis ISD (Before a Special Education Hearing Officer). Motion carried unanimously.

## **DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ITEMS**

Discuss and Consider Approval of Strategic Plan

Travis Whisenant from Engaged to Learn praised Willis ISD's exceptional focus and commitment during their strategic plan development, specifically highlighting Dr. James's hands-on leadership and the active participation of students. The process, spanning six months, began in February with extensive stakeholder engagement through summits, focus groups, and surveys, involving over 4,000 participants, predominantly students. This community input served as the backbone of the strategic plan, ensuring it reflected the community's values and needs.

The plan emphasizes being student-focused, community-driven, and designed to align and integrate existing systems rather than creating new, isolated initiatives. It includes aspirational goal setting with a backward design and a multi-year action plan that strategically allocates resources (time, treasure, and talent) to ensure achievable outcomes.

The strategic plan outlines five core goals: fostering student success in safe learning environments, ensuring transparent communication on district financial resources, enhancing instructional effectiveness, building genuine relationships with all stakeholders, and aligning communication for clarity and accessibility. Each goal has specific objectives, such as establishing student codes of conduct, creating accessible financial reporting, developing individualized student pathways, implementing district-wide safety protocols, and surveying communication preferences.

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The objectives timeline spans five years, with Year One focusing on foundational elements like establishing conduct codes and launching a mentor program. Year Two will emphasize training and implementation, including behavioral expectations and streamlining communication. Years Three to Five will see innovation and community-wide alignment, incorporating technology, fostering inclusive systems, and promoting enrollment growth. This comprehensive plan is designed to be a living document that drives district actions and behaviors to ensure all students thrive.

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

A board member expressed pride in the community and school district's effort in developing the strategic plan, acknowledging the significant work involved. They voiced excitement for the plan, particularly highlighting the opportunity to **improve the district** even in areas where measures are already in place, emphasizing that existing systems can always be enhanced.

Discuss and Consider Approval of the Design Development Concept of the 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Center

Bob Eaton, Chief of Construction/Operation, introduced the presentation for the Willis ISD Ninth Grade Center, which is in its second of three design phases (Design Development). Eaton requested the board's approval to move into the construction documents phase.

Carla Castillo, an architect with Huckabee, presented the refined design, noting no radical changes since the March schematic design approval. She emphasized the collaborative effort with the district team in refining the project. The site plan remains largely consistent, featuring a main entry, student drop-off, and a dedicated special education drop-off with a canopy connecting to the CTE building for student safety and visibility. The design also includes a courtyard overlooking the football field, a service area maintaining continuity with the existing high school, and a secondary entrance for athletics to separate public access from students during events.

The floor plans for the three-story building include stacked academic blocks, with most classrooms receiving natural daylight. Athletic facilities, a competition gym with seating for nearly 2,000, and fine arts spaces are strategically located. A two-story media center with collaboration rooms and an LGI (Large Group Instruction) space are central to the design, emphasizing visual transparency and learning on display.

Huckabee's renderings showcase the building's aesthetic, aiming to marry the 90s-built existing campus with the more contemporary CTE and PAC centers. This is achieved through the use of brick, metal panels in charcoal tones, and stone accents, along with subtle "Willis purple" glazed brick for school spirit. Intentional lighting is also being considered for night-time aesthetics.

The project is on track for the Guaranteed Maximum Price (GMP) presentation in November, with Gamma Construction Manager at Risk already integrated into the design and pricing process. Substantial completion is projected for June 2027, with the building set to open in fall 2027.

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

Board Member Questions and Responses:

- Question 1: Aesthetic Cohesion with Existing High School a board member inquired if the design could ensure the new Ninth Grade Center's overhangs and entryways, while beautiful, would blend seamlessly with the existing Willis High School campus, specifically referencing the main high school entrance and the cafeteria area. They wanted the new additions to integrate with the current structures, similar to how the PAC building's canopies were color-matched previously.
  - Response: Bob Eaton acknowledged the desire for overall cohesion. Carla Castillo explained that while the new Ninth Grade Center's entrance has a distinct design, it incorporates elements like the gray metal soffits used in the PAC, thus extending that aesthetic. Eaton clarified that integrating

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architectural changes directly into the existing high school building is outside the current project's scope due to code compliance and other factors. However, he committed to discussing with Dr. James and the financial department the possibility of a separate project to update the existing high school's aesthetics to match the new construction, ensuring the entire campus has a cohesive look.

- Question 2: Sound System for the Gym a board member asked about the sound system for the gym.
  - Response: Bob Eaton confirmed that a comprehensive sound system is included. He indicated a dedicated media room located off the gym on the first floor where all control software, computers, hardware, and microphones will be housed. He also mentioned that the athletic and fine arts departments were involved in the planning and agreed upon the chosen system.

#### Discuss and Consider Approval to Join the Multi District Social Media Litigation

Willis ISD is considering joining a multi-district lawsuit against social media companies to hold them accountable for addictive platforms and seek financial compensation for mental health and disciplinary costs incurred by schools. The litigation, representing districts in 39 states, alleges platforms exploit youth vulnerabilities and fail to moderate harmful content. If successful, the lawsuit could provide financial recovery for schools to offset mental health and intervention costs, increase pressure for platform reform, and advocate for student safety nationally. The district's risk is minimal as legal representation is on a contingency basis (no upfront cost).

