

**MINUTES OF THE OCTOBER 26, 2021  
SPECIAL MEETING OF THE  
WASHOE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

October 26, 2021

**1. Opening Items**

**1.01 CALL TO ORDER**

The special meeting of the Board of Trustees was called to order at 10:01 a.m. in the Board Room of the Central Administration Building, located at 425 East Ninth Street in Reno, Nevada.

**1.02 ROLL CALL**

President Angela Taylor and Board Members Jeff Church, Ellen Minetto, Diane Nicolet, and Beth Smith were present. Board Member Joe Rodriguez was present through video conference. Superintendent Kristen McNeill and staff were also present.

**1.03 PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

President Taylor led the meeting in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**2. Items for Presentation, Discussion, Information and/or Action**

**2.01 REVIEW AND DISCUSSION BY THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES (BOARD) REGARDING THE APPLICATIONS RECEIVED FROM APPLICANTS TO FILL THE VACANCY ON THE BOARD IN DISTRICT F CREATED BY THE RESIGNATION OF FORMER TRUSTEE JACQUELINE CALVERT; AND POSSIBLE ACTION TO SELECT THOSE CANDIDATES TO BE INTERVIEWED BY THE BOARD FROM AMONG THE FOLLOWING LEGALLY-QUALIFIED APPLICANTS: SCOTT BENTON, ELVIRA DIAZ, JENNIFER FONDA, DR. JOHN GWALTNEY, JACK HEINEMANN, ADAM MAYBERRY, BRUCE PARKS, HEATHER PARKYN, DANIELLE (NICOLE) PEREZ, GRAEME REID, AND JOHN REYES, THE CHARACTER, COMPETENCE, AND MISCONDUCT OF ANY APPLICANT MAY BE CONSIDERED BY THE BOARD PER NEVADA REVISED STATUTE (NRS) 241.033 AND ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION MAY BE TAKEN AGAINST ANY APPLICANT PER NRS 241.034**

President Taylor explained the applicants would be provided the opportunity to speak to the Board and community to explain why they were interested in filling the vacancy for

Trustee district F. Trustees would be permitted to ask some clarifying questions as time allowed.

Scott Benton provided remarks via video conference. He was a parent of students in high school and middle school in District schools, as well as a pre-K student. He had served as a volunteer cheer coach in the community. He spoke about his prior volunteer work in the District by serving on various committees of the Board of Trustees and how that had provided him with a working knowledge of how public bodies operated in the District and the Nevada Open Meeting Law. If selected, he believed he would provide an important voice of diversity on the Board of Trustees.

Jack Heinemann was a student at the University of Nevada, Reno, as well as a guest teacher in the District. He had previously run for a seat and applied for a vacant seat. He continued to seek a position on the Board of Trustees because he believed he could provide a valuable voice for all students in the District. He wanted to serve the students and staff by clearly communicating the needs of the District to the community. He believed his experience as a former District student and guest teacher would provide a voice not currently on the Board.

Trustee Church requested clarification on where Mr. Heinemann was in his education. Mr. Heinemann indicated he would receive his degree in the summer of 2022.

Jennifer Fonda was a former guest teacher in the District, the owner of a small business in the area, and worked with a lot of the area's youth. She stated she was interested in serving on the Board of Trustees to provide a safe and quality public education for current and future students in the community. She wanted to ensure a foundation was created that provided students the opportunity to succeed in either the workforce or higher education. She believed it was important to listen to the community and respect the values they wanted to see in the schools even if they were different from hers. She was interested in improving communication with the community and asking questions about where money was spent, as well as why. She was also part of the U.S. Navy Reserve and the parent of a high school freshman.

Trustee Church requested clarification on Ms. Fonda's educational degrees. Ms. Fonda noted she was currently working on her Master's degree.

President Taylor wondered what Ms. Fonda's experience was as a guest teacher in the District. Ms. Fonda explained she appreciated seeing a different perspective of the schools. She was impressed with the large differences in experiences of students and wanted to ensure all their stories were told.

Trustee Rodriguez asked if Ms. Fonda was currently part of the U.S. Navy Reserve. Ms. Fonda noted that she was and if selected to be interviewed, would request the

interview be conducted virtually since she would be deployed at that time. Normally, she would serve reserve orders out of Fallon.

