

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, July 29, 2024.

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

Dr. John Freeman, Chairman
Maxwell Barr, Vice-Chairman
Raul Marquez
Mark Morgan
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
Eric Hansen, Chief Information Technology Officer
Brad Keller, Chief Institutional Research Officer
Rhonda Kernick, outgoing Chief Human Resources Officer
Laurie Kincannon, incoming Chief Human Resources Officer
Dr. Brenda Madore, Ed.D., 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:

Stephanie Bissonnette, Interpreter
Jimmy De Los Santos, Security
Patrick Gonzales, Big Spring Herald
Renee Porter, Interpreter
Shannon Stuteville, Executive Assistant to the President
Shane Taiclet, District Director of Administrative Services

Due to unforeseen circumstances for several board members, a quorum was not present at 11:00 a.m. for the scheduled executive session. Dr. Sparks, Dr. Freeman, Mr. Barr, and Mr. Zeichick in attendance in person, with Mr. Morgan by phone-- engaged in an informal information sharing session led by Dr. Sparks. This activity was open to the public. At 12:05 p.m. Mr. Morgan arrived.

With the arrival of Mr. Morgan, a quorum was present, and Chairman Dr. John Freeman then called the meeting to order at 12:07 p.m. Immediately after calling the meeting to order, the Board moved into Executive Session to discuss personnel matters/president's evaluation. Trustee Raul Marquez, Jr. joined the Executive Session at 12:32 p.m. Upon conclusion of the Executive Session at 1:43 p.m., the Board recessed for lunch.

After a short break for lunch, Trustees gathered for the regular meeting. 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 and will be available on the website. Minutes will also be available on the website.

Chairman Freeman reconvened the meeting at 2:20 p.m. Mr. Barr led the invocation.

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 June 10, 2024, financials for May & June 2024, a monthly report of auxiliary services, personnel matters, and an internal audit report. Mr. Marquez 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, Dr. Sparks received permission to address certain agenda items out of order to accommodate the need for Mr. Marquez to leave by 3:00 p.m. Those items that required a vote or were critical information were to be addressed first.

Next, as part of the performance evaluation of Dr. Sparks relative to the Board's vision, mission and strategic goals attainment, Dr. Sparks outlined several major strategic planning efforts underway for next year as budget planning continues for the Board Budget Workshop on August 12. One annual effort undertaken by administration in the area of Performance Excellence is the review of certain salary schedules as part of the college's ongoing efforts to remain competitive. Of recent note over the last few years has been the Professional Exempt and Non-Exempt schedules. The April 23 posting of the Department of Labor's final regulations updating the salary threshold for exemption status (not eligible for overtime) and increasing expectations of the Department of Labor to increase minimum wage for non-exempt workers as early as January 2025 have been factors for consideration in the ensuing review as well. Administration is studying the non-exempt schedule with the intention of an entry level of \$15 per hour as well as increasing salary amounts across the schedule. She shared that a plan for implementation for the Board to consider at the Board Workshop is in final preparation dependent on how the budget preparation concludes for each campus.

Upon the conclusion of her remarks, Trustees considered giving Dr. Sparks authority to continue developing a plan as part of budget preparation. Mr. Zeichick made a motion to approve giving Dr. Sparks authority to proceed. The motion was seconded by Mr. Morgan. All Trustees present voted in favor of the motion.

Next, Trustees considered giving Dr. Sparks authority to utilize the balance of Base Tier funding intended for the prison program that had not been expended from the current budget for next year. After negotiations with the prison and with input from current faculty, a plan has been developed to run a pilot program that may develop into something that can ensure sustainability of the program in the future. Mr. Barr made a motion to approve giving Dr. Sparks authority to move forward as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Marquez. All Trustees present voted in favor of the motion.

Next, Trustees considered the Quarterly Investment Report. Mr. Zeichick made a motion to approve the report as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Barr. All Trustees present voted in favor of the motion.

Next, Trustees considered a Catalog change. (See attached.) Mr. Barr made a motion to approve the change as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Zeichick. All Trustees present voted in favor of the motion.

Next, Trustees received an update on the HB8 funding model. Over the past several months, Howard College has developed tools to adapt to the new HB8 funding model. Institutional Research Officer Brad Keller has created an accurate method to allocate funding by campus and category on an annual and semester basis. This tool has been vetted by Brenda Claxton, Eric Hansen, Rebecca Villanueva, Dr. Burchett, and Dr. Sparks for its soundness. They are still refining details and verifying outcomes with the Cabinet and campus leaders but feel confident in its accuracy. In the meeting Trustees were introduced to a shell of the tool, minus the specific allocation amounts.

Dr. Sparks explained that HB8 demands greater agility, making real-time accuracy crucial. The Chief Institutional Research role position was created to address this laser-focus need. With the new funding model in place for a year, many community colleges have faced challenges, and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) continues to update guidelines. Howard College anticipated moving out of base tier funding, and next year, based on the tax base increases, will likely only receive performance tier funding. She continued that this means funding is now almost solely based on completions, not contact hours, with specific dollar amounts tied to achievements. At the Budget Workshop, they will share the filled-in shell with exact funding amounts.

Brad Keller then presented the shell to Trustees and discussed last year's numbers and THECB targets, weighted scores for performance outcomes, and funding predictions. He explained that this model offers new funding opportunities and allows the college to set annual targets for each campus. High-demand fields and advising impacts were also discussed.

