

**CYPRESS-FAIRBANKS INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

**SEPTEMBER 14, 2020
REGULAR BOARD MEETING MINUTES**

The Cypress-Fairbanks Independent School District Board of Trustees convened in Regular Session on Monday, September 14, 2020, in the Boardroom of the Cypress-Fairbanks Independent School District Instructional Support Center, located at 10300 Jones Road, Houston, Texas.

Call to Order

Board President Bob Covey called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

The following Board members were present: Debbie Blackshear, Bob Covey, Julie Hinaman, Tom Jackson, Dr. John Ogletree, Don Ryan and Gilbert Sarabia.

Special Recognitions

Board President Covey recognized CLC members Leslie Martone, Stacye Anderson, Frances Romero and Ryan Irving who were in the audience.

Invocation

Reverend Heather Tolleson, Senior Pastor of First Christian Church, delivered the invocation.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Cypress Creek High School AFJROTC cadets, under the direction of Senior Master Sergeant John R. Schwartz, United States Air Force, Retired, presented the colors for the meeting. Those cadets were Cadet Staff Sergeant Yazmin Soto on left rifle, Cadet Captain Larissa Sarabia carrying the American Flag, Cadet Second Lieutenant Eric Carranza carrying the Texas Flag and Cadet Lieutenant Colonel Haley Koop on right rifle.

Vision and Mission Statement

Board member Julie Hinaman read the District's Vision and Mission statement for the benefit of the audience.

Board President Covey announced that the Board would proceed with the **Recognitions** portion of the agenda.

1. Recognitions

1A. The Board recognized Sarah Harty, new Assistant Superintendent for School Leadership.

Board President Covey called for a recess at 6:11 p.m.

Board President Covey called the meeting back to order at 6:16 p.m.

Mr. Covey announced that the Board would proceed with the **Public Comments** portion of the agenda.

2. Public Comments

2A. Patrons who have duly registered per policy BED (Local) may address the Board and make public comments on an agenda item during or before the board's consideration of the item. The Board may allow public comment on agenda items at all meetings. The Board will continue with the remaining agenda after the registered patrons have had an opportunity to speak. (To participate, registration is between 5:30 and 5:50 p.m. on the day of the Board meeting at the entrance to the CFISD ISC Boardroom.)

1. Donna Lord, president Cy-Fair TSTA/NEA, addressed the Board on the reopening of CFISD, requesting better educational and equitable opportunities for students by providing dedicated teachers for CFISD Connect and dedicated teachers for F2F.
2. Tara Cummings, CFISD parent, addressed the Board on the reopening of CFISD, sharing her connectivity issues with remote learning.

3. Diana Alexander, CFISD employee, addressed the Board on the reopening of CFISD, sharing how she feels the instructional model is not working.
4. James Robertson, husband to 3rd grade CFISD teacher, addressed the Board on the reopening of CFISD, expressing that the current platform is not a sustainable platform.
5. Dr. Sterling Allen, CFISD parent, addressed the Board on the reopening of CFISD, expressing that Schoology is not a sustainable platform.
6. Traci Manley, CFISD pre-K teacher, addressed the Board on the reopening of CFISD, specifically, the lack of leadership on her campus.
7. Hayley Green, CFISD parent of 1st grader, addressed the Board on the reopening of CFISD, sharing her connectivity issues with remote learning
8. Neysha Theys, CFISD parent to 3rd grader, addressed the Board on the reopening of CFISD, specifically, difficulties with remote learning.
9. Mariah Naymuddin, CFISD teacher, addressed the Board on the Signing of the Resolution, specifically, equitable language access.
10. Paul Langone, CFISD teacher, addressed the Board on the reopening of CFISD, specifically, how teachers are being overworked with no support from the administration.
11. Jesse G. Lands addressed the Board on the reopening of CFISD, specifically, the lack of leadership and support for teachers.
12. Nikki Cowart, Cy-Fair AFT, addressed the Board on the Signing of the Resolution, specifically, the plan to actively promote equity for all staff and students.

Mr. Covey announced that the Board would proceed with the **Board Comments** portion of the agenda.

3. Board Comments

- 3A.** Any Board member may make a comment during this portion of the agenda, without prior posting being required. Comment items may not pertain to the character of any students, staff or Board member and may not be discussed or deliberated upon at this meeting.

