

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

Meeting No. 350

The Windham School District Board of Trustees met in session on Friday, October 17, 2025, at the Cambria Hotel Austin Uptown in Austin, Texas.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Eric J.R. Nichols, Chair
Hon. Faith Johnson, Vice-Chair
Dr. Rodney Burrow, Secretary
Hon. Molly Francis
Ambassador Sichan Siv
Pastor Nate Sprinkle
Bill Welch
Sydney Zuiker
Tom Fordyce

WINDHAM STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Kristina Hartman, Superintendent
Robert O'Banion
Kevin Sawnick
Erik Brown
Luann Pickett
Rachel Taylor

CONVENED

Chairman Eric J.R. Nichols convened the meeting of the 350th Windham School District (WSD) Board of Trustees (Board) to order on Friday, October 17, 2025, at 8:04 a.m. in accordance with Chapter 551 of the Texas Government Code, the *Open Meetings Act*. He welcomed Regan Stewart with the Legislative Budget Board and Mike Ward with the Texas Senate. 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.

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.

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 19, 2025 meeting, appraisers for the 2025-26 school year, school district permits 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

Texas' Contributions to Education in Corrections

Superintendent Hartman presented an overview of Texas' role in national and international collaboration related to education in corrections. She explained that Windham School District and the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) have worked closely with counterparts in other states through various associations, networking opportunities and shared learning experiences.

She noted that this report was prompted by an earlier campus visit where students were learning about entrepreneurship, associations and professional memberships. During that visit, Superintendent Hartman had the opportunity to speak with the class about the value of networking and learning from other partners, which she said aligned with the broader themes of her presentation.

The Superintendent said Texas was recently represented at the American Correctional Association (ACA) conference in Denver, Colorado, where the team presented a session titled "Engaging Interagency and Nongovernmental Organizations for High Impact Advisory Recommendations in the Corrections Setting." The panel included TDCJ Executive Director Bobby Lumpkin; Dr. Tina Jackson, Assistant Commissioner for Workforce Education at the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board; Cole Meyer, Policy Analyst at Texas Appleseed; and herself. Superintendent Hartman reminded the Board that Dr. Jackson and Cole Meyer were recently recognized in a previous session for their service on the Postsecondary Education Advisory Committee.

Superintendent Hartman continued her presentation by highlighting Texas' efforts to gather meaningful feedback from stakeholders and the resulting legislative outcomes. She noted that audience members were particularly interested in how openly Texas welcomed outside advocacy groups and partners into the collaborative process, emphasizing that feedback from external partners only strengthened the work. Reflecting on her 20 years in education in corrections, she acknowledged that such collaboration had not always existed. She expressed appreciation for the current partnership between Windham and TDCJ, noting the open lines of communication and cooperation, especially during legislative sessions. In addition to sharing Texas' practices, she described the valuable insights the team gained from other states and countries. She noted that the team also attended sessions focused on adult corrections, housing and engagement strategies for youthful learners, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and leadership development.

Superintendent Hartman presented her service on several ACA committees, including the Board of Governors, Awards Committee, International Committee and Probation and Parole Committee. She said she also serves as Chair of the newly established Education Directors in Corrections Council, which was formed to offer informed recommendations to ACA. She shared that ACA Executive Director, Rob Green, approached her and encouraged the shift in terminology from “correctional education” to “education in corrections” to better reflect the setting rather than the type of instruction. This prompted a national conversation among education leaders and led to broader adoption of language that reinforces educational equity and supports successful reentry.

The Superintendent said that during the Council’s first meeting, representatives from Delaware, Florida, Maine, Ohio, Virginia and Washington State convened to establish priorities, review legislation and discuss communication strategies for corrections stakeholders. These included developing newsletter articles and exploring a symposium focused on technology in education in corrections. She said that members emphasized the importance of fact sheets and selected committee leads in areas such as career and technical education, evidence-based practices, technology, professional educators, interdisciplinary collaboration and strategic planning. Texas shared recent occupational licensing legislation and highlighted strong support from state legislators. She noted that a virtual follow-up meeting was scheduled before year-end.

Ms. Hartman presented that Windham also engaged with the Correctional Education Association (CEA), where the Superintendent served as Past President of the Council of Directors of Correctional Education. She said at the summer meeting, directors received updates from the U.S. Department of Education regarding Pell grants for postsecondary education in correctional settings. A key topic was the upcoming rulemaking process for the Workforce Short-term Pell initiative, aimed at expanding access to short-term, career-focused training programs for justice-impacted individuals. She said that CEA continues to host monthly virtual meetings addressing high-interest topics in education in corrections, offering directors opportunities to share challenges and exchange ideas.

