

Next, Trustees received updates on two ongoing construction projects:

### **Big Spring Softball Field House**

Dr. Sparks told Trustees that the proposed building currently being considered will be approximately 1,400 square feet, featuring a small porch and overhang to allow students to gather outside and provide an open internal space. Architectural and engineering plans are expected to be completed by September 19, after which they will be published for contractors to review on September 19 and 21. A pre-bid conference is scheduled for Wednesday, October 1, with bids opening on Tuesday, October 14. The bid tabulation results will be presented at the October 20 Board meeting. Additionally, work is ongoing on a new policy and associated procedures, which will be brought to the September 22 Board meeting for review and approval.

### **San Angelo Campus Café**

The San Angelo Campus Café opened successfully this week, exceeding sales expectations. The café has received enthusiastic support and positive feedback from the San Angelo campus community.

Next, Dr. Sparks provided the President's Report. She informed the Board that the retirement reception for Provost Monica Castro, originally scheduled for this afternoon, will be rescheduled due to a family medical situation. Dr. Marnita Guinn's reception in San Angelo will proceed as planned tomorrow.

The President reviewed the calendar of upcoming events including but not limited to:

- September 10, Big Spring Chamber of Commerce Legislative Luncheon 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
- The focused meeting for the San Angelo campus on September 11 has been canceled and is being rescheduled.
- The San Angelo Foundation meeting will be held on September 11 via Zoom.
- The Linda Lindell tree dedication will occur on September 18 at 4:00 p.m. on the Big Spring Campus.
- The next meeting will be the focused meeting for SWCD on September 22, with an Executive Session at 9:30 a.m. and a dedication of the Nexus Plaza at 10:30 a.m.
- The Fall award ceremony for the San Angelo campus is upcoming.
- The Lamesa Focus Meeting is scheduled for October 6.

For the San Angelo campus focus meeting, two potential dates were discussed: November 20 and December 3. Trustees determined that November 20 was the best date.


Next, Dr. Sparks recognized Erica Little, a San Angelo campus student, for being selected as a 2025 Coca-Cola Leaders of Promise Scholar. She will receive a \$1,000 scholarship.


Next, Dr. Sparks provided legislative and general updates. She noted ongoing efforts to address information coming from the state, with regular updates received from the Texas Association of Community Colleges. There will be multiple updates to policies coming in the next few months to align with new legislative requirements.

Next, Trustees discussed the annually required conflict disclosure forms. All present Trustees completed and signed a disclosure form as required. Forms will be acquired from those not in attendance.

Finally, Dr. Sparks noted that Trustees would be receiving final information on their upcoming trip to the ACCT Congress held in October.

There being no other business, the Trustees adjourned at 2:12 p.m.

  
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Dr. John Freeman, Chairman

  
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Adrian Calvio, Secretary

The Board of Trustees of the Howard County Junior College District met for an executive session, public hearing on the budget, and regular board meeting in the Board Room of the Student Union Building at the Big Spring campus of Howard College on Monday, August 25, 2025.

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

Dr. John Freeman, Chairman  
Maxwell Barr, Vice-Chairman  
Adrian Calvio, Secretary  
Raul Marquez (Mr. Marquez arrived at 11:20 a.m.)  
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  
Dr. Hanna Carter, Ed.D., Chief High School Partnerships Officer  
Brenda Claxton, Chief Fiscal Officer/Controller  
Eric Hansen, Chief Information Technology Officer  
Laurie Kincannon, 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  
Lupe Sudano, Provost, Lamesa

Others present were:

Stephanie Bissonnette, Interpreter  
Ricky Creswell, Security  
Dee Lindsey, Dean of Workforce Development  
Andreia Medlin, Coliseum Event & Mailroom Delivery Coordinator/BS Campus Reporter  
Renee Porter, Interpreter  
Shannon Stuteville, Executive Assistant to the President  
Shane Taiclet, District Director of Administrative Services (via Zoom)

Chairman Dr. John Freeman called the meeting to order at 10:41 a.m. Immediately after calling the meeting to order, the Board moved into Executive Session to discuss personnel matters. The public hearing on the budget and regular meeting were open to the public in the Board Room on the Big Spring Campus and via Zoom. Those meetings were recorded and will be available on the website. Minutes will also be available on the website. Upon conclusion of the Executive Session at 11:50 a.m., the Board recessed for lunch.

