

**MINUTES OF THE WINDHAM SCHOOL DISTRICT  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

Meeting No. 319

The Windham School District Board of Trustees met in session on Friday, August 14, 2020 via Zoom Video Conference.

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Patrick O’Daniel, Chairman  
Derrelynn Perryman, Vice Chairman  
Larry Miles, Secretary  
Mano DeAyala  
Hon. Molly Francis  
Hon. Faith Johnson  
Sichan Siv  
Eric Nichols  
Dr. Rodney Burrow

**WINDHAM STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Kristina Hartman, Superintendent  
Kevin Sawnick  
Jon Lilley  
Robert O’Banion

**CONVENED**

Chairman Patrick O’Daniel convened the meeting of the 319th Windham School District (WSD) Board of Trustees (Board) to order on Friday, August 14, 2020, at 12:30 p.m. in accordance with Chapter 551 of the Texas Government Code, the *Open Meetings Act*. During the regular session, the Board conducted business from the agenda posted in the Texas Register. A quorum was present and the meeting was declared open.

Chairman O’Daniel reported that the WSD Board was committed to providing the opportunity for public presentations on posted agenda topics as well as for public comments on issues within its jurisdiction as provided in Board Rule 300.1. As no speaker registration cards were received by the Board staff, no public presentations on posted agenda topics were heard.

**RECOGNITIONS**

Kevin Sawnick, Department Director of Instruction, introduced Nathan Herrod, Workforce Specialist in College and Career Readiness. Mr. Herrod serves as the coordinator for the development and implementation of the standard high school diploma program for young students, the liaison for postsecondary education with TDCJ’s Rehabilitative Programs Division, the point of contact and review coordinator for articulation agreements with colleges, and the facilitator for the district’s college and career initiatives.

## **CONSIDERATION OF APPROVAL OF CONSENT ITEMS**

The Chairman called the Board's attention to the Consent Items on the agenda, which consisted of the minutes of the June 26<sup>th</sup>, 2020 meeting, appraisers for the 2020-2021 school year and the WSD's naming of Matthew Gaines High School.

There being no other comments, objections or amendments to the Consent Items, the Consent Items were approved as submitted.

## **SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**

### **Windham School District's Lane Murray Excellence in Teaching Award**

Kristina Hartman, Superintendent of Windham School District, reported that WSD recently announced the 2020-2021 school year District Teacher of the Year and recipient of the Lane Murray Excellence in Teaching award and the District finalists.

Ms. Hartman stated that Windham's Career and Technical Education Teacher of the Year, Jerry Riley, from the Panhandle Region's Neal Unit will represent WSD as District Teacher of the Year and receive the Lane Murray Excellence in Teaching award. The award is named for Dr. Lane Murray, the first superintendent of the Windham School District and pioneer in educational opportunities for incarcerated individuals.

She said that Jerry Riley signifies a teacher who genuinely goes the extra mile for his students to be successful. With a primary focus on skill development to secure productive employment upon reentry into the community, Mr. Riley dedicates his curriculum to providing ample resources and tools for students to obtain exemplary knowledge in the field of construction with an emphasis on carpentry. He is committed to advancing students past the context of a classroom and successfully into a trade work environment. Mr. Riley exemplifies the mission of Windham School District in full by providing excellent educational opportunities for students to effectively reduce recidivism through career pathways and life skills development from a technical perspective. Intrinsic motivation is at the heart of Jerry Riley's teaching practices, and for this reason and the many listed above, he has been selected as the District Teacher of the Year.

Ms. Hartman said that the two recognized finalists are Windham's Life Skills Teacher of the Year, Rosalinda Juarez of the Sanchez State Jail in El Paso and Windham's Academic Teacher of the Year, Lee Russell of the Connally Unit in Kenedy.

