

STATE OF TEXAS

(Minutes conducted via electronic voting)

COUNTY OF CAMERON

BE IT REMEMBERED, that on the **24th day of June, 2025**, the Board of Trustees of the Brownsville Independent School District met in a **Special Called Board Meeting** at the Administration Building, 1900 Price Road, Brownsville, Texas, for the purpose of transacting any and all business that came before the Board and with the following to wit:

PRESENT:

Daniella Lopez Valdez	President
Minerva Pena	Secretary
Carlos Elizondo	Board Member
Denise Garza	Member
Jessica Gonzalez	Member
Frank Ortiz	Member

ABSENT:

ALSO PRESENT:

Dr. Jesus H. Chavez	Superintendent of Schools
Eric Flores	Attorney for the Board

ALSO ABSENT:

None

WHEREUPON, a quorum being present and it appearing before the Board, it is hereby so found that notice of this **Special Called Board Meeting** has been duly given in the manner and for the length of time as prescribed by law. The meeting was called to order and declared ready for the transaction of business with the following to wit:

- I. Special Called Board Meeting called to order by Daniella Lopez Valdez, Board President at 5:30 p.m.**
- II. Moment of Silence led by Dr. Jesus H. Chavez, Superintendent.**
- III. Pledge of Allegiance led by Daniella Lopez Valdez, Board President.**
- IV. Roll Call. Daniella Lopez Valdez, Board President announced that all Trustees were present.**
- V. Recommend approving the agenda of the Special Called Board Meeting of Tuesday, June 24, 2025, with any corrections/deletions.**

Ms. Daniella Lopez Valdez, Board President stated, I would like to pull agenda item VII. A. 1 for us to focus on the Trustee appointee today.

Motion made by Denise Garza, seconded by Jessica Gonzalez, and unanimously carried to recommend approving the agenda of the Special Called Board Meeting of Tuesday, June 24, 2025, with the deletion as stated by Daniella Lopez Valdez, Board President. (6-0-0)

VI. PUBLIC COMMENT:

Mr. Eric Flores, Board Attorney stated, Madam President, if I may? Ms. Daniella Lopez Valdez, Board President stated, yes, Mr. Flores. Mr. Flores continued, just for those in the audience, let's just remember to remain professional in our public comments. Let's not name anybody. Let's not be disrespectful. And definitely no jeering from the audience. It's maintained decorum, whether it be on the dais or within the public audience. The BISD as well as the administration is not going to tolerate that anymore. I will issue one warning as to the conduct and on the second there will be a removal. Thank you, Madam President. Ms. Lopez Valdez stated, Thank you, Mr. Flores.

Claudia Cortez – Item VIII A and IXA.

Good afternoon President Lopez-Valdez, Trustees and Superintendent Dr. Chavez. My name is Claudia Cortez and I proudly serve as the Secretary of AOB. I'm also an engineer by profession and a BISD engineering educator and advisor who has spent more than 16 years helping our students grow into leaders, innovators, and collaborators. I am here today to share a few thoughts on the appointment of trustee for Place 7. At yesterday's national send-off for our technology student association competitors. I spoke about the incredible achievements of our students, but I realized I forgot to mention something deeply personal. As an advisor, I myself have learned that the terms collaboration and teamwork, truly what they truly mean by observing my students working together. It was because of watching them, observing them. It was because of these things that I learned and the teamwork that our team had. TSA fashion design team not only placed first at regionals, but also achieved best in state, qualifying to the national level. The experience reminds me how essential it is that this Board also models the same spirit of collaboration. We need to see a Board that is committed to working together and one that will enlighten us with what the six of you can accomplish as a united team. That tone will set the example for our campuses, classrooms, and our community. As Helen Keller once said, "alone we can do so little, but together we can do so much". As a Board considers who will serve as trustee, I ask that you choose someone neutral to both sides. Someone who not only brings education experience and dedication, but also someone who shares the spirit of collaboration. Someone who understands that leadership is about listening, respecting diverse voices, and building consensus. We need a trustee who will stand with educators and students who will advocate for equity, who will transparency and the progress, and who will help this board move forward together. Imagine, just imagine, what you can accomplish when working together. The possibilities are limitless. On behalf of AOB and myself, thank you for your service and thank you for taking this decision seriously. Just like some of the groups say, we are watching, we are hopeful, and we are ready to see what this board as a team can do for the future of our students and staff. Thank you.

