

Belton Independent School District

Board Meeting Minutes

Regular Board Meeting, August 18, 2025 - 6:15 p.m.

Pittenger Fine Arts Center, 400 N. Wall St, Belton TX, 76513

Board Members Present:

Manuel Alcozer
Chris Flor
Erin Bass
Jeff Norwood

Brandon Bozon
Riley Beck
Rucker Preston

Board Members Absent:

1. Call to Order, Moment of Silence and Pledge of Allegiance

Manuel Alcozer, Board President, called the regular meeting of the Belton Independent School District Board of Trustees to order at 6:15 p.m. He stated that a quorum of Board Members was present, that the meeting had been duly called, and that notice of the meeting had been posted in accordance with the Texas Open Meetings Act, Texas Government Code Chapter 551.

2. Recognitions

Student Pledges – Joe M. Pirtle Elementary School

The evening's pledges were led by Joe M. Pirtle Elementary students Indigo Cloutier and Logan Dunlap.

Student Showcase – Mile Markers of Success: National Competitors Q&A

The District highlighted the accomplishments of Belton ISD students who spent their summer earning national recognition in career and leadership competitions. Students from Belton High School and Lake Belton High School advanced to the national stage in Business Professionals of America, SkillsUSA and the Technology Student Association, showcasing their talents in areas like medical coding, robotics, construction and more.

BHS Theatre Award of Distinction

The Board celebrated Belton High School Theatre for earning Exemplary Status in the Texas Educational Theatre Association's (TxETA) 2025 Award of Distinction program. This achievement reflects the hard work of students and the leadership of theatre directors Marie Phillips and Melissa Stuhff.

New Administrator Introductions

Cheyenne Babb, James L. Burrell Elementary Principal

Ms. Babb was named principal of James L. Burrell Elementary in Belton ISD. She brings more than a decade of experience in public education, including roles as both teacher and campus administrator across multiple grade levels. Most recently, she served as principal at Rockdale Junior High, a Texas Association of School Administrators Student Voice Campus. She holds a bachelor's degree in early childhood education and a master's degree in school administration from Lubbock Christian University.

Rachel Ramirez, Lake Belton Middle School Principal

Ms. Ramirez was named principal of Lake Belton Middle School. With 18 years of experience in public education, Ramirez has served in leadership roles in Hereford and Lockhart ISDs and recently stepped into campus leadership at LBMS after serving as an assistant principal. Ramirez holds multiple advanced degrees, including a master's in educational leadership from West Texas A&M University, and is a graduate of the N2Learning Principal Leadership Academy.

Department Showcase - Teaching & Learning

The Board recognized the Teaching and Learning department. This team plays a vital role in ensuring that each and every learner in Belton ISD has access to high-quality instruction, resources and support. This work is led by Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning Gabi Niño.

Community Partner – University of Mary Hardin-Baylor

Belton ISD recognized the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor (UMHB) as the Community Partner Showcase. Belton ISD is partnering with UMHB researchers—Dr. Costello, Dr. Bond and Dr. Morton—to evaluate the effectiveness of the Hope Squad program. This collaboration supports the commitment to student mental health by helping us understand the program's impact and identify opportunities to strengthen it.

3. Public Comments Regarding Items on the Agenda

None.

4. Action Items

A. Public Hearing Regarding 2025-2026 Budget and Proposed Tax Rate

Melissa Lafferty, Chief Financial Officer, presented the proposed budgets for FY 2026:

- General Fund revenues (\$153,309,901) and expenditures (\$13,309,901);
- Accelerated instruction compensatory funds (\$719,123);
- Debt Service Fund revenues (\$26,404,350) and expenditures (\$25,233,326); and
- School Nutrition Fund revenues (\$8,250,000) and expenditures (\$9,471,432); and

Ms. Lafferty informed the Board that the 2025-2026 proposed tax rate of \$1.1494 incorporates \$0.0317 “disaster pennies” into the M&O tax rate as provided by Texas Tax Code Section 26.042(e). The “disaster pennies” will reimburse Belton ISD for existing and forthcoming expenditures related to the May 2024 severe weather event that impacted facilities across the District.

Manuel Alcozer opened the public hearing at 6:37 p.m. There were no public commenters, therefore Mr. Alcozer closed the public hearing at 6:38 p.m.

Board members praised the finance team for achieving a balanced budget, noting the significant effort involved and its importance after challenging previous years.

1. Consider, Discuss, and Take Appropriate Action Regarding Adoption of the Budget for Accelerated Instruction for the 2025-2026 School Year

Brandon Bozon made a motion, seconded by Chris Flor, to adopt the Budget for Accelerated Instruction for the 2025-2026 School Year. The motion passed unanimously, (7-0).

