

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

Meeting No. 338

The Windham School District Board of Trustees met in session on Friday, October 13<sup>th</sup>, 2023 at the Cambria Hotel Austin Uptown in Austin, Texas.

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Eric J.R. Nichols, Chair  
Hon. Faith Johnson, Vice Chair  
Hon. Molly Francis  
Ambassador Sichan Siv  
Bill Welch  
Nate Sprinkle  
Sydney Zuiker

**BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Dr. Rodney Burrow

**WINDHAM STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Kristina Hartman, Superintendent  
Robert O'Banion  
Erika Moore  
Erik Brown  
Danielle Nicholes  
Raul Leonidas Nuques  
Azure Mach  
Kristie Jones  
Rachel Taylor

**CONVENED**

Chairman Eric J.R. Nichols convened the meeting of the 338<sup>th</sup> Windham School District (WSD) Board of Trustees (Board) to order on Friday, October 13<sup>th</sup>, 2023, at 12:13 p.m. in accordance with Chapter 551 of the Texas Government Code, the *Open Meetings Act*. A quorum was present and the meeting was declared open. 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 Nichols 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

Azure Mach, Central Texas Regional Principal, recognized Ms. Kristie Jones. Ms. Mach said Kristie Jones, principal of the Halbert and Travis campuses, located in Burnet and Austin, grew up in a small rural East Texas community with a graduating class of 24. She said she earned her Bachelor's degree in Biology from Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches, Texas. After several years of work in a corporate environment, Ms. Jones returned to SFA to earn her teaching credentials beginning her educational career at Lufkin High School.

Ms. Mach said during her six years in the classroom, Ms. Jones earned her Master's in Biology, as well as her principal certification. She said she earned her superintendent certification from Texas A&M University while serving as an assistant principal and later a principal for Navasota ISD. Ms. Mach said during her term in Navasota, Ms. Jones grew to love working with students in alternative education environments.

Ms. Mach presented that in 2017, an opportunity presented itself for Ms. Jones to work in a central office capacity. Ms. Jones became the Director of Curriculum & State and Federal Programs for Pewitt CISD. She said she served in this role until joining the Windham School District in June 2023 as the principal for the Travis and Halbert campuses. Ms. Mach said since taking on this role, Ms. Jones has been instrumental in the increase in staff recruitment and the development of team building events. She has also made it a priority to provide quality program evaluation at both of her campuses.

Ms. Mach said that Ms. Jones has a heart for community service. She said she has served on numerous city, civic and church committees in various capacities to include President of Navasota Kiwanis Club, President of Navasota Housing Authority, and Omaha Chamber of Commerce as the 2018 Member of the Year. Ms. Mach said Ms. Jones believes educators have the loudest voice when they are outside the walls of their campuses. She said Ms. Jones loves being back in the Central Texas area and looks forward to getting involved in a local church and the community around her.

Chairman Nichols congratulated and thanked Ms. Jones. He asked Ms. Jones to say a few words.

Ms. Jones said as a veteran of public schools, she will always, 100%, support what public schools do. She said however, public schools have not been able to capture every single student that comes across their hands and in their classrooms. She said she looks at this as an opportunity, working for Windham, to catch some of those students that they were not able to catch in the public-school system.

Ms. Jones said it took her three and a half days on the job to run into a former student that she previously had. She said she wants the Board to know that she will do everything she possibly can to serve the students and the residents at her campuses.

Chairman Nichols said he appreciated Ms. Jones and the work they were doing in helping to educate and train in order to do the catch-up work Ms. Jones discussed. He thanked Ms. Jones very much for her work.

Next, Danielle Nicholes, Communications Administrator, recognized Ms. Erika Moore. Ms. Nicholes said Erika Moore was recently promoted to Department Director of Instruction. Ms. Moore is currently in her thirteenth year with Windham School District, where she has served in multiple roles including student advisor, principal, regional principal and now in her current position, where she leads the Assessment, Advisement & Records; Federal Programs; Library Services; and Professional Development departments. She said Ms. Moore earned her Bachelor of Science in elementary education from Stephen F. Austin University, her Master of Science degree in Counseling and Guidance from Texas A&M Commerce, and her principal certificate from Stephen F. Austin University.

