



**PALO VERDE COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

**Regular Meeting/Organizational Meeting**

Tuesday, December 9, 2025

Closed Session: 4:00 p.m. | Open Session: 5:00 p.m.

Physical Meeting Location: One College Drive, Blythe, CA – CL 101

LiveStream Meeting Location: PVC Needles Center, 725 W. Broadway, Needles, CA

**1. OPENING OF MEETING**

1.1 CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:01 p.m. by Board President Stella Styers.

1.2 ROLL CALL

- **Trustees Present:** Stella Styers, Gloria Cople, Jon McNeil, Angel Ramirez, Brad Arneson, Glenda Williams, Melina Rangel-Ruiz(Student Trustee)\*
- **Administrators Present:** Dr. Bruce Moses, Superintendent/President, Stephanie Slagan, Asst. Supt./V.P. of Administrative Services and College Advancement

*\*Note: In accordance with California Education Code, the Student Trustee's vote is advisory and does not count toward the final Board action.*

1.3 APPROVAL OF CLOSED SESSION AGENDA

**Motion:** Approve the Closed Session Agenda for this meeting.

**Moved by:** Brad Arneson

**Seconded by:** Angel Ramirez

**Action:** Motion Carries

**Vote:**

- **Yes:** Stella Styers, Gloria Copple, Jon McNeil, Angel Ramirez, Brad Arneson, Glenda Williams

## **2. HEARING OF CITIZENS - CLOSED SESSION ITEMS**

Public comment on items listed on the Closed Session agenda will be heard prior to the Board adjourning to Closed Session. Each speaker is limited to five (5) minutes, with a maximum of fifteen (15) minutes per topic, unless otherwise determined by the Board President. The Board cannot take action on items not listed on the agenda.

### **2.1 PUBLIC COMMENT ON CLOSED SESSION ITEMS**

There were no public comments offered regarding the items on tonight's Closed Session agenda.

## **3. RECESS TO CLOSED SESSION**

The Governing Board recessed to Closed Session at 4:02 p.m.

### **3.1 CONFERENCE WITH LABOR NEGOTIATOR (GOVERNMENT CODE 54957.60)**

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

- Agency Representative:
  - Dr. Bruce Moses, Superintendent/President
- Employee Organizations:
  - CSEA Chapter 180
  - Palo Verde Community College Association/CTA

### **3.2 PUBLIC EMPLOYEE DISCIPLINE/DISMISSAL/RELEASE (GOVERNMENT CODE 54957)**

Two (2) cases.

### **3.3 PUBLIC EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE EVALUATION (GOVERNMENT CODE 54957(B))**

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

- Superintendent/President

### **3.4 CONFERENCE WITH LEGAL COUNSEL - EXISTING LITIGATION (GOVERNMENT CODE 54954.5)**

- Case name unspecified: may jeopardize existing settlement negotiations.

#### 4. RECONVENE TO OPEN SESSION

The Governing Board reconvened to Open Session at 5:08 p.m.

##### 4.1 FLAG SALUTE

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

##### 4.2 REPORT ON ANY ACTION TAKEN IN CLOSED SESSION

Board President Styers reported that the Board took action in Closed Session to release a Classified Administrator. The motion passed unanimously with the following vote:

- Trustee Styers — Yes
- Trustee Copple — Yes
- Trustee McNeil — Yes
- Trustee Arneson — Yes
- Trustee Ramirez — Yes
- Trustee Williams — Yes

##### 4.3 APPROVAL OF OPEN SESSION AGENDA

**Motion:** Approve the Open Session Agenda for this meeting.

**Moved by:** Brad Arneson

**Seconded by:** Angel Ramirez

**Action:** Motion Carries

**Vote:**

- **Yes:** Melina Rangel-Ruiz, Stella Styers, Gloria Copple, Jon McNeil, Angel Ramirez, Brad Arneson, Glenda Williams

##### 4.4 APPROVAL OF OCTOBER 28, 2025, SPECIAL MEETING/STUDY SESSION MINUTES

**Motion:** Approve the October 28, 2025, Special Meeting/Study Session Minutes.

**Moved by:** Jon McNeil

**Seconded by:** Brad Arneson

**Action:** Motion Carries

**Vote:**

- **Yes:** Melina Rangel-Ruiz, Stella Styers, Gloria Copple, Jon McNeil, Angel Ramirez, Brad Arneson, Glenda Williams

4.5 APPROVAL OF NOVEMBER 18, 2025, REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

**Motion:** Approve the November 18, 2025, Regular Meeting Minutes.

**Moved by:** Angel Ramirez

**Seconded by:** Brad Arneson

**Action:** Motion Carries

**Vote:**

- **Yes:** Melina Rangel-Ruiz, Stella Styers, Gloria Copple, Jon McNeil, Angel Ramirez, Brad Arneson, Glenda Williams

4.6 ANNOUNCEMENT OF RECUSAL FROM AGENDA ITEMS

Trustee Ramirez recused himself from Action Item 13.7.

