

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

Meeting No. 351

The Windham School District Board of Trustees met in session on Friday, December 19, 2025, at the Texas Prison Museum in Huntsville, Texas.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

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

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

Dr. Rodney Burrow, Secretary
Sydney Zuiker

WINDHAM STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Kristina Hartman, Superintendent
Robert O'Banion
Kevin Sawnick
Erik Brown
Luann Pickett
Jason Evans
Charles Bell
Michelle Owen
Maggie Lima
Mario Cotton
Dr. Stephanie Jenkins
Ashley Koonce
Danielle Nicholes
Michelle Lewis
LaMina Kelley
Trina Hodge
Isaac DeBose
Dr. Ashley McKelvey
Jerry Brown
Dr. Jodi Christie
Kayla Williams
Rachel Taylor

CONVENED

Chairman Eric J.R. Nichols convened the meeting of the 351st Windham School District (WSD) Board of Trustees (Board) to order on Friday, December 19, 2025, at 12:33 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.

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

Kevin Sawnick, Division Director of Instruction, was called to the podium. Mr. Sawnick recognized Mr. Jason Evans for his recent promotion to Department Director of Instruction, and said he upholds extensive educational experience, leadership and commitment to advancing educational opportunities across Windham School District. He said Mr. Evans began his career as a seventh-grade math teacher and brings more than 20 years of educational experience to his role. He noted that he has served in numerous leadership positions, including athletic director, regional director and committee chair for Leon Independent School District. Before joining Windham, Mr. Evans supported Lee College as an academic advisor. Mr. Sawnick said Mr. Evans' career with Windham began as a principal at the Luther, Pack and Wynne campuses, where his leadership earned him recognition as the district's 2024-2025 Principal of the Year. In May 2024, he was appointed as the Central Texas regional principal, continuing to demonstrate excellence in guiding teams and supporting student success.

Mr. Sawnick presented that Mr. Evans earned a Bachelor of Science in Kinesiology with a Mathematics minor from Sam Houston State University and a Master of Education in Educational Administration from Lamar University. He holds multiple educator certifications, including principal, teacher 6-12 physical education and teacher 6-12 mathematics. Mr. Sawnick said that Mr. Evans is known for his collaborative leadership style and prioritizes strong communication and teamwork to achieve student and district goals. Since his promotion to Department Director of Instruction in September, Mr. Sawnick noted that Mr. Evans leads the Career and Technical Education, College and Career Readiness and Apprenticeship and On-the-Job Training departments. He said he represents Windham's mission with pride and personifies "We are Windham" in every interaction. He noted that Mr. Evans has been instrumental in the expansion of the district's efforts within postsecondary education partnerships.

Mr. Sawnick described Mr. Evans as a true champion of district programs, and said he is highly active across campuses and takes every opportunity to engage with staff, students and stakeholders, building relationships that strengthen the district's impact. Mr. Sawnick presented that the district looks forward to Mr. Evans' continued vision, leadership and ideas for advancement.

Mr. Sawnick asked for the Board to please join him in congratulating Mr. Evans on his new role as Department Director of Instruction. Chairman Nichols acknowledged Mr. Evans' recognition and asked him if he'd like to say a few words.

Mr. Evans thanked the Board and Superintendent Hartman for the recognition and praised the team of educators, staff and students that help to forward the district's growth and mission. He thanked the Board once again for the opportunity to speak.

Next, Ms. Luann Pickett, Department Director of Instruction, was called to the podium. Ms. Pickett recognized Dr. Stephanie Jenkins for her recent promotion to administrator of Windham School District's Special Education and Federal Programs department. She noted that this achievement reflects years of dedication, expertise and a passion for serving students with unique learning needs.

Ms. Pickett said that Dr. Jenkins began her career in education in 2002 as a fourth-grade teacher in Huntsville Independent School District. Her early classroom experience sparked an interest in supporting students who require specialized instruction. In 2008, she earned a master's degree from Sam Houston State University in special education along with a diagnostician certification, which opened the door to a new chapter in her career. Ms. Pickett noted that the following year, Dr. Jenkins joined Windham as a diagnostician supporting students in the East Texas region, providing critical support to campuses, including Matthew Gaines High School at the Ferguson campus in Midway.