Ms. Nicholes said prior to joining Windham, Ms. Moore worked in the public-school system for 16 years, holding roles such as 3rd-8th grade teacher, special education teacher and counselor. In her spare time, she enjoys spending time with family and traveling.

Ms. Nicholes asked the Board to please join her in congratulating Ms. Moore on becoming one of Windham's Department Directors of Instruction.

Chairman Nichols congratulated Ms. Moore and asked her to share a few words. Ms. Moore said she truly believes in the mission for Windham School District. She said they provide excellent educational opportunities for their students. Ms. Moore said there is no greater joy than watching Windham students succeed, and that their reaction to success is priceless. She thanked the Board for the opportunity and for the recognition.

Lastly, Ms. Nicholes recognized Mr. Raul Leonidas Nuques. She said for those who were in attendance, they may recall that Raul Leonidas Nuques was introduced as the Dominguez Principal during the February 2023 Board meeting. She said Windham is pleased to recognize Mr. Nuques for his promotion to the Panhandle Regional Principal position, effective September 2023.

She said Mr. Nuques joined the Windham School District in June of 2019 as a campus principal serving the Torres and Ney campuses and then transitioned to the Dominguez campus. Mr. Nuques has been an educator for over 20 years encompassing roles such as high school science and math teacher, principal, federal programs coordinator, special education director and superintendent. Ms. Nicholes said he holds multiple certifications from both the Texas State Board for Educator Certification and Florida Department of Education.

Ms. Nicholes said that Mr. Nuques earned several degrees in the Texas A&M University System: a bachelor's degree with a major in Chemistry and a minor in Human Resources Management; a master's degree in Business Administration in International Trade with a focus on International Finance and Banking; and a Master of Science in Educational Administration. He is also a certified mediator and holds a Training & Development Professional Certification from Texas A&M University.

Ms. Nicholes said Mr. Nuques is looking forward to sharing his staff and student-centered approach and expertise with the Panhandle Region to support the district.

She asked the Board to please join her in congratulating Mr. Nuques on his new role.

Chairman Nichols congratulated Mr. Nuques. He asked Mr. Nuques to say a few words.

Mr. Nuques said first he would like to thank the Board, Chairman Nichols and Superintendent Hartman for the opportunity. He said like his colleague mentioned earlier in the meeting, Windham serves students that deserve a second chance. He said he has also met several students, and even with the unforeseen circumstances, the second opportunity at education gives them hope and a better chance for a better tomorrow.

Chairman Nichols said that it is amazing that Windham educators have the opportunity to meet students that they've previously worked with and they get to see the legacy that they are leaving through the work that they are doing. He thanked Mr. Nuques.

### **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 August 25<sup>th</sup>, 2023 meeting, excused absences and personal property donations.

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

### **SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**

#### **Statewide Principals' Leadership Meeting**

Superintendent Hartman said that she will be speaking on the statewide principals' meeting that recently took place. She said she prefaces the prepared remarks by saying that Windham took a different approach for this meeting. Rather than developing agenda items at the central office level and presenting to people, she said Windham engaged their Principals' Focus Group to provide them with feedback on what they thought principals needed. Ms. Hartman said that the Board will hear throughout the report some of the practices that were utilized in coming together for the professional development that was received very well.

Superintendent Hartman said that on September 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>, Windham School District principals from across the district came together for a two-day meeting held in San Antonio. Windham principals uphold an unwavering commitment to delivering high quality education and leadership to our staff and students. By bringing together all Windham principals, she said staff were given an opportunity to network, share ideas, receive information and recommend adjustments to campus and district operations that will ultimately produce the best practices to support staff and student success.