**5. HEARING OF CITIZENS - NON-AGENDA ITEMS**

Public comment on matters not listed on the agenda but within the jurisdiction of the District will be heard during this section only. Each speaker is limited to five (5) minutes, with a maximum of fifteen (15) minutes per topic, unless otherwise determined by the Board President. The Board cannot take action on non-agenda items but may refer matters to the Superintendent/President for follow-up or place them on a future agenda.

5.1 PUBLIC COMMENT ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

- Michael Cusick, representing the Blythe Rotary Club, reported on the success of the Blythe Rotary Club Tamale Festival held on Sunday. He expressed appreciation for the Palo Verde College women's basketball team for their assistance at the event and announced that the Blythe Rotary Club would be making a \$500 donation to support the women's basketball program. Mr. Cusick indicated he would coordinate the donation with the College's Athletic Director.

- Elizabeth Cusick addressed the Board and stated that she was submitting a written disclosure directly to the Board of Trustees. Ms. Cusick provided each Trustee with a packet of materials as part of her public comment. She stated that the submission was made pursuant to federal and state whistleblower protection laws and asserted that the Board, as the governing body of the District, had the authority to receive and review such disclosures.

Ms. Cusick stated that her concerns related to alleged retaliation, workplace conduct, and the management and oversight of federally funded programs, including allegations of grant mismanagement, improper handling of federal records, denial of access to required systems, and interference with reporting processes. She stated that multiple administrators were involved in the matters raised and that the materials provided only included partial documentation supporting her concerns. Ms. Cusick further stated that she believed the involvement of certain administrators created conflicts that prevented impartial review at the campus level.

Ms. Cusick stated that she also had concerns regarding alleged discriminatory or retaliatory hiring practices and cited her own experience as an example, stating that she had applied for 23 positions with the District and received 3 interview opportunities. She stated that she believed other employees may have experienced similar treatment.

Ms. Cusick formally requested that the Board take immediate action to protect the integrity of the investigation and ensure a safe environment for all employees. She requested that the Board place the involved administrators on administrative leave or consider dismissal pending internal and external investigation. She further requested that the Board conduct an internal review that would include speaking with additional employees and recommended that the Board consider engaging an external forensic financial

audit, which she described as a detailed review of financial records beyond a standard audit.

Ms. Cusick stated that she intended to submit complaints to various state and federal oversight agencies for independent review and investigation.

## **6. PROVISIONAL TRUSTEE APPOINTMENT**

### **6.1 PROVISIONAL TRUSTEE CANDIDATE PRESENTATIONS**

Prior to the candidate presentations, District legal counsel, Ms. Kathy Meola of Atkinson, Andelson, Loya, Ruud & Romo (AALRR), presented an overview of the Provisional Trustee Appointment process and the procedures related to a Special Election.

Ms. Meola explained that the vacancy on the Board was created by the passing of Trustee Dr. George W. Thomas. She stated that, pursuant to Education Code section 5091, the Board may fill the vacancy in one of two ways: by making a provisional appointment or by calling for a special election. Ms. Meola explained that if the Board makes a provisional appointment, the appointed individual would assume all powers and duties of a Board member immediately upon appointment but would serve only until the next regularly scheduled election for Board members.

Ms. Meola further explained that if the Board does not fill the vacancy through a provisional appointment, the Board must call for a special election. She stated that the Board has sixty (60) days from the date the vacancy occurred, or until January 1, to either make a provisional appointment or call for a special election. If the Board does not take either action within that timeframe, the Riverside County Superintendent of Schools would be required to call for a special election. Ms. Meola explained that the special election would be held in June 2026, with the election scheduled for June 2, 2026, and that the Trustee seat would remain vacant until that election. She further noted that the cost of a special election would be borne by the District.

Ms. Meola explained that the Board was scheduled to proceed with provisional trustee candidate presentations during the meeting. She stated that if a candidate received at least four affirmative votes, the candidate would be appointed immediately, sworn in, and seated as a Trustee, with the ability to participate in and vote on the remaining agenda items. She further explained that if no candidate received the required four votes, no provisional appointment would be made, and the Board could then consider whether to call for a special election, which would also require at least four affirmative votes.

Three candidates for the Provisional Trustee appointment provided presentations to the Board of Trustees in accordance with the agenda.