Board member Gilbert Sarabia thanked everyone in the audience for coming to the meeting and for the speakers who shared their experiences. Mr. Sarabia expressed his excitement for the new school year and for the upcoming class of 2021. He also shared his excitement for the extracurricular activities going on and for the challenges to come. Mr. Sarabia stated how much he trusts the administration and how they are listening to the community. He assured the community that the administration is working around the clock to solve problems as they arise. Ms. Sarabia was moved when he spoke of the Signing of the Resolution this evening. He went on to share how he and his fellow Board members toured Rowe Middle School before the first day of school and what an outstanding job facilities and planning/operations did with this campus. "Great things will happen there." Ms. Sarabia closed by asking the Cy-Fair community to trust in Dr. Henry, the Board of Trustees and the administration. He thanked all the teachers and staff for doing such a great job in this unprecedented time.

Board member Julie Hinaman thanked Rose Dudley for making face masks for each Board member and for her generosity. Ms. Hinaman also thanked the teachers of the district and let them know that she knows how hard they are working and that she is listening to their voices and reading their emails. "Thank you for your efforts. Knowing that it's going to get easier doesn't make it easier now. I understand that, but please know that you are appreciated, and you are loved." Ms. Hinaman reminded everyone that there is an election coming up and national voter registration day is September 22nd, and the deadline to register is October 5th. She explained how, typically, the League of Women Voters go into high schools and

register the district's eligible seniors to vote, but due to not being able to go into classrooms this year, the League of Women voters have partnered with the school district and the teachers to provide a video and voter registration materials so that all eligible seniors will have the opportunity to register to vote. Ms. Hinaman explained how one could check their current registration status by going to harrisvotes.com. Ms. Hinaman shared her thoughts on the importance of respecting the experiences of students today. She explained how today's students are experiencing things that no other students have before – having to wear masks, social distancing in classrooms, learning virtually through new platforms amid fear that the pandemic has been brought into homes, schools, businesses and families. Ms. Hinaman encouraged the district, campus administrators and leaders to seek out ways to incorporate student voices. To listen, engage and involve students. “Unprecedented times can be opportunities to try new ideas, new ways of doing things, and something good could come from that, for sure.”

Board member Tom Jackson reminded everyone about the deadline for completing the 2020 Census. Mr. Jackson stated that the greatest source of child development funds in the state of Texas happens to be block grants all of which get allocated based on the census. He shared how Texas is running approximately 9 percent behind where we were at the last census. “So, it matters.” Mr. Jackson shared that when the pandemic was recognized, he shifted his Board approach from “crop duster” to using the matrix of strength, weakness, opportunity and threats. Mr. Jackson shared a story from his past when he was a chief financial officer for a company which found itself on the front page of the Houston Chronicle and was the lead story on all three major television channels. He was subsequently interviewed by the FBI because of two families, one in the southeast and one in the Midwest who were “unhappy.” It was suggested that Mr. Jackson obtain and look into extortion insurance. Years forward, Mr. Jackson stated that he was a chief financial officer for a publicly held company preparing to testify in federal court as there was an unhappy family in the northeast. Mr. Jackson testified in federal court and ultimately won the case. He shared that a former colleague who is now a county judge had a press conference on threats and wrote an op-ed on them. “Threats are always inappropriate, and I would say a threat against one is a threat against all.” Mr. Jackson went on to say that he is a great fan of hyperbole and oration, but we need to be careful when we use our words that we do not encourage others to take steps which are inappropriate. Mr. Jackson expressed his thanks and shared how his heart goes out to parents who are trying to keep their children safe but also shelter them with the best education possible. “If I could amplify that feeling, I would send the same emotion and thoughts and the tip of my hat to our teachers and our administrators during these trying times. I wish I could do more for each of you. I know the road will become bumpier before it becomes any smoother.” Mr. Jackson asked the shareholders of the district to be patient and please create as little stress as possible upon the community, the staff and employees of the district. “We will persevere, we will see the end of this, but it will be a long year.”