Superintendent Hartman said the Principals' Leadership Meeting kicked off with introductions, district updates and awards. Principals engaged in six breakout sessions throughout the two-day meeting. Topics discussed included campus accountability, campus operations, the Americans with Disabilities Act, legislative interactions, assessment security, human resources and legal updates, district brand and preparation for the Correctional Education Association campus audits, which she said the Board may all recall being briefed on during the August Board meeting. She

said Maggie Lima, Windham's Human Resources (HR) Administrator, Erik Brown, General Counsel, and Robert O'Banion, Director of Operations and Chief Financial Officer, discussed relevant HR topics, such as the management of leave, new hire preparation and difficult professional conversations with staff. Presentations and interactive sessions were also delivered by Windham's Division of Instruction, Assessment, Advisement & Records; Communications; and Operational Support departments.

Superintendent Hartman said along with the informational breakout sessions, staff also enjoyed motivational guest speakers. On the first day of the meeting, Windham principals heard an inspiring message from Marcus Forney, Huntsville Independent School District's Chief Academic Officer, on the importance and power of effective campus leadership. Mr. Forney highlighted 21<sup>st</sup> Century Leadership: embracing change and possessing a growth mindset. He said "Your leadership should be contagious because of the influence you have on others." She said Mr. Forney encouraged Windham staff to be reasonable risk-takers for the benefit of the students and district as a whole. Superintendent Hartman said to round out their final meeting day, the district welcomed health and wellness motivational speaker Todd Whitthorne, who has previously spoken at Windham conferences and team building events. His presentation, "Empowering Excellence, Unleashing Leadership and Motivation for Success," touched on ways employees can ensure they are taking care of their own health and wellness, which in turn makes them better leaders. She said overall, the words these guest speakers shared enabled staff to connect what they learned during the two-day meeting to real work application, allowing them to apply that in all areas across their campuses.

Superintendent Hartman presented that Windham School District is dedicated to nurturing the intellectual and personal growth of their students, equipping them for a lifetime of success and responsible citizenship. This statewide principals' meeting was an excellent opportunity to enhance their staff's leadership capacity. She said the district continuously aims to equip their staff with the knowledge, skills and strategies necessary to navigate the evolution of modern education. Ultimately, she said Windham staff's commitment to professional development ensures they remain well-prepared and adaptive leaders dedicated to providing the best possible educational opportunities for Windham students.

She added to her report the excitement she shared with Bryan Collier and their colleagues at the Travis campus. Superintendent Hartman said they were able to Zoom with the Czech Republic students, and she believes it to be one of the highlights of her career thus far. She said she looks forward to providing the Board with additional information in the future.

Superintendent Hartman also took the opportunity to say that on behalf of the Windham School District, during this Board of Trustees meeting, she would like to acknowledge how very grateful the district is for the years of service from Ms. Derrelynn Perryman. She said Ms. Perryman inspired, supported and made Windham better. She said Ms. Perryman will remain with them, and they thank her for her leadership.

This concluded her report. She paused for questions.

Chairman Nichols said he assumed that during the breakout sessions, there were opportunities to

share about best practices and so forth. Superintendent Hartman confirmed, indicating that the approach they took was separating the principals into groups of about six people for six breakout sessions. She said they were 90-minute sessions that included scenario-based modeling, and they were able to practice. In between each session, she said they had a 30-minute networking break where they shared ideas, which they truly took advantage of. Superintendent Hartman said she believes it to be a successful event because the district listened to the campus principals and addressed their needs.

The Chairman thanked Superintendent Hartman for her report.

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

### **Technology Updates**

Chairman Nichols said that the integration of technology into Windham School District's educational programs is an indispensable part of preparing Windham students to reenter our Texas communities. Getting students ready for the technology they will encounter in the free-world is an essential part of helping the transition from incarceration to life in that free world. The Chairman said over the course of the past several months, Windham School District has embarked on an array of dynamic technological initiatives, all aimed at ushering in a new era of seamless and effective learning environments for both students and educators alike.

