

SOUTHWESTERN CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD OF SCHOOL TRUSTEES
March 13, 2024

Members Present: Travis Beck, Jonathan Deater, Blake Newkirk, Isaac Pile, Brad Stamper, Dustin Simpson, and Derrek Tennell

I. Call to Order

A. Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America

President Tennell called the meeting to order at 7:39 p.m. in the Southwestern Consolidated Administration building. He led the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States flag.

B. Welcome, introductions and recognitions

Derrek Tennell welcomed everyone in attendance.

II. Agenda Modifications

None

III. Public Comments

Board president, Derrek Tennell read a prepared statement to address issues that had been raised at previous meetings and in the media. He stated that the statement was not on behalf of the board, simply a summary of his thoughts from the last few months. He wanted to assure the public that Southwestern Schools are stronger than they have been for several years. He first spoke of the alleged high turnover rate, stating that Southwestern had lost less staff this year than any of the last five years. He also let the public know that this year huge strides had been made to improve both staff pay and benefits.

The next topic addressed was board member authority. Mr. Tennell reminded the public that board members individually held no power to make decisions or changes. The only way a change can be made is when a superintendent brings a topic to the board and a vote is taken with a majority of the board voting to approve the change during a public meeting. The main job of a board member is to protect the students, support the staff, and to uphold the values of the corporation. Mr. Tennell then stressed that the board and administration are committed to providing a safe and comfortable working environment. He invited everyone to watch the previous board meeting in its entirety, as the local coverage and social media only addressed the first few minutes of the meeting.

Mr. Tennell then addressed some of the topics from the previous meeting, including Title funds and special education staffing.

Mr. Tennell stated that the board had been ridiculed for a lack of transparency, to this he explained that board members were not always at liberty to discuss items or events due to state and federal privacy laws and under the advice of the school attorney. He pointed out that our community deeply cares about our school and its future. He asked for the community to take a look at the big picture and the changes that have

been made to move forward. He stated that the community had been asking for change, and changes have been made with the goal of improving Southwestern.

Mr. Caleb Tennell informed the board members that he wanted to make sure that the board was aware of the achievements of the current 6th grade class. He stated that last year as 5th graders, this class had achieved a 53.7% passing grade on the state ILEARN ELA testing. He stated that the state average was 40.7% at that time. He further explained that this was the highest passing grade for all surrounding school districts as well. Mr. Tennell informed the board that Southwestern had a passing rate higher than 89% of the schools across the state. He also pointed out that of the class A schools, Southwestern was rated second in the state. Only 35 public school districts in the state received higher scores than Southwestern. Mr. Tennell pointed out that if students had received these rankings for a sporting event, they would have received recognition. Since the true purpose of the school district is to educate students, they deserved recognition. Mr. Tennell reported that as of that time, he had been the only person that had mentioned these accomplishments to the students. He reiterated that the students deserve to be publicly recognized and celebrated for their efforts and that everyone should be so proud of the class of 2030.

Mrs. Tylynn Routier, school nurse and parent, commented that as she had been attending the board meetings, she felt that comments had recently turned negative. She wanted to thank the admin team and the board for their leadership and their ability to make the tough decisions they had recently faced. Mrs. Routier wanted to make sure that board members were aware that recent public opinions were not shared by all in the community. She let them know that she had never felt more supported and confident that her child was receiving everything he needed to be successful. She felt confident that the teachers, support staff, and administrators were acting in the best interest of Southwestern students.

Several members of the elementary staff presented the board members with statements as to why they are proud to be employees of Southwestern Elementary and what great co-workers they have. Ms. Britney Taylor acted as the spokesperson to introduce the purpose for the staff members attending the meeting. She told the board that the staff, everyone including custodians and cooks, worked together to form a great team. The message from the staff included:

From the outside looking in, we are Southwestern the small country school nestled between cornfields. From the outside looking in, we are Southwestern With classrooms where friends become family. From the outside looking in, we are Southwestern the small tight knit community who thrives on family values.

But from the inside

: we love what we do and we show up everyday for our kids and our community and we stay

From the inside ... we teach abc's and 123's and we stay ...

From the inside, ... we make learning fun under the guidance of our fearless leader and we stay ...

From the inside, we work as a team and we problem solve as a team and we stay ...

From the inside, we combine careers with passion for lightbulb moments and we stay ...

From the inside, we laugh together, we cry together, we work hard together.

Because ... We are Southwestern!

I challenge you to spend time in our hallways and in our classrooms!! Our elementary building is Amazing! Our leader is amazing! And our children are amazing!

This is Southwestern ... We are Southwestern and we will not lose sight of what's most important!!

IV. Consent Items and Claims

A. Approval of minutes of the previous meeting

B. Approval of accounts payable vouchers

Mrs. Newkirk moved and Mr. Simpson seconded for both items A and B.
Carried 7-0.

V. Business and Financial Reports

A. Financial Report

Dr. Bourke informed the board that the financial reports were in their packets. No questions were asked regarding the report.