Chairman Freeman opened the public hearing on the 2025-2026 Howard College and SWCD Budgets at 12:30 p.m.

Dr. Freeman read the hearing procedures and invited citizens to present their views concerning the proposed budgets. There were no comments or interested parties in attendance. Dr. Freeman closed the public hearing at 12:31 p.m.

Next, Chairman Freeman called the regular meeting to order. The invocation was given by Maxwell Barr. The public was invited to address the Board. There were no comments.

Next, Trustees considered routine matters, including Minutes of Executive Session/Regular Meeting held on July 30, 2025; and Executive Session/Budget Workshop/Special Meeting held August 11, 2025; Financials for July 2025; Monthly Reports of Auxiliary Services; and Personnel Matters. 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 considered the adoption of the annual budgets for Howard College and SouthWest College for the Deaf (SWCD) for the fiscal year 2025-2026. The District's total budget is \$64,513,580, a decrease of \$1,508,438 from last year's \$66,022,018. This reduction is primarily due to fewer fund balance projects and the completion of the Title V grant. As was the case last year, the budgets for Big Spring, San Angelo, and SWCD also benefited

from lower property insurance costs, while Dawson County continues to cover facility and insurance costs for the Lamesa campus.

Salary adjustments across the district included step raises, new positions added during the past year and in the proposed budget, and Cabinet raises to address competitiveness in the higher education market, 15% of which are funded through SWCD for District positions. Some positions were combined or deleted across campuses to balance costs. As a result, payroll costs increased by \$1,159,028 compared to last year across the district.

Each campus has specific highlights. In Big Spring, projects totaling \$597,700 were in the budget, including perimeter fencing, maintenance equipment, ADA-compliant upgrades, cafeteria improvements, IT access controls, and exterior repairs. With \$219,923 added for contingencies, Big Spring's special projects and contingency for major repairs and maintenance as needed total \$817,623. Planned projects from fund balance are the softball field house, replacement of the Warren Center roof and underground chilled/hot water valves repairs if needed. At Lamesa, no fund balance projects were planned, but smaller projects from the district's project list were funded through the operating budget to include ADA projects, IT control and zoom phones. San Angelo's budget includes Zoom phones and access controls from fund balance. Recent tuition and building use fee increases as well as performance funding have helped stabilize finances. The ADN Director position, inadvertently omitted, will be reinstated with existing funds. SWCD continues to operate within a tight budget; however, several fund balance projects are planned at \$1.2 million less than last year. Those projects include a new Avigilon network video recorder to replace aging equipment, parking lot repairs, Activity Center upgrades, Nexus Plaza and gazebo improvements, bus carport, remodel of dorm kitchen, IT controls, Zoom phones, and building repairs.

Overall, the District's unrestricted budget is \$44,237,634, down \$1,845,249 from last year. Howard College's unrestricted budget (District/Big Spring, Lamesa, and San Angelo) totals \$39,802,449, reflecting a planned deficit of \$1,188,312. SWCD's unrestricted budget is \$4,435,185, with a planned deficit of \$454,492.

Mr. Zeichick made the following motion:

*"I make a motion that this budget be approved using the Total No-New-Revenue rate which will raise more taxes for maintenance and operations than last year's tax rate. The tax rate will effectively be raised by 0.00 percent and will raise taxes for maintenance and operations on a \$100,000 home by approximately \$53.76. This budget will raise more revenue from property taxes than last year's budget by an amount of \$671, which is a 0.00 percent increase from last year's budget. The property tax revenue to be raised from new property added to the tax roll this year is \$42,950."*

Mr. Barr seconded the motion. All Trustees present voted in favor of the motion. Voting will be noted on the cover page of the adopted budget.

Next, Trustees considered the 2025 tax rate, following the updated methodology established in the 2019 legislative session. Under the state's current approach, hearings and notices are tied to the Total No-New-Revenue (NNR) tax rate rather than the Maintenance and Operations (M&O) rate that was used in the past. Because this year's proposed rate is the Total No-New-Revenue rate, no tax hearing was required.

