

The Board of Trustees of the Howard County Junior College District met for an executive session and regular board meeting in the Board Room of the Student Union Building at the Big Spring campus of Howard College on Monday, June 10, 2024.

The following members of the Board and District Administration were present:

Dr. John Freeman, Chairman
Maxwell Barr, Vice-Chairman
Adrian Calvio, Secretary
Mark Morgan (via Zoom)
Ben Zeichick

Dr. Cheryl T. Sparks, Ed.D., President
Dr. Amy Burchett, Ed.D., Executive Vice-President
Jeff Anderson, Provost, SWCD
Pam Callan, Provost, San Angelo
Monica Castro, Executive Dean, Lamesa
Brenda Claxton, Chief Fiscal Officer/Controller
Rhonda Kernick, outgoing Chief Human Resources Officer
Laurie Kincannon, incoming Chief Human Resources Officer
Brenda Madore, Chief of Staff/Institutional Advancement Officer - recorder
Fabian Serrano, Chief Operations and Safety/Security Officer
Cindy Smith, Chief of Student Success/Public Information Officer
Steve Smith, Chief Business Officer/Internal Auditor

Others present were:

Kaye Barr, guest
Stephanie Bissonnette, Interpreter
Ricky Creswell, Security
Phil Furqueron, Architect
Terry Hansen, Consultant
Renee Porter, Interpreter
Savannah Robinson, Big Spring Herald
Shannon Stuteville, Executive Assistant to the President
Shane Taiclet, District Director of Administrative Services

Chairman Dr. John Freeman called the meeting to order at 11:08 a.m. with Dr. John Freeman, Maxwell Barr, Adrian Calvio, Ben Zeichick, and Dr. Cheryl Sparks located in the Board Room of the SUB on the Big Spring campus. Mark Morgan participated via Zoom.

Shortly after calling the meeting to order, the Board moved into Executive Session in accordance with Texas Government Code Section, 551.074 to discuss personnel matters. Upon conclusion of the Executive Session, the Board recessed for lunch at 12:11 p.m. The regular meeting was open to the public in the Board Room on the Big Spring Campus and through remote connection utilizing a toll-free number. The regular meeting was recorded but due to technical difficulties the broadcast was interrupted partially through the meeting. The recording will be available on the website. Minutes will also be available on the website.

After a brief recess for lunch, Chairman Freeman convened the regular meeting at 12:54 p.m. Mr. Zeichick led the invocation.

Next, Dr. Freeman welcomed attendees. Dr. Sparks noted that Kaye Barr, wife of Maxwell Barr, was in attendance to witness Mr. Barr's swearing in as a reelected Trustee. Savannah Robinson of the Big Spring Herald and Laurie Kincannon, the incoming Chief Human Resources Officer were also welcomed.

Next, the public was invited to address the Board. There were no comments.

Next, Trustees considered routine matters, including the minutes of the regular meeting on April 29, 2024, the Financials for April 2024, monthly report of auxiliary services, personnel matters, and an internal audit report. Mr. Zeichick made a motion to approve the routine matters. The motion was seconded by Mr. Barr. All Trustees present voted in favor of the motion.

Next, Trustees moved to New Business Visioning/Future Directions.

Next, Mr. Maxwell Barr and Mr. Adrian Calvio took the oath of office as the elected trustees for Precincts 4 and 3 respectively. Both gentlemen had been reelected in the uncontested election.

Next, Trustees considered the selection of officers of the Board. Mr. Zeichick made a motion to select leadership of the Board as presently constituted, with Dr. John Freeman as Chair, Mr. Maxwell Barr as Vice-Chair, and Mr. Adrian Calvio as Secretary. Mr. Barr seconded the motion. All Trustees present voted in favor of the motion.

Next, Trustees considered trustee foundation appointments. Mr. Barr made a motion to select Mr. Ben Zeichick to serve on the Howard College at San Angelo Foundation Board and Dr. Marisha Beck to serve on the Southwest Collegiate Institute for the Deaf Foundation Board. All other assignments would stay as presently constituted. Mr. Calvio seconded the motion. All Trustees present voted in favor of the motion.

Next, Trustees considered approval of the 2024 Facilities Master Plan. Phil Furqueron and Terry Hansen presented, describing the process of creating the plan as a rewarding exercise and a valuable resource for the district. Development of the plan involved comprehensive surveys conducted among students, faculty, staff, and the community, with approximately 450 responses received. Site evaluations were carried out at each campus, offering a detailed view of current conditions. Terry highlighted the survey process, noting the simplification to 15 main questions compared to previous survey instruments used in earlier plans. The responses and comments included in the report, provide an objective view of the campuses. Building evaluations are meticulously detailed in the report.