Ms. Hartman thanked TDCJ for introducing Windham to the Texas Corrections Association approximately a year ago, where she said she now serves on the Board alongside several TDCJ colleagues. As a member of the Conference Planning Committee, Superintendent Hartman said she has contributed to shaping the agenda for the upcoming San Antonio conference, which features presentations on leadership development, AI, substance use awareness and intervention strategies and approaches for working with special populations. She mentioned that Board member Sydney Zuiker will be presenting at this conference on mental health resources and that the opening keynote speaker will be Christy Krings from Rachel’s Challenge, which came from a referral from the Board, and Matt Tenny, a well-known leadership speaker, will be closing the conference.

Ms. Hartman also reported that the joint culinary arts experience held on October 12, 2023, at the Travis campus, an international collaboration between the Czech Republic, TDCJ, Windham and Sam Houston State University, was named a finalist for the 2025 Prison Achievement Award presented by the European Organization of Prison and Correctional Services (EuroPris). She noted that this recognition honors innovative and impactful practices in corrections.

The event showcased cross-cultural engagement and rehabilitation through career and technical education. Participants from both countries collaborated in a culinary experience emphasizing skill-building, teamwork and mutual respect. She said the collaboration highlighted how hands-on learning and international partnerships can support personal growth, professional development and community reentry. A brief video was shared to illustrate the impact of the experience.

Superintendent Hartman concluded by noting that being named a finalist for the EuroPris award reflects growing recognition of Texas' commitment to innovative practices within the corrections environment. It aligns with broader efforts such as expanded Pell grant access and the Workforce Short-term Pell initiative, reinforcing the importance of educational and workforce training opportunities for individuals in incarceration. She emphasized that continued collaboration across agencies and international borders enhances outcomes for those served and fosters professional growth and shared learning. Ms. Hartman shared that even though Windham did not win the award, the experience was deeply meaningful. She recounted a moment when a representative from the Czech Republic remarked, "everyone won," highlighting the spirit of shared learning among all program finalists. She noted that the team gained valuable ideas from viewing other submissions and felt proud to be recognized on an international stage.

The Superintendent also updated the Board on recent developments in education in corrections technology, noting legislative support for improved connectivity and bandwidth. She said Windham recently began discussions with Sam Houston State University regarding a potential research implementation study to gather staff and student perceptions about technology integration. She said the goal is to better understand expectations, identify training needs and prepare for future classroom enhancements.

In closing, Superintendent Hartman thanked her colleagues at TDCJ and several legislative offices, one of which was represented at the meeting, for their support in securing letters for a recent grant submission. She noted that the grant focuses on cross-agency data analysis to improve pathways from training to reentry, specifically measuring people that have participated in Windham programs and their wage earnings with people in the community that have the same level of training to determine if the pay is equitable or if additional supports are needed for student success. She expressed appreciation to the Board and noted that compiling the grant was a rewarding experience, as it showcased years of collaborative work and engagement across agencies.

This concluded her report, and she paused for questions from the Board.

Chairman Nichols thanked Ms. Hartman for her comprehensive presentation and acknowledged the depth of the information shared. He expressed appreciation on behalf of the entire Board for her emphasis on highlighting opportunities for engaging with interested public policy stakeholders across the state, noting that such collaboration amplifies the Board's mission and reinforces the belief that no one has a monopoly on good ideas. He commended the openness to constructive input from diverse voices.

Chairman Nichols also posed a follow-up question to Superintendent Hartman regarding Pell grants, to provide clarification on whether they support both academic programs as well as career and technical education programs. He noted the importance of such programs in equipping

individuals reentering their communities with skills that lead to sustainable employment and a stable future. Superintendent Hartman confirmed that Pell grants support both academic and career and technical education programs. She explained that traditional Pell grants have long been used by students in public institutions, and as of 2023, they are also authorized for use in the corrections environment, including for career and technical education training programs that are of a certain length. She noted that students in technical trades at colleges such as Lee College, Alvin College and Trinity Valley Community College commonly use Pell grants to fund their education.

The Superintendent further explained that recent federal legislation introduced the Workforce Pell initiative, which is currently undergoing the rulemaking process. She said this initiative will expand Pell grant eligibility to shorter-term programs, making them accessible to individuals in corrections settings who may only be enrolled for a few months before returning to their communities. She said these programs will offer entry-level, industry-recognized credentials that help students gain employment with high-demand employers and potentially continue their education post-release.