She stated that Rosalinda Juarez has a true dedication to her position as a CHANGES teacher of the Windham School District and exhibits a sincere passion for connecting with her students to promote best practices. Ms. Juarez came to Windham with a distinct mission to teach the complexities of inclusivity and acceptance of multicultural populations, and to implore students to productively learn from one another and celebrate cultural uniqueness for optimal growth and development. She provides ample innovative strategies for evolving cultural perspectives and encouraging leadership development in her classroom through artistic expression and creative analysis in coursework curriculum. Ms. Juarez utilizes the trials and tribulations of her own previous experiences to exemplify understanding of the difficulties faced by her students and provide guidance for obtaining a better future. For these reasons, Ms. Juarez has been selected as

the Life Skills Teacher of the Year and was named as a finalist for the District Teacher of the Year.

Ms. Hartman said that Lee Russell exhibits a true passion for teaching and a sincere dedication to going above and beyond for his students to succeed. He is dedicated to helping students to reach their potential through support and positive reinforcement. Mr. Russell provides authentic strategies for best practices in a classroom environment. When asked to give advice to new Windham teachers, Mr. Russell recites his own “Golden Rules of Education” and “Strategies for Student Success,” emphasizing the importance of effectively motivating students through facilitative instruction and transformational learning practices. Mr. Russell’s commitment to adapting his teaching methods to meet the needs of each student individually and his passion for providing top-notch educational experiences for all participating students deserves to be recognized and celebrated. For these reasons, he has been selected as the Academic Teacher of the Year and was named as a finalist for the District Teacher of the Year.

Ms. Hartman stated that the WSD is proud of the accomplishments of these exemplary educators who represent the many dedicated teachers across the state in the district.

Ms. Hartman said that she would also like to provide a brief update on the response from WSD educators and staff to a district-wide survey that was developed in order to assess the climate and morale of the WSD team during COVID-19 protocols and to request and act on feedback from the Windham team.

She stated that over 700 individuals responded to the survey to include principals, teachers, librarians, support staff and employees assigned to the administration building. A five-point Likert scale was used with responses ranging from “Not effective or Never” to “Very safe/supportive.” Categories included perceived safety, support from the administration and level of effectiveness during distance learning. Three hundred seventy four of the 700 individuals also chose to answer the open-ended question seeking suggestions or comments from staff. Questions and comments were reviewed and categorized into six areas: instruction, technology, communication, professional development, safety and general operations. The results of the survey were shared with the district and suggestions are being addressed and shared via email on a weekly basis with the format of suggestion, action and responsible party.

Ms. Hartman noted that the staff has expressed thanks for seeking their opinion on these matters. An example of a question that was asked is, “How supportive has the administration been in meeting your distance learning and remote work needs?” The majority of WSD staff (620) answered either “supportive”, “more supportive than expected”, or “very supportive”. A question was also asked about safety, “Are established health protocols being followed at your unit?” The majority of staff answered “always.”

Superintendent Hartman stated that WSD is taking the staff feedback very seriously. Staff has had some excellent comments and suggestions and she looks forward to future discussion with the Board related to WSD staff morale and survey.

## **REPORT FROM THE CHAIRMAN, WSD BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

### **WSD's Standard High School Diploma Program: Matthew Gaines High School**

Chairman O'Daniel reported that The Windham School District (WSD) will pilot a standard high school diploma program beginning in the fall of 2020 with a high school named after the lustrous Texan, Matthew Gaines. This program establishes a method for eligible incarcerated students to earn a high school diploma and an industry-recognized certification in an environment that meets the needs of the learner.

The Chairman said that the high school program will address the needs of eligible learners in adult correctional facilities and improve their quality of life by providing:

- Academic and career and technical education courses that lead to a standard high school diploma,
- Career exploration leading to postsecondary education and training opportunities or employment,
- Industry-recognized certifications, and;
- Special Education and Title I services for eligible students

Chairman O'Daniel stated that initial enrollment in the high school will consist of 40 male students age 26 and under with priority given to students under the age of 22. A standard high school diploma program for incarcerated women is currently offered at the San Saba Unit through a Memorandum of Understanding with the Mullin Independent School District and another for men by at the Hughes unit by the Lometa Independent School District. WSD's program will allow for an accurate assessment of student success in a program that emphasizes career and technical education competencies in addition to core courses and provides an accurate cost comparison.