Dr. John Gwaltney was a former professor, community college president, and President of the Nevada Board of Education. He was a previous finalist for a different vacancy and believed the issues currently facing the Board were extremely serious. He mentioned he had a lot of experience in education and felt he could provide a unique perspective to help assist the Board in working together to move forward as a team. He was interested in helping the Board to get to a place where they were able to provide the best service to 64,000 students that needed the Board to work effectively.

John Reyes was a recent high school graduate in the District. He believed he could provide a fresh perspective on the Board because he had not a lot of experience that would sway him one way or another. He mentioned he was part of the Men of Color Program and that he would like to see the program expanded to help additional students.

Danielle (Nicole) Perez was a parent of two children and an electrician by trade. She taught electrical work at the union training center and had worked with the District's Career and Technical Education (CTE) Department to provide opportunities for students. She was a proponent of CTE, especially for young women, because it provided additional options. She was interested in helping the District and being a voice for those traditionally underrepresented.

Trustee Rodriguez requested additional information of the work at the training center. Ms. Perez explained she worked primarily with the pre-apprenticeship program and what it was like to be part of a job site. She was traditionally the first instructor apprentices saw during the first year of the program.

Adam Mayberry was a native Nevadan and suffered a severe hearing impairment at age 3 due to meningitis. He had worked in public affairs for various government agencies, including as Communications Manager for Representative Jon Porter in Washington D.C. before returning to the area. He had been a volunteer for various boards and commissions in the area. He was a single parent of twin girls who were freshmen in high school. He understood the struggles parents were facing and was interested in being an advocate for students who needed additional assistance.

President Taylor asked what drew Mr. Mayberry to a life in public service. Mr. Mayberry indicated the public sector had been a part of his life for close to 30 years and believed it was a noble cause. Due to his hearing impairment, he was not able to serve in the military and wanted to give back to his country and state.

Elvira Diaz had immigrated to the United States from Mexico, where she worked as a chemist. After leaving the corporate world, she worked for her church and then started a bakery in Carson City after moving to Nevada. She had been an activist for the Latino community since 2009. She was interested in serving on the Board of Trustees to give back to the people. She felt that as an immigrant parent in the District and the parent of a transgender child, she would provide a unique perspective on the Board. She would also provide a strong connection to the Latino community.

Bruce Parks stated he did not believe he would receive any serious consideration as an applicant because he had been a vocal advocate opponent of the Board and District. He stated he would continue to hold the Board accountable until they produced students who were fully able to function in society. He believed he was compelled to try to serve on the Board to solve the problems he advocated for and serve as a voice of "we the people." He claimed he could fix what was wrong with the Board but did not believe he would be given the chance.

President Taylor wondered how Mr. Parks envisioned working together as a Board since he had been an outspoken critic. Mr. Parks mentioned that if the Board continued to bring forth items that did not focus on the primary mission of the District, which he believed was to graduate students who could function in society, he was not interested in working with them.

President Taylor opened the meeting to public comment.

Valerie Fiannaca spoke in support of Bruce Parks to fill the vacant seat. She praised his work in bringing people together to advocate for a single cause and lead a team. She felt the Board was unbalanced in their political leanings and believed Mr. Parks would help to bring balance. She urged the Board not to focus on his brashness but on Mr. Parks' ability to bring people together.

Shannon Coley believed the Board should select an applicant who had previously served on boards and commissions.

The Board received emails from the following:

- Crystal Roberts
- Dr. Jen Mortensen
- Lorraine Toole
- Dr. Amber Joiner

Trustee Church spoke in favor of moving Dr. John Gwaltney forward because of his resume and willingness to address the tensions directly. He also expressed support for candidates interested in serving their communities.

Trustee Smith expressed her appreciation for all those interested in serving and putting themselves out there to be considered publicly. She was focused more on the candidates who spoke about the service they had conducted and were interested in continuing to serve their community. She was looking for someone who would add to the current composition of the Board.

Trustee Nicolet explained she was focusing on the questions posed as part of the application and if there was a focus on students, families, and the community. She saw a preponderance of focus on some of those areas in a few of the candidates.

Trustee Minetto agreed with the remarks of the prior Trustees. She was impressed with the dedication and tenacity of the younger applicants and their interest in serving their community.

Trustee Rodriguez mentioned he was impressed with the diversity of the applicants and their varied interests and careers.