A board member asked for clarification on "potential financial recovery." The response explained it's similar to a past vape lawsuit payout, where funds could be used for mental health programs, counseling, or other needs related to social media impact. These funds would come from the social media companies (TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, and YouTube) if the suit is won, with no current or future costs to the district. The recommendation is to approve participation to protect students and reclaim resources.

Motion by Chad Jones and seconded by Cliff Williams 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 WISD Unlimited Tax School Building Bonds, in One or More Series; and Containing Other Related Matters

The Willis ISD board previously approved issuing \$45 million of the remaining \$87.7 million from the May 2024 bond election. Due to proposed legislation, the district sees a potential financial benefit in issuing the full \$87 million this summer. They are requesting approval of an updated bond order to allow this flexibility, anticipating a benefit from issuing the entire amount. This updated order provides the option for either amount, but the intent is to issue the full \$87 million this summer.

Motion by Cliff Williams and seconded by Nikita Lagway to accept the Superintendent's recommendation. Motion carried unanimously. This motion was made with one board member absent during the vote.

#### Discuss and Consider Approval of Yates Stadium Bleachers Purchase

Willis ISD's purchasing, maintenance, athletics, CFO, and chief operations officer collaborated in May to address seating needs at Yates Stadium. They decided that smaller, portable bleacher sets would best serve current and future athletic events across the district. Willis ISD has secured six sets of 26x10 foot bleachers from Outdoor Aluminum, slated for availability by August 1st. These bleachers are designed to be movable with small tractors or lawnmowers, offering versatile seating solutions with a single purchase.

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

#### Discuss and Consider Approval to Select an Architectural Firm for the Expansion of Cannan & Turner Elementary and Authorize Dr. Kim James or her delegate to Negotiate on behalf of WISD

Willis ISD sought board approval to delegate authority to Dr. James or her delegate to negotiate with architectural firms for a 10,000-square-foot expansion at both Cannan and Turner elementary schools.

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Board Member Comments and Questions:

- A board member expressed strong support, viewing it as a positive statement for the district and a cost-saving measure given limited state aid.
- Another board member questioned if the district was "locked into" the stated \$4 million budget.
  - Response: It was clarified that the \$4 million is currently an estimate based on a projected construction cost of around \$350 per square foot, not a locked figure. The goal is to avoid issues like those with Lynn Lucas Middle School, where costs exceeded estimates. The district plans to use a Construction Manager at Risk (CMAR) to ensure the project stays within budget through early negotiation and constructability reviews, utilizing existing bond dollars.

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

Discuss and Consider Approval of an Expansion of Scope to Elementary #7

Willis ISD is planning a 10,000-square-foot expansion for Elementary #7, which will add about 10 classrooms and support spaces. This initiative aims to accommodate rapid growth and streamline future rezoning efforts. The necessary infrastructure for this expansion, including mechanical, electrical, and plumbing, was already built into the original design, so the district is seeking approval for a change order to proceed.

Board Member Questions and Responses:

- Question: "What is the timeline and how do y'all plan on running this out there?"
  - Response: The design phase is estimated to take two to three months, with the addition itself expected to be completed around October or November.
- Question: "What about when it comes to the price point per square foot how are you going to hold Stewart to the fire on that?"
  - Response: Preliminary numbers are currently being gathered, and the project is anticipated to remain within the \$4 million budget range for the square footage, based on initial discussions with the contractor.

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

Discuss and Consider Approval of a Delegate and Alternate to the 2025 Texas Association of School Boards (TASB) Delegate Assembly

The Texedcon Conference, including the TASB 2025 Delegate Assembly, will be held in Houston from September 11-14, with Delegate Assembly on September 13. Registration for this annual membership meeting, where all members can influence TASB's direction, opens on July 22. The chosen delegate will represent the Willis ISD Board of Trustees, ensuring community priorities are reflected in TASB's work.

Motion by Chad Jones and seconded by Cliff Williams to elect Board Member, Scott Carson as the official voting delegate and Board Member, Charles Perry as the alternate for the 2025 TASB Delegate Assembly. Motion carried unanimously.

Discuss and Consider Approval of the WHS Culinary Arts International Trip

The Culinary Arts program is planning an international trip to Milan, Florence, and Rome, Italy, from March 4-11, 2026. Students will participate in two cooking classes taught by professional chefs and visit producers of balsamic vinegar, prosciutto, and white truffle oil. The itinerary also includes tours of Florence, Vatican City, Milan, and Bologna, with chaperones already secured for the trip.

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

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**BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS:**

A board member commended the team for their hard work and noted visible improvements in various areas. They recalled a time a few years prior when the district's outcomes were heading in the opposite direction, which was "extremely disappointing." Now, seeing the district "turning it around and going the right direction" is very exciting, a positive shift they deeply appreciate, reminding everyone it's a marathon, not a sprint.

**SUPERINTENDENT COMMENTS:**

The Superintendent announced that the next board meeting is scheduled for July 9th. Recognizing that many board members might be taking vacations or trips, she extended well wishes, asking everyone to stay safe, enjoy their time off, and return healthy.

**FUTURE BUSINESS / MEETINGS: July 9, 2025 Regular Board Meeting @ 5:30 pm**

**ADJOURNMENT OF REGULAR MEETING**

Motion by Cliff Williams and seconded by Paulett Traylor to adjourn. Motion carried unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 8:47 p.m.