Chairman Nichols said to this end, Windham has added six highly skilled instructional technology education specialists to its team. These individuals, led by Paul Gathright, Educational Specialist II for Instructional Technology, have been assigned the vital task of guiding the implementation and execution of digital and technology-based projects. Each specialist will work closely with principals and administration to align curriculum standards, including various computer software applications, across all campuses. These specialists will promote educational innovation, encourage collaboration among staff and educators and improve educational services through professional development, ensuring staff are well versed in new technology within their classrooms. They will also lead the adoption of innovative technology throughout the district.

The Chairman said in yet another effort to embrace the digital age for the population it serves, Windham has taken another significant step forward by making the ECHO, the longtime, Texas prison newspaper, available in a digital format, accessible via resident tablets and the district's website. He said many, if not most, read their newspaper on tablets, and now members of the population will as well. The ECHO has transformed into a magazine-like format, tailored to cater to the preferences of tablet users. Residents now have access to an array of digital enhancements, including vibrant colored photos that correspond with stories and inspiring design elements. He said for the ones who cannot get away from the news print, a limited number of printed copies of the ECHO will still be available in the campus libraries.

The Chairman said finally, in September, Windham announced the launch of their newly designed website. This website provides users with an improved, streamlined experience when looking for important information. District programming is now showcased dynamically on the website, with ready access to pivotal information such as important announcements, press releases and photo

albums. He said this website, very importantly, can also be accessed by Windham alumni, who he said can access crucial resources and their student records. The district's key partnerships, such as Women's Storybook Project of Texas and Bulkley Trucking, are also highlighted on this new website, displaying the support Windham students are receiving from outside organizations and employers. Windham believes that this renovated online platform will serve as an invaluable resource not only for their communities, but also for their dedicated staff, students, and stakeholders.

The Chairman said Windham School District remains committed to staying at the forefront of educational technology, as the district aims to elevate teaching and learning outcomes across their campuses. He said through continued investments in technology expansion, the provision of digital resources and the cultivation of robust community engagement, the district remains steadfast in its mission to provide a modern, equitable and truly transformative educational experience for all.

This concluded his report.

### **CELEBRATING TEXAS HISTORY: NATIONAL HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH**

Raul Leonidas Nuques, Panhandle Regional Principal, presented that every year, Americans dedicate September 15<sup>th</sup> – October 15<sup>th</sup> to recognizing and celebrating the progressive impact made by those of Hispanic heritage. He said this includes histories, cultures and contributions by American citizens with ancestral ties to Spain, Mexico, the Caribbean and Central and South America. Windham's theme for National Hispanic Heritage Month is "Prosperity, Power and Progress." Campuses and departments are encouraged to incorporate this theme into classroom lessons and activities in the form of listening to cultural music, holding art contests and creating celebratory posters. Students may also write poetry, essays and songs to recognize the influence of Hispanic heritage.

Mr. Nuques said National Hispanic Heritage Month is a time to celebrate the rich and diverse cultural contributions of Hispanic and Latino Americans to the progression of the United States. This month-long celebration offers a significant opportunity for Texans to honor the history, traditions and achievements of the Hispanic community, which he said has played a vital role in shaping the Lone Star State's identity.

Mr. Nuques presented that the history of recognizing the Hispanic heritage dates back to 1968, when President Lyndon B. Johnson dedicated a week to highlight individuals with Hispanic ancestral ties. In 1988, President Ronald Reagan expanded the recognition to cover a 30-day period. It was then enacted into law on August 17, 1988.

Mr. Nuques said National Hispanic Heritage Month is unique, as it commences in the middle of September. This timing holds particular importance since it coincides with the independence anniversaries of several Latin American nations, including Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua, which all gained their independence on September 15. Additionally, Mexico and Chile mark their independence on September 16 and September 18, respectively. The strategic alignment of National Hispanic Heritage Month allows these milestones to be honored while simultaneously celebrating the month dedicated to recognizing the Hispanic heritage.