President Taylor thanked all the applicants for their interest in serving on the Board. Some areas she was focusing on were a different perspective, selflessness, service, collaboration, and leadership. The process to narrow the candidates was reviewed. Each Trustee would select up to 5 candidates, with the top candidate being given 5 points, then 4, and so on. The Board would then decide on the number of candidates they would be interested in interviewing based on the results of the rankings.

*President Taylor recessed the meeting for 30 minutes for rankings and tabulation.*

The results of the individual Trustee rankings were as follows:

Trustee Church

Jack Heinemann – 5

Adam Mayberry – 4

John Gwaltney – 3

Jennifer Fonda – 2

John Reyes – 1

Trustee Minetto

Jack Heinemann – 5

John Reyes – 4

Adam Mayberry – 3

Scott Benton – 2

Trustee Nicolet

Adam Mayberry – 5

John Gwaltney – 4  
Jack Heinemann – 3  
Jennifer Fonda – 2  
Elvira Diaz – 1

Trustee Rodriguez

Danielle (Nicole) Perez – 5  
Jack Heinemann – 4  
Adam Mayberry – 3  
John Gwaltney – 2  
Jennifer Fonda – 1

Trustee Smith

Jack Heinemann – 5  
Scott Benton – 4  
Elvira Diaz – 3  
Adam Mayberry – 2  
Danielle (Nicole) Perez – 1

President Taylor

Jack Heinemann – 5  
Adam Mayberry – 4  
Elvira Diaz – 3  
John Gwaltney – 2  
Jennifer Fonda – 1

The totals were as follows:

Jack Heinemann – 27  
Adam Mayberry – 21  
John Gwaltney – 11  
Elvira Diaz – 7  
Scott Benton – 6  
Jennifer Fonda – 6  
Danielle (Nicole) Perez – 6  
John Reyes – 5

President Taylor explained the next step was to determine the number of finalists the Board was interested in interviewing. She noted there was a clear break in the rankings that could serve as a guide, if that were the interest of the Board.

Trustees Church and Minetto agreed there was a clear break from the top two candidates.

Trustee Smith felt the Board should move on the top four. She believed the interview process was very different than the application process and she was interested in hearing from at least four of the candidates.

Trustee Rodriguez believed the interviews did provide more information about the individual. He would like to see at least three candidates move forward, so could support four moving forward.

It was moved by Trustee Smith and seconded by Trustee Rodriguez that **the Board of Trustees Board of Trustees selects the candidates to be interviewed by the Board from among the following applicants: Elvia Diaz, Dr. John Gwaltney, Jack Heinemann, and Adam Mayberry.**

President Taylor opened the motion for discussion.

Trustee Church noted he could support the top three but was not interested in supporting four based on the rankings.

The result of the vote was 4-2: (Yea: Diane Nicolet, Joe Rodriguez, Beth Smith, and Angela Taylor. Nay: Jeff Church and Ellen Minetto.) Final Resolution: Motion Carries.

President Taylor explained the interviews would be conducted on November 9, 2021 beginning at 8:00 a.m. The meeting would be posted and open to the community.

### **3. Closing Items**

#### **3.01 PUBLIC COMMENT**

No public comment was received.

#### **3.02 ADJOURN MEETING**

There being no further business to come before the members of the Board, President Taylor declared the meeting adjourned at 11:54 a.m.

---

**Angela D. Taylor, President**

---

**Diane Nicolet, Clerk**

---

**From:** Crystal Roberts  
**Sent:** Tuesday, October 26, 2021 12:04 AM  
**To:** Public Comments  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Re: Scott Benton for the school board

Hello. I am writing to you today in support of Mr Scott Benton for the school board. Mr Benton has been a God send to my family the past few years. As a single mother of two I was not able to provide Christmas for my children and Mr Benton made sure my children were covered for Christmas. As a father of three children we all know he doesn't have a lot of money however he shared with my two children ensuring they had a wonderful Christmas.

Scott Benton not only has integrity but he truly cares about everyone including children. Mr Benton has three children, two of whom are in the public school system and he has experienced the frustrations that are met by many parents today. He has sat and talked in length to many of us and he is prepared to bring his knowledge to the tables.

Scott knows what is needed as a leader and a parent. And right now more than ever we need parents to help lead us back in the direction we need to be. Many parents such as myself feel we are not being heard and as such we are frustrated. Scott acknowledges our frustrations and gives feedback which to me means the world that he doesn't ignore me but truly hears my frustrations.