Ms. Pickett presented that over the years, Dr. Jenkins became a registered professional diagnostician and later achieved national certification in the field. She said in 2017, she completed her Doctor of Education from the University of Houston in curriculum and instruction with a focus on reading and literacy education. Her research interests include literacy instruction for special populations, and she also holds certification as a reading specialist. Ms. Pickett said these accomplishments have strengthened Dr. Jenkins' ability to design and implement programs that meet the diverse needs of learners across the district.

Ms. Pickett said beyond her credentials, Dr. Jenkins is admired for her leadership style. She described her as engaged, supportive and constantly learning alongside her team. She said Dr. Jenkins' approach fosters collaboration, and her colleagues describe her as open, fair and approachable; a leader who values input and inspires confidence.

Ms. Pickett presented that one of Dr. Jenkins' favorite aspects of working with Windham is helping students under the age of 22 reach their full potential. She said she is passionate about motivating them to kickstart their educational futures and equipping teachers with the tools they need to help students succeed beyond the classroom.

Ms. Pickett said that the district looks forward to the continued impact of Dr. Jenkins' leadership within the Special Education and Federal Programs department, and asked for the Board to join her in congratulating Dr. Jenkins on her well-deserved promotion.

The Chairman thanked Dr. Jenkins for stepping forward into her important role and expressed

appreciation for her field of work. He asked if she would like to share a few words. Dr. Jenkins thanked the Board for the opportunity and noted that she has received a lot of guidance and that she looks forward to working with her team and the growth to come.

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 October 17, 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

Superintendent Hartman began her report by thanking the members of the Board for their attendance at Windham's Art Extravaganza, spearheaded by Department Director of Instruction Ms. Luann Pickett. She noted that the Board attended the event at the Be Free Gallery in Huntsville, where they had the opportunity to vote on pieces of artwork depicting literary pieces and poems representing different categories. She thanked them again for their participation.

Ms. Hartman continued by presenting that, as the Board is aware, Windham School District operates more than 100 campuses within the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, serving students in Texas state prisons. She said the district's mission is to guide, motivate and empower students by inspiring excellence and transforming lives. She noted that this role is often attributed to teachers, justly so; however, the district was pleased to recognize the often behind-the-scenes efforts that support its teachers and staff to effectively accomplish their charge.

Superintendent Hartman presented that Windham recognizes the exceptional contributions of someone who was not expecting the presentation —Chief Financial Officer (CFO), Robert O'Banion —she said whose leadership and dedication have been instrumental in advancing Windham's mission. She asked Mr. O'Banion to join her at the podium.

Ms. Hartman noted that as the Board has witnessed, Mr. O'Banion has played a critical role, along with his Business and Finance team, in developing the district's annual budgets, gaining feedback from each Windham department and campus. She said in order to afford the funds necessary to succeed, Mr. O'Banion and herself have engaged with the Texas Legislative Budget Board, members of key legislative committees and policy advisors. Mr. O'Banion has helped secure funding and legislative support for innovative programs that enhance educational opportunities for students, often providing backup documentation that is accurate and readable on short notice. She said his efforts have enabled Windham to pilot new initiatives, support teachers and staff with salaries commensurate with public school settings and elevate the importance of education in corrections. Ms. Hartman noted that they make a good, well-balanced team when engaging with stakeholders who have interests in both the programmatic and financial aspects of the district. She

said he has not only helped secure funding and legislative support for innovative programs, but has also sharpened her own budget and school finance skills, particularly upon her return to Texas as a new superintendent.

Superintendent Hartman continued by recognizing that Mr. O'Banion's commitment extends beyond the financial realm. She said he has spent significant time away from his family during legislative sessions, traveling between his office in Huntsville and the Capitol in Austin to advocate for Windham's needs. She recognized his family in attendance and extended heartfelt thanks for their support of his tireless work.