The candidates presented in the following order:

- Beverly A. Mays
- Monty Dale, who provided a PowerPoint presentation
- Scott Dean, who provided a PowerPoint presentation

Following Ms. Mays' and Mr. Dale's candidate presentations, Trustees asked questions of the candidates, and the candidates responded to the questions posed by the Board.

Trustee Styers asked clarifying questions of Mr. Dale and Ms. Mays regarding their prior experience serving on a governing board.

Trustee McNeil stated that the Board is dysfunctional and that the Board would like to move away from dysfunction and work together more effectively to pursue the District's goals and mission. He asked Mr. Dale and Ms. Mays what their plan would be to help the Board work together more effectively.

Following Mr. Dean's presentation, Trustee McNeil referenced Mr. Dean's familiarity with Board meetings and District issues and stated that his presentation reflected observations made over time. Trustee McNeil acknowledged Mr. Dean's

explanation regarding bringing forward outside ideas in a constructive, non-adversarial manner. Trustee McNeil stated that some Board members may perceive Mr. Dean as adversarial and asked how Mr. Dean would help address that perception and demonstrate that offering outside perspectives could be beneficial to the Board.

## 6.2 BOARD DISCUSSION – PROVISIONAL TRUSTEE CANDIDATES

The Board of Trustees discussed the qualifications and presentations of the three provisional trustee candidates.

- Trustee Arneson commented on the candidates' presentations, letters of interest, and backgrounds, and expressed support for Mr. Dale, noting his communication style, preparedness, and emphasis on data-driven decision-making.
- Trustee Ramirez agreed with Trustee Arneson's assessment and stated that Mr. Dale's background and presentation reflected experience that could benefit the College, the community, students, and the Board.
- Trustee Styers commented on the candidates' motivations and community involvement. She noted Mr. Dale's community ties and discussed Ms. Mays' prior service on various boards, familiarity with Board policy, and knowledge of the District, students, and community. President Styers also raised questions regarding data referenced in Mr. Dean's presentation, and Mr. Dean provided clarification.
- Trustee Copple expressed support for Ms. Mays, citing her long-standing involvement in the community, prior board experience, and service to the College, including coaching. Trustee Copple commented on Mr. Dale's qualifications and instructional background and discussed the distinction between governance responsibilities and operational functions of the Board. Trustee Copple also acknowledged Mr. Dean's long-

term involvement with the District and his interest in budgetary, programmatic, and operational matters.

- Trustee Williams commented that all three candidates were well qualified and discussed each candidate's strengths, including community leadership, governance experience, connection to students and families, understanding of fiscal and business matters, experience with correctional education, and commitment to student pathways and collaboration with District leadership. Trustee Williams stated that selecting among the candidates was a difficult decision.
- Trustee McNeil stated that, in his view, Mr. Dean had the best application and demonstrated a clear understanding of the overall operation of the College, including budgetary, instructional, and programmatic issues and how those elements fit together. Trustee McNeil referenced Mr. Dean's experience with correctional education and discussed the significance of enrollment and correctional education programs to the District's fiscal stability. He noted concerns related to face-to-face instruction at the Ironwood facility and stated that these issues were important considerations for the Board. Trustee McNeil also commented on the strengths of the other candidates, noting their community connections, willingness to learn, and potential to contribute positively to the Board. He discussed the importance of dual enrollment, pathways, and collaboration with administration, drawing on his own experience in education leadership. Trustee McNeil stated that all three candidates were well qualified and would be assets to the District, and that the decision before the Board was a difficult one.
- Student Trustee Rangel-Ruiz commented that all three candidates performed well and expressed support for Mr. Dale, noting his connection to students, involvement with the local high school, and understanding of evolving student needs.

### 6.3 BOARD ACTION - PROVISIONAL TRUSTEE APPOINTMENT OR CALL FOR A SPECIAL ELECTION

Board President Styers opened the floor for nominations for the Provisional Trustee appointment.

- **Motion:** Trustee Brad Arneson made a motion to nominate Monty Dale. Trustee Angel Ramirez seconded the motion.
  - **Yes:** Stella Styers, Angel Ramirez, Brad Arneson
  - **No:** Gloria Copple, Jon McNeil, Glenda Williams
  - **Action:** Motion Failed
- **Motion:** Trustee Gloria Copple made a motion to nominate Beverly A. Mays. Trustee Jon McNeil seconded the motion.
  - **Yes:** Gloria Copple, Jon McNeil, Glenda Williams
  - **No:** Stella Styers, Angel Ramirez, Brad Arneson
  - **Action:** Motion Failed
- **Motion:** Trustee Gloria Copple made a motion to nominate Scott Dean. Trustee Jon McNeil seconded the motion.
  - **Yes:** Gloria Copple, Jon McNeil, Glenda Williams
  - **No:** Stella Styers, Angel Ramirez, Brad Arneson
  - **Action:** Motion Failed

District legal counsel, Ms. Kathy Meola of AALRR, informed the Board that a candidate may only be reconsidered if a Trustee who previously voted “No” wishes to change their vote and bring forward a motion to reconsider. If no Trustee seeks reconsideration, the Board President must call for a nomination to hold a Special Election. If that motion fails, the responsibility to call the Special Election falls to the County Superintendent.