Phil directed attention to the building evaluations beginning on page 115, covering overall site conditions, landscaping, systems, interiors, fire protection and safety, and accessibility, with a comments section for notable observations. Terry emphasized that the planning process outlines each building's assessment, offering a basis for future work on any facility at Howard College. The Master Plan also informs the deferred maintenance list, which is used during budget preparation and tracks progress and projects. They also noted the document's detailed cost analysis, based on current regional data used by contractors, engineers, and architects. Phil's contributions include a current plan of the existing campus and a conceptual plan for future developments, along with phasing and cost estimates.

Customized plans for each campus were developed based on revenue sources. Phil emphasized the extensive information in the phasing spreadsheets, which are expected to be widely used. Terry reflected on the 2007 plan's completion, where each item was color-coded and tracked. The new plan offers a 30,000-foot view and is redesigned to be intuitive, based on user experience and substantial input received during the process. The team expressed pride in the document and its usability.

Dr. Sparks complimented Phil and Terry on the high quality of the plan and explained that they were selected because of their extensive experience with building projects at the College district as well as the fact that they both had their hearts in the project and care deeply about the future of Howard College. Mr. Calvio made a motion to approve the 2024 Facilities Master Plan as presented. Mr. Zeichick seconded the motion. All Trustees present voted in favor of the motion.

Next, Dr. Sparks discussed recent changes to the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) by the U.S. Department of Labor, which updated the salary threshold for exemption status. The new rule takes effect on July 1, 2024, with an initial increase, followed by a more significant increase in January 2025. Dr. Sparks provided a brief overview, noting that some positions in the district will be impacted. Rhonda Kernick, Chief HR Officer, began analyzing these changes in May as the college awaited state guidance. Despite speculation that the Governor might address the fiscal impact for Texas, recent feedback indicates no state action will be taken. As a result, the college has been reviewing salary schedules and impacted positions in detail.

The entire non-exempt and professional exempt schedules are under review to determine the best course of action. With the changes taking effect on July 1 for phase one and January 1 for phase two, the college will begin working with individual employees over the next few weeks. Dr. Sparks emphasized the fiscal impact of these changes, which will be addressed during the budgeting process and discussed in more detail at the July 29th Board meeting.

Next, Trustees moved to Performance Measures/Outcomes.

Next, Brenda Kay Madore provided a brief update on the Rural Promise project. The program has been named Open Roads Promise Driven by Howard College. Marketing efforts and various meetings are ongoing, with program details being finalized by a cross-sectional team. Additionally, a new position, Dean of High School Partnerships, has been created and posted. This role will manage the day-to-day operations of the Promise program as well as oversee dual credit responsibilities.

Next, Dr. Sparks related that Adult Education & Literacy (AEL) grants have experienced changes in the way they are being allocated. There is now only one grant for the district instead of individual grants available for campuses. Addressing the changes in the AEL grant has to be submitted by the 1st of July and efforts are underway to determine best delivery for the district.

Next, Trustees moved to Monitoring.

Next, Dr. Sparks explained that due to the funding model changes for community colleges and the impacts of COVID-19, disruptions to operations and funding at the Federal Correctional Institution (FCI) have been experienced. Over the past few years, discussions have been ongoing with the FCI. A bridge contract will cover the rest of this year, with a bid process expected for the next five years. The new funding model, with its performance tier funding, is challenging to implement at the federal prison. The college hopes for an RFP that can be pursued, though it may not be released until 2025 due to the election year. Several faculty members are affected by these changes, and alternative approaches are being considered to continue the program. Trustees affirmed the action that Dr. Sparks had already taken with contract negotiations to complete this fiscal year.

Next, Trustees considered RFP #24-005 SWCD Dorm Shower Replacement Project. Funds were allocated for the project in this budget. Steve Smith and Phil Furqueron provided rationale for the recommendation. Steve reported that three contractors submitted bids, and they recommend Mid-Tex from Midland. They are pleased with the quality of the contractors who bid, with Mid-Tex offering a competitive bid. The project involves replacing 26 showers installed back in 1997, with no asbestos abatement required. The replacement will also include the installation of strobes to indicate when bathrooms are in use, along with new valves, doors, and toilets. Maintenance requested porcelain tiles instead of fiberglass for durability. The grading criteria for the bids were made available to board members, with points assigned accordingly.

Dr. Sparks inquired about the start date. Work is expected to begin in approximately two weeks. The project might be phased depending on material availability. This initiative comes from the Master Plan and has been prompted by student feedback. Mr. Barr made a motion to approve the RFP as presented. Mr. Calvio seconded the motion. All Trustees present voted in favor of the motion.

