

ROCKDALE INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER 21, 2026 REGULAR BOARD MEETING

The Rockdale Independent School District Board of Trustees met in regular session at 5:00 p.m. on September 21, 2026, in the Rockdale ISD Conference Center. Board members present were Board President Scott Heintze, Vice President Jason Barcak, Members Charles Miles, Janice Keen, Karen Laughlin, and Wesley Janak. Board Secretary Amy Casas was absent from the meeting. Others present were Superintendent Dr. Michael Watson, Assistant Superintendent Tiffany Whitsel, Assistant Superintendent Kathy Pelzel, and Business Manager Rebecca King. District staff members in attendance were Kayleigh Whitsel, Dell Giles, Michael Young, and Dyan Shelander. Others present were Laura Cullen, Braxton Wilks of U.S. Capital Wealth (Financial Advisors), Justin Hicks of Hutton Andrews Kurth (Bond Council), Rita Johnson of Temple College, Julie Cortez, Kaitlyn Brinkley, Ethan Brinkley, Landry Brinkley, Kase Brinkley, Nathan Bland, Anna Bland, Karis Bland, Anthony Lopez, Lisa Richardson, and Donald Shuffield.

President Scott Heintze called the meeting to order and a quorum was established. Karis Bland, a kindergarten student at Rockdale Elementary School and Anthony Lopez, a fourth grade student at Rockdale Intermediate School led the Board of Trustees, administrators, and meeting guests in the Pledge of Allegiance to the U.S. and Texas flags.

There were no meeting guests registered to address the Board during the Public Forum portion of the meeting.

Assistant Superintendent Tiffany Whitsel introduced the September ROAR (Rockdale Outstanding Actions Recognized) recipients. The ROAR initiative was launched by Rockdale ISD's Human Resources department to recognize our staff members more frequently for their dedication and contributions to Rockdale ISD. For the month of September, two individuals, Julie Cortez, Food Service Assistant and Kaitlin Brinkley, 6th Grade Math Teacher, were selected for special recognition at the board meeting.

The superintendent's report focused on student success and districtwide academic priorities. Assistant Superintendent Kathy Pelzel presented Balanced Scorecard Priority 1: Student Success, including a review of TELPAS results presented by Multilingual Coordinator Dr. Dell Giles. The Board also reviewed the district's 2026-27 performance objectives and campus improvement plans. Key objectives include improving attendance rates, increasing College, Career and Military Readiness (CCMR), strengthening TEA accountability outcomes, supporting staff retention, and effectively managing federal reserve funds.

Motion by Jason Barcak, second by Wesley Janak for approval of the following consent agenda items:

1. Minutes from the August 17, 2026 Regular Board Meeting
2. Appointment of members to the 2026-2027 School Health Advisory Committee (SHAC)
3. 2026-2027 District and Campus Performance Objectives as presented
4. Rockdale ISD Board Members to the School Health Advisory Council (SHAC), District Education Council (DEC), District Safety Committee, and District Calendar Committee
5. Installation of a camera in each Life Skills Classroom at Rockdale Elementary School

Motion carried (6 for - Heintze, Barcak, Miles, Keen, Laughlin, Janak; 0 against).

Business Item VIII.E. was moved to the beginning of Business Items on the Agenda.

Motion by Charles Miles, seconded by Jason Barcak to approve the Order authorizing the issuance, sale, and delivery of the Rockdale ISD Unlimited Tax Refunding Bonds, Taxable Series 2026, as presented. Braxton Wilks of U.S. Capital Wealth and Justin Hicks of Hutton Andrews Kurth presented the purpose of the transaction to refund a portion of the District's outstanding Unlimited Tax School Building Bonds, Series 2023 prior to their scheduled maturity dates to lower debt service costs. Motion carried (6 for - Heintze, Barcak, Miles, Keen, Laughlin, Janak; 0 against).

Motion by Karen Laughlin, seconded by Charles Miles for approval of classroom and library book lists as presented. In compliance with Texas Senate Bill 13 (SB 13) and Board Policy EFB (LOCAL), Rockdale ISD is required to make all recommended book lists publicly available for at least 30 days prior to board approval. This process ensures transparency and allows parents and community members the opportunity to review proposed library materials before they are added to campus collections. Motion carried (6 for - Heintze, Barcak, Miles, Keen, Laughlin, Janak; 0 against).