Adina Alegria – VII. A. 1 and IX. A

And I know you pulled it, but I would still like to read my speech as it was prepared because I still believe it's relevant. So good afternoon President López Valdez, members of the board, Dr. Chavez, administrators, and those joining the Brownsville ISD YouTube channel. My name is Adina Alegria, Executive Director of Texas Valley Educators Association affiliated with Brownsville Unions Coalition. As you discuss and possibly approve the renegotiated one-year

contract this afternoon for board council, while modest in scope, carries great significance for our district's stability and legal integrity. Our staff attorney has served the Brownsville Independent School District diligently and professionally. However, the volume and complexity of our district's legal matters, both pending and potential, continue to grow substantially. From contract negotiations and employment issues to compliance oversight and litigation defense, this district operates in an environment that demands deeper bench strength and legal support. Remember, this district has under 5,000 employees and 38,000 students. That's around 43,000 lives and you are the largest employer South of San Antonio. So you can imagine the potential need of this district. This afternoon I asked you to engage additional legal counsel on a limited one-year basis. This added legal resource will oversee pending and anticipated litigation, allowing the staff attorney to concentrate on day-to-day legal needs and district operations. Now, here's where the numbers become as compelling as the need itself. This proposed solution is expected to save the district between \$40,000 and \$60,000 in the upcoming fiscal year. How can we proactively address legal issues before they escalate? By managing cases more efficiently and avoiding the high cost often associated with reactive legal strategies. Beyond the financial prudence, risk management is an even more pressing concern. Expecting a single staff attorney to manage the full spectrum of legal challenges single-handedly places this district vulnerable. It is not a question of workload. It is about safeguarding the district's interest, ensuring compliance, and being prepared for the complexities ahead. This proposal is not about adding bureaucracy. It is about reinforcing the legal foundation that protects our board. That's all of you. Our educators, those are those are the ones that support you or have voted for you. And most importantly, our students, the ones each of you says you're fighting for. One year of additional counsel is not just an investment in legal support, but an investment in a district's ability to navigate challenges with foresight and confidence. I respectfully urge you to consider this recommendation and its value, not in just dollars saved, but in legal clarity and stability and peace of mind. Now to the current vacant seat on the board, a seat that must be filled without further delay. The inability to fill that vacancy has resulted in a non-working Board that cannot effectively carry out its duties or progress on key issues facing our schools. This lack of functionality not only hampers decision making, but also undermines the trust that the students, parents, and community members have in each of you. Prompt action to appoint or elect a qualified individual will restore the board's ability to govern efficiently and with integrity, ensuring you remain focused on your shared mission of providing quality education. At this point, you have to acknowledge that convening another meeting, potentially the sixth or more, to address this unresolved issue is a waste of time and taxpayer resources. It is time for members to set aside personal agendas and egos and do what is right for the people you serve. Your duty is to the students and families who rely on you to make responsible, timely decisions, not to who you may owe a favor. Restoring a functioning collaborative board is not an administrative necessity, but a moral obligation. Thank you all for your time dedication to our schools and attention.

Patrick Hammes – IX. A.

