RIO HONDO INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT
215 West Colorado Street
Rio Hondo, Texas 78583
November 11, 2013

The Board of Trustees of the Rio Hondo Independent School District met in a Regular Session on Monday, November 11, 2013, at 7:00 p.m. in the Administration Building, 215 W. Colorado Street, Rio Hondo, Texas, with Mr. Wiesman, President, presiding.

TRUSTEES:	PRESENT -	President	Thomas E. Wiesman
		Vice President	Jessica A. Gonzales
		Secretary	Tomas Gomez
			Manuel Flores, Jr.
			Arnold Martinez, Jr.
			Claudia Villalobos
	ABSENT -		Noe Alaniz, Jr.
SUPERINTENDENT:			Ismael Garcia
RECORDER:			Florence Landry
ADMINISTRATION:			Elda Garza
			Rita O. Lopez, Annette Jaramillo
			Fidel Garza, Jr.
			Deyanira M. Garcia
SCHOOL DISTRICT ATTORNEY:			Ricardo Morado
VISITORS:			See Attached List

Items 1 & 2 Mr. Wiesman called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m., after noting a quorum was present and that the meeting notice had been posted as required by law.

Moment of Silence in honor of Veterans.

Item 3 Mr. Wiesman led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Item 4 Prayer.

Item 5 Welcome/Open Forum:

Mr. Wiesman welcomed everyone and asked if anyone had signed up to speak under the Open Forum. No one signed up to speak under the Open Forum.

Item 6 Student/Staff Recognition

Superintendent Garcia stated that Administration would like to recognize the Rio Hondo Robotics team. The team achieved First Place at the 2013 HESTEC Robotics Day Competition on October 10, 2013.

Principal Deyanira Garcia introduced High School Biology/Physics teacher Christopher Gonzales. Mr. Gonzales thanked GEAR UP for making it possible for their Robotics team to participate. He stated there were 60 teams competing and the Rio Hondo Robotics team earned First Place and students were awarded personal laptops. Mr. Gonzales introduced the Robotics team president and members.

Board Member Villalobos thanked Mr. Gonzales for taking the reins and bringing Robotics back to Rio Hondo ISD. "You have a group of outstanding kids who needed a leader like you to believe in them and to help them. They are self-sufficient; all they need is to be given what they need to work with", Ms. Villalobos told Mr. Gonzales. She congratulated the students and encouraged them to keep up the hard work.

In addition, the Bobcat Band was recognized for their outstanding achievements. Two students made 1st and 3rd Chair at the Texas State Band Camp on June 17, 2013. The Band placed 7th in State in the OPS Contest on July 28, 2013. The Band also placed 2nd at the San Benito Tournament of Bands on October 12, 2013, and won best percussion. The Band earned its 17th consecutive 1st Division at Pigskin on October 19, 2013. Three students placed at the All-State Jazz Contest on September 21, 2013. The students placed 6th, 8th, and 12th. Band Director John Garza also discussed its "Adopt-A- Freshman" program. The students introduced themselves and mentioned their position in the band.

Board Member Villalobos thanked the students for their dedication and the time they spend in the band program. Mentioned how people come up to her and tell her how great the Rio Hondo Bobcat Band is. "You all are one of a kind", Ms. Villalobos told the students. She also thanked Mr. Garza for the time he spends helping the students and for modeling such great leaders in our school.

The Lady Bobcats Varsity Volleyball team was also recognized for making it to the first round of the playoffs. Coach Mary Salas expressed her appreciation for the privilege to coach the volleyball team. This is a first for Rio Hondo - first year to make it to the playoffs in the volleyball program, she stated. She congratulated the team for their hard work and asked they introduce themselves.

Board Member Villalobos commented that she had the privilege of attending several games. She stated, "they are an amazing team". Ms. Villalobos recognized the leadership of one of the team members and also praised all the team for their hard work and said she hoped the team will continue with great leadership. Ms. Villalobos thanked the students for being able to do well in both, academics and sports. Coach Salas informed the Board that on Wednesday they would be having the All-District selection for the varsity team.

Principal Garcia thanked all the parents for their support. "It is so important to our school and students", she stated.