Superintendent Hartman presented that Mr. O'Banion demonstrates an engaged approach by visiting campuses and interacting with teachers, principals, staff and students. She said he is currently leading the transformative connectivity initiative in collaboration with the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) to provide bandwidth in all Windham classrooms — academic, life skills and career and technical education — as well as for the district's higher education partners operating in TDCJ. She noted that this effort will prepare students for success during their time with the district and upon reentry by equipping them with tools and technologies that reflect community norms, including exposure to emerging trends such as artificial intelligence in the workforce.

Ms. Hartman said that Mr. O'Banion's expertise with numbers, Excel and the production of accurate, timely reports has been vital in securing funding for teacher pay raises and other critical initiatives. She presented that he has established standing meetings with TDCJ's Facilities Division to address maintenance and modernization issues, strengthening Windham's partnership with TDCJ. Additionally, she said he has worked with the district's General Counsel to create opportunities for hiring Teacher Retirement System of Texas retirees by passing along the surcharge to employees, broadening Windham's recruitment pool. She noted that his attention to policy revisions, compliance with comptroller rules and ability to balance stakeholder needs exemplify his commitment to making things happen for staff and students.

Superintendent Hartman presented that Mr. O'Banion is quick to credit his success to the talented teams in the Business Office, Human Resources and Operational Support, as well as program specialist Mr. Isaac Debose, and the district recognizes that behind effective leadership is a hardworking, committed team. She said his leadership fosters collaboration and innovation across the district. She then asked that the Windham team from the Business Office, Human Resources and Operational Support, and Mr. DeBose, please stand to be recognized.

Ms. Hartman presented that Mr. O'Banion has helped the district start utilizing artificial intelligence (AI) through Microsoft Copilot, which Windham now has a license through. She said that she plugged in information about him, not confidential information, and asked Copilot to talk about Mr. O'Banion and his strengths. She presented that Copilot said not to be expected from a CFO, Mr. O'Banion is also a master of the smoker. She said that he is an award-winning BBQ chef and judge, which means he can balance a budget and a brisket with equal precision. She noted that they have high hopes that one day he'll share his culinary talents with the district's culinary students — because nothing says "career readiness" like learning from a champion pitmaster. She continued and said that if that weren't enough, Mr. O'Banion has presented Windham's financial

strategies to national and international audiences, proving that his expertise is recognized far beyond Texas. She said whether he's explaining how to effectively secure funding or debating the merits of mesquite versus hickory, Mr. O'Banion brings passion and professionalism to everything he does.

Finally, Superintendent Hartman recognized that Mr. O'Banion's sense of humor keeps the team smiling. She said he's been known to dominate the Ugly Sweater Contest and enthusiastically embrace Hawaiian Shirt Day — at the Superintendent's request. She said that this is proof that even in the world of finance, fun has a place.

Ms. Hartman presented that on behalf of the Superintendent and the Board of Trustees, they express their deepest appreciation to Robert O'Banion for his outstanding attitude, performance and unwavering dedication to Windham School District. She said his work has strengthened Windham's ability to serve students and support staff, and its collective vision continues to shape the future of education in corrections.

Superintendent Hartman once again thanked Mr. O'Banion and his family of their extraordinary service and efforts within the district.

This concluded the Superintendent's report.

REPORT FROM THE CHAIRMAN, WSD BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Postsecondary Collaboration Updates

Chairman Nichols presented that as many may recall from previous meetings, the administration and management of postsecondary programs shifted to Windham School District by the 89th Texas Legislature with support from the Texas Department of Criminal Justice. This change was intended to better align educational processes and expand opportunities for students across Texas.

The Chairman presented that prior to and since implementing this recommendation, Windham has worked diligently to strengthen the system's partnerships with higher education and postsecondary partners, including by broadening the range of postsecondary offerings. He said there are currently 16 active postsecondary education programs with students enrolled, five additional institutions have received contracts and are working through the initial start-up phase and four institutions have expressed their interest in participating in this postsecondary program through the application process.