Mr. Nuques said there are numerous individuals within the Hispanic lineage that have made monumental efforts towards growing America as we know it today. To name a few: Roberto Clemente, Susana Martinez and José Hernández. Clemente, originally from Puerto Rico, came to the United States in 1954 to kickstart his career in major league baseball. An elite baseball player, Clemente was a passionate advocate for Latino and Black players' rights, helping pave the way for future generations of Latino baseball players. Also influential is Susana Martinez, the first Hispanic female governor in U.S. history. Born in Texas, Martinez served as the New Mexico governor from 2011 – 2019, prioritizing the safety of communities and high-quality education for all students. José Hernández is an American-Latino engineer and former astronaut for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, better known as NASA. He was a crew member for the Space Shuttle Mission STS-128, and served as the chief of the Materials and Processes branch of the Johnson Space Center. He now serves as a Regent of the University of California.

Mr. Nuques said that in addition, Jovita González de Mireles, the namesake behind the Mireles High School within the Woodman campus, is another powerful woman with Hispanic heritage ties. The teacher, writer and historian was one of the first Latin American women to obtain a master's degree. She earned her high school equivalency by the age of 18 and completed her bachelor's degree at Our Lady of the Lake College in San Antonio. González taught Spanish at Saint Mary's Hall before attending the University of Texas at Austin, one of the first women of her ethnic class to do so, and graduated with her master's degree in history in 1930. These are just a few reasons supporting the district's decision to name the Woodman high school program after her.

Mr. Nuques presented that from its early Spanish colonial roots, to the contributions of Tejanos during the Texas Revolution, individuals of Hispanic heritage have made lasting and impactful contributions to the state's cultural progression. He said the positive influence that the Hispanic Heritage has had on the progression of America is inspiring. National Hispanic Heritage Month is a time to recognize these efforts and commend the lineage for the contributions they have put forth and their immense accomplishments. Recognizing this rich history, he said Windham School District takes great pride in celebrating National Hispanic Heritage Month.

This concluded his report. He paused for any questions.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Nuques for his report and said that the Board applauds and celebrates the Hispanic heritage that has meant so much to the state of Texas and more specifically, means so much to the Windham School District and the population that it serves. He said that they appreciate Mr. Nuques' efforts individually and his great presentation so they always can keep in mind the tremendous contributions to the state and its institutions, in which he said includes the very important Hispanic heritage. He thanked Mr. Nuques again.

Judge Faith Johnson also commented by saying that she loved the idea that the celebration starts in September and extends into October. She said they get to celebrate in both months, which makes it exciting. Mr. Nuques agreed.



**DISCUSSION, CONSIDERATION, AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING THE  
ANNUAL REVIEW OF WINDHAM BOARD POLICY WBP-11.12 (REV. 15),  
“INVESTMENT POLICY,” AND RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE INVESTMENT  
POLICY**

Robert O’Banion, Director of Operations and Chief Financial Officer, stated that this review is in accordance with Chapter 2256 of the Government Code known as the *Public Funds Investment Act*, requiring the investment officer to report to the Windham Board of Trustees any updates to conform with the Government Code. He said he was pleased to report no substantive changes to the policy that would impact Windham. He stated the definition of joint accounts was added and incorporated into the authorized investment section under “repurchase agreements,” as well as an update to the signature authority on the resolutions.

Mr. O’Banion said they ask for the Board’s approval of the policy as presented, along with a resolution adopting the investment policy. He paused for any questions.

Chairman Nichols asked the board for a motion.

*Judge Faith Johnson moved that WSD Board of Trustees approve the annual review of Windham Board Policy 11.12 (rev. 15), “Investment Policy,” and resolution adopting the investment policy as presented and that the Chairman sign the resolution adopting the policy.*

*Judge Molly Francis seconded the motion, which prevailed unanimously when called to a vote.*

Chairman Nichols thanked everyone for attending the meeting. The next meeting of the WSD Board of Trustees will be Friday, December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2023 in Huntsville, Texas.

**ADJOURNED**

There being no further business for the regular session, Chairman Nichols adjourned the 338<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Windham School District Board of Trustees at 12:44 p.m.



Chairman



Secretary

*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.*