The proposed total No-New-Revenue tax rate was \$0.216637, which is higher than last year's rate of \$0.158693 due to the significant decrease (approximately \$3.1 billion dollars) in the tax base. This rate is made up of two components: the debt service rate, set at \$0.016736 (up from \$0.012555 last year), and the M&O rate, set at \$0.199901 (up from \$0.146138 last year). While the adopted rate represents the No-New-Revenue rate, new property added to the tax roll in the amount of \$42,950 generates an additional \$671. As a result, the College is required to state that this budget raises more taxes for maintenance and operations than last year's tax rate. For homeowners, the tax impact equates to an increase of \$53.76 on a \$100,000 home.

To finalize adoption, three motions were considered:

1. Mr. Zeichick made the motion:

*"I move that the property tax rate be adopted that does not exceed the no-new-revenue tax rate which is a rate of \$0.216637. This tax rate will raise more taxes than last year's tax rate by \$671, which is a 0.00% increase from last year's budget. The property tax revenue to be raised from new property added to the tax roll this year is \$42,950."*

Mr. Marquez seconded the motion. All Trustees present voted in favor of the motion.

2. Mr. Zeichick made the motion:

*"I move to adopt a debt tax rate of \$0.016736 for the 2025 tax year."*

Mr. Calvio seconded the motion. All Trustees present voted in favor of the motion.

3. Mr. Zeichick made the motion:

*"I move to adopt a maintenance and operations rate of \$0.199901 for the 2025 tax year which is a No-New-Revenue M&O rate."*

Mr. Barr seconded the motion. All Trustees present voted in favor of the motion.

This completed the adoption of the tax rate.

Next, Trustees considered the renewal of the district's depository services contract. Wells Fargo, which has served as the district's depository for several years, will continue in this role under a two-year extension. The College's long-standing relationship with Wells Fargo has provided reliable and comprehensive banking services that meet the district's operational and financial needs. Mr. Barr made a motion to approve the depository services contract renewal as presented. Mr. Marquez seconded the motion. All Trustees present voted in favor of the motion.

Next, Dee Lindsey and Dr. Hanna Carter provided an update on efforts to strengthen connections between schools, industry, and the community.

Dee discussed Howard College's ongoing work to help students find meaningful employment while encouraging them to remain in the area. Through partnerships with the Chamber of Commerce, students have opportunities to meet with industry leaders and learn about workforce needs. Howard College held an industry meeting in November to gather feedback on required credentials and certifications. The College also partners with the Budget Reality Fair, where the theater department presented both good and bad interview skits to help students understand professional expectations. Over the summer, Upward Bound students participated in a Junior Leadership Program modeled after the Big Spring Leadership groups. Efforts are also underway to bring more industry representatives into schools across Howard County, with companies such as ABS Wind, Big Spring Fire, and Oncor participating. Additional partnerships are being developed, including the lineman training program with Oncor that just launched.

Dr. Carter highlighted the upcoming Open Roads Program pledge event on October 15, which will include participation from ten area school districts. The event will feature Howard College's career and technical programs in areas such as nursing, EMT, dental hygiene, welding, construction, HVAC, and interpreting through SWCD. In addition to the pledge ceremony, the College is collaborating with the Chamber of Commerce and the Texas Workforce Commission to host a community job fair that afternoon, scheduled from 2:00–5:00 p.m. in the East Room of the Coliseum.

Next, Trustees considered the quarterly investment report. Mr. Barr made a motion to approve the report as presented. Mr. Marquez seconded the motion. All Trustees present voted in favor of the motion.

Next, Trustees considered a Resolution Authorizing the Continuation and Ratification of the Faculty Senate in compliance with Senate Bill 37, passed during the 89th Texas Legislative Session and signed into law on June 20, 2025. The resolution formally ratifies the continuation of the Howard County Junior College District Faculty Senate and establishes policies in accordance with Section 51.3522 of the Texas Education Code.