Board President Styers asked the Trustees if there were any motions for reconsideration. Hearing none, Board President Styers asked if there was a motion to call for a Special Election.

- **Motion:** Trustee Jon McNeil made a motion to call for a Special Election. Trustee Brad Arneson seconded the motion.

- **Yes:** Gloria Copple, Jon McNeil, Glenda Williams, Stella Styers, Angel Ramirez, Brad Arneson
- **Action:** Motion Carried

#### 6.4 OATH OF OFFICE - PROVISIONAL TRUSTEE

No Oath of Office was administered, as the Board did not appoint a Provisional Trustee.

### 7. **ANNUAL ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES IN ACCORDANCE WITH EDUCATION CODE SECTION 720009(2) AND BOARD POLICY 2305**

#### 7.1 ELECT/APPROVE PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD FOR 2026

Board President Styers announced that the Board would conduct its Annual Organizational Meeting in accordance with Education Code section 72000(c)(2)(A) to elect officers of the Board for 2026. She outlined the nomination and roll call voting procedures to be used for the election of Board President, Vice President, and Clerk.

Board President Styers opened the floor for nominations for the office of Board President and directed the Executive Assistant to the Board to call the roll of Trustees to determine whether any Trustee wished to make a nomination.

- Trustee Styers nominated Trustee Brad Arneson, seconded by Trustee Ramirez.
- Trustee McNeil nominated Trustee Gloria Copple, seconded by Trustee Williams.
- Trustee Ramirez nominated Trustee Brad Arneson, seconded by Trustee Styers.
- Trustee Williams nominated Trustee Gloria Copple, seconded by Trustee Copple.
- Trustee Copple and Trustee Arneson did not make nominations.

Following the close of nominations, the Executive Assistant conducted roll call votes on each nomination in the order received.

- **Roll Call Vote – Trustee Brad Arneson**

Motion made by Trustee Styers, seconded by Trustee Ramirez.

- **Yes:** Stella Styers, Angel Ramirez, Brad Arneson
- **No:** Gloria Copple, Jon McNeil, Glenda Williams
- **Action:** Motion failed.

- **Roll Call Vote – Trustee Gloria Copple**

Motion made by Trustee McNeil, seconded by Trustee Williams.

- **Yes:** Gloria Copple, Jon McNeil, Glenda Williams
- **No:** Stella Styers, Angel Ramirez, Brad Arneson
- **Action:** Motion failed.

- **Roll Call Vote – Trustee Brad Arneson**

Motion made by Trustee Ramirez, seconded by Trustee Styers.

- **Yes:** Stella Styers, Angel Ramirez, Brad Arneson
- **No:** Gloria Copple, Jon McNeil, Glenda Williams
- **Action:** Motion failed.

- **Roll Call Vote – Trustee Gloria Copple**

Motion made by Trustee Williams, seconded by Trustee Copple.

- **Yes:** Gloria Copple, Jon McNeil, Glenda Williams
- **No:** Stella Styers, Angel Ramirez, Brad Arneson
- **Action:** Motion failed.

Following the failed nominations for the office of Board President, District legal counsel, Kathy Meola of Atkinson, Andelson, Loya, Ruud & Romo (AALRR), advised the Board that, pursuant to Board policy, Board officer terms are one year in length and that the failure to elect a Board President resulted in a vacancy in the office of Board President. Ms. Meola explained that, under these circumstances, the Vice President of the Board assumes the duties of the Board President and continues to serve as Vice President while fulfilling the responsibilities of the Board President until a new Board President is elected by a four-vote majority.

Trustee McNeil requested clarification regarding the scope of the Vice President's role during the vacancy, specifically whether the Vice President would assume all duties and responsibilities of the Board President, including presiding over meetings and facilitating communication among Board

members. Ms. Meola confirmed that the Vice President fulfills the duties of the Board President during the vacancy.

The Board proceeded with the agenda under the direction of Vice President Gloria Copple, who fulfilled the duties and responsibilities of the Board President during the vacancy.

7.2 ELECT/APPROVE VICE PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD FOR 2026

*No action was taken on Items 7.2 through 7.4, as the Board was unable to elect a Board President and, pursuant to legal counsel's guidance, the items were suspended until a Board President is elected.*

Following the failed election of a Board President, District legal counsel, Kathy Meola, advised that, pursuant to Board policy, all Board officers remain in their current positions until a new Board President is elected.