Scott is raising three beautiful intelligent children who lead by his examples and are well defined and role models in our community. You would do well by adding Mr Benton to your school board. I ask that you consider him as a addition that can lead us into the next generation of leaders like himself.

I grew up in this town. I went from grade school to college here. I know what it took then as a student and what it takes now as a parent to get the school system back on track. I am no stranger to this district. I am a graduate of Wooster High School and a parent of a graduate of Sparks high. I have 1 student left in the district and so to me who sits on this board matters very much. This school district matters greatly. My parents trusted this school board and I have as well with my babies. I trust you care as well about who runs your school systems!! And that person would be Scott Benton!!!

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely

Crystal Roberts

Mother of a Sophomore and a graduate of Sparks High.

[Sent from Yahoo for iPhone](#)



---

**From:** Jen Mortensen  
**Sent:** Tuesday, October 26, 2021 6:31 AM  
**To:** Public Comments  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Board applications to replace Trustee Calvert

Dear Board of Trustees,

I'm writing to voice my opposition to the candidate Graeme Reid. Mr. Reid specifically referenced the College of Education and Human Development at UNR in his application letter. He called the Dean, Dr. Easton-Brooks racist. He can't believe the University "permits" the content on the website. He thinks it's "outrageous" that the Dean (a black man who studies equity in education) would dare say anything about George Floyd and Black Lives Matter.

I have worked in this college as a professor for the past six years. I also attended UNR as an undergraduate and graduate student for 7 years. The idea of having a WCSD Trustee that is in such illogical opposition to the major institution that educates and produces many (most?) WCSD teachers is unacceptable. Even beyond our college, the higher administration "permits" the content on our website because the entire university supports the mission we have for our students - and believes in academic freedom. Mr. Reid bolded words on our Deans statement such as "equity" and "diversity" as if they are proof that the COHED is some propaganda machine.

We are a college in a R1 university with faculty who produce and consume science related to teacher training and education. We train our teachers about equity and diversity because it is CRITICAL to being a competent educator in a this district. We also send all of our pre-service teachers to intern at WCSD. They tend to have wonderful experiences, but I am very concerned by the possible takeover of a board seat by someone so antithetical to our mission. I would never expect everyone to fully agree on all issues, but not understanding that diversity and equity are important in terms of serving WCSD children, is concerning.

Thank you for all the hard work you do.

Jennifer Mortensen, Ph.D., CFLE

--

~Jen

---

**From:** Toole, Lorraine  
**Sent:** Tuesday, October 26, 2021 7:41 AM  
**To:** Public Comments  
**Subject:** Board of Trustee

Good Morning,

I would like to give my support to Scott Benton to fill the empty seat as board of trustee. He is an amazing family man and puts his sole into our community and its members.

Thank You

Lorraine Toole  
8<sup>th</sup> Grade ELA  
O'Brien STEM

---

**From:** Amber Joiner  
**Sent:** Tuesday, October 26, 2021 9:50 AM  
**To:** Public Comments; Church, Jeffrey; Minetto, Ellen; Rodriguez, Joseph M; Smith, Elizabeth A; Taylor, Angela; Nicolet, Diane M  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Note of Support for Scott Benton, District F

Dear School Board Trustees,

I am writing to express my strong support for Scott Benton as you consider candidates for your open position in District F. I have known Scott for five years in various capacities, and I know he would be an excellent Trustee! He is a person of high integrity and intelligence, and he is a collaborative and considerate colleague.

I first met Scott in one of his many volunteer roles working with children when my daughter joined the organization. He was helpful, welcoming, and extremely hard working for the kids and families he coached. On a personal level, Scott is also an incredible father who would bring a valuable parent perspective to the board. His kids are in our WCSD public schools at various levels, so he understands first-hand what many parents and children are experiencing.

Scott is also very experienced working in a challenging environment. His day job for many years has been working with people who are homeless. This role has given him a lot of experience handling confrontation and difficult situations, which he does with respect and patience. He is always looking for ways to help individuals in crisis to improve their lives.

Most recently, Scott has been the chair of your Safe and Healthy Schools Commission, which I also serve on. In that role, he leads the meetings in compliance with the many legal rules while ensuring fair and open dialogue among the members. As a colleague on this Board, he has been very collaborative. Most importantly, he is always focused on what's best for our kids.

Thank you for considering Scott's candidacy. I hope to see him join you on the Board in the future.

Sincerely,  
~Amber Joiner

**Amber Joiner, PhD**