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Education Improvement Council (EIC) Meeting Minutes: February 23rd, 2026

Meeting Duration: 5:01PM-5:57 PM

South Texas Preparatory Academy: .....Saire Moreno, Jada Carrera
South Texas World Scholars .....Joshua Zamora, Veronica Castro
Medical Professions: ..... Hanani Vasquez, Bruno Sanchez
Health Professions: ..... Ariel Nieto, Paola Salazar
Rising Scholars Academy..... Debbie Delgado, Elvis Reid
Science Academy .....Lorena Lopez, Esthela Pacheco
Virtual Academy ..... Lirio Arredondo, Monica Perez
Student Representatives.....Andrea Guerrero (SA) Eiza Salinas (HP)
Professional Non-Teacher ..... Amy Pena
District Level Professional .....Marcos Flores
Parents.....Eddie Lucio, (RSA), Armando Salinas (HP), Angelica Camarillo (MP)
Community Members .....Isabel Alvarez (SA), Sonia Kerps (WS)
Business Members .....Nativdad Hinojosa (MP), Christine Molis (STPA)

EIC Special Meeting Minutes 4:58-5:32PM

1. **Welcome**

   Amy Pena called the meeting to order at 4:58 PM

   - Motion passed unanimously

Opening Remarks

Dr. Lara addressed the committee and shared that he is currently in the process of retirement. He expressed appreciation for the work of the Educational Improvement Committee (EIC) and emphasized the importance of the committee's role in supporting the district.

Dr. Lara stated that as long as decisions are made with students' best interests in mind, the district will continue to move in the right direction. He also informed members that the school board is currently in the process of searching for a new superintendent.

Agenda Item

Discussion: Waiver Request Related to Superintendent Eligibility

Mr. Ben Castillo, legal counsel for the district, presented information regarding a possible waiver request related to Texas Education Code requirements.

Background of the Waiver

Mr. Castillo explained:

- State law requires that a current school board member must wait one year after leaving the board before being eligible to become superintendent.
- However, the Texas Education Commissioner may grant a waiver allowing a board member to be considered sooner.
- The school board has approved submitting a waiver request, and as part of the process the EIC is asked to provide comments.

He clarified that:

- This discussion does not involve selecting or endorsing any specific candidate.
- The purpose is only to discuss the process and provide feedback that may be included with the waiver request.

Discussion and Questions

Clarification of Requirements

Bruno Sanchez asked for clarification regarding the requirements for the waiver and eligibility process.

Debbie Delgado requested that comments and information be clearly read so members could fully understand the process.

Superintendent Search Process

Mr. Castillo explained that:

- The superintendent position was posted in December.
- The application window closed in January.
- The search process is being conducted by TASB (Texas Association of School Boards).
- The board will review candidates and begin interviews soon.

If a current board member were selected, that individual would be required to resign from the board before assuming the superintendent position.

Questions from Committee Members

Hanani Vasquez asked whether this situation had occurred before.
Mr. Castillo provided an example from another Texas district where a similar waiver had been granted.

Joshua Zamora asked why the one-year waiting rule was originally created.
Mr. Castillo explained that the law was intended to prevent potential conflicts of interest, though waivers are allowed.

Saire Moreno asked whether waivers like this are common.
Mr. Castillo stated they are not very common, mainly because most school boards have only seven members, while STISD has 24 board members, which increases the likelihood that some members may meet superintendent qualifications.

Discussion on Purpose of the Waiver

Some members questioned whether the waiver was being requested because a specific candidate was already in mind.

Mr. Castillo clarified that:

- The waiver does not guarantee that a board member will be selected.
- It simply allows the board to consider the largest possible pool of candidates.

Concerns About Conflict of Interest

Saire Moreno, Ariel Nieto and Paola Salazar expressed concern that the situation could represent a conflict of interest.

Bruno Sanchez asked whether safeguards were in place to ensure fairness.

Mr. Castillo stated that:

- Any board member who applies would not participate in discussions or decisions related to the superintendent search.
- The search process is managed through TASB and follows standard procedures.

Support for Expanding Candidate Pool

Some members supported the waiver because it would expand the candidate pool.

Debbie Delgado stated she was in favor of allowing the waiver so the district could consider more potential candidates.

Joshua Zamora also expressed support for the waiver for the same reason.

Additional Questions

Monica Perez asked whether the district had previously requested a waiver of this type.

Bruno Sanchez asked who ultimately hires the superintendent.
Mr. Castillo confirmed that the school board makes the final hiring decision.

He also explained that:

- Candidate identities remain confidential during the search process.
- Once finalists are selected, a 21-day waiting period is required before a final decision is made.

Transparency and Fairness Concerns

Lorena Lopez asked how the district could ensure the process remains fair and that a board member would not be selected simply because they are already on the board.

Mr. Castillo explained that:

- The search firm and board will conduct multiple interviews.
- The final decision will be based on qualifications and experience.

Debbie Delgado added that the process demonstrates that the district is making a serious effort to select the best candidate for students.

Additional Discussion Points

Committee members discussed:

- The unique size of the STISD board (24 members) compared to typical districts.
- The importance of transparency and public trust.
- Ensuring the best-qualified candidate is selected.

Superintendent Qualifications (General Discussion)

Mr. Castillo explained typical qualifications for superintendent candidates:

- Texas Superintendent Certification
- Administrative experience
- Central office leadership experience
- Doctorate degree preferred
- Previous superintendent experience preferred

EIC Comment Summary

The committee discussed providing summary comments to accompany the waiver request.

The proposed comment included:

- Recognition of the importance of stability and strong leadership during a superintendent transition.
- A recommendation that clear safeguards be in place to maintain transparency and public trust.
- Safeguards may include:
    - Recusal of any interested trustee from related discussions or decisions
    - Adherence to a fair and professional search process
    - Documentation that any employment decision occurs only after legal requirements are met

Members noted that opinions within the committee were mixed, with some supporting the waiver and others expressing concerns regarding potential conflicts of interest.

The district's legal counsel will synthesize the committee's comments and include them in the waiver submission.

Motion to adjourn the meeting

1st Motion: Joshua Zamora
2nd Motion: Lorena Lopez

Meeting Adjourned: 5:32 PM