Motion by Jason Barcak, seconded by Janice Keen that the Board of Trustees authorize the Superintendent to negotiate, approve, and execute an electricity supply agreement for Rockdale ISD facilities through the TASB Energy Cooperative. Due to market volatility, pricing quotes provided by retail electricity providers fluctuate constantly until formally executed. Granting authority to the Superintendent allows the District to lock in rates when pricing conditions are optimal. Motion carried (6 for - Heintze, Barcak, Miles, Keen, Laughlin, Janak; 0 against).

Motion by Janice Keen, seconded by Wesley Janak for approval of the August 2026 financial report as presented. Major purchases include Claims Administrative Services - workers compensation renewal, Skyward, Inc. - Skyward Student and Skyward Finance Annual Renewal, and Casey's General Stores - transportation fuel. Motion carried (6 for - Heintze, Barcak, Miles, Keen, Laughlin, Janak; 0 against).

Motion by Charles Miles, seconded by Karen Laughlin to approve the General Fund budget transfers as presented. The reallocation of funds for unemployment compensation and HVAC repairs and maintenance are budget neutral. Motion carried (6 for - Heintze, Barcak, Miles, Keen, Laughlin, Janak; 0 against).

Motion by Janice Keen, seconded by Karen Laughlin to approve the proposed rate to pay debt service of \$0.3619 per \$100 of taxable value. This rate exceeds the district's debt service rate determined under Texas Education Code section 44.004(c)(5)(A)(ii)(b) of \$0.337041 by \$0.024859. The excess revenue collected from the proposed rate will be used to prematurely refund bonds issued by the district. Motion carried (6 for - Heintze, Barcak, Miles, Keen, Laughlin, Janak; 0 against).

Motion by Jason Barcak, seconded by Janice Keen to approve the adoption of the tax rate of \$1.0691 per \$100 of valuation. The proposed tax rate for the 2026 year is \$0.7072 for Maintenance and Operations and \$0.3619 for Interest and Sinking - total tax rate of \$1.0691 per \$100 of property valuation. Motion carried (6 for - Heintze, Barcak, Miles, Keen, Laughlin, Janak; 0 against).

The Board and administrators discussed upcoming board meetings and event dates including Beginning of Year Strategic Roundtable, Long Range Facilities Committee meetings, Gold Club Breakfasts, and Battle of the Bell Tailgate.

Motion by Jason Barcak, seconded by Wesley Janak to enter into closed session at 6:29 p.m. Motion carried (6 for - Heintze, Barcak, Miles, Keen, Laughlin, Janak; 0 against). The Board of Trustees returned to open session at 7:33 p.m.

Dr. Watson reported the following Non-Certified Personnel Hires:

- Bradford Ingram, LVN, High School for the 2026-2027 school year
- Cheri Garner, LVN, Junior High School for the 2026-2027 school year
- Corina Luna, Custodian, Intermediate School for the 2026-2027 school year
- Meranda Hernandez, Food Service, High School for the 2026-2027 school year
- Bryson McDaniel, Grounds, Maintenance for the 2026-2027 school year
- Delaine Phillips, Custodian, Elementary for the 2026-2027 school year
- Kolbi Coldiron, Custodian, Intermediate for the 2026-2027 school year
- Larry Jackson, Bus Driver, Transportation for the 2026-2027 school year

Dr. Watson reported the following Certified Personnel Hire:

- Lisa Von Gonten, Coach, Junior High School for the 2026-2027 school year

Dr. Watson reported the following Non-Certified Personnel Resignations:

- Robert Scott Fischer, Instructional Aide, Elementary School effective 09/11/2026
- Corina Luna, Custodial, Intermediate School effective 09/11/2026

Dr. Watson reported the following Non-Certified Personnel Terminations:

- Rachael Finch, Food Service, High School effective 09/11/2026
- Zavion Burgess, Custodial, Junior High School effective 09/16/2026

Dr. Watson reported the following Certified Personnel Resignations:

- Chatta Whaley, District RN, Elementary School effective 09/16/2026

Motion by Janice Keen, seconded by Wesley Janak to adjourn. Motion carried (6 for - Heintze, Barcak, Miles, Keen, Laughlin, Janak; 0 against).

The meeting adjourned (7:34 p.m.).