Trustee McNeil asked whether the Board President was still the Board President. Ms. Meola clarified that the Board President position was currently vacant and that the Vice President was fulfilling the role and duties of the presidency during the vacancy. She further clarified that the Clerk and other officer positions remained unchanged until a Board President is nominated and elected by a four-vote majority.

Ms. Meola advised the Board that [Agenda Items 7.2 (Elect/Approve Vice President of the Board for 2026), 7.3 (Elect/Approve Clerk of the Board for 2026), and 7.4 (Elect/Approve Riverside County Committee on School District Organization Representative for 2026)] were suspended until a new Board President is elected.

Trustee McNeil asked whether he remained the Clerk, and Ms. Meola confirmed that he did. Trustee McNeil then asked whether the Board President was still the Board President but without responsibilities. Ms. Meola responded that the Board President position was vacant, that the Vice President was

filling the role of the presidency, and that all other officer positions remained the same until a Board President is nominated and approved by a four-vote majority.

Trustee Cople asked when the Board could attempt to elect a Board President again, and Trustee Arneson asked whether that would occur after the special election. Ms. Meola advised that the Board could agendaize the election of a Board President at any meeting between now and the special election, and that the election could occur at any time once a nominee receives four votes.

Trustee Cople asked whether her position would extend through December of the following year. Ms. Meola clarified that Trustee Cople was filling a vacancy only until a Board President is nominated and elected, and that this could occur at any time. Ms. Meola further clarified that, if a Board President had been elected, the term of office would be one year in accordance with District Board policy.

7.3 ELECT/APPROVE CLERK OF THE BOARD FOR 2026

*No action was taken on Items 7.2 through 7.4, as the Board was unable to elect a Board President and, pursuant to legal counsel's guidance, the items were suspended until a Board President is elected.*

7.4 ELECT/APPROVE RIVERSIDE COUNTY COMMITTEE ON SCHOOL DISTRICT ORGANIZATION REPRESENTATIVE FOR 2026

*No action was taken on Items 7.2 through 7.4, as the Board was unable to elect a Board President and, pursuant to legal counsel's guidance, the items were suspended until a Board President is elected.*

7.5 APPOINTMENT/APPROVAL OF SECRETARY TO THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES, DR. BRUCE MOSES

Trustees discussed whether formal action was required regarding the appointment of the Secretary to the Board of Trustees.

Trustee McNeil asked whether Board action was required for the Secretary position, noting the importance of County signature and certification requirements. District legal counsel, Kathy Meola, referenced District Board Policy 2210 and explained that the duty of attesting the signature of the Board President rests with the Clerk of the Board and remains the Clerk's responsibility.

Trustee McNeil asked whether the County requires annual certification confirming that the Superintendent/President serves as Secretary to the Board. Ms. Meola stated that the item was agendaized and could be acted upon if the Board wished, and further stated that she was not certain of the County's specific requirements.

Trustee Cople stated her understanding that, pursuant to Board policy, the Superintendent/President automatically serves as Secretary to the Board.

No action was taken on this item.

#### 7.6 APPROVAL OF BOARD OF TRUSTEES 2026 MEETING SCHEDULE

**Motion:** A motion was made by Trustee Styers to approve the Board of Trustees 2026 Meeting Schedule, seconded by Trustee Arneson.

#### **Discussion:**

Trustee McNeil requested that the meeting scheduled in Needles in October be moved either earlier or later in the year, noting that the October date coincides with Fall Break and that many community members are out of town during that time. Trustee Williams clarified that this would involve switching the October Needles meeting with a meeting scheduled in either September or November and holding the October meeting at the Blythe campus. Trustee Arneson stated that November would be preferable, as the September

meeting occurs immediately after the start of the academic term.

Trustee Copple stated that she would like to change the regular Board meeting day from Tuesdays to Wednesdays. She explained that many community members wish to attend Board meetings but are unable to do so because school board meetings and city council meetings are also held on Tuesdays. Trustee Copple stated that moving the Board's meetings to Wednesdays, while keeping the same meeting time, would allow greater community participation.

Board President Styers asked whether the calendar should be tabled to allow for additional discussion. District legal counsel, Kathy Meola, advised that a motion to table would supersede the pending motion. Trustee McNeil expressed concern that tabling the item without approving any portion of the calendar would leave the Board without an approved meeting date for January.

Dr. Moses stated that changing the regular meeting day could have broader implications for existing academic and operational calendars and would require additional review and consultation with campus leadership and union groups. Trustees acknowledged that there were multiple considerations associated with changing the meeting day.

