



Board Meeting Minutes
August 10, 2023, 12:02 pm

ATTENDING:

Christian Chesnut	Jeffry Kennemer,	Eric Semlear
Dr. Aimee Dennis	President	Dr. Jo Ann Simmons
Dr. Gina Doepker	Dr. Joanna Neel	Officer Bradley Standerfer
Dr. Dominick Fazarro	Dr. Michael Odell	
Amanda Kaiser	Dr. Jaclyn Pedersen	

Guests logging in via the online stream, including Rachel Hawkings and Jaime Burke-Hicks

1. Call to Order

The board meeting of the UT Tyler University Academy was called to order at 12:02 pm by Mr. Kennemer on Thursday, August 10, 2023, confirming that a quorum was present.

2. Pledge

The Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag was said, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the Texas Flag.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Kennemer confirmed there were no registered requests for public comment.

ACTION ITEMS

4. Consent Agenda

The minutes of the previous meeting, Thursday, July 20, 2023, were presented for questions or discussion. There were none. Dr. Neel made a motion to accept the minutes, and Dr. Fazarro seconded the motion, passing unanimously.

5. Request Adoption of the 2023-2024 Budget

Christian Chesnut, UTTUA Finance Manager, briefly described the budget, noting small increases in revenue due to grants, additional staff positions, and student numbers have increased our expenditures in the new year.

Discussion:

- Dr. Simmons asked what amount was being rolled over from 22-23. Chesnut said it was \$79,800.
- Dr. Simmons spoke about the financial difficulties of all school districts due to several reasons, primarily related to Covid: lower attendance rates, ESSR funds

ending, and grants changing in use and availability. Palestine's open spots, particularly at the high school level, will need addressing in the near future.

- Dr. Simmons mentioned that we will eventually need to tackle teacher pay increases to align with other local teacher pay increases.

Dr. Odell moved to accept the 23-24 Budget, and Dr. Neel seconded the motion passing unanimously.

6. Request Approval of 2022-2023 Budget Amendments

Chesnut presented the amendments, stating that they were primarily all related to capturing the Longview campus expansion under the 22-23 budget.

Mr. Semlear moved to approve the budget amendment, and Dr. Fazarro seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

7. Request Approval of the District Food Safety Plan (HACCP) for 2023-2024

Amanda Kaiser presented the HACCP- the only changes from the previous year were an update to our number of students on campus, the percentage receiving free breakfast, and the removal of the line stating we were providing a concession stand. Each campus now has vending machines, so we will only serve bagged breakfasts.

Dr. Doepker moved to approve the HACCP, and Mr. Semlear seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

8. Request Approval of the District Food Service Wellness Plan for 2023-2024

Amanda Kaiser presented the Wellness Plan- the only change was the update that we no longer provide a concession stand.

Dr. Doepker moved to approve the Wellness Plan, and Dr. Neel seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

9. Request Approval of the Innovative Course Student Leadership

Jaclyn Pedersen introduced UA Longview teacher Jaime Burke-Hicks, who presented through the Zoom link. Burk-Hicks formally requested the board replace the Longview campus's 8th and 9th-grade pathway/advisory class with the TASC Student Leadership Class. The class is designed to increase leadership skills.

Discussion:

- Mr. Kennemer: Is the curriculum set? Burke-Hicks: yes, TASC provides curriculum, rubrics, projects, etc.
- Dr. Fazarro: how is the outcome assessed? Burke-Hicks: the class is graded.
- Dr. Pedersen: we hope to complete research to see if the leadership skills learned have positive outcomes in other classes/content areas.
- Dr. Odell: we already are a PBL-driven skill, and this class will fit our model well.
- Mr. Semlear: will this be required of all 8th-grade students, or can they opt out? Burke-Hicks: our intention is for all 8th and 9th-grade students to take the class this year, no opting out. Going forward, it will be 8th grade only.
- Mr. Semlear: where in the schedule will this class be placed? Is it replacing a class? Burke-Hicks: It will replace our current pathway/advisory class.

Essentially, it will encompass all that advisory did plus the leadership aspect, essentially increasing the resources of advisory.