Key provisions of the resolution include faculty-only representation, with some members elected by faculty and others appointed by the president; officer appointments made by the CEO from among faculty members; advisory status only, without final decision-making authority; defined terms of service and procedures for election, reappointment, and removal; no compensation for service; and requirements for public meetings, online broadcasting, advance posting of agendas, and record-keeping. The resolution also affirms faculty members' rights to freedom of association under state and federal constitutions.

Dr. Sparks explained that approval would ensure that the current Faculty Senate remains in place before the September 1 deadline. To follow State guidelines, the current bylaws will be removed from the Employee Handbook, and adjustments will be made to align the Senate's current structure with the newly required language.

Revised bylaws will be developed in collaboration with Faculty Senate members and presented to the Board at a later date.

Mr. Calvio made a motion to approve the resolution as presented. Mr. Marquez seconded the motion. All Trustees present voted in favor of the motion.

Next, Trustees considered a series of updates to the Handbook and Catalog, reflecting organizational, policy, and legislative changes.

Significant revisions were made to the organizational chart, which was provided in the Executive Session packet, along with the Primary Responsibilities table outlining major areas of responsibility for each cabinet member. The proposed updated salary schedule for Cabinet, along with other schedules approved as part of the 2025–2026 budget, will also be incorporated into the Employee Handbook.

Policy updates included:

- Policy 2.2: Defines the makeup, purpose, and function of committees and councils. Committees and councils have been realigned to comply with SACSCOC standards in preparation for upcoming reaccreditation.
- Policy 5.3: Establishes Howard College's new telework policy in alignment with Senate Bill 2615, effective September 1. Most higher education employees are required to work on campus, with limited exceptions. Full-time telework may be approved for certain classified employees whose roles do not require regular campus presence, while faculty may telework only under specific conditions, such as online courses in certain instances, research, or telehealth. Situational telework may be granted for medical needs or extraordinary events. All telework arrangements require supervisor, Cabinet, and Presidential approval, are subject to annual review, and may be revoked at the College's discretion.
- Policy 5.6: The previous Work from Home policy implemented during the pandemic will be deleted and replaced by the updated Policy 5.3.
- Policy 6.5: Revised to align with Senate Bill 2615, addressing telework for faculty members.

Additional updates included a statement recommended by TASB as policies are updated by year-end for compliance with Senate Bill 37: "Harmony with Law: Newly enacted law is applicable when effective. No policy or regulation, or any portion thereof, shall be operative if it is found to be in conflict with applicable law."

A new policy, 4.20, was presented to ensure compliance with Executive Order GA-48, which governs transactions involving foreign adversary countries. This policy protects institutional data, infrastructure, and national security, outlining restrictions on gifts, contracts, and participation in foreign-sponsored talent programs. It also includes reporting and review requirements, travel guidelines, and enforcement measures, including potential disciplinary action for violations. Required travel forms for employees and contractors are included under this policy.

Finally, catalog updates included preparatory steps for the upcoming Veterinary Technology program, ensuring compliance with THECB and SACSCOC requirements prior to the program's launch next fall.

Mr. Zeichick made a motion to approve the catalog and handbook updates as presented. Mr. Barr seconded the motion. All Trustees present voted in favor of the motion.

Next, Trustees conducted the annual review of the Investment Policy and Strategy (Board Handbook Policy 4.11) in accordance with the Public Funds Investment Act. Minor editorial adjustments were made under the "Authorized Investments" section to reflect changes in banking products and services over time. These revisions do not alter the types of investments permitted under the policy.

Mr. Calvio made a motion to approve the revised Investment Policy and Strategy and reaffirm the College's compliance with the Public Funds Investment Act. Mr. Marquez seconded the motion. All Trustees present voted in favor of the motion.

Next, Trustees considered the appointment of Logan, Thomas, and Johnson LLC to provide auditor services. Beginning with local CPA James Welch, Dr. Sparks explained the College has maintained a long-standing and positive relationship with Jan Thomas and the firm, and their continued engagement ensures consistent and reliable auditing services. Mr. Zeichick made a motion to approve the appointment as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Barr. All Trustees present voted in favor of the motion.