Item 7 Board Members Villalobos and Gonzales asked the following questions regarding Item 9, Notice of Grant Award: Who oversees the flexibility of the funds? Was the amount the same as last year? How are the funds prioritized? Regarding funds used for consultants, is that for staff development?

A motion was made by Mr. Flores to approve consent agenda items 8 and 9. The motion was seconded by Mr. Gomez. The motion carried unanimously.

Item 8 *Minutes of the Called Meeting of August 26, 2013, 6:00 p.m. and Called Meeting of August 26, 2013, 6:30 p.m., approved.

Item 9 *Notice of Grant Award (NOGA), SAS #: RLISAA14, 2013-2014 TTL VI, B, SP 2, Rural & Low Income School, accepted.

Item 10 Superintendent Garcia stated that the Bobcat Curriculum Alignment Team (B-CAT) would be making a presentation to the Board of their team's vision and goals. The team wants to lay out the need for curriculum alignment and to introduce the need for, as well as, the plan for developing a writing program along grade levels and across contents. The B-CAT team consists of several teachers from the high school representing the core academic subjects, Mr. Garcia explained. Mr. Garcia informed the group that the time allowed for their presentation was ten minutes.

High School Teacher Laural Bloom stated the Vision: To Create College and Career Ready Graduates. Ms. Bloom stressed, "for real, not just in words". She said that they had their first Vertical Alignment meeting on September 20, 2013. Ms. Bloom stated that there is a "Writing" problem at Rio Hondo ISD. Said scores were 30% for freshmen and 32% for sophomores. Ms. Villalobos asked if these scores were for incoming freshmen or last year's. These are last year's scores Ms. Bloom stated. Ms. Bloom thanked the Principal for the professional staff development they have been provided which has already helped, however, they need professional development opportunities and want to include other content teachers, Ms. Bloom stated. Ms. Wilmoth gave an example of students' writing skills. She stated that on lab reports they have no paragraphs, no punctuation, no capitalization, and no well-developed sentences. Ms. Serna stated that developing the grammar program has allowed them to start organizing their sentences; just implementing grammar which has been pushed aside throughout the years, she stated. Ms. Bloom stated that grammar has been taken out of grammar school in Rio Hondo and they would like to get it back.

High School Teacher Ida Serna read her journal entry expressing what she and the team hope to be gained from the alignment of the curriculum. She said that if everyone involved had faith and trusted each other, only good could come out of everyone working together.

High School Government and Economics and AP US Government, fifth-year Teacher, Pete Zuniga commented that he was very proud of the B-CAT dedicated members that are spearheading this initiative throughout the District. He said that it was an honor to work with them. Mr. Zuniga introduced the B-CAT coordinators specifying their positions, education, and years in the education field:

Statira Wilmoth - AP, Pre-AP, and Chemistry Teacher, Department Head for Science Department, Masters in Curriculum and Instruction, with a focus on Secondary Science, 16th year in education.

Laural Bloom - Freshman Reading, Dual Enrollment Comp. I, and AP English III Teacher, Masters in English, 20th year in education.

Imelda Zuniga - Teaches College Algebra, Pre-Calculus, EOC I, Dual Enrollment Pre-Calculus, Masters in Mathematics, 11th year in education.

Ida Serna - Teaches English I and Pre AP English I, BA Degree in English, 10th year in education.

Statira Wilmoth explained the plan for curriculum and development. Every content area for every grade level needs to have at least one person assigned to the curriculum. We need to have Science, Social Studies, English Language Arts and Math representatives from PK-12th at these meetings. Professional development needs to be provided to the team to be on the same page on how to write this curriculum. Team needs to meet every six weeks during the school year and during summer to write the curriculum and framework for every content and grade level, Ms. Wilmoth explained. She commented that last week during the State Conference for the Science teachers in Houston, she met an individual from a local school district that said that they have a curriculum specialist for elementary and secondary science and shared the success they have had since they implemented the program six years ago. There is no reason why Rio Hondo cannot do the same thing or better, Ms. Wilmoth stated.

Ms. Imelda Zuniga read a quote by Tony Robbins, "If you do what you have always done, you'll get what you have always gotten."