Trustee Arneson suggested approving at least the January portion of the calendar to allow the Board to continue meeting while providing time to further evaluate the proposed meeting day change. He stated that approving January and February would give Dr. Moses time to review the potential impact of changing the meeting day. Trustee McNeil agreed, noting the importance of long-standing community traditions regarding meeting schedules.

**Amended Motion:** Trustee Styers moved to amend her original motion to approve the Board of Trustees 2026

Meeting Schedule for the months of January and February only. The amended motion was seconded by Trustee Arneson.

**Action:** Motion Carries

**Vote:**

- **Yes:** Melina Rangel-Ruiz, Stella Styers, Gloria Copple, Jon McNeil, Angel Ramirez, Brad Arneson, Glenda Williams

7.7 APPROVAL OF AUTHORIZED AGENTS AND ANNUAL RCOE CERTIFICATION OF SIGNATURES FOR PVCCD

**Motion:** Approve the Authorized Agents and Annual RCOE Certification of Signatures for PVCCD.

**Moved by:** Jon McNeil

**Seconded by:** Brad Arneson

**Action:** Motion Carries

**Vote:**

- **Yes:** Melina Rangel-Ruiz, Stella Styers, Gloria Copple, Jon McNeil, Angel Ramirez, Brad Arneson, Glenda Williams

## 8. REPORTS

8.1 PVCCA/CTA - RICHARD CASTILLO, PRESIDENT OF PVCCA/CTA  
Richard Castillo, President of PVCCA/CTA, commended the Board for its vote to call a special election, stating that while it was difficult for those who applied to fill the vacancy created by the passing of Trustee Dr. George W. Thomas, it reflected how democracy works and allows people to have a vote.

Mr. Castillo stated that he had “good news, better news, and best news,” and reported that he had followed through on a commitment related to instructional offerings in Needles. He stated that faculty had taken the proposal to the union to offer classes in Needles and that the “Golden Four Plus One” was being proposed for the Fall 2026 schedule. He explained that the proposal includes two English courses, a math course, a speech communications course, and Ethnic Studies, to be offered at Needles in a hybrid format.

Mr. Castillo stated that the proposal includes a request for a no-cut guarantee, meaning that courses would not be cancelled even with low enrollment. He explained that the hybrid format would involve faculty traveling to Needles to teach face-to-face one day per week, with the remainder of the instruction conducted online. He stated that even if enrollment were low, the courses would remain open under the no-cut guarantee.

Mr. Castillo identified the proposed instructors as follows: English taught by himself and Ms. Kaylene Elliott; mathematics taught by Mr. Biju Raman; Ethnic Studies taught by Ms. Rene Roedel; and Speech Communications taught by Dr. Julien Sperling. He stated that faculty met with Dr. Robinson, Dean of Instruction, and that the proposal was now under review by Mr. Cowden. Mr. Castillo stated that faculty were awaiting a response regarding approval of the proposed schedule.

Trustee Williams asked whether the proposed courses would be offered in a hybrid format using Zoom. Mr. Castillo clarified that the courses would not be taught via Zoom. He explained that faculty would travel to Needles on the scheduled class day and teach face-to-face for at least half of the required weekly instructional time.

Mr. Castillo stated that, for example, in a four-hour class, faculty would be on site in Needles for at least two hours, and in some cases up to three hours, with the remaining instructional time conducted online through assigned activities. He stated that this format would be repeated throughout the term.

Trustee Styers asked whether faculty would remain in Needles teaching for approximately three hours. Mr. Castillo responded that faculty would operate as a small cohort and stated that, as proposed to Dr. Robinson, faculty would also hold face-to-face office hours in Needles.

Trustee Styers asked whether the courses were still at proposal status. Mr. Castillo confirmed that the courses were in proposal status and stated that the courses had been placed on faculty teaching schedules for Fall 2026. He stated that the proposal was now under review by Mr. Cowden's office and that the five faculty members were willing to travel to Needles to teach under the proposed model.

Trustee McNeil asked if the Academic Senate, Dr. Robinson, and the faculty had approved the proposal. Trustee Styers asked whether there was a budget associated with the proposal or whether budget details would be brought to the Board at a later date, including information regarding travel days, faculty participation, and costs to the District.

Mr. Castillo responded that budget determinations were administrative matters. He stated that if funding were the issue, the administration would need to identify the resources to support the proposal, noting that the Needles community has been requesting these courses for many years. He stated that faculty were not requesting additional compensation, as the travel and teaching arrangement is already addressed in the collective bargaining agreement. Mr. Castillo further stated that, if District transportation were not available, faculty could travel by personal vehicle and be reimbursed for mileage pursuant to Article IV of the contract. Mr. Castillo stated that faculty had responded to the long-standing requests from the Needles community and expected administrative support for the proposal.