2. Consider, Discuss, and Take Appropriate Action Regarding Adoption of the Budget for the 2025-2026 School Year

Erin Bass made a motion, seconded by Jeff Norwood, to adopt the Budget for the 2025-2026 School Year. The motion passed unanimously, (7-0).

3. 1.Consider, Discuss, and Take Appropriate Action Regarding Resolutions Adopting the Tax Rate for the 2025-2026 School Year

Chris Flor made a motion, seconded by Brandon Bozon, to approve a resolution incorporating an additional \$0.0317 of “disaster pennies” into the District's maintenance and operations tax rate for tax year 2025 under the authority of Texas Tax Code Section 26.042(e) as presented. The motion passed unanimously, (7-0).

Chris Flor made a motion, seconded by Jeff Norwood, that the property tax rate be increased by the adoption of a tax rate of \$1.1494, which is effectively an 11.4% increase in the tax rate. The motion passed unanimously, (7-0).

B. Consider, Discuss, and Take Appropriate Action Regarding Adoption of the 2025-2026 Campus Objectives

Dr. Michael Morgan, Deputy Superintendent, explained Texas Education Code 11.251(a) requires each campus and district to develop, review, and revise campus/district goals and objectives. Dr. Morgan described how the objectives are developed and connected their alignment to District Goals, Key Progress Measures and Campus Objectives. He requested the Board approve the Campus Objectives written in the District and Campus Improvement Plans.

Chris Flor made a motion, seconded by Rucker Preston, to approve the 2025-2026 Campus Objectives as presented. The motion passed unanimously, (7-0).

C. Consider, Discuss, and Take Appropriate Action Regarding Naming a Delegate and Alternate to the 2025 TASB Delegate Assembly

Manuel Alcozer shared that the TASB's Delegate Assembly gives school boards a direct voice in advocating for Texas public schools and in the overall direction of the Association. The Board may appoint one delegate and one alternate to serve as its representatives at the 2025 Delegate Assembly in September.

Erin Bass made a motion, seconded by Brandon Bozon, to appoint Rucker Preston as the Delegate and Chris Flor as the Alternate representative for the 2025 TASB Delegate Assembly. The motion passed unanimously, (7-0).

D. Consider, Discuss and Take Appropriate Action Regarding the Purchase of Real Property (Old Waco Rd, Temple TX)

Dr. Mike Morgan proposed the purchase of land as part of the 2022 bond's allocation for land acquisition, a strategy to secure future school sites and manage construction costs. The recommendation was to authorize the purchase of 15 acres at 2115 Old Waco Road for a future elementary school site in a high-growth area. The negotiated price is \$3,573,000, which includes site improvements (entry road, water/wastewater, drainage easements) to effectively deliver a "finished lot" and avoid significant future costs (e.g., detention pond costs, estimated \$575,000 to \$1.5 million).

Board members highlighted this as a forward-thinking acquisition to secure land at a favorable price for future needs, even though there is no immediate need to build

Jeff Norwood made a motion, seconded by Rucker Preston, to approve the contract for the purchase of the property and authorize the Board President to execute any and all instruments appropriate or necessary to effectuate the purchase of the property. The motion passed (6-1-0), Brandon Bozon opposed.

E. Consider, Discuss and Take Appropriate Action Regarding a Resolution on the Establishment of a School Library Advisory Council

Gabi Nino, Assistant Superintendent of Teaching & Learning, presented changes related to Senate Bill 13, which enhances parental rights regarding school library materials.

Key provisions of SB13: Library checkouts are now part of a student's academic record, parents can restrict their child's access to specific books, and digital tracking of checkout history is required (Belton ISD already had these practices in place).

SB13 established School Library Advisory Councils (SLACs), while not mandatory, the administration recommends a proactive approach.

Riley Beck made a motion, seconded by Rucker Preston, to adopt the resolution to establish a local School Library Advisory Council as presented. The motion passed unanimously, (7-0).

5. Reports

A. Academic Progress Report

Ms. Nino provided a report regarding TEA Accountability Ratings. See Report.

B. 2022 Bond Projects Report

Dr. Morgan provided a report on the status of the 2022 Bond Projects. See Report.

C. Board Committee Reports

1. Budget Committee

Chris Flor shared that work in this committee involved budget and tax rate, which were presented for Action earlier in the meeting.

2. Facilities Committee

Jeff Norwood reported that work in this committee focused on 2022 Bond Projects, 2025 Bond Propositions and land purchase, all of which have been presented for Action this month.

3. Policy Committee

Erin Bass reported that the Policy Committee discussed recommended changes to CDA(LOCAL) Other Revenues: Investments, BDAA(LOCAL) - Officers and Officials Duties and Requirements, BDF(LOCAL) - ADD - Board Internal Organization-Advisory Committees, EFB(LOCAL) - Library Materials, FNCE(LOCAL) - Personal Communication Devices/Electronic Devices, FD(LOCAL) - Admissions, all of which are proposed for approval later in the meeting.