Good afternoon Board President Lopez Valdez, Dr. Chavez, members of the board, Patrick Hammes speaking on the behalf of BEST, Brownsville Educators Stand Together, Union Local 3877, a union of professionals. Claudia's comments and Adina's comments, we basically are trying to echo, we would be echoing the same thing. We agree that a position needs to be filled. We still regret the fact that you did not allow the community to make that decision or recommendation. One of the things that, I know that Claudia was talking about, a shared experience, we just came back from the Texas AFT State Conference in Dallas where I took seven emerging leaders, first-time delegates, and the same thing. We saw them go through the

democratic process, engage in team building, working together, resolving issues, and that's what we need to see from you guys. I never have a problem with a 4-3 or a 5-2 or a 6-1 vote if you are truly believe that whatever the decision is that you cannot support. But then we also strongly believe that once that occurs, you put it aside and you move forward and come back together again on the best interest of the students and of the staff and of the community. This is not the time to be harboring differences or carrying grudges and moving forward. So if you are making a decision today, we are looking forward to it. We need you to work collectively together for the best interest. And we need you to agree to disagree respectfully when that situation arises also. So, thank you very much, and have the best day possible.

The Board may deliberate or take action regarding the following agenda items.

Board policy BE (Local) and Robert's Rules limits debate to two opportunities. A Trustee may debate a motion for three minutes on the first speaking opportunity and two minutes on the second opportunity.

Ms. Daniella Lopez Valdez, Board Member stated, before we begin, I just wanted to thank all Board Members for being present. Today is a big day, not just for us, but for the children that we serve. The community is watching and we have a responsibility to lead with integrity, humility, and unity. To set aside our differences, personal pride, and act solely in the best interest of our children. May they be our North Star through this process. And I want to extend a sincere gratitude to all who have stepped up and answered the call to serve and to your families. Your commitment and your willingness and your time does not go unnoticed. With that being said, let's carry out our duty with thoughtfulness and respect for the sake of every child and every employee and every community of Brownsville. Thank you all and we can go ahead and proceed.

Mr. Eric Flores, Board Attorney stated, members of the public, at this time the Board will convene into executive session to discuss the candidates that are before them to fill the vacancy for trustee place seven currently held by Erasmo Castro. There have been questions as to this process. Just to remind the public, the unfortunate passing of Mr. Castro took place on February 15, 2025. By statute, that should be filled either two ways, by election or by appointing, triggering the 180 day. On March 14, 2025, myself as well as co-council advised the Board as well as Mr. Remi Garza as to those provisions. We missed, unfortunately the Board did not act to call that election within that statutory period to fall within a uniform date. At that point we then moved on to an appointment process which many members of the public or some members of the public saw where it through a survey portal brought those names to the Board. There was questions or issues with that. We did not appoint at that time. Fast forward to early month of June then we devised another process where members of the Board were allowed to bring forth one or two names or more if they chose. Some members participated, others did not, putting us where we are today, where the members of the Board collectively came up with a set of names. We intend for this process to be as transparent as possible. The questions that will be asked will cover a variety range of areas that board members will see on a day-to-day while they govern and while they dictate policy for Brownsville ISD. So, with that being said, we will convene now into executive session where the interviewees will be asked questions. The actual deliberation in regard to who will be selected, who will be nominated, and who will be voted up or down by the Board will happen in open. There will be no deliberations in regard to the candidacies or who the pick will be in closed session. I hope that makes sense and I hope that clarifies a lot of the questions that members of the public may have. Again, we want this process to be as transparent as possible. Most importantly, we want BISD to remain compliant with state law. Thank you.

Mr. Carlos Elizondo, Board Member stated, may I? Ms. Lopez Valdez stated, Mr. Elizondo. Mr. Elizondo continued, with that said, Mr. Flores, on transparency, I would like to have this out in open session. Mr.

Flores stated, you may make a motion if you would like, Mr. Elizondo. Mr. Elizondo stated, I would like to make a motion to have this interview in open session. As Mr. Flores just alluded, he says he wants transparency. This would be one of the biggest things to the public, to the community, if we have it transparent. Mr. Flores stated, well, just for the record, not me personally, right, but yes. Mr. Elizondo stated, you just said it, right? Mr. Flores replied, yes, but... Mr. Elizondo stated, so that's why I'm taking back on your words that transparency would be the key issue for this. And maybe that would be the greatest idea you had is to put it out in... Mr. Flores interjected, that's correct I'm just saying that it's not my personal opinion that's just we collectively we wanted to be transparent just for the record. Mr. Elizondo stated, so... Mr. Flores interjected, so Madam President you do have a motion if you do have a second then you will can take a vote and for the record Mr. Elizondo's motion is to hold the interview process in the open. Is there a second to Mr. Elizondo's motion? Going once, going twice. The motion fails due to lack of second. Mr. Elizondo stated, thank you. Ms. Lopez Valdez stated, we are now in closed session

