

**Harris County Department of Education
Minutes of Emergency Called Board Meeting
March 20, 2020 at 10 a.m. via Telephone**

The Harris County Board of School Trustees met in an emergency board meeting on March 20, 2020 via telephone conference.

Notice was given pursuant to Texas Government Code Sections 551.125 and 551.045 that due to the state of emergency declared by officials of Houston and Harris County, Governor Abbott on behalf of the State of Texas, and President Trump on behalf of the United States of America regarding the spread of coronavirus/COVID-19 (hereafter “COVID-19”), the Harris County Department of Education Board of Trustees will meet via telephone in an emergency called meeting on March 20, 2020, beginning at 10 a.m. An emergency exists that requires immediate action of the Board of Trustees because of an imminent threat to public health and safety and/or a reasonably unforeseeable situation, specifically the spread of COVID-19. Additionally, a determination was made that the convening at one location of a quorum of the HCDE Board of Trustees is difficult or impossible, given the emergency/disaster declarations and the mandates to socially distance.

Eric Dick, Board President, called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m. and declared a quorum present, that the meeting was duly called, and that notice of the meeting was posted in accordance with the Texas Open Meetings Act, Gov’t. Code §551.125 and §551.045 and Governor Abbott’s temporary suspension of a number of open meetings laws in response to COVID-19.

Board Members Present:	Eric Dick, Board President; Danny Norris, Board Vice President; Richard Cantu; Andrea Duhon; Amy Hinojosa; Don Sumners, Mike Wolfe
Board Members Absent:	None
Board Attorney:	Sarah Langlois
Administration:	James Colbert, Jr., County School Superintendent; Danielle Clark, Chief Communications Officer

1. Opening Items

A. Call to Order – Board President Eric Dick called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m.

B. Declaration of Quorum– Board President Eric Dick stated for the record that a quorum was present, the names of trustees participating in the meeting, and that the notice has been posted in the time and manner required by law

2. Superintendent's Report regarding COVID-19 matters

Superintendent Colbert stated that HCDE created a 3-tier COVID-19 response outlining how HCDE will respond to the pandemic, including Tier 1: HCDE's response to school closures through April 10, 2020; Tier 2: HCDE's response through the end of the school year; and Tier 3: HCDE's response to school closures through August. Mr. Colbert reported that HCDE will be supporting HCDE operations, clients (including records, Choice Partners, and Schools), and the Harris County community during this time. He explained that HCDE has identified the critical staff necessary to meet expectations and has had multiple meetings to create protocols for healthy habits in compliance with CDC and other respected grounds' guidance. Mr. Colbert advised that HCDE has created a work schedule for staff to be responsive during those times. Mr. Colbert reported that the facilities and maintenance staff are cleaning all HCDE facilities. Mr. Colbert explained that in HCDE's Head Start program, there are more than 1,300 children who rely on Head Start to provide breakfast and lunch, and many of those families are currently experiencing hardship. Under President Dick's direction to give due diligence during this dire time to support our students, HCDE has developed "Because We Care" food packages to ensure those students and families are supported during this time. The packages will include enough food to support the child for a week of time. Mr. Colbert explained that parents would be able to pick up the packages via a drive-up service. He stated that the cost for this program will run about \$59,000 per week and it was anticipated that HCDE would provide the packages for an estimated 4 weeks. Mr. Colbert advised that he attended a large conference call with the mayor, commissioner, county judges, and superintendent in reference to the state of Harris County. During this call, the decision to close schools was made as a group effort. He stated that April 6th they will come together again to readdress the issue and that there is a chance that the schools will be closed for the rest of the year. Mr. Colbert noted that during this time, HCDE is continuing to pay staff and keep them fully engaged and employed. He recognized that HCDE has a healthy business model so is able to ensure that all staff are receiving full compensation,. Mr. Colbert addressed Therapy Services, explaining that HCDE does 54% of all therapy in Harris County and employs approximately 160 therapists. Mr. Colbert advised that he had spoken to the director and they have been assisting school districts implement needs assessment and will be providing music therapy online. He advised that he will have a phone call with the Commissioner of Education regarding special education later today to find out guidelines that need to be met. Mr. Colbert noted that the upcoming board retreat in April is postponed and that HCDE will keep the board updated as to when it will be rescheduled. Mr. Colbert addressed that the April regular board meeting will still occur, and he is waiting to see updates as to whether the schools will be closed. HCDE is currently looking into methods for conveying board books electronically if the meeting should be held via

phone or videoconference. He stated that the scheduled ribbon cutting for ABS West has also been cancelled or postponed, as the Department will be trying to shy away from large gatherings.

3. Consider adoption of Resolution approving actions relating to COVID-19 emergency and delegating authority to the Superintendent to take all actions as may be necessary in regards to the same.

Motion made by Richard Cantu, seconded by Mike Wolfe to adopt the Resolution approving actions relating to COVID-19 emergency and delegating authority to the Superintendent to take all actions as may be necessary in regards to the same.

Motion passes with 7-0 voting to adopt.

4. Adjourn

Motion made by Don Sumners, seconded by Andrea Duhon to adjourn the meeting.

Motion passes with 7-0 voting to adjourn.

Meeting adjourned at 10:41 a.m.

Board President

Board Secretary