Board Member Martinez said he was shocked. He told the team they pretty much covered everything; stated he experienced exactly what they were saying in college. Something needs to change; something is needed but can it work? How will this be developed? I want information from leadership, Mr. Martinez stated.

Superintendent Garcia stated, "you have touched on a very difficult situation for me." He said he had met with this group of teachers almost at the beginning and he commended them for taking this responsibility on their own, and for them really wanting to make a difference for this school district. Mr. Garcia said teachers need to work with administrators and with other teachers. Can start with Writing, he said. It is good to

empower teachers but need to remove barriers. We are going to look at it and start with Writing, Mr. Garcia stated.

Ms. Villalobos commented that she sees Mr. Martinez's enthusiasm because they are just a group of high school teachers. At every campus she has visited, she has seen a group of teachers that have this fire in them, she said.

Superintendent Garcia said that part of the issue, "and I will be straight up with the Board, community, and with my administrators", he stated. One of the things that I have expressed that I have concerns is changing the paradigm of what we have been doing, which is not necessarily the best way of doing it, to turning over and empowering our teachers, which I really want to do that to make sure that we then will be able to set it up all the way from the high school to the elementary. Unfortunately, at this particular time, we are not there, Mr. Garcia commented. We need to work with our administrators and teachers so that we can see how this way of thinking can actually trickle all the way down to the elementary. One of the things I spoke with Ms. Bloom and the group, is what I want to do is start with a small concept, for example, like Writing, and let's work out all the kinks. And then from there go on to the other core areas, Mr. Garcia stated. But I think that if we empower our teachers, and I believe in them, I think that it is something that is good for our school district, and it is somehting that we need to do. The problem is, we need to take away the barriers that we are putting ourselves in front of them; learn how to remove those barriers so that this actullay can happen. We are going to look at it, we are going to see how it is going to work out for Writing, and then take it from there, Mr. Garcia stated.

Ms. Villalobos asked, "have you rolled it out yet, the Writing"? Ms. Bloom stated, "not rolled out yet but are eager to roll it out." "We don't see the obstacles; don't know if there are politics going on", Ms. Bloom stated. "We are delighted with the professional development; think that if you put us together (staff), we can do it" she said.

Ms. Villalobos asked the teachers, "are you o.k. with starting with the Writing or do you want to go full force? Superintendent Garcia stated, "they want to go full force".

Ms. Villalobos asked if there were content leaders and if there were strong leaders to guide them. Also asked if the administrators joined in the meetings.

Mr. Garcia stated he was afraid of letting go and giving full control to teachers.

Mr. Martinez commented that he has read alot of studies. Said that teachers have to have input (buy-in) and cater to kids. Methodology is not written, he said. he asked if there was another school that had something in Writing. High School Teacher Ms. Zuniga said they want it to come to Rio Hondo. Not just high school teachers; would like to talk to other campus teachers. Ms. Villalobos asked how often meetings took place.

Item 11 Presentation of Monthly Financial Report, Cafeteria Report, and Tax Collection Report.

Superintendent Garcia answered questions from Board Member Gonzales regarding the reason for the increase in transportation of $18,729 and $16,292 in Co-Curricular funds. Also asked for the reason in decrease for the School Leadership account.

Ms. Villalobos asked if this would reflect across every single budget.

Item 12 Superintendent Garcia informed the Board that he is presenting a District Financial Improvement Plan. He stated that the main reasons that he needed to come up with this plan is two-fold:

(1.) Because when we went through the budget process the Board requested that a Financial Plan be developed, and

(2.) Letter dated October 23, 2013, from the Texas Education Agency which states, "Based on a review of financial indicators for fiscal year 2012, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) has identified your district as having circumstances that could lead to financial insolvency. This letter serves as a preliminary identification and notification of that status and describes the process for your district to provide TEA with supporting documents before a final determination is made."

Mr. Garcia further explained, if the District is placed on the financial insolvency list, which means we do not have revenues, several things might happen:

(1.) Might be assigned a monitor from TEA to review our finances.

(2.) On a quarterly basis, we would have to submit financial data to TEA, which includes information on enrollment, expenses, tax collections, everything that has to do with the finances of the school district.