VII. Board Member Request:

A. Recommend approval of Contracts/Proposals/Purchases:

1. Discussion and possible action to approve the renegotiated one-year contract for Board Counsel with primary representative Eric D. Flores. (Board Agenda Request Daniella Lopez Valdez/Board Support Denise Garza) **(Remove agenda item VII. A. 1 – as per Daniella Lopez Valdez)**

VIII. CLOSED MEETING: as pursuant to the Texas Government Code Sections: 551.071, 551.072, 551.074, 551.082, and 551.084. 12:20 p.m.

A. ATTORNEY CONSULTATION

1. Discussion and consideration regarding the appointment of Trustee Place 7 (Unexpired Term).

Note: Mr. Carlos Elizondo left meeting at 5:14 p.m. requested to participate via zoom at 5:15 p.m.

IX. BOARD RECONVENES - Board action on agenda items discussed in Executive Session. 5:42 p.m.

- A. Board Action on Agenda VIII. A. 1. Discussion, consideration and possible action regarding the appointment of Trustee Place 7 (Unexpired Term).**

Mr. Eric Flores, Board Attorney stated, Members of the public, thank you for those who stayed and those that are currently watching online. The Board of Trustees were all present here during this process. All 11 applicants were interviewed extensively with questions varying various topics. Each one of those answered those questions. On behalf of the Board, we thank you all for putting your name forward. The Board discussed their qualifications and those who met those qualifications for the vacancy. No vote was taken back in executive session. Madam President, members of the trustee, Dr. Chavez, at this time you all may put forth any nominee you all see fit. Ms. Daniella Lopez Valdez, Board President stated, I motion to approve to fill the vacancy of Trustee Place 7 with Ms. Soto-Grantland. Ms. Minerva Pena, Board Member stated, Second.

Motion made by Daniella Lopez Valdez, seconded by Minerva Pena, and unanimously carried to recommend approval of appointing Ms. Neida Ruth Soto-Grantland for Brownsville Independent School District Trustee Place 7 (Unexpired Term). (6-0-0)