The Chairman said that student enrollment in either the standard high school diploma program or the high school equivalency program will be a multidisciplinary team decision that will include the student, and considers the number of credits needed to graduate with a standard diploma, student's remaining time on sentence, student's age and student's custody level. Priority will be placed on the option that will most likely result in completion and award of a diploma (standard or equivalency) and industry-recognized certification in order to prepare the students for immediate employment or postsecondary education enrollment following release from incarceration.

Chairman O'Daniel reported that the Matthew Gaines High School will be located at the Ferguson Unit near Huntsville in Midway, Texas. Matthew Gaines (1840-1900) was a former slave, community leader, minister and Texas State Senator who made significant contributions in public education and public reform.

The Chairman stated that Mr. Gaines was born into slavery on August 4, 1840 (1842) near Alexandria, Louisiana. Reportedly, a young white man living on the plantation smuggled books to Matthew, who taught himself to read, which back then, was a criminal offense. After the Civil War, Gaines eventually settled in Burton, Washington County, Texas. He became a Baptist

minister as well as a leader of the freedmen. Gaines was known as a powerful orator and spoke seven languages.

Chairman O'Daniel said that Gaines, elected as a Republican, was one of four black men to serve Texas as state senator during the 19th century. Gaines fought for many issues: education, mental health aid, prison reform, the protection of black Americans at the polls and their election to public office, tenant-farming reform, and restraints on bribery and fraud. In 1871, Gaines sponsored successful legislation to exempt educational and religious groups from taxation as an incentive to improve communities. Although unjustly removed from office and even arrested for speaking out about civil rights, Matthew Gaines never backed down from what he believed in. Indeed, his arrest followed a speech in which he told his audience, "In the eyes of God, blacks should have pride and hold their heads up even in troubled times".

Mr. Chairman stated that we are in troubled times now, and every graduate of the Matthew Gaines High School should be able to hold up their heads in pride, too.

The Chairman said that Senator Matthew Gaines passionately supported the forward movement that established the first public school system for all Texans. Per Texas A&M University's Division of Student Affairs, "The first African-American state senator from Washington County, he was instrumental in the 12th Texas Legislature's passage of Senate Bill 276, which created the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas under the Land-Grant College Act of 1862, also known as the Morrill Act."

Chairman O'Daniel concluded that because of his service to the Texas state legislator, support of civil rights, work in prison reform, and champion of education, the name Matthew Gaines is a powerful reminder of the result of perseverance and commitment- an expectation that will hold true to the students of Windham's aptly named high school program. Some say pride comes before a fall, but the Matthew Gaines High School seeks to reverse that saying. After a fall, a high school education comes pride.

## **OVERVIEW OF THE WSD ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR THE 2018-2019 SCHOOL YEAR**

Jon Lilley, Division Director of Instruction, gave an overview of the WSD Annual Performance Report for the 2018-2019 school year. Mr. Lilley stated that at Windham, the journey to success follows the road that aligns appropriate educational and training opportunities with meaningful employment. WSD students are incarcerated individuals in the Texas Department of Criminal Justice who are in need of educational opportunities that range from literacy and high school equivalency programs to advanced technical training and life skills.

Some of the highlights include:

- Many of our students dropped out in 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> grade, have an average academic functioning level of 6<sup>th</sup> grade when they join Windham classes and have an average age of 32. Students are ready for new opportunities and we celebrate success as students progress throughout their course enrollment and completions with Windham.