Mr. Garcia then explained the three factors that led to the District's financial status:

(1.) Student-to-Staff ratio outside the norm or declining - Should be 8.80 for every student; District is 7.46 - 34 employees over

(2.) General Fund Expenditures Exceeding Revenues

(3.) Actual Expenditures Consistently Exceeding Budgeted Expenditures

Mr. Garcia stated that by November 25, 2013, TEA wants intermediate financial data for this year; Mrs. Landry, Mr. Ron Dela Garza, and he are working on providing this information to TEA, he said. In addition, we will be submitting our Plan of Action. Superintendent Garcia reviewed the District's Financial Improvement Action Plan:

Finding #1:	Student to staff ratio outside the norm or declining
Objective:	To increase the mean WADA/Staff ratio to be within 85% of the mean for the 2013-2014 fiscal year as compared to enrollment group
Summative Evaluation:	The 2013-2014 WADA/Staff ratio will be within the 85% of the mean as compared to enrollment group

Mr. Garcia said that the goal is to bring student to teacher ratio into the realms that is being recommended by TEA. Will accomplish this by doing the following Corrective Actions/Strategies:

- Implement a District-Wide hiring freeze on all non-essential positions

- Contract with TASB to conduct a Staffing Review.
  (Preliminary report to be presented at the December 2013 board meeting.)

- Develop a Budget adopting calendar for the purpose of preparing an accurate budget that addresses district needs and adheres to newly adopted staffing formulas.

- Implement a Parental Involvement Program
  (Develop a Plan on how to increase student attendance at our campuses.)

- If needed, implement an early resignation/retirement incentive plan

Superintendent Garcia also reviewed the information regarding the Staff Responsible, Resources Needed, Timeline, and Formative Evaluation for each Corrective Action listed above.

Board Member Villalobos asked: The letter that TEA sent, is this for the reporting for 2011-2012 school year, not including last year 2012-2013? Seeing the numbers that we encountered during the thorough budget process, not including 2012-2013, how big of a hit in the last two years? Doing the five incentives that you propose, how long before we bring the fund balance up? What is the worst thing our District will see? Does it mean that we would need to borrow money for payroll? Will we need to touch fund balance this year? If yes, is it to cover last year's or this year's expenses? Ms. Gonzales asked if CATE money that was put in fund balance would need to be taken out from fund balance and placed under restricted funds. If so, asked if that contributed to the low balance.

Mr. Garcia reviewed Finding # 2:

Finding #2:	Actual expenditures consistently exceeding budget expenditures
Objective:	To accurately record the District's revenues and expenditures
Summative Evaluation:	The District's actual expenditures will not exceed the District's actual revenues

Corrective Action/Strategy:

- Work with Omar Garcia, Investment Banker from BOSC Inc., Austin, to review the estimated revenues for the 2013-2014 fiscal year
- Attend the TASBO Budget Academy to accurately complete the Summary of Finance Template and Forecast State and Local Revenue
- Implement a District-Wide Energy Conservation Program
- Evaluate current bus routes for efficiency and effectiveness
- Contract TASB to conduct a compensation study

Superintendent Garcia also reviewed the information regarding the Staff Responsible, Resources Needed, Timeline, and Formative Evaluation for each Corrective Action listed under Finding #2.

Mr. Garcia also mentioned that he, administration, and the principals would like to implement a District-Wide energy conservation program to save money, especially in electrical bills. We have the preliminary program in place, just a matter of giving it the final approval, , doing the staff development, and trying to get our teachers and our students to participate in saving some money through energy conservation, he said. In addition, he would like to evaluate the current bus routes for efficiency and effectiveness. Finally, Mr. Garcia stated, we have contracted TASB to conduct a compensation study to make sure our salaries are comparable to the market.

Finding #3:	Declining or low assigned and unassigned Fund Balance
Objective:	Increase unassigned fund balance to reflect a minimum of sixty days of working capital
Summative Evaluation:	Ten percent increase in fund balance by the end of Fiscal Year 2013-2014

Corrective Action/Strategy:

- Modify Board Policy CE(LOCAL) to include a minimum Fund Balance Requirement

- Change Fiscal Year start date from September 1st to July 1st

Superintendent Garcia reviewed the information regarding the Staff Responsible, Resources Needed, Timeline, and Formative Evaluation for each Corrective Action listed under Finding #3, as well.