Ms. Daniella Lopez Valdez, Board President stated, I want to thank the community and thank absolutely every single applicant who is part of this process. Thank you all for being, and your families for stepping up and answering the call to serve. We appreciate you for being part of this process. I appreciate the community who is here and I also want to appreciate my Board for coming together and coming to a solution for the community and to move the district forward. Thank you all very much and I will go ahead and let Dr. Chavez, you want to go ahead first and then. Anybody want to say some words? Okay, we'll start with Ms. Pena and then we'll go to Mr. Elizondo and then we'll go this way. Ms. Minerva Pena, Board Member stated, I want to thank everyone who applied. There were so many. The qualifications were excellent. I was very impressed and I pray that we go forward in a positive manner and I appreciate everyone who wants to come and serve for the district and here's hoping that we move forward in a positive manner to take care of the front line, which are our teachers, our students, our employees, because once you take care of your front line, everything else at the top will fall in place. So thank you everyone for believing in us and helping us come to a conclusion that we actually did choose someone because I'll just say my personal opinion, this is in God's hands, that we wanted to do what was right for the district because everyone that works for our district is worth their weight in gold. Thank you for believing in us and for working and staying with us. We plan to move forward in a positive way. So thank you everyone. Ms. Lopez Valdez stated, Mr. Elizondo would you like to say anything? Mr. Carlos Elizondo, Board Member stated, I just want to congratulate Ms. Grantland and just looking forward to working with you and making the district great again. I appreciate everything you've done and the amount of time that you put into this interview and thanks to the Board for their consideration. Thank you. Ms. Jessica Gonzalez, Board Member stated, I would also like to thank everybody that took the time to apply, the ones that got nominated. Congratulations to you as well. It's no secret that up here we make very tough decisions. I think I speak for everybody when I say this has been one of the toughest. It definitely has. So, I would also like to mention Erasmo for a little bit. Knowing Erasmo, and I have to laugh because he was such a jokester, he would have loved the fact that we're still talking about him four months after his passing. So, I just know he would have been like, good, I can hear him chuckling. And he would have been like, good, I'm glad. So may his memory and advocacy forever be a blessing thank you. Mr. Frank Ortiz, Board Member stated, yes I like to take the opportunity first of all to thank all the candidates that came before us it's tough okay when you go up against and you're in front of Board Members it's tough, so I certainly want to thank all of them for taking the time and being here. I certainly want to congratulate Ms. Grantland. Okay, we look forward to working together with her to move our district forward. And what really makes me happy was the fact that it was a six zero unanimous vote. Thank you. Ms. Denise Garza, Board Member stated, yes, and congratulations Ms. Grantland. As some of my colleagues have mentioned, this has been one of the toughest decisions, you know, being here as a school board member. I did prepare a little, you know, comment. losing Mr. Castro was not just a big loss for BISD but it was a loss for our community. He wasn't just a Board Member, he was a kind dedicated person who truly cared about people and worked hard to make a difference. So yes, filling this seat was one of our toughest, hardest decisions we had to face. And I will say back in March, I had voted for a Special Election, only because I felt that we owe this to our community for them to make that decision. But things didn't go as, you know, as we wanted, right? So, we have been asking even then after if we could have a special election and you know with legal counsels doing their research for us we weren't able to have a special election so we did this process and thank you to all the candidates coming out here putting your name out there I know it's not an easy decision. These are decisions that you usually talk with your families because it is time away from your families. So, I just want to make sure that as Ms. Grantland gets nominated, appointed today, we always remember Mr. Castro and what he believed in and that we are going to work

together and that we will continue to honor his legacy. Thank you. **Dr. Jesus Chavez, Superintendent** stated, yes, ma'am. First of all, let me thank all of our Board Members for dedicating not only today but really a number of hours of study and reviewing all the information that they've gotten from all of our applicants. I also want to thank certainly Ms. Soto Grantland. I look forward to working with her and I know that all of our team is going to continue to work well with all of our board members including our newest board member. I also want to thank all of the other community individuals. We had a great number of people who were very interested in serving and so you know we certainly not only through our board here but really throughout our community need to thank and recognize all of them for their commitment to serve. And let me say out to them and really other folks there's certainly lots of opportunities to continue working with us. I know that we have a number of committees that we've set up in the year past, but we're also going to set up and continue to work with as we move forward with a number of projects. So please continue to consider working with us. Brownsville ISD, you know, the best district if you will. Lastly, let me thank Mr. Eric Flores for really working very closely with our Board and giving us a great process and really very close work with all of our Board. So Eric thank you so much for your work not only today I know that is in working with our attorneys that you know that they were very helpful throughout this process and worked very closely with each of our Board Members. So Eric, thank you so much. We really appreciate all the work you've done. *Mr. Flores replied, thank you, Doc.* Ms. Lopez Valdez stated, thank you all so much. And Godspeed. We'll see you all on Thursday for budget. Oh, Dr. Chavez has some announcements. Just a second.