Next, Trustees considered RFP #24-003 Big Spring Campus Coliseum Air Handling Unit (AHU) Replacement & Utility Transformer Replacement Project. Dr. Sparks explained that this project, previously separated into different projects, focuses on replacing three utility transformers and four or eight air handling units (AHUs) at the Big Spring Campus Coliseum. Initially, there were difficulties in securing bids for the transformers and AHUs due to long lead times. However, combining these into a larger project resulted in more interest from contractors.

Five contractors submitted bids, though two were incomplete. The base proposal included replacing four rooftop units at the Coliseum with an alternate to replace the additional four units. The final recommendation expanded this to all eight units for cost efficiency and to avoid repeated staging costs. The RFP justification included discussion about the advantages of using rebuilt transformers with a three-year warranty over new ones with a one-year warranty. Rebuilt transformers have an eight-month lead time, compared to twelve months for new ones.

Dr. Sparks emphasized the need for all eight AHUs, noting the discomfort in the Coliseum due to outdated units from 1977/78, which are difficult to repair. Currently, only three out of eight units function for heating, and five to six for cooling, affecting events such as basketball games. This past winter, a conference game had to be relocated due to cold conditions. To address this, funds were allocated last summer from the budget and pulled from the fund balance. Additional funding sources include CARES payments and increased interest monies and tax collection, though there remains a shortfall of about \$500,000. Voting to approve the project now allows for ordering, with the cost included in next year's budget.

Fabian Serrano indicated that contractors are open to using rebuilt transformers, with two of the three needed already found. This project aligns with the Facilities Master Plan, and the coliseum serves as an important community relocation site. Future community plans include possibly applying for a state grant for a backup generator. The project recommendation was justified based on the contractor's experience, staff availability, and past performance. This project will significantly improve conditions in the Coliseum and ensure reliability for community use.

Mr. Barr made a motion to continue discussions on rebuilt versus new transformers and authorize moving forward with engineers to ensure compatibility as well as giving Dr. Sparks administrative authority to make the final decision based on expert guidance. Mr. Calvio seconded the motion. All Trustees present voted in favor of the motion. Dr. Sparks related that administration would report the final decision at the next Board meeting.

Next, Trustees considered the Region 18 Purchasing Cooperative Membership Interlocal Agreement. This is an annual requirement for participation in the Cooperative. Mr. Zeichick made a motion to approve the interlocal agreement. Mr. Barr seconded the motion. All Trustees present voted in favor of the motion.

Next, Trustees considered a Resolution Authorizing the Auction of Howard County Trustee Property to the Highest Bidder for Cash, Without Reservation. Two properties had been submitted for approval. Mr. Zeichick made a motion to approve the resolution. Mr. Calvio seconded the motion. All Trustees present voted in favor of the motion.

Next, Trustees considered handbook and catalog changes (see attached). Catalog changes needed for the upcoming academic year and a new policy addressing the Executive Order by the Governor on antisemitism were included. Mr. Zeichick made a motion to approve the changes. Mr. Calvio seconded the motion. All Trustees present voted in favor of the motion.

Next, Trustees received a brief update on the San Angelo Electrical/Plumbing Lab. Shane Taiclet reported that the electrical wiring is almost complete, the sheetrock is up, and texture is almost done.

Next, Fabian Serrano gave an update on the joint paving project that is being planned for the Big Spring campus with the City. The work will commence in earnest in July.

Next, Monica Castro gave an update on projects slated for the Lamesa campus. The vestibule door will be complete by the end of June. In the next budget year they will be working on the landing and ramp. This is another item on the Facilities Master Plan that will be marked as completed.

Next, Dr. Sparks and Jeff Anderson gave a brief update on the SWCD Dental Lab Technology (DLT) renovations. Jeff and faculty member Carlos Medrano had traveled to a Dental Lab in Houston to gain insight on needed upgrades.

Next, Dr. Sparks reviewed upcoming activities with Trustees. The next Board Meeting will be July 29. There will be a budget workshop on August 12, a tax hearing (if needed) on August 19, and the regular meeting on August 26.

Next, Dr. Sparks informed Trustees that Jeryn Ellerd had advanced to the NIRA finals in Team Roping. Several theater students had been recognized for their performances in Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dream Coat.

Next, Dr. Sparks briefly updated Trustees on legislative matters. Funding projections have been released. Administration is analyzing that data.

Next, Trustees discussed the annually required cybersecurity training. Rhonda verified who had received the link and provided instructions on how to access the training. It needs to be completed by July.

There being no other business, the Trustees adjourned at 2:27 p.m.

Dr. John Freeman, Chairman

Adrian Calvio, Secretary
By Brenda Madore