Chairman Nichols said to further strengthen these partnerships and continuously improve the process of providing postsecondary opportunities to the population, Windham recently hosted its first Postsecondary Collaborative Meeting in October in Huntsville. He said he was honored to attend on behalf of the Board and see firsthand the developments in expanding the relationships with excellent higher education and postsecondary partners and the offerings that can be presented to the populations housed in TDCJ. The Chairman said the event featured updates on the policies and procedures related to the collaboration between external postsecondary partners and

Windham, including from Superintendent Hartman. He noted that he was also glad to see that there is an active advisory committee on postsecondary education opportunities, which includes not only Windham representatives and partners, but also interested stakeholders from the community and advocates.

The Chairman noted that Windham team members were very active at the conference, presenting among other things sessions on planning, finance and human resources, among other topics. In addition, he said representatives from higher education and the district's postsecondary partners presented on various topics including on how to best drive results and student success in collaboration with Windham. He said that the Board was pleased to be joined by Tracy Williams, Lee College's Director of Reentry Services and member of the postsecondary education advisory board previously mentioned, and Jason Evans, Windham's Department Director of Instruction. He thanked both of them for joining him at the podium and said he understands that Mr. Evans will begin the presentation and turn it over to Mr. Williams.

Mr. Evans thanked Chairman Nichols, Vice-Chair Johnson, Board members and Superintendent Hartman. He began by emphasizing how the collaborative meeting reinforced the shared commitment to expanding access to quality postsecondary education for eligible students in TDCJ. He said Windham's College and Career Readiness team, led by administrator Ms. Ashley Koonce, worked tirelessly to ensure this event delivered meaningful value for all attendees. He noted that the district is grateful for their dedication to strengthening partnerships with colleges and universities statewide.

Mr. Evans said that this gathering provided an excellent opportunity for Windham and higher education institutions, from the Panhandle to the Gulf Coast, to connect and network on successes, challenges and promising practices. He noted that while the Chairman highlighted some of the major discussion points, he would share a few additional details. He said prior to the Collaborative Meeting on October 22nd, the Postsecondary Education Programs Advisory Committee convened to make new recommendations, review new higher education program proposals and discuss implemented action items, such as the new program application form for active institutions, which streamlines the process to request program additions or adjustments. He said this committee plays a critical role in evaluating higher education program proposals and guiding process improvements.

Mr. Evans presented that day one also included updates from Superintendent Hartman, Cole Meyer with Texas Appleseed and himself. He said the Texas Higher Education in Prison Consortium met that afternoon, providing the higher education partners a chance to debrief and address agenda items. Mr. Evans said that the second day of the meeting focused on high-level process updates, including reporting, student advisement and operational improvements. Strategic networking opportunities, such as a regional breakout session, allowed institutions to connect directly with their Windham regional principals and College and Career Readiness coordinators. He noted that key follow-ups from this meeting include enhanced communication, increased social media awareness, student recruitment strategies and coordination on graduation ceremonies.

Mr. Evans said that to conclude the week, Lee College hosted the Texas Education in Corrections Conference, enabling partners to transition seamlessly for further collaboration. To share more, he

turned the report over to Mr. Tracy Williams, Lee College's Director of Reentry Services.

Mr. Williams began by thanking the Board for the opportunity to speak. He said as Mr. Evans mentioned, Lee College hosted the 11th Annual Texas Education in Corrections Conference on October 24th at the Walker Education Center in Huntsville. He said the theme for this year's event was "Generational Success: Building a Legacy Inside & Out." Mr. Williams noted that the conference featured a robust agenda, beginning with opening remarks and a keynote address by Chairman Nichols, followed by a Partnership Panel moderated by Dr. Brandon Warren, which included Superintendent Hartman and other distinguished leaders from higher education and TDCJ.