Board member Dr. Ogletree extended his appreciation to the teaching staff and to all those working in schools. Dr. Ogletree acknowledged how teachers and the district's administration are going through quite a bit of stress at this time and that no one is exempt from the strain, the hours and the tension in trying to figure all this out. Dr. Ogletree assured the community that the district will make the right choice and decisions if the current platform is wrong and children are not being educated and if there is a lack or gap in safety and health. He further assured the community that there would be a course correction if the current platform isn't working. Dr. Ogletree stated that as we are five days into the new school year, his prayers are that things will go according to plan – that there will be education for all and that those who are at home will not suffer. He also stated that he is trusting that the administration will make the necessary adjustments to the learning platform for remote learners. Dr. Ogletree urged everyone to keep pressing forward, listen and continue taking constructive criticism so that the district may do the right thing. Dr. Ogletree went on to say how we need to focus on the kids that have language barriers, kids who have a low socio-economic background and kids who have parents that work outside the home and make sure they are able to follow the learning platform. “If they can't then let's try something else.” Dr. Ogletree shared how he suggested that there be dedicated virtual teachers and teachers dedicated to classrooms only, but since that is not the direction the district took, he is praying for and being supportive of their decisions. He is encouraging Dr. Henry, his team, administrators and teachers to do the right thing. “Let's pray that this gets done. Thank you.”

Board member Debbie Blackshear shared how a couple of weeks before school started she discussed how one of the most unique things of this school year would be is that everyone would be on the same level playing field – “because whether you have taught for one year or you’re a new teacher or if you’ve taught for 20 years or more, this would be totally new for everyone.” Ms. Blackshear expressed her appreciation for all of the teachers, support staff, bus drivers, food service workers, custodians, everyone who is working together to try to make this the best situation possible for our students. Ms. Blackshear shared how she spoke to four different CFISD teachers at her church and they discussed all the challenges presented to them this year while trying to teach in-person and online. Ms. Blackshear expressed how distressed she is hearing that there are teachers in the district whose administrators are not listening to them and are not receptive to their feedback about their classroom situations. “We have to make this work.” Ms. Blackshear asked, as a Trustee, to please give the new school platform two to three weeks to see how it goes and that the district definitely wants to hear their feedback. Ms. Blackshear went on to express how worried she is about the stress level district teachers and assured them that as a Board they are listening and if down this path they see things not working, they will make corrections to make the situation work. “Realizing it may not work for everyone, but we’re doing our best to make it work for teachers, students and parents, but it’s going to take a lot of patience on everyone’s part. Thank you.”

Board member Don Ryan began by saying how this is no way anyone wanted to start the new school year. He asked the community to look back at the history of the district and how we’ve always gone above and beyond during rough times. “We always have, and we always will.” Mr. Ryan went on to say that the district has experienced tough times in the past and that we’ve gotten through them. “There’s been bumps in the road, no doubt.” He expressed his confidence that as Board members they hired an effective leader, Dr. Henry. Mr. Ryan shared that he has no doubt in Dr. Henry’s leadership and that Dr. Henry is a compassionate leader. “What you say and what you feel, he feels ten times over.” Mr. Ryan shared that Dr. Henry too has grandkids in schools. He expressed how Dr. Henry takes the brunt of everything and does it with a smile on his face. “He is a reflection of a great leader and we’re going to come through this with his leadership and with his administration and with the sacrifices that teachers make in the classroom. Yes, it sucks right now – that’s blunt – but I assure you, we will get through this. We always do.” Mr. Ryan stated that this is the true fiber of our community and our district. “It’s just who we are.” He asked everyone to be patient acknowledging times aren’t easy right now, especially when you’re in the throes of chaos. He expressed his confidence in the Board and the administration and assured everyone when looking back on this time in a year or so, we would say, “We nailed that one.”

Board member Bob Covey announced that the State Board of Education just approved 5 of 8 charter school applications. Mr. Covey explained to the viewing audience how this will affect a number of school districts across the state, including Austin, San Antonio, Dallas, Fort Worth and South Texas. Mr. Covey shared that the approximate costs to districts affected will be a loss of approximately \$78 million annually and \$425 million over ten years. In addition, it will cost the state of Texas \$180 million due to charter schools getting more dollars per ADA than public schools. Mr. Covey went on to say how some of these charter schools are headquartered out of New York, Florida and California where a part of that money will be sent. In light of this, Mr. Covey asked the community to step up and speak to the State Board of Education and every legislator against approving charter school applications. Mr. Covey expressed how brokenhearted he was to hear some of the negative stories shared tonight. He commented that as many negatives heard tonight, he has heard that many and more positives from staff who have come forward to thank the district and the administration for what they have been doing. Mr. Covey stated that when he was first elected to the Board that there was a huge overview of things that he had no idea affected all of the other facilities and the other 80,000 students. At first, he had not taken this into consideration. However, he quickly learned that the CFISD Board has to be open to look at the entire situation and make decisions that are best for everybody. “It may not be something that’s best for you as an individual, but we look at it as being best for everybody.” Mr. Covey shared that he has never had so many negative texts and emails sent to him as he has in the past three weeks – from those people who do not sign their names. “They are certainly willing to send remarks that I would never repeat to anybody. If you don’t have the guts to tell me who you are and stand up for what you believe, I don’t want to listen to what you’ve got to say. I personally have a problem with that.” Mr. Covey closed by affirming his support and how he backs this Board. “They are taking everything into consideration that will be best for this district because this district has been a leader for almost 80 years.”

