Texas Education Agency

Commissioner Mike Morath

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204-904
2021-2022

March 4, 2022

Dr. Jason Hewitt, Superintendent
Ms. Yvonne Johnson, Board President, Board of Managers
Shepherd Independent School District
1401 S. Byrd Ave.
Shepherd, TX 77371

Dear Dr. Hewitt and Ms. Johnson:

The purpose of this letter is to provide notification to the district of my decision to defer initiating the required statutory procedures for transferring authority to the board of trustees. As you are aware, on March 6, 2020, a board of managers was appointed to Shepherd Independent School District (ISD or district) and subsequently installed on March 18, 2020. The board of managers was appointed due the fifth unacceptable academic performance rating assigned to the Shepherd Primary and Shepherd Intermediate campuses. Texas Education Code (Tex. Educ. Code) §39A.111.

The purpose of this letter is to provide notification to the district of my decision to defer initiating the required statutory procedures for transferring authority to the board of trustees. Pursuant to Tex. Educ. Code §39A.208(c), if, before the second anniversary of the date the board of managers was appointed, I determine, after receiving local feedback, that insufficient progress has been made toward improving the academic or financial performance of the district, the authority of the board of managers may be extended for a period of up to two additional years.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, Governor Abbott issued a proclamation certifying that COVID-19 posed an imminent threat of disaster in the state and declaring a state of disaster for all counties in Texas. Subsequently, on March 16, 2020, the Governor waived the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) testing requirements for the 2019-2020 school year and ordered all schools temporarily closed on March 19, 2020. As a result, Texas Education Agency (TEA or agency) labeled all districts and campuses *Not Rated: Declared State of Disaster* for the 2019-2020 school year. Additionally, recognizing the ongoing impact of COVID-19 and the unique challenges schools faced during last school year, the agency did not issue A–F accountability ratings for the 2020–2021 school year. The 2020-2021 accountability rating label that was issued to all districts and campuses was *Not Rated: Declared State of Disaster.*

Due to the lack of data to demonstrate sufficient progress, I have determined that the statutory prerequisite in Tex. Educ. Code §39A.208(c) for an extension of the appointment has been met. Therefore, I am extending the authority of the board of managers and deferring the initiation of the required statutory procedures for transferring authority to the board of trustees. I will announce the date of the expiration of the appointment of the Board of Managers and the transition schedule for the Board of Trustees no later than March 6, 2024.

Despite this extension of the appointment, the board of managers must continue to order and hold all elections as required by law. Tex. Educ. Code §39A.201(a). If you have questions about the extension of the appointment of the board of managers, please contact Garrett Black, Director of Sanction Monitoring, at (512) 463-9146 or via email at Garrett.Black@tea.texas.gov.

Sincerely,

Mike Morath
Commissioner of Education

MM/lm

cc: Michael Holland, Executive Director, Region 6 ESC
Jeff Cottrill, Deputy Commissioner, Governance and Accountability, TEA
Mike Meyer, Deputy Commissioner, Finance, TEA
Kelvey Oeser, Deputy Commissioner, Educator Support, TEA
Leo Lopez, Associate Commissioner/Chief School Finance Officer, TEA
Cory Green, Associate Commissioner, Grants and Compliance Oversight, TEA
Ashley Jernigan, Associate Commissioner, Governance-Compliance and Investigations, TEA
Von Byer, General Counsel, TEA
Christopher Jones, Senior Legal Counsel, TEA
Garrett Black, Director, Sanction Monitoring, TEA
Deniann Grant, Assistant Director, School Improvement, TEA
Vicki Mims, Conservator