Mr. Williams stated that additional sessions included a presentation by TDCJ Executive Director Bobby Lumpkin titled, "Legacy Building," a discussion on accreditation expectations led by Dr. Douglas Walcerz and a panel on special programming and community engagement featuring representatives from Trellis Foundation, Jobs for the Future and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

Mr. Williams noted that a highlight of the event was the Inside-Out Postsecondary Alumni Panel, which included both in-person and virtual participants at the Ferguson and Plane campuses. He said alumni shared their educational experiences, the impact of these programs and their future goals to expand their education. Mr. Williams presented that the panel was extremely well-received by all in attendance. He said the day concluded with presentations on innovative programs, networking opportunities and recognition awards celebrating advocacy, service and alumni achievements.

Mr. Williams turned the report back over to Mr. Evans. Mr. Evans presented that another exciting topic was that in early November, Lee College and Windham made arrangements for Lee's executive director of school and college partnerships, associate vice president of transfer and educational partnerships and director of dual credit programs to visit the Ferguson campus. He noted that Windham culinary students prepared lunch and then the group toured the Matthew Gaines High School program, career and technical education programs and observed courses that are provided by Lee College to postsecondary students and Windham's eligible dual credit high school students. He said the tour was followed by discussion on enhancing the dual credit partnership between the college and Windham as the memorandum of understanding (MOU) is undergoing renewal and will be updated to include Financial Aid for Swift Transfer (FAST) funding eligibility, which was authorized by the 89th Texas Legislature, for which the partners are grateful. He said Windham has also recently renewed its MOU with Central Texas College to serve dual credit students within the Jovita González de Morales High School at the Murray campus in Gatesville. Mr. Evans presented that these dual credit programs allow high school students to earn college credit while completing their diploma, helping them jumpstart their postsecondary education goals.

Mr. Evans concluded by noting that what is most encouraging for the district is that every one of the current postsecondary partners shares a deep commitment to expanding program availability across TDCJ and building seamless career pathways training from Windham to postsecondary. He said this dedication supports students in their accessibility to meaningful educational pathways.

He presented that together, they are all building a stronger, more collaborative network that prioritizes student success and long-term impact.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Evans and Mr. Williams for sharing their updates. He asked for examples of types of postsecondary opportunities currently being offered to students through this collaboration and others that may be coming in the future. Superintendent Hartman particularly highlighted that through the district's partnership with Lee College, there is an Integrated Education and Training program for women at the Plane campus, meaning they receive academic remediation through Windham while they receive their college courses through Lee College. She mentioned the dual credit program, as well as Lee College's associate degree offerings across fields such as business, welding, logistics and more.

Superintendent Hartman also presented that there are unique programs currently being proposed, such as an application that has been submitted for industrial maintenance, which is a high-demand, high-wage field. She noted that they are also looking ahead to additional bachelor degree programs and higher-level education, along with plentiful career and technical education offerings. The Superintendent presented that the district is trying to build upon entry level courses being provided by Windham to then transition to level one certifications and associates degrees offered by the colleges. She said the briefings she's heard from Texas Education Agency and the data being collected is that students are most successful when transitioning to associate degree programs following their technical training.

Mr. Williams concluded by thanking the Board for the opportunity to share about the conference and noted that the college looks forward to the continued partnership and collaboration with Windham. The Chairman noted the Board's deep appreciation for the college, their partnership and the expansion of Windham's relationship with all higher education partnerships. He noted that these partnerships are critical to advancing the shared mission of transforming lives and creating meaningful opportunities for individuals within the Texas Department of Criminal Justice as they transition to their communities for successful reentry.

WINDHAM'S LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

Dr. Ashley McKelvey, Education Specialist for Leadership and Development, began her report providing an update on three key initiatives strengthening the district's leadership capacity and development: the Windham Leadership Academies, Career Conversations and the Tuition and Certification Reimbursement program.

Dr. McKelvey presented that the Windham Leadership Academies are designed to inspire fundamental change by cultivating exceptional leaders who empower staff and students and create environments where potential flourishes. She said the goal is to prepare leaders who can stabilize campuses, elevate performance and make meaningful, lasting impacts.