D. Superintendent's Report

Dr. Malinda Golden reported on a successful convocation event, highlighted kickoffs for professional learning and "ParaWorld" for paraprofessionals, described the start of the school year as the "smoothest" she had experienced, crediting teachers, staff, and the transportation team. Dr. Golden announced two recent financial awards: a Certificate of Excellence in Financial Reporting from ASBO International and an A rating (superior) from the Financial Integrity Rating System of Texas (FIRST).

E. Board Highlights

Board members shared positive experiences, including the energetic convocation, the smooth first day of school at various campuses, attending "Meet the Tigers" and other sports events, and appreciating the hard work of coaches and PTAs. A special mention was made of the positive and inclusive culture at Belton High School for students with special needs, noting the sense of peace and welcome felt by students and their families. Manuel concluded by expressing pride in the District's accomplishments and the energy reflecting a promising future.

6. Consent Agenda: Consider and Take Appropriate Action

A. Minutes of Previous Meetings:

1. July 21, 2025 - Workshop Minutes
2. July 21, 2025 - Regular Minutes
3. July 28, 2025 - Special Meeting

B. Unaudited Financial Report for the Month Ending July 31, 2025

C. Budget Amendment #11 for 2024-2025

D. Expenditures over \$50,000

1. Renewal of Integrated Systems for Skyward Hosting
2. Renewal Nearpod - Tech Apps TEKS Instructional Resource
3. Renewal Freckle Math/Reading - Supplementary Instructional Resource
4. Renewal STAR Literacy and Math Universal Screener Assessments
5. Texas Equipment Solutions for HVAC Unit Replacements (Various Campuses)

E. Renewal of Interlocal Agreement with Armed Services YMCA Killeen for Before and After-School Daycare

F. Renewal of Interlocal Agreement with YMCA of Central Texas for After-School Daycare at Belton Early Childhood School

G. Resolution Regarding Designation of 2026 Non-Business Days for the Texas Public Information Act

H. Renewal of Memorandum of Understanding with the Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Program (JJAEP)

I. Approval of Resolution Regarding CDA(LOCAL) - Other Revenues: Investments

- J. Policy Update 124 - 2nd Reading
 - 1. CDA(LOCAL) Other Revenues: Investments
- K. Policy Update 125 - 2nd Reading
 - 1. BDAA(LOCAL) - Officers and Officials Duties and Requirements
 - 2. BDF(LOCAL) - ADD - Board Internal Organization-Advisory Committees
- L. District Local Policy Update - 2nd Reading
 - 1. EFB(LOCAL) - Library Materials
 - 2. FNCE(LOCAL) - Personal Communication Devices/Electronic Devices
 - 3. FD(LOCAL) - Admissions

Erin Bass made a motion, seconded by Brandon Bozon, to approve the Consent agenda as presented. The motion passed unanimously (7-0).

7. Public Comments Regarding Non-Agenda Items

None.

8. Closed Session (Texas Government Code, Subchapters D and E)

The Board convened in Closed Session at 8:30 p.m.

- A. Student Disciplinary Matter - Texas Government Code, Section 551.082
- B. Personnel - Texas Government Code, Section 551.074
 - 1. Consider Superintendent Recommendation Regarding Termination of Pietro Giustino, Term Contract Employee
- C. Consultation with Attorney - Texas Government Code, Section 551.071

9. Reconvene in Open Session and Take Action, if any, on Items Discussed in Closed Session

The Board reconvened in Open Session at 9:31 p.m.

10. Action Item:

A. Termination of Pietro Giustino, Term Contract Employee

Jeff Norwood made a motion, seconded by Chris Flor to accept the superintendent's recommendation to terminate Pietro Giustino, term contract employee. The motion passed unanimously (7-0). See the full motion attached.

11. Adjourn

Adjourn: There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:32 p.m.

Manuel Alcozer, Board President

Erin Bass, Secretary

PIETRO GIUSTINO
AUGUST 18, 2025

MOTION TO TERMINATE WHEN EMPLOYEE DOES NOT REQUEST A HEARING

Mr. President, I move to terminate the employment of Pietro Giustino under his term contract for the 2025-2026 school year effective immediately; and I move that the record reflect the following:

- --on July 21, 2025, the Board proposed that Mr. Giustino's term contract be terminated for good cause;
- --the employee received written notice of proposed termination on July 23, 2025;
- --the written notice informed the employee of the right to request a hearing before an independent hearing examiner within 15 days of receipt of the notice; and
- --Mr. Giustino did not make a timely request for a hearing.