

July 9, 2025

The Board of Trustees of Willis ISD met in Regular Business Session on July 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 5:30PM. 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, 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.

### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

President Kyle Hoegemeyer read the rules as it pertains to the public comment session of the meeting and announce the two speakers.

A coalition of community organizations, including Love's Youth, the Liberty Library Project, and local Republican Women's groups, is offering to donate high-quality, legally compliant posters of the Ten Commandments to every classroom in the district. Speaking on behalf of the groups, Rebecca Smith stated that the initiative, based on the recently passed SB10, aims to restore foundational values and promote character development at no cost to the schools or taxpayers. She added that the groups have ensured each poster meets all legal requirements and are seeking donations of \$10 per poster to help with printing costs.

Bob Holden, a resident of Willis, spoke to the board about two scholarship opportunities available to students and teachers: a Democracy Award scholarship and a VFW National Citizen Education Teacher Award. He also commented on the push for "green climate change rules," encouraging science teachers to provide students with more balanced information. Holden suggested that green energy projects are causing "tremendous destruction" to the planet and that a recent NASA discovery indicates they may be contributing to global warming.

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

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

Chief Financial Officer Garrett Matej reported that the district's local revenue budget is 99.3% collected through June and is on track to exceed 100% by the end of the fiscal year. While federal revenue is slightly higher than anticipated, the district is working with TMHP to finalize figures as a portion might need to be paid back. Matej confirmed that state aid projections are on target and that expenditures have reached over \$74 million. He anticipates a final budget amendment in August to close the books and account for new staff and compensation plan adjustments.

#### Investment Report

In his third quarterly investment report, Chief Financial Officer Garrett Matej noted a slight decline in interest rates, though not as significant as anticipated. The district has earned **\$2.88 million** in interest across its three primary funds, and Matej expects to meet the budgeted **\$2.75 million** for the general fund by the end of the fiscal year. The report also provided a snapshot of earnings for the bond programs. Matej noted

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that while the district may owe **\$3-4 million** to the IRS due to arbitrage on the 2022 bond program, the overall interest earnings for these programs remain strong.

#### Health Insurance Plan Review

Chief Financial Officer Garrett Matej introduced Laura Gwaltney from Walker and Associates to discuss the district's health insurance plan. Gwaltney, joined by Blue Cross Blue Shield account executive Ray Bailey, presented a review of the plan's year-end and nine-month performance. The presentation revealed that the plan ran well, but prescription costs, particularly for specialty medications, are a major driver of increased spending. Gwaltney explained that the district's health plan is outperforming national averages in cost per employee per year. To address rising costs and ensure the plan's longevity, the district negotiated a renewal with a fixed-cost reduction of 12% by increasing pharmacy rebate credits from Blue Cross Blue Shield. They are also introducing new pharmacy utilization strategies, such as an OTC-driven formulary and a specialty lockout program, to manage costs. Gwaltney highlighted that despite an increase to premiums, the plan remains highly competitive with TRS options and will have minimal disruption to members, with no changes to deductibles or out-of-pocket costs. Lastly, she presented a positive six-month report on the Next Level Prime membership, noting its success in providing urgent and after-hours care and achieving a cost savings of \$1.5 million for the district.

#### **CONSENT AGENDA**

- A. Approval of Minutes
- B. Approval of Instructional Materials Allotment Purchases for 2025-2026
- C. Approval of Frontline Contract Renewal for the 2025-2026 School Year
- D. Approval of Region VI ESC Contracted Services for the 2025-2026 School Year
- E. Approval of Continued Contracted Services with River Oaks Academy
- F. Approval of Calfee MS FF&E Vendor NTE Scope Change
- G. Approval of WHS Parking Lot Material Testing – UES Professional Solutions
- H. Approval of Willis ISD Transportation Center for Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ)
- I. Approval of the Final Payment of Lynn Lucas MS Central Plant Project
- J. Approval of Interactive Online Learning Grant
- K. Approval of the 2025 – 2026 Montgomery County Juvenile Justice Center MOU
- L. Approval of the 2025-2026 Methodist Hospital Athletic Trainer Contract

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

#### **CLOSED SESSION**

The Board entered into closed session at 6:06P.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. Real Estate: Pursuant to Texas Gov't Code 551.072
- C. Real Estate: Pursuant to Texas Gov't Code 551.072
- D. Superintendent Evaluation Texas Gov't Code 551.071
- E. Consultation with Attorney by Phone: Pursuant to Texas Gov't Code §551.071

#### **OPEN SESSION**

The Board reconvened into Open Session at 9:22P.M. President Hoegemeyer asked if there are any motions from closed session.

Motion by Cliff Williams and seconded by Paulett Traylor to approve the Superintendent's contract as amended, presently before the Board of Trustees, whereby the Superintendent's employment is extended through July 31, 2028.

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### **DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ITEMS**

Discuss and Consider Approval to Accepting the Strong Foundation Part C Grant Award

Meghan Ballard, the Director of Federal Programs, announced that the district is rounding out its Lasso Cycle 3 grant awards. The district was notified of multiple grants, including two awards of **\$821,000** each for Bluebonnet RLA and Bluebonnet Math, plus another **\$277,000** for Bluebonnet Math for grades six through Algebra 1. However, the district will deny the RLA awards because it did not adopt the Bluebonnet curriculum, reducing the total accepted funds from approximately **\$2.4 million** to **\$1.4 million**. These funds will be implemented in the upcoming school year.