Dr. McKelvey noted that the tracks focus on developing transformational leaders across all organizational levels by promoting innovative instruction, operational excellence and strong, cohesive teams. She said this mission guides the design of every track within the Academy, which

consists of four primary focus areas. Dr. McKelvey said these points are focused through a lens that they refer to as LEAD UP. The LEAD UP framework provides a clear, research-based structure that strengthens leadership consistency across the district by aligning behaviors, decision-making and communication at every level. She said it also equips leaders with the shared language, mindset and behaviors needed to drive success. Dr. McKelvey mentioned that the courses are delivered asynchronously online through the Canvas learning management system and are grounded in research-based resources. She noted that as the campus hosts visitors, participants are easily identifiable by their Leadership Academy lapel pins, which they wear proudly and mindfully as a reminder of both their dedication to Windham and professional growth.

Dr. McKelvey presented that there were multiple principals nominated and 17 approved by district leadership to be a part of the 2025-2026 Principals' Leadership Academy cohort. She said these leaders, at various points in the Academy, participate in coursework, coaching and structured learning to improve communication, decision-making, culture-building and leadership across their campuses. She said the team is currently previewing the Administrators' track as well. This track is intended for any leadership level beyond the campus and strengthens system-wide collaboration, consistency and operational alignment. She noted that the LEAD UP framework is also utilized within this track, except it was adjusted to focus on system-level practices. At the systems-level, LEAD UP elevates participants from managing isolated tasks to leading with districtwide mindsets, improving communication and strengthening collaboration across regions, programs and agencies.

Dr. McKelvey said further, in 2026, the district will be launching the Emerging Leaders' track, which will provide a pathway for staff who demonstrate leadership potential but are not yet in formal leadership roles. She presented that Career Conversations is currently supporting the emergent leaders prior to the full start of their Academy track. It is a monthly virtual series introducing aspiring leaders to expectations, Windham career pathways and foundational leadership skills. She said once the Emerging Leaders' track launches, Career Conversations will continue as an ongoing opportunity for staff interested in leadership who have not yet entered a cohort, ensuring an inclusive, continuous leadership pipeline.

Lastly, Dr. McKelvey touched on the Tuition and Certification Reimbursement program. She noted that this program reimburses staff for approved coursework and certification expenses that build professional capacity and support district needs. The program, chaired by Mr. Robert O'Banion, Windham's Chief Financial Officer, and run by a committee of administrators, has awarded \$110,242.58 to staff members pursuing further education and certification as of November 2025. She said that the Tuition and Certification Reimbursement program is truly a testimony of the district and Board's dedication to the district's staff, their families and the future of education in corrections. She said the team is incredibly proud of this work.

In closing, Dr. McKelvey said all of these topics collectively represent a comprehensive, sustainable leadership development system for Windham School District. She said while efforts are only in their infancy, Windham is looking forward to continued growth, partnerships and further solidifying itself as a leader in education.

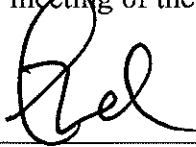
Dr. McKelvey thanked the Board for their time. This concluded her report and she paused for

questions. The Chairman thanked Dr. McKelvey on her presentation. General Bill Welch commented that he upholds tremendous pride toward Windham and its staff for the work they are doing to help reduce recidivism.

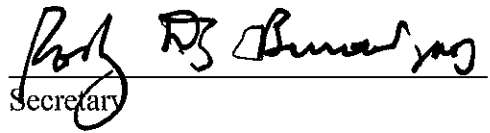
Chairman Nichols thanked everyone for attending the meeting and announced the next meeting of the WSD Board of Trustees will be on Friday, February 20, 2026 in Austin, Texas.

ADJOURNED

There being no further business for the regular session, Chairman Nichols adjourned the 351st meeting of the Windham School District Board of Trustees at 1:14 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.