- More than 68,000 students received WSD educational services. These were the highest priority students as resources allowed, based upon ages, release dates and educational needs.
- WSD students in school year 2019 were supported by a combination of adult education, career and technical education and life skills classes – all designed to support future employment opportunities.
- Almost 28,000 students participated in WSD adult education and literacy programs. During the year, 9,250 students completed one or more educational functioning level. Functioning levels encompass approximately two grade levels.
- The WSD recognized that in order to provide the most effective and efficient services, our educators and staff must be aware of the current best practices in instruction, communication and support. The Professional Development in 2018-2019 included training in motivational interviewing, strategic planning, accountability, technology, industry standards and best practices.
- Of the 27,907 students who participated in adult education and literacy programs, 4,511 students took the High school Standard Equivalency (HSE) exam in school year 2019. Of that group, 86% were awarded a certificate.
- A highlight of each students HSE journey is graduation where many families witness their graduate experience success during incarceration.
- Life Skills is another area the district programs help students refocus thinking, develop people skills, enhance cognitive skills, and retain better-paying jobs.
- Opportunities for Windham students in school year 2019 were supported by a combination of customized literacy courses, expanded
- Career and Technical Education (CTE) offerings and focused life skills programs. Windham’s diligence serves as a strategic differentiator for successful outcomes by providing data driven programming.
- Program expansion in school year 2019 focused on current industry employment needs and marketable employability to students
  - These changes resulted in increasing numbers of students obtaining viable career training.
  - 25,754 CTE Certificates Earned (90% completion rate of those eligible)
  - 33,695 Industry Certifications Earned in 39 CTE courses, some with multiple levels
- WSD provides supplemental Lead and Achieve courses at designated campuses for students under the age of 22. The curriculum is designed to enhance academic, leadership and employability skills. In addition to supporting the goal of achieving a High School Diploma or Equivalency, teachers and students spend 20 percent of class time on lessons dedicated to work readiness and career planning skills.
- Elective Personal Enrichment Courses (EPEC) are classes taught during the winter, spring, and summer breaks of school year 2019. Classes centered on soft skill lessons, enhanced job readiness and career potential.
  - There were almost 12,000 course enrollments from roughly 10,000 students.

- WSD's Accountability System assists school employees in comparing campus data, tracking key unit activities, supporting the campus improvement plan and recognizing units and unit personnel. This system allows WSD to track performance on critical measures and strengthen effectiveness in all program areas.
- Career & Technical Education combines quality instruction, preparation for industry certificates, and employment connections to help students build careers. During school year 19, more than 21,000 students earned 25,754 CTE course completions (90% completion rate). CTE students earned 33,695 industry certificates.
- The WSD Career and Technical Education (CTE) programming provides a graduate with the skills and real-world learning experiences necessary to compete in today's workforce.
- The WSD workforce and reentry initiatives create the opportunity for successful reentry into employment, careers, and reconstructed lives. By connecting with industry leaders and community stakeholders, WSD gives students opportunities for skilled training, genuine career experience and reduced chances of recidivism to create a stronger Texas work force.
- WSD coordinated OJT and apprenticeship programs in partnership with TDCJ. Thanks to our partnership, workplace opportunities include: On-the-job training, and Job-related apprenticeships within TDCJ.

Mr. Lilley stated that WSD is pleased to highlight the progress and efforts within the WSD that are detailed in this report, and will continue to develop and implement innovative programs that support student success, provide the community with capable, reliable employees and improved lives for individuals and their families during and following incarceration.

Mr. Lilley asked if there were any questions. There were no questions.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Lilley for a very good presentation.

### **DISCUSSION, CONSIDERATION, AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING PURCHASES AND CONTRACTS OVER \$500,000**

WSD Chief Financial Officer Robert O'Banion stated that board approval was being requested for a purchase over \$500,000. WSD recommends awarding the purchase totaling \$1,010,100.00 for Aztec Instructional Software.

This purchase will provide instructional software to 84 computer labs across the district to support student academic achievement. Aztec Software has been in operations for 40 years as an adult education technology company and is currently utilized within adult correctional environments within the Federal Bureau of Prisons, Oklahoma, Florida and California. WSD has utilized this software at eleven of our campuses for this past year providing supplemental academic services to eligible students.

This purchase is being made through the Education Service Center Region 19 – Allied States Cooperative in El Paso, TX. Consistent with all of our purchasing cooperatives, the contract is bid and negotiated through the educational service center who does not charge any fees to the

WSD. This is an annual license agreement for one year beginning September 2020. This software provides diagnostic, prescriptive, computer-based instruction to support and enhance the academic programs. Funding for this purchase is included in the Fiscal Year 2021 budget that being presented to the board today.