### **Faculty Remarks - Greg Snider**

As part of the PVCCA/CTA report, Mr. Castillo invited Mr. Greg Snider to speak. Mr. Greg Snider, faculty member in Health and Kinesiology, addressed the Board.

Mr. Snider introduced himself and stated that he has taught at Palo Verde College for nearly 17 years and that the College is

his professional home. He stated that he is often recognized on campus for bringing his dog to the College, which he explained has helped him build relationships across the campus community. Mr. Snider stated that his interactions with staff across departments, including Admissions and Records, Counseling, Human Resources, and administration, have contributed to positive personal relationships and a sense of connection on campus.

Mr. Snider stated that, while he personally has positive relationships with administrators, he does not understand why there continues to be an adversarial professional relationship between faculty and administration. He stated that recent labor negotiations have left faculty discouraged and disappointed and that the current atmosphere on campus reminds him of a period several years ago when conditions were not positive. Mr. Snider stated that he does not want to work in an environment with that type of atmosphere and shared that colleagues have expressed that they no longer enjoy coming to work.

Mr. Snider stated that, if he were an administrator, he would want to provide faculty and staff with as many resources as possible, including cost-of-living adjustments, health care, and retirement support. He stated that the College is a nonprofit institution and not a publicly traded company, and that he struggles to understand why faculty requests for such support are met with resistance. He stated that faculty are not asking for unreasonable compensation, but rather long-term stability and support.

Mr. Snider shared concerns regarding retirement readiness, stating that faculty are often required to seek part-time employment after retirement. He cited an example from a recent retirement planning conversation indicating that retiring after 30 years of service could result in receiving approximately 60 percent of maximum pay, which he stated would be difficult to live on. He stated that administrators may move on to other positions, but faculty often remain at

the institution for decades, and he questioned why more effort is not made to support faculty over the long term.

Mr. Snider further expressed concern about enrollment and instructional load, stating that this was the first time in his career that he was worried about making load. He stated that changes related to prison education programs and facility closures could significantly impact the College's future and described these issues as a "five-alarm fire" for the institution. Mr. Snider stated that, rather than focusing on internal conflict, both faculty and administration should come together to address sustainability challenges facing the College.

Mr. Snider concluded by urging collaboration between faculty and administration to focus on the long-term viability of the institution and thanked the Board for the opportunity to speak.

#### **Faculty Remarks - Rene Lopez-Roedel**

Mr. Castillo invited faculty member Ms. Rene Lopez-Roedel to address the Board.

Ms. Lopez-Roedel introduced herself and stated that she teaches ASL, Sociology, and Ethnic Studies. She stated that she did not make instructional load for the upcoming Spring semester, noting that this was the first time this has occurred since she began teaching at Palo Verde College during the 2013–2014 academic year. She stated that she is a full-time, tenured faculty member and that courses were cut due to an overall reduction in course offerings, which she estimated at approximately twenty percent. She stated that multiple faculty members are not making load and expressed concern that she has not received clear communication from administration regarding how faculty will be supported to ensure they make load. She stated that, as a result, she will need to teach summer school out of necessity.

Ms. Lopez-Roedel stated that courses were cut and that there is an approximate 20 percent deficit in course offerings, resulting in multiple faculty members not making load. She stated that she has received no communication from administration regarding how faculty will be supported to make load or ensure basic financial stability. She stated that she will be required to teach summer school because she does not have a choice. Ms. Lopez-Roedel stated that she was fortunate that her division chair, Dr. Jen, spoke with Dr. Sam on her behalf, and that between Dr. Jen and Dr. Sam she was able to potentially pick up one additional class. Ms. Lopez-Roedel expressed appreciation to Dr. Sam for attending faculty meetings and addressing the issue. She stated that she heard nothing from anyone else and specifically stated that she heard nothing from Clint, whom she identified as the administrator responsible for assisting faculty in making load.

Ms. Lopez-Roedel stated that she was able to secure an additional class only after speaking with her division chair, Dr. Jen, and Dr. Sam, and expressed appreciation for their assistance. She stated that she did not receive communication from other administrators regarding load concerns and noted that Dr. Sam attended faculty meetings to address the issue. She stated that she heard nothing from anyone else and stated that she heard nothing from Clint, whom she identified as the administrator responsible for assisting faculty in making load.