Dr. Amy Burchett noted that the college could receive funding in multiple ways for a single student, emphasizing the importance of rewarding milestones. Dr. Sparks highlighted that funding amounts will change annually, and the college is developing improved reporting methods. Brad Keller is preparing dashboards to track and share information with leadership. This year's funding is based on targets projected by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, with mid-year adjustments possible but also lagging downward adjustments in funding if projected targets are not achieved.

Howard College's complexity and multiple campuses create a challenging situation. At the August 12 Budget Workshop Trustees will be presented the funding allocation with forecasted dollar amounts, divided by campus.

Mr. Marquez departed at 3:00 p.m.

Next, Trustees received an update on the Tax Base Value Certification/Reappraisal Plan for 2025-2026. Dr. Sparks noted that Trustees had been provided with documents related to the recent tax base value certification prepared by the Tax Assessor and the Howard Central Appraisal District Office's plan to reappraise certain locations this upcoming year. She also shared a draft copy of one of the first notices to be posted on the college's website as part of the tax adoption process. This information is prepared by the Tax Assessor utilizing information from the Tax Base Value Certification document. Trustees discussed the increase in tax base, which was approximately \$300 million dollars over last year. Dr. Sparks noted that the information was pertinent to decisions that Trustees will make at upcoming meetings regarding the tax rate and additional information would be provided for the Budget Workshop.

Next, Trustees discussed Budget Preparation. Dr. Sparks informed Trustees that at the August 12 Budget Workshop, the completed HB8 funding model information, salary schedule implementation plan, and possible tax scenarios based on the appraised tax base value information as part of a proposed preliminary budget will be presented for discussion and consideration. Dependent upon Board action at that time concerning an increase in tax levy, a subsequent tax hearing may need to be scheduled for August 19. The regular meeting where Trustees adopt the tax rate and approve the final budget will be held August 26.

Next, the Trustees received a brief update on the School to Industry meetings developed by the Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber identified a need to retain local high school graduates in the local workforce and created these meetings to address that need. Under Dee Lindsey's leadership, Howard College has partnered with the Chamber and the Big Spring EDC in this initiative. School districts, businesses, the Workforce Board, and Workforce Solutions have also been participating in these meetings. A large meeting of various community company leaders is being discussed for this fall, and Trustees will hear more about this in the coming weeks.

Next, Trustees received an update on the recently received Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) Financial Condition Report. Dr. Sparks was happy to report that as anticipated, Howard College is reported as having no financial stress indicators. Credit is due to Brenda Claxton and team, as well as Board decision-making.

Next, under Purchasing, Dr. Sparks reported on the administrative decision authority given at the last meeting to move forward with consideration of reconditioned transformers as part of the Big Spring Campus Coliseum Air Handling Units (AHU) Replacement & Utility Transformers Replacement Project. After consultation with the engineers and selected contractor, she reported that since reconditioned transformers will save approximately \$120,000 on the project that have a 3-year warranty in contrast with the 1-year warranty of new units bid, it was determined that was the best course of action.

Next, Trustees received an update report on several construction/infrastructure projects that are ongoing. First, Shane Taiclet provided an update on the San Angelo Electrical/Plumbing Lab. It is nearing completion. Second, Fabian Serrano gave an update on the Big Spring paving project. The contractor is expected to be on site August 8 or 9. Coordination with staff and students will occur to allow for the closure of affected parking lots. Third, Fabian Serrano gave an update on the SWCD Residence Hall project. They had a preconstruction meeting that morning and are ready to begin work. That will commence in one week.

Next, Dr. Sparks provided the President's Report by providing an overview of the Board calendar, highlighting significant events. She then led a discussion about the scheduling of the focused board meetings. It was determined to schedule the following board meetings for the remainder of the calendar year:

Monday, September 23, 2024	Regular Meeting	Big Spring Campus
Monday, October 7, 2024	Lamesa Focus Meeting	Lamesa Campus
Monday, October 21, 2024	SWCD Focus Meeting/Regular Meeting	SWCD Campus
Monday, November 18, 2024	Big Spring Focus Meeting/Regular Meeting	Big Spring Campus
Wednesday, December 4, 2024	San Angelo Focused Meeting/Plumbing Electrical Lab Ribbon Cutting	San Angelo Campus
Monday, December 16, 2024	Regular Meeting	Big Spring Campus

Next, Dr. Sparks noted that Michael Contrares, Director of Library Services located on the Big Spring campus was the Texas Library Association July Member Spotlight.

Next, Dr. Sparks shared that legislative informational meetings are being scheduled as the legislative session nears. Howard College just received its Legislative Appropriation Request (LAR) which includes the funding request for Howard College and SWCD due August 16. The LAR will be shared with the Board at the August 12 meeting.

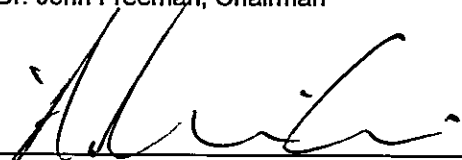
Next, Dr. Sparks related that all of the Trustees had completed their required cybersecurity training with the exception of Dr. Beck and Mr. Marquez. Dr. Beck was in progress of completing. She reminded Trustees that the training is due to be completed by July 31.

Next, Trustees discussed the upcoming 2024 Community College Association of Texas Trustees (CCATT) Annual Conference and Regional Meetings on September 12-14 in Amarillo and the 2024 Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT) Annual Congress, October 23-26 in Seattle. All Trustees have notified the college of their intentions to attend or not and travel arrangements are in progress.

There being no other business, the Trustees adjourned at 3:35 p.m.



Dr. John Freeman, Chairman



Adrian Calvio, Secretary
By Brenda Madore