Mr. Covey announced that the Board would proceed with the **Citizen Participation** portion of the agenda.

4. Citizen Participation

4A. Patrons who have duly registered per policy BED (Local) may address the Board regarding matters of concern/interest to the district, other than the character of any student, staff or Board member. The Board may not act upon any matter that is not listed under the action item portion of the agenda. (To participate, registration is between 5:30 and 5:50 p.m. on the day of the Board meeting at the entrance to the CFISD ISC Boardroom.)

1. Bryan J. Henry, candidate for the Texas House of Representatives, addressed the Board on public education funding and the state budget.

Before proceeding with **Agenda Item 5A, Signing of the Resolution**, Mr. Covey asked Dr. Ogletree to please read the resolution condemning racism and affirming the district's commitment of *Opportunity for All*. Dr. Ogletree read the resolution then all Board members signed the resolution.

Mr. Covey announced that the Board would proceed with the **Reports** portion of the agenda.

6. Reports

6A. The Administration provided an update on the reopening of CFISD.

Mr. Covey announced that the Board would proceed with the **Consensus Action Items** portion of the agenda.

7. Action Items – Consensus

7A. The board will consider approving the minutes of the August 10, 2020 Regular Board Meeting.

Mr. Covey announced that the Board would proceed with the following **Non-Consensus Action Items** that were moved to **Consensus** at the Board Work Session on Thursday, September 10, 2020.

8. Action Items – Non-Consensus

8A. The Board will consider approving the 2020 certified tax rolls and the estimated collection rate for 2020 to be 100%, and the 2019 excess debt collections rate to be zero.

8C. The Board will consider approving the 2020-2021 Cypress-Fairbanks I.S.D. Student Code of Conduct.

8D. The Board will consider awarding bids and contracts and/or authorizing purchase orders as recommended in the posted agenda item.

1. CFISD Printer Quote
2. Districtwide Copiers – Lease
3. Print Center Copiers – Lease
4. External Website Design, Content Management & Web Hosting Services
5. Internal Website Design, Content Management & Web Hosting Services
6. Concrete Installation/Demolition and Bollards
7. HVAC Parts and Supplies
8. Insulation Services
9. Plumbing Fixtures, Parts and Supplies
10. Recovering Moveable Air Walls and Gyp Walls – Berry Center

8E. The Board will consider the approval and execution of the plat for CFISD Holbrook Elementary School.

Mr. Covey asked if any Board member wished to remove one or more items for further discussion. No further discussion was needed, so Mr. Covey asked for a motion to approve the consensus items as recommended or amended.

Board member Don Ryan made a motion to approve.

Board member Julie Hinaman seconded.

Motion passed by a 7 to 0 vote.

Mr. Covey announced that it was determined at the Board Work Session on Thursday, September 10, 2020, that the following **Non-Consensus Action Item** remain on **Non-Consensus**.

- 8B.** The Board will consider the 2020 Tax Rate Resolution to support the 2020-2021 Maintenance and Operations and Debt Service budgets by setting the 2020 M & O and Interest and Sinking tax rates.

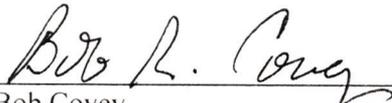
Board member Don Ryan moved that the 2020 property tax rate be increased by the adoption of the tax rate of 1.3555, which is effectively a 0.74 percent increase in the tax rate, and further moved, that the Board approve the resolution adopting the tax rate and levy ad valorem taxes for the year 2020 as reflected in the resolution for a decrease in the actual tax rate of 0.0145 or 1.45 cents.

Board member Debbie Blackshear seconded.

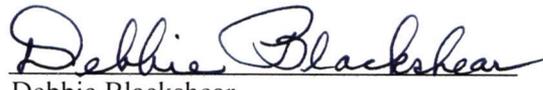
Motion passed by a 7 to 0 vote.

Adjournment

Board President Covey thanked everyone for attending and adjourned the meeting at 9:07 p.m.



Bob Covey
President, Board of Trustees



Debbie Blackshear
Secretary, Board of Trustees

Approved: October 12, 2020