Board Member Gonzales asked if the District had ever received a letter from TEA like this before, are these recurring deficiencies, or is this a one-time thing? Superintendent Garcia said he did not see a letter but he did review a plan that showed one of the corrective actions was to adhere to the staffing formulas that TEA recommends. Well, based on the results, that has not happened, the declining enrollment being one of the main reasons, Mr. Garcia stated. Mrs. Landry explained that over about an 8 year period, enrollment declined by about 200 students but number of staff remained the same. Ms. Villalobos asked how much did the District loose. About one million dollars, Ms. Landry stated. Ms. Villalobos asked if the number of staff has increased since then.

Ms. Villalobos stated that it is good to have an action plan but are we going to adhere to it? Are we going to work together to create a successful plan to bring back those 200 kids, to help our school come afloat? Mr. Garcia responded: that is what we are going to work on, it's not only going to be how can we recruit and retain students, it's also, how can we lower our expenses, and how can we decrease the number of employees that we currently have in the school district. Will work on attendance as well, Mr. Garcia stated. Ms. Villalobos stated that she will be pushing for ADA (Average Daily Attendance) to increase and to have incentives and systematic programs to bring our kids to school.

Item 13 Superintendent Garcia stated that at the October 14, 2013, Board Meeting the Board approved TASB Policy CE(LOCAL) which changed the fiscal year that the district operates from September 1 and ending August 31 to July 1 and ending June 30. If a school district decides to change their fiscal start date, a "Notification of Intent to Change Fiscal Start Date" form must be filed with the Texas Education Agency. In addition to the form, an approved copy of the School Board Minutes approving this change must be included. If the school district submits a form and then decides not to change or decides to change back to September 1 start date, a new form must be submitted, Mr. Garcia explained.

Mr. Garcia explained that the request to the Board is that they approve for administration to submit notification of intent to change the fiscal year from September 1 to July 1, to the Texas Education Agency. Mr. Garcia reminded the Board that the change is not going to solve the problems, but it will provide additional time to work on getting the District's finances in order. Mr. Garcia also informed the Board that if the change is made, changing back would be very difficult because instead of needing funds for 10 months, it would be for 14 months. Ms. Gonzales asked if we were "capped" in regards to property taxes.

A motion was made by Mr. Flores to change the Fiscal Year for the 2014-2015 School Year from September 1 and ending August 31 to July 1 and ending June 30. The motion was seconded by Mr. Gomez. The motion carried unanimously.

Item 14 Mr. Garcia stated that the Board Members would like to discuss the possibility of participating in the City of Rio Hondo Christmas Parade by entering a Christmas float representing the Rio Hondo ISD Board at the annual parade. The parade is scheduled for December 7, 2013, at 7:00 p.m. This year's Christmas Parade is titled, "Old MacDonald Christmas Parade", Mr. Garcia commented.

Board Member Gonzales explained that she asked this item be placed on the agenda because she had seen an interest in Board Member Gomez and hoped the other members would also like to participate in preparing a float with their personal funds and participate in the City of Rio Hondo Parade on December 7, 2013. Ms. Gonzales asked the School Attorney, Mr. Morado how the Board should communicate through this process and Mr. Morado stated the Superintendent could be the contact person.

A motion was made by Ms. Gonzales that the Board participate in the City of Rio Hondo Parade scheduled for December 7, 2013. The motion was seconded by Mr. Gomez. The motion carried unanimously.

Item 15 Superintendent Garcia stated that Pursuant to Texas Property Tax Code Sec 6.03(g), each taxing unit is entitled to vote by resolution adopted by its governing body for one candidate to the Cameron County Appraisal District Board of Directors. The eight (8) taxing units represented by this director are: La Feria ISD, Los Fresnos CISD, Lyford CISD, Rio Hondo ISD, Santa Maria ISD, Santa Rosa ISD, South Texas ISD, and Texas Southmost College. There are two candidates for Position Eight and each jurisdiction is allowed only one vote, Mr. Garcia stated. The ballot must be returned to Cameron Appraisal District before December 15, 2013, Mr. Garcia informed the Board.