B. Extracurricular and Cafeteria Report

Dr. Bourke informed the board that the extracurricular and cafeteria reports were in their packets. No questions were asked regarding the report.

VI. New Business

A. Recommend the acceptance of donations and grants

a. Donation of \$300.00 from Shelby Co Scuffy for Clothes for Kids

b. Donation of \$450.00 from Shelby Co Scuffy for the Elementary Backpack Program

c. Donation of \$50.00 from Treva Whitis for the Spartan Cupboard
Mr. Beck moved and Mr. Deater seconded, Carried 7-0.

B. Recommend \$5,000 travel stipend for speech and Language pathologist.

Mr. Beck moved and Mr. Stamper seconded, Carried 7-0.

C. Recommend to approve contract with Mindy Evans to provide blind/low vision tech instruction at SWE.

Mr. Pile moved and Mr. Deater seconded, Carried 7-0.

VII. Reports and Presentations

A. Superintendent Reports

Dr. Bourke reported on the need for a facilities plan. He also reported that after additional research there is no need for a growth data study. He stated that from a ten year enrollment history does not indicate an expected urgent need to accommodate increasing enrollment. Dr. Bourke reported that there was no urgent need for new classroom space. He stated that Southwestern needs to focus more on renovations and repairs. Dr. Bourke stated that the board members had received a copy of a report from Lancer Architects that showed some of the most urgent areas to need repairs.

VIII. Personnel

A. Leaves/Resignations/Terminations

- Recommend to accept the retirement of John Pile as a contracted bus driver. Mr. Pile had been a driver for Southwestern for 42 years. A special recognition was given by Dr. Bourke in thanks to Mr. Pile for his years of dedicated service to our students. Mr. Pile was not present.
- Recommend to accept the resignation of Stacy Baute as Technology Director, effective February 12, 2024.
- Recommend to terminate Mike Sorrell as boys varsity golf coach
- Recommend to accept the resignation of Darrien Stanfill as Bus Driver, effective March 16, 2024.

Mrs. Newkirk moved and Mr. Pile seconded, Carried 7-0.

- Recommend to accept the resignation of Julia Oltman as an instructional aide.

Mrs. Newkirk moved and Mr. Pile seconded, Carried 7-0.

B. Recommendations to Hire

- Recommend hiring Jordan Bledsoe as Administrative Assistant, effective March 4, 2024 at \$22.50/hr
- Recommend hiring Zachary Sprout as Director of Technology at \$70,000.00 with administrative benefit package.
- Recommend hiring Gary Muldoon as Varsity Boys Golf Coach
- Recommend hiring Chris Thurston as Special Ed teacher for both schools.
- Recommend hiring Mary Engel as Sixth Grade Sponsor
- Recommend the approval for Chris Ingels as volunteer Varsity Golf Coach
- Recommend the approval for Terri Muldoon as volunteer Varsity Golf Coach
- Recommend hiring Adrienne Pope for Summer Maintenance at \$20.00/hr
- Recommend the approval for Leslie Parker as Junior High Track Coach
- Recommend the approval for Anna Ramsey to change from part time to full time custodian effective 3/14/24.

Mr. Pile moved and Mr. Stamper seconded. Carried 7-0.

IX. Superintendent Comments

Dr. Bourke thanked the elementary staff for attending the meeting and for their kind words about Southwestern School District.

X. Board Member Comments

Mr. Beck requested that the newly hired employees be introduced to the board members and for them to tell a little about themselves. Mr. Beck recognized John Pile for his years of service and stated that the bus drivers are the first and last person to have contact with the students on a school day. He also recognized all of the community members and staff members in attendance and their words of encouragement. He commended Mr. Caleb Tennell for his presentation concerning the class of 2030 and their academic accomplishments. Mr. Beck reread a statement that he had first presented at the November board meeting. This statement addressed his job as a board member and how it not only affects him, but his family as well.

Mr. Simpson thanked everyone for attending the meeting. He stated that the last few months had not been easy and that it was nice to hear all of the positive comments.

Mrs. Newkirk thanked Mr. Caleb Tennell for informing the board about the accomplishments of the class of 2030 and encouraged him to invite the class members to the next meeting. She also thanked him for reminding everyone that we are here for education as our main focus. Mrs. Newkirk thanked everyone for the positive comments and thanked the staff members for attending.

Mr. Brad Stamper seconded all proceeding comments that had been made by the board members. He let staff members know how much he appreciated the ongoing and continuous support that they offer to students. He let staff members know that his children enjoy attending this school at Southwestern. Mr. Stamper stated that the board members are here for the students, education provided, and the staff members.

Mr. Deater thanked all staff members for their contributions to the education of students.

Mr. Tennell stated that he agreed with all of the remarks made by his fellow board members.

XI. Adjournment

Mr. Tennell adjourned the meeting at 8:18 p.m.

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