Mr. O'Banion asked if there were any questions. There were no questions.

Chairman O'Daniel asked the board for a motion.

*Derrelynn Perryman moved that WSD Board of Trustees approve the WSD Purchase, Aztec Instructional Software.*

*Faith Johnson seconded the motion, which prevailed unanimously when called to a vote.*

### **DISCUSSION, CONSIDERATION, AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING THE WSD BUDGET AND SALARY SCHEDULE FOR 2020-2021**

Chairman O'Daniel said that over the past few week, each Board member individually reviewed with the district superintendent and finance leader the details of the WSD Budget and Salary Schedule that was presented at the meeting. The budget was the result of many months of preparation and numerous meetings with leadership offices on the needs of the district. The Chairman thanked Kristina Hartman, Robert O'Banion, and Jon Lilley for their insight and vision on this project.

Robert O'Banion, WSD Chief Financial Officer, thanked the members for the opportunity to discuss the budget for the 2020-2021 school year and for support of the District's mission.

Mr. O'Banion highlighted some areas within the 2020-2021 budget:

- The all fund revenues decreased for fiscal year 21 by 12.5% to \$63,314,798. This significant \$9 million decrease in revenue can primarily be broken down into two areas. The first is a \$2.9 million appropriation decrease as a result of a 5% legislative reduction. The second area of significant decrease is the MOU with TDCJ which decreased approximately \$4.6 million.
- The TEA budgeted Grant funds increased by \$1 million.
- The all funds budgeted expenditures decreased for FY21 by 7% or \$5 million to \$69,923,038.
  - Lower expenditures from a 5% legislative reduction, resulted in the elimination of operating funds as well as 43.5 vacant teaching positing and 10 vacant non-teaching positions for a total reduction of \$2,855,750.
  - Additional legislative reductions within TDCJ reduced MOU funding \$4,611,035 resulting in the elimination of the current Health and Wellness program and 87.3 FTEs.
  - The budget includes funds for the expansion in several program areas.

- This budget includes funding for the purchase of student educational software at 84 facilities at a cost of \$1,010,100 to support student academic achievement.
  - Increased expenditures within the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act federal grant in the amount of \$204,693 allows for two new positions and operating funds for this population.
  - Funding for a high school diploma pilot program in the amount of \$236,966 to establish the standard diploma option for eligible young students within the current education department at the Ferguson unit.
- The Personnel Schedule showed that the overall total FTE's decreased from last year's budget by 139 to 1,066.9 FTE's for FY21.
  - The remaining pages of the budget book reflect our different salary plans.

Mr. O'Banion asked if there were any questions. There were no questions.

Mr. O'Banion asked that the Windham School District Board of Trustees approve the 2020-2021 budget for the Windham School District as presented and the salary schedule as Board Policy.

Mr. O'Daniel thanked Mr. O'Banion and recognized that this was a unique and challenging year to come up with a budget. The Chairman and the Board were very appreciative for all the hard work.

Mano DeAyala expressed thanks for everything WSD does.

Chairman O'Daniel asked the board for a motion.

*Mano DeAyala moved that WSD Board of Trustees approve the Windham School District Budget and Salary Schedule for 2020-2021 as presented.*

*Eric Nichols seconded the motion, which prevailed unanimously when called to a vote.*

Chairman O'Daniel thanked everyone for coming to the meeting and reminded them that the next meeting of the WSD Board of Trustees will be Friday, October 30th, at Double Tree Hotel Northwest Arboretum in Austin, Texas.

**ADJOURNED**

There being no further business for the regular session, Chairman O'Daniel adjourned the 319th meeting of the Windham School District Board of Trustees at 1:06 p.m.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chairman\*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Secretary\*

\*Signature on file

*Note: Referenced attachments for draft minutes are available upon request. Following approval*

*of the minutes, attachments will be maintained with the signed minutes in the Office of Record.*