Ambassador Siv expressed appreciation for Superintendent Hartman's leadership in culinary programming and shared his enthusiasm for hands-on involvement. He also inquired about EuroPris's structure and Windham's engagement with the organization. Superintendent Hartman responded by explaining that Windham's first interaction with the European Organization of Prison and Correctional Services occurred when the district was notified it had been named a finalist for the 2025 Prison Achievement Award. The nomination was submitted by colleagues in the Czech Republic, who requested a video showcasing Windham's culinary collaboration. She noted that EuroPris functions similarly to U.S. correctional leadership associations, with membership from national prison agencies across Europe. She noted that finalist countries included Turkey, Ireland and England. She thanked Ambassador Siv for his interest in participating in culinary programming and encouraged him to join a future class.

Board member Bill Welch expressed appreciation for Superintendent Hartman's enthusiastic presentation, noting that her energy is reflected throughout the entire organization. He commended the efforts of both leadership and staff. Superintendent Hartman thanked Mr. Welch for recognizing Windham's staff and educators, and stated that their dedication is a source of motivation and makes the organization a pleasure to work with.

Board member Sydney Zuiker shared that several legislators had recently expressed how much they learned about Windham during the current legislative session. She thanked Superintendent Hartman for her ongoing engagement and conversations with stakeholders, noting that the outreach is clearly making an impact and being recognized publicly. She concluded by commending the team's efforts.

Superintendent Hartman thanked Ms. Zuiker and shared that several legislative offices provided letters of commitment in support of a recent grant application. She noted how encouraging it was to receive thoughtful questions and timely responses from those offices, emphasizing that their engagement demonstrated meaningful support for Windham's work.

REPORT FROM THE CHAIRMAN, WSD BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Peer Tutoring Program

Chairman Nichols began his report by spotlighting the many ways in which Windham School District has been working to innovate and modernize its operations and programming. He focused this report on Windham's expansion of peer resources, specifically student-to-student peer support, to amplify instructional efforts through the Peer Tutor training program.

The Chairman noted that research has consistently shown adult learners participating in peer tutoring programs experience an average academic improvement of 15–20%. Windham's Peer Tutor training program was designed to prepare individuals in incarceration to provide academic support to fellow students pursuing high school equivalency, high school diplomas or career and technical education (CTE) goals. In addition to academic benefits, the program emphasizes communication, leadership and personal growth. Chairman Nichols reiterated that peer support programs benefit both the tutor and the student receiving support, and that peer tutors were expected to lead by example, fostering a culture of mentorship, shared success and mutual encouragement. He emphasized that positive peer leadership within TDCJ facilities was essential to building a rehabilitative culture aligned with the Board's vision for Windham and TDCJ staff and students.

Chairman Nichols then introduced Ms. Luann Pickett, Windham's Department Director of Instruction, to provide further detail on the Peer Tutor training program. He thanked Ms. Pickett for her continued efforts to keep the Board informed on instructional developments.

Ms. Pickett thanked everyone on the Board and reported that the Peer Tutor training program supported tutors in developing leadership, communication and interpersonal skills while reinforcing their academic foundation and sense of community. She said students receiving tutoring benefited from individualized attention and clarification of instructional concepts, which increased confidence, motivation and engagement.

Ms. Pickett stated that the program was based at the Bartlett campus and operates on a 12-week cycle covering eight modules. She noted that candidates were selected from Windham's pool of current or prospective peer tutors and return to their assigned campuses to continue providing support upon completion. Minimum requirements included a high school diploma or equivalency certificate, qualifying assessment scores and a signed training agreement outlining expectations, confidentiality and program rules.

Ms. Pickett explained that the program provides comprehensive curriculum designed to develop both academic and instructional skills and that the first two modules cover orientation, pre-testing, confidentiality and professional communication training through Southwest Airlines Customer Service, along with a book study. Modules three through six focus on cognitive strategies, CTE safety procedures, instructional foundations, subject-specific strategies and workplace readiness. She said these modules also highlight high impact standards in math as well as strengthen CTE related math instruction. Finally, she said modules seven and eight emphasize instructional technology, digital resources and individualized tutoring through a practicum involving student

data analysis. Tutors have the opportunity to earn certifications that enhance both academic and professional skillsets.

Ms. Pickett noted that Technology integration was a key component, with laptops, Smart Boards®, instructional software and online resources used to build digital literacy and prepare tutors and students for academic and workplace environments. Evaluation played a central role, with feedback used to reinforce accountability and identify areas for growth.

Ms. Pickett shared that the program celebrated its first cohort on August 14, 2025, with 27 tutors graduating. A second cohort began on September 22, 2025, with approximately 23 tutors enrolled. She said select tutors from the first cohort remained to assist with subsequent training cycles. She shared that plans were underway to expand the program to include library clerks, who would be trained to support individuals struggling with specific subjects or awaiting entry into educational programming, broadening access to timely and effective academic support. A brief video was shown to illustrate the Peer Tutor training program experience.