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

Discuss and Consider Approval of the WHS – Out of State Choir Field Trip

The Willis High School Choir is requesting approval to attend the Music USA Festival at Universal Studios from March 13-16, 2026. This trip will allow 40 choir members to perform and receive clinics from distinguished adjudicators. The cost is **\$1,886** per student, with the choir planning to fundraise to help offset costs, and there will be no cost to the district.

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

Discuss and Consider Approval of 2025-2026 Health Insurance Program

Chief Financial Officer Garrett Matej requested the board's approval for the renewal of the district's health plan with Blue Cross Blue Shield of Texas for the 2025-2026 school year. The plan's proposed premiums and changes project a total funding of **\$7.3 million** against an anticipated spend of **\$8 million**. The majority of this spending gap is attributed to claims, which can fluctuate annually. Matej stated he has a plan to address the gap for the upcoming year and will form review committees in the fall to find a long-term solution for the plan's financial stability. He concluded by thanking Walker and Associates and Blue Cross Blue Shield for their assistance.

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

Discuss and Consider Approval of 2025-2026 Compensation Plan

Chief Financial Officer Garrett Matej presented the 2025-2026 compensation plan, which includes significant raises for teachers and other staff. Teachers with three to four years of experience will receive a **\$2,500** raise, while those with five or more years will get a **\$5,000** raise, as mandated by new legislation. Other professionals, as well as hourly and administrative staff, will receive a **3%** raise to their base salary. The entire compensation package will add **\$2.69 million** to the new budget. After the plan's approval, the district will communicate the updated pay scales to all personnel.

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

Discuss and Consider Approval of the Purchase of Roark Play Ground Equipment

Purchasing Coordinator Kelly Hughes-Shropshire announced the district's recommendation for a new playground at Roark Pre-K Center, following input from both administration and faculty. The procurement process involved obtaining three quotes through co-op pricing, with Playgrounds of Texas offering the best value at **\$46,417.80**. The new playground, which will be installed before the start of the school year, was secured at approximately a **50% discount**.

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

Discuss and Consider Approval of the Architecture Firm for Cannan Elementary School Expansion  
Purchasing Coordinator Kelly Hughes-Shropshire reported that an architectural committee selected Huckabee Associates for the expansion of Cannan Elementary. The district's negotiating team successfully secured a lump-sum, flat fee of **\$400,000** with the firm to reduce risk on the project. A board member asked about the budget for the expansion, to which Hughes-Shropshire responded that the current budget is **\$4.5 million** for 10 new classrooms and restrooms. Then asked about the construction timeline, and Hughes-Shropshire stated that the project is being fast-tracked and is expected to have a 12-month design and build schedule.

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

Discuss and Consider Approval of the Geotechnical and Material Testing for Cannan Elem. Expansion  
Purchasing Coordinator Kelly Hughes-Shropshire announced the procurement of geotechnical and material testing services for the Cannan Elementary expansion. As the design is not yet complete, a final quote isn't available. Instead, the district is working with a "not to exceed" total of **\$40,000**, which includes a **\$5,000** fee for geo-testing and an hourly rate of **\$58** for material testing. A board member questioned the exact cost, asking for confirmation that the total was **\$40,000**, not **\$40,000 an hour**, and Hughes-Shropshire confirmed the "not to exceed" amount.

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

Discuss and Consider Approval of 2025-2026 Hazardous Route Resolution

Director of Transportation Michael Haggerty requested the board's approval for the hazardous route resolution for the 2025-2026 school year. This resolution is mandated by the Texas Education Agency and is crucial for the district to receive an additional **10%** of its regular transportation allotment. He explained that a hazardous route is an area within two miles of a campus where no walkway is provided and children would have to cross freeways, major traffic arteries, or other comparable conditions. Haggerty presented examples from campuses like Meador, Brabham, and Lynn Lucas, where students would face dangerous conditions if they had to walk. The resolution, which outlines these hazards across all 12 campuses, will allow the district to continue providing bus transportation for all eligible students.

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

Discuss and Consider Approval to Amend Board Policy FD (LOCAL) and FM (LOCAL)

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

Discuss and Consider Approval of TASB Local Board Policy Update 125

- a. BDAA (LOCAL) Officers and Officials: Duties and Requirements of Board Officers
- b. BDB (LOCAL) Board Internal Organization: Board Committees
- c. BDF (LOCAL) Board Internal Organization: Advisory Committees

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- d. EI (LOCAL) Academic Achievement
- e. FDE (LOCAL) Admissions: School Safety Transfers
- f. FEC (LOCAL) Attendance: Attendance for Credit
- g. FFAC (LOCAL) Wellness and Health Services: Medical Treatment

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

**BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS:**

The board announced a change for next year's evaluations, stating that the closed session portion will be moved to the end. The board also expressed pleasure that Dr. James has committed to three more years with the district. The speaker concluded by thanking all involved, especially the principals, for their hard work and dedication, noting that they are seeing great things happening in the district.

**SUPERINTENDENT COMMENTS:**

Dr. Kim James thanked the board and staff, expressing excitement for an additional year added to her contract and looking forward to the next three years. She attributed the district's success to her team, not herself. Dr. James is eager for the accountability results to come out in August, which she believes will show the amazing things the district has accomplished. She emphasized that while they are not satisfied, they are "well on their way" and the upcoming year will focus on implementing new systems and improvements.

**FUTURE BUSINESS / MEETINGS: Dr. James announced that August 20, 2025 Lone Star Governance Workshop @ 4:30PM, following by Public Meeting regarding Budget and Tax Rate for 25-26, and 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 9:43PM