- Dr. Simmons: a huge thank you to Jaime Burke-Hicks for her leadership and willingness to bring opportunities to our students.

Dr. Neel moved to approve the Innovative Course Student Leadership class, and Dr. Fazarro seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Dr. Simmons then took a moment to recognize Rachel Hawkins, Director of the Longview Campus, who was present through the Zoom link. Ms. Hawkins was thanked and acknowledged for her hard work and tenacity in the expansion of the Longview campus, both for facility completion and student enrollment.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

10. Superintendent Report from Dr. Simmons

a. 88th Legislative Session Updates

- i. Plenty of safety requirements:
 1. The state now requires an armed officer in each building during all class hours.
 2. TEA is continuing the vulnerability assessments at schools and requiring schools to have a Knox box with keys for first responder access.
 3. Maps are now required to be available for all responders.
 4. Schools can eject any individual on campus and refuse to present a form of identification.
 5. The state will increase funding by \$10/student to offset the cost of the safety standards.
- ii. Library updates: new expectations that all library books/resources are reviewed for sexual content and align with state requirements
- iii. Accelerated instruction for students failing STAAR: Parents can now opt out of instruction. There is also a change in teacher to student ratio and the number of hours students can receive instruction.
- iv. Retention committee: a K-8 parent can now request their scholar to be retained rather than going through the retention committee.
- v. All dyslexia students will now be served through the Special Education Department. Many were previously under a 504 plan.
- vi. Advanced mathematics for middle school students: math curriculum will be offered so students can enter 8th-grade Algebra I. Our students already take Algebra I in 8th grade, so there will be very little tweaking to our curriculum.
- vii. Online state testing: there will be an opportunity for a small percentage of paper tests due to difficulties for some students with online testing.

- viii. Each school board will need to meet to take a vote on having a chaplain available in the school for student support.

b. Financial Updates

- i. Chesnut presented the 2023-2024 Budget Report

c. Armed Security Officers on Campus Plan

- i. The state now requires an armed officer in each building during all class hours. UT Tyler Officer Standerfer attended the board meeting to inform us that the campus PD was addressing this requirement and looking at how to shuffle officers if an officer is out and additional coverage is needed. They are looking at new hires and sending officers to school-based training. Officer Standerfer inquired if we might be interested in hosting Alert Level I training on our campus next summer. Dr. Simmons was in agreement. Officer Standerfer also mentioned that PD would make sure a marked car would be visible on each campus, in addition to the required officer.

d. Enrollment Projections for 2023-2024

- i. Dr. Simmons reported that we'd have 1034 students in our district.
- ii. Dr. Fazarro brought up the idea of offering Esports again.

e. Campus Updates

- i. Dr. Simmons reported that our full district attended a UT Tyler offered Back to School Bash in the morning of August 8, and then our own annual meeting in the afternoon, where we celebrated our staff, including Dr. Pedersen as Administrator of the year, and Christian Chesnut as Support Staff of the year.
- ii. We continue to have a SpEd opening left.

f. Annual Board Training

- i. Dr. Dennis reviewed the training requirements as presented in the agenda:
 1. Board Members- 6 hrs
 2. Superintendent- 15 hrs
 3. Executive Directors of Curriculum and Operations- 15 hrs
 4. Directors- 5 hrs
 5. Finance Manager- 15 hrs.
- ii. Dr. Dennis stated that she would send everyone the Texas Charter Schools link so they could complete the training by January. They should send their certificate of completion back to Aimee.

g. Administrative Updates

- i. Personnel- one SpEd position left
- ii. Facilities: Longview and Tyler portables are ready to go, and a review for improvements to Longview parking/dismissal space will be completed.

h. Looking Forward

Dr. Simmons reviewed that at the next meeting, the agenda items will include Governance Reporting, Title III Annual Report, ESL Waiver (if applicable),

STAAR Accountability Ratings (if available), G/T Handbook, and the CTE Handbook.

Dr. Dennis reported that we received a preliminary passing rating from Charter First- a huge shout-out to Christian for all her hard work.

11. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 1:20 pm with a motion from Dr. Fazarro and a second by Mr. Semlear. The motion passed unanimously.

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