Mr. Garcia stated that the Board is being asked to vote for an individual to represent Position Eight in the Cameron County Appraisal District Board of Directors. There are two individuals running for this position: Mr. Jose Noe Diaz, Jr. and Ms. Adela Garza and they have provided their resumes, Mr. Garcia commented.

A motion to approve the Resolution naming Mr. Jose Noe Diaz, Jr. as the candidate nominated to hold position eight (8) of the Cameron Appraisal District Board of Directors was made by Mr. Flores. The motion was seconded by Mr. Gomez. Votes in favor: Mr. Wiesman, Ms. Gonzales, Mr. Gomez, Mr. Flores, and Mr. Martinez. Ms. Villalobos abstained. Motion carried.

Item 16 Superintendent Garcia stated that Board Policy EHBB(LOCAL) deals with the identification of Gifted and Talented students.

Assistant Superintendent for Special Programs Rita Lopez stated that as previously mentioned at the October 2013 board meeting, the only change to this policy is No Reassessment. Ms. Villalobos asked, just for reassessment?

A motion was made by Mr. Flores to approve the adoption of the revised TASB Board Policy EHBB(LOCAL); Special Programs, Gifted and Talented Students. The motion was seconded by Ms. Villalobos. The motion carried unanimously.

Item 17 Human Resources Director Veronica Puente explained to the Board that since the last Board Meeting, some individuals were removed and others added to the School Health Advisory Council (SHAC) Members list for the 2013-2014 School Year.

Board Member Gonzales stated that she attended the first SHAC meeting and was impressed; very informative. Ms. Gonzales suggested that more students serve on this committee. Ms. Villalobos asked if people who stepped down was it because they did not want to be part of it anymore? Ms. Gonzales also suggested that the members who served last year be asked if they are willing to participate this year.

A motion was made by Ms. Gonzales to approve the Revised School Health Advisory Council (SHAC) Members for the 2013-2014 School Year. The motion was seconded by Mr. Martinez. The motion carried unanimously.

Item 18 Mr. Wiesman closed the regular session at 8:40 p.m. to discuss personnel matters. The regular session resumed at 10:58 p.m. Personnel items were as follows:

Personnel:

a. Level Three Grievance Appeal of Rosalinda Reyes

No Action.

b. Consider Employment of Personnel

A motion was made by Ms. Villalobos to offer a contract for the 2013-2014 school year, as recommended by the Superintendent, to:

Sofia Lopez Kinder Teacher

The motion was seconded by Mr. Martinez. The motion carried unanimously.

c. Consider Approving Addendum to the Substitute Teacher List for the 2013-2014 school year.

A motion was made by Mr. Flores to approve the Addendum to the Substitute Teacher List for the 2013-2014 school year, as recommended by the Superintendent. The motion was seconded by Mr. Gomez. The motion carried unanimously.

d. Superintendent

No action.

Item 19 There being no further business before the Board, Mr. Wiesman adjourned the meeting at 10:59 p.m.

Thomas E. Wiesman, President

Tomas Gomez, Secretary

VISITORS/GUESTS

Persons wishing to have their comments heard tonight during the public comment period must first complete, and present to the Board President, the "Citizen's Public Comment Request Form."

VISITANTES/INVITADOS

Las personas que deseen presentar commentarios o problemas esta noche durante el periodo de comentarios publicos, primero deben completar y presentar al Presidente del Consejo Directivo Escolar la forma de "Peticion para commentos publicos".

RIO HONDO I.S.D. BOARD OF TRUSTEES REGULAR MEETING OF NOVEMBER 11, 2013

1. Vicky Guillen	26.
2. [illegible]	27.
3. [illegible]	28.
4. Diana Tyerina	29.
5. [illegible]	30.
6. J Romos	31.
7. David Jimenez	32.
8. Rosa Linda Reyes	33.
9. [illegible]	34.
10. [illegible]	35.
11. [illegible] Gamez	36.
12. [illegible]	37.
13. [illegible]	38.
14. M. Salas	39.
15. Sandy Heredia	40.
16. Sandy Aguilar	41.
17. Amelia Zuniga	42.
18. [illegible]	43.
19.	44.
20.	45.
21.	46.
22.	47.
23.	48.
24.	49.
25.	50.