Chairman Nichols thanked Ms. Pickett for her presentation and the accompanying video on the Peer Tutor training program. He posed a follow-up question regarding clarification on how peer tutors are assigned to assist fellow students after completing their training. He welcomed additional input from Superintendent Hartman on how the program facilitates peer-to-peer academic support across campuses.

Ms. Pickett responded that peer tutors are selected through two primary pathways: some are already assigned as tutors on their campuses and are brought into the program to strengthen their skills, while others respond to recruitment efforts, including advertisements posted in common areas. Ms. Pickett added that Windham is expanding the program to include library clerks, who are already assigned and will help support individuals not currently enrolled in school. She said this dual approach allows Windham to reach a broader population and provide timely academic support.

Ms. Hartman clarified that Windham currently has both uncertified and certified peer tutors. She said those already working in educational roles become more effective after completing the Peer Tutor training program, which equips them with deeper understanding of learning styles and instructional strategies. She referenced a graduate's remarks in the video, highlighting how the training helped him understand both his own learning process and how to support others. She also noted the graduate's recognition of mutual respect between staff and residents at the Bartlett campus, attributing this positive culture to the efforts of TDCJ.

Chairman Nichols inquired whether the program's reach would extend beyond Bartlett. Superintendent Hartman confirmed that Bartlett served as the initial pilot site, with plans to expand next to a women's facility. She said future determinations on additional locations will be guided by the program's continued success and evolving needs across the district.

Pastor Nate Sprinkle praised the program's concept and its dual benefit in supporting students and building confidence among tutors. He asked whether all library clerks would eventually be trained as peer tutors. Ms. Pickett responded that this was the long-term goal.

Board Secretary, Dr. Rodney Burrows, shared his thoughts on the Peer Tutor training program through the lens of his experience in medical education. He emphasized that teaching others requires self-awareness and understanding of one's own learning style, which reinforces knowledge and builds confidence. He noted that the program benefits both the students receiving tutoring and the tutors themselves, contributing to education and rehabilitation. Dr. Burrow also highlighted the sense of pride, meaning and personal growth the program fosters, suggesting it may help uncover future educators among the incarcerated population. He affirmed that this aligns with Windham's broader mission of empowerment and transformation, which Ms. Pickett quickly agreed with.

Chairman Nichols thanked Ms. Pickett and the Windham staff for their work in supporting and implementing the Peer Tutor training program.

DISCUSSION, CONSIDERATION, AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING THE ANNUAL REVIEW OF WINDHAM BOARD POLICY WBP-11.12 (rev. 17), "INVESTMENT POLICY," AND RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE INVESTMENT POLICY

Robert O'Banion, Chief Financial Officer, presented Windham Board Policy 11.12, revision 17, known as the Investment Policy, for its annual review in accordance with Chapter 2256 of the Texas Government Code, also known as the Public Funds Investment Act. He noted that the Act requires the investment officer to report any updates to the Board of Trustees to ensure compliance with the code. While there were no substantive changes to the policy, he said minor updates were made to the section on unauthorized investments to reflect recent legislative revisions. Mr. O'Banion requested Board approval of the policy as presented, along with the resolution adopting the investment policy, and paused for any questions from Board members.

Chairman Nichols asked the Board for a motion.

Board Member, Bill Welch, moved that WSD Board of Trustees approve the annual review of Windham Board Policy WBP-11.12, Revision 17 (Investment Policy), along with the resolution adopting the Investment Policy as presented and that the Chairman be authorized to sign the resolution.

Board Secretary, Dr. Rodney Burrow, seconded the motion, which prevailed unanimously when called to vote.

DISCUSSION, CONSIDERATION, AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING PROPOSED REVISION OF WINDHAM BOARD POLICY WBP-03.00 (rev. 4), "WINDHAM SCHOOL DISTRICT"

Erik Brown, General Counsel, presented the proposed revision to Windham Board Policy 03.00, revision 4, known as "Windham School District." He noted that the revision includes the addition of

Windham’s administration of postsecondary programs, an updated mission statement, revised terminology and minor edits for clarity and grammar. He paused for any questions from the Board.

Board Member, Tom Fordyce, moved that WSD Board of Trustees approve the revision of Windham Board Policy WBP-03.00, revision 4, titled “Windham School District” as presented.

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

Chairman Nichols thanked everyone for attending the meeting and announced the next meeting of the WSD Board of Trustees will be on Friday, December 19, 2025 in Huntsville, Texas.

ADJOURNED

There being no further business for the regular session, Chairman Nichols adjourned the 350th meeting of the Windham School District Board of Trustees at 8:50 a.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.