



Superintendent's Public Engagement Committee
Meeting Minutes

January 18, 2012 • 8:30 a.m.–10:00 a.m.
Hattie Mae White Educational Support Center

Terry B. Grier, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools

The purpose of the Superintendent's Public Engagement Committee (PEC) is to support public-engagement outreach for the district's efforts in providing high-quality education, communicate critically important information, and gain valuable input from key community members.

IN ATTENDANCE

Terry Grier
Beth Brown
Martin Cominsky
Melinda Garrett
Laura Grobowsky
Dale Davidson

Frances Robinson-Hunt
Judy Long
Christina Masick
Elena Coates
Mary Nesbitt
Fernando Cisneros

Michele Pola
Laura Richardson
Earl Jimmison
Jason Spencer
Helen Olin
Leslie Smith

North Forest ISD

North Forest had a hearing last week but there has not been a ruling as of yet. North Forest may initiate a lawsuit under the Voting Rights Act that would further delay the process. HISD has concerns of merging districts mid-year and at this point there are a lot of unknowns. Until all legal avenues have been exhausted, HISD cannot take any actions.

Budget

Melinda Garrett presented budget information to the group including details on where the dollars are budgeted, general fund projects and one-time needs. Last year, substantial cuts were made within central office eliminating 700 positions. Currently, the district is reviewing all department budgets. An explanation of the central service budget was provided detailing that these budgets directly support critical services provided to schools such as police officers, custodians, itinerate nurses and museum teachers, as examples. The group asked how HISD compares to other districts. Melinda offered that HISD Central Service spending is the second lowest in the state offering the [Schools First Report](#) as a reference located on the HISD budget website.

Currently, the projected budget deficit is \$45-25 million with additional details to be shared at the upcoming board workshop. Discussion included topics such as the status of the lawsuit against the state, the ability to utilize fund balance, district efforts in areas where the census indicates growth and the actual funds expended by schools. The group asked clarifying questions about the Superintendent's compensation plan as well as conducting best-practice sharing across the district. Dr. Grier commented that information sharing is under way via visits to other school, writing program sharing, and "WOW" videos. Dr. Pola committed to sharing a recent [article on Superintendent Compensation](#). Dr. Grier commented that the district faces challenges recruiting because HISD pays employees less than other districts.

Alternative Certification Program (ACP)

A concern was raised with the upcoming closure of the University of Houston-Downtown and its impact to HISD. Dr. Pola responded that the impact to the district is minimal as other options exist such as HISD's ACP program.

Follow-up

The group requested the number of registered voters within the North Forest ISD area. The group also asked for information on the number of new hires in Central Services as well as the actual spending on a school-by-school basis.

On behalf of the Anti-Defamation League, Martin Cominsky distributed the [No Place for Hate Brochure](#) to the group noting many, but not all, HISD schools participate in the Community of Respect initiative. He asked the group to share the information with their networks.

The next meeting of the Superintendent's Public Engagement Committee is tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, April 18, 2012 8:30 a.m.

**Chief of Staff Michele Pola serves as the liaison to the committee.
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