

Statement from Dr Mary Bone, RRISD Trustee and Danielle Weston RRISD Trustee

Since the RRISD Board of Trustees was first notified of deeply troubling accusations (including criminal accusations) against RRISD Superintendent, Hafedh Azaiez, in mid-July, we (Bone and Weston) have actively sought to protect RRISD students, staff and the community at large. We speak only for ourselves in this press release.

On 7/13/2021, Trustee Bone was contacted by a woman who briefed Bone that Dr Azaiez assaulted her and that she feared for her safety and that of her unborn child. The victim shared that once protective measures (including but not limited to a restraining order) were put in place, and when she felt safe to do so, she would pursue criminal charges. She also requested to be able to share her story with the board president. Trustee Bone then fully briefed the board president on everything she had just learned including the request that the board president listen to the victim's story herself. The board president declined this request. Thus, the entire board (except for one trustee) received an e-mail from the victim on 7/14/2021 which included a request to share her story with the entire board.

A meeting was then scheduled for 7/23/2021 but was cancelled. For reasons unknown to us, the agenda for that meeting (on 7/23/2021) only listed one agenda item, "Pursuant to Texas Government Code Under Section 551.071, the Board will meet in consultation with its attorney regarding the Superintendent's contract." The agenda failed to include an item to discuss allegations made against the superintendent (TGC 551.074 would have likely covered this). It also failed to allow trustees to participate virtually and failed to allow the board to take any action. Thus, it's unlikely that the 7/23/2021 meeting would have been productive because the entire board would not have been able to properly address this situation. Our expectation was that this meeting would be rescheduled ASAP with the appropriate and needed agenda items and provisions. Our desire to hold a proper and special meeting on this topic has not changed. And yet despite repeated requests, we have been denied. Even now, no meeting has been scheduled.

We know of no other course of action than to pursue board policies to exercise proper oversight of the RRISD. Policy BE Local states on page 1:

"The Board President may call special meetings. The Board President shall call a special meeting at the request of two members of the Board. Special meetings shall be called when, due to the requirements of action by the Board, it does not appear that a matter requiring action may be dealt with in a regular Board meeting. Special meetings may also be called for the convenience of the public in order to allow the Board to decide specific items in a timely manner."

Criminal accusations against the superintendent that came to the entire board in a 7/23/2021 e-mail are worrisome. Victims of domestic violence are often dismissed, marginalized and they commonly live in fear. Most victims of domestic violence never come forward because it is too dangerous to do so. In our

view, the failure to promptly schedule and hold a board of trustees meeting to discuss and address this matter can only mean that our high level of concern and sense of urgency is not universally shared among all seven trustees.

It is difficult to navigate domestic violence accusations but we are guided by meaningful principles. First, all persons in our country are innocent until proven guilty. Second, the well-being of our students, staff and community are more important than anything else. Third, given the credibility of the accuser, these accusations cannot be ignored.

As elected officials we swore an oath to the Constitution. We are also committed to a Code of Ethics and are charged with ultimate leadership of the RRISD. We hold unique power and trust to protect RRISD students, staff and the district. We are duty bound to prioritize the safety and well-being of our students and staff and to protect the entire district. Our on-going desire to hold a proper and special meeting on this topic has not changed. As individual trustees, we have no power. Only as a body corporate are we able to discuss and take action on matters. It's imperative a special meeting be held immediately.