X. Announcement(s):

Dr. Jesus Chavez, Superintendent stated. Let me remind everybody, we do have a Special Called Board Meeting this Thursday, June 26, and one of the items, of course, that we will be reviewing and improving is our budget for the upcoming year. We have no scheduled meetings for July of 2025, although, as the Board knows, we are going to be working individually and there are a number of communications that we're going to have individually with myself and so we'll continue to focus on what our district needs to do to move forward. Lastly, let me say that on June 30th through July 4th, our offices will be closed that one week. We'll have a skeletal crew if indeed there's something necessary, but for most everybody else again our offices will be closed. Thank you so much. Ms. Lopez Valdez stated, yes, Ms. Gonzalez has a question for legal counsel. Ms. Gonzalez stated, Mr. Flores, regarding just because he was talking about announcements, I'm sure people would want to know when Ms. Grantland would be sworn in. Do you have something? Obviously, she needs to be... Ms. Minerva Pena, Board Member stated, I guess how fast can it be done is the question. *Mr. Eric Flores stated, it can be done pretty quickly. The swearing-in is ceremonial. She has been appointed. At some point, though, a resolution and an actual swearing in shall take place, but she can serve immediately if need be.* Ms. Pena stated, but question is, if I may? We are having a budget meeting on Thursday. Could we schedule it right before this budget meeting so she'd be part of that budget meeting or how? Is that possible? I'm just asking. Ms. Lopez Valdez stated, I think if we could talk to her first and then we can ask what works best for her schedule, but Mr. Ortiz, do you have a question? Mr. Frank Ortiz, Board Member stated, no, that was my question if to legal counsel here if it's allowable, and if she's willing to get sworn in on Thursday, could we do that? *Mr. Flores replied, that's something that we'll coordinate with her, Mr. Ortiz, just to ensure that number one, she is here and if she is here we will try to make it as quickly and efficiently as possible.* Mr. Ortiz stated, will that cause any issues as far as the posting of an agenda item? *Mr. Flores replied, that's something that we'll track down as well, Mr. Ortiz.* Ms. Pena stated, so the answer to you to Mr. Ortiz's question was yes? *Mr. Flores stated I....* Ms. Pena interjected, see I'm very specific on the question if we can answer it because I like to get to the source. So, if she says yes and she's going to be here and it

can be done will we be able to do it then? *Mr. Flores replied, so we do and I can hear Mr. Salinas here in my earshot. There is a potential hurdle of a posting issue, right? Typically, something of that ceremonial presence is posted on an agenda, but I think the first question we need to answer is coordinate with Ms. Ruth, the appointee, and then that will trigger the deadlines.* Ms. Pena stated, define the posting issue, please. *Mr. Flores replied, 72 hours beforehand.* Ms. Pena stated, the three days like for the meetings? *Mr. Flores stated, that is correct, yes ma'am.* Ms. Pena stated, and there's no such thing as an emergency special for that? *Mr. Flores stated, so it would not fall...* Ms. Pena interjected, can you look into that. *Mr. Flores continued, it would not fall under an emergency, however we could call a special.* Ms. Lopez Valdez stated, we'll go ahead and get back to everybody as soon as possible and make sure that we can talk with Ms. Grantland and come up with a solution, make sure legal counsel looks at our days and we will go from there and we will make sure that everybody's, Mr. Ortiz. Mr. Ortiz stated, yeah, just a follow up. Since she has been approved today, can she participate on Thursday? *Mr. Flores replied, so what we'll do is given all the questions that have taken place, I will send out a board bulletin answering that question by the end of tonight.*

XI. Adjournment.

Motion was made by Daniella Lopez Valdez, seconded by Jessica Gonzalez, and unanimously carried to approve to adjourn the Special Called Board Meeting at 5:57 P.M. (6-0-0)

➤ **There being no further business appearing before the Board, the meeting was adjourned.**

(HANDOUTS ADDED TO OFFICIAL MINUTES)

**(AUDIO/VIDEO TAPES OF THE OPEN MEETING AND THE WRITTEN CERTIFIED AGENDA
OF THE CLOSED MEETING ARE ON FILE)**

Approved by:

Daniella Lopez Valdez, President of the Board

Date

Attested by:

Minerva Pena, Secretary of the Board

Date

Notes: Font style designation

Board of Trustees
Administration
Board Attorney
Staff Attorney
Speaker/Presenter

(Minutes presented at Regular Board Meeting held on August 5, 2025)