Ms. Lopez-Roedel then addressed her experience teaching in the prison system. She stated that she has taught at Ironwood State Prison since 2014–2015, initially as an adjunct teaching face-to-face classes in both SNY and general population yards. She explained that, previously, she was escorted in and out by custody staff and that those staff remained nearby during instruction. She stated that this is no longer the case and that she no longer receives an escort, which she considers a significant safety risk. She stated that she prefers having custody staff present or nearby during instruction and that the absence of escorts has led her to stop teaching in the prison at this time.

Ms. Lopez-Roedel stated that, under the current Memorandum of Understanding between the District and CDCR, faculty will be required to carry keys for the entire education building. She stated that she believes this presents a serious security risk and that she is unwilling to carry keys without proper training. She stated that losing such keys could place the entire facility on lockdown and emphasized that faculty are being asked to assume this responsibility without appropriate preparation.

Ms. Lopez-Roedel further expressed concern regarding the absence of a hostage-negotiation policy and the lack of guaranteed life-insurance benefits in the event of a serious incident. She stated that these conditions make her unwilling to continue teaching in the prison environment. She also noted that stipend compensation for prison instruction has been reduced from approximately \$1,300 per semester to \$200 per CTLC, and expressed concern about the reduced compensation relative to the risks involved.

Ms. Lopez-Roedel stated that she has taught in male prisons for many years and described herself as a 63-year-old woman who volunteered to teach in those environments. She stated that faculty previously attempted to enter facilities together for safety, but that this practice is no longer in place. She emphasized the need for security measures and faculty comfort in the workplace.

Ms. Lopez-Roedel also stated that there is no formal system for campus check-in or check-out when faculty travel to prison sites, noting that only Dr. Sam is aware of her schedule. She stated that during lockdowns, faculty have been delayed for several hours without campus awareness or follow-up. She described an incident in which she arrived at the prison without knowing that a serious disturbance had recently occurred and stated that she narrowly avoided being present during a riot. She expressed concern that faculty are being

sent into a correctional environment without adequate communication, tracking, or safety protocols.

Ms. Lopez-Roedel concluded by stating that, due to these safety, compensation, and communication concerns, she cannot return to teaching in the prison system at this time. She stated that this decision was made to protect her own safety and the morale of her colleagues.

### **Wrap-Up Remarks - Richard Castillo**

Richard Castillo stated that the issues raised by Mr. Snider and Ms. Lopez-Roedel were serious and reflective of broader concerns facing faculty, including morale, resources, health and welfare benefits, and workplace safety. He stated that faculty were negotiating for resources necessary to perform their work and emphasized that faculty teaching in prisons are visitors to those facilities, not prison employees, and do not receive the training required to safely assume custodial responsibilities.

Mr. Castillo reported that, during negotiations held earlier that week, faculty representatives raised concerns regarding proposed changes related to faculty evaluations, grievance procedures, and due-process protections. He stated that faculty were concerned about proposals that would eliminate third-party arbitration and instead place grievance decisions before the Board, which he described as creating a situation where grievances could be heard publicly. Mr. Castillo stated that faculty sought clarification as to whether this would require public hearings involving witnesses and evidence and expressed concern that administrative proposals had not been fully explained or thought through.

Mr. Castillo stated that faculty were troubled by repeated responses during negotiations that issues had “not been talked about,” including questions related to costs, implementation, prison teaching assignments, and administrative teaching load. He stated that faculty were concerned about administrators being permitted to teach full

instructional loads in addition to their administrative duties, which he stated conflicted with faculty understanding of assignment roles and good-faith bargaining practices.

Mr. Castillo stated that faculty had raised concerns regarding investigations and due-process protections, including whether faculty would be informed of investigative outcomes or potential disciplinary actions. He referenced prior cases and stated that faculty were seeking clear rules to ensure transparency and protect employee rights. He stated that faculty believed these protections were necessary to help the District avoid future problems and litigation.

With respect to prison instruction, Mr. Castillo reiterated faculty requests for three basic safety measures: no requirement for faculty to carry keys, guaranteed escorts, and the presence of trained staff nearby during instruction. He stated that faculty concerns regarding safety measures, communication, and emergency preparedness had been raised repeatedly and remained unaddressed. He stated that faculty were willing to support prison instruction but could not do so without adequate safety protections.

Mr. Castillo stated that faculty had entered negotiations in good faith with modest proposals related to salary and health benefits. He stated that faculty were not seeking excessive compensation and noted that their requests were comparable to agreements reached with other employee groups. He emphasized that faculty were seeking fairness, stability, and long-term sustainability rather than large increases.

Mr. Castillo concluded by urging the Board to ask its negotiating team for clarity regarding the proposals being brought forward and stated that the Board has the authority to direct negotiations. He encouraged collaboration and transparency, stated that faculty remained willing to negotiate in good faith, and thanked the Board for the opportunity to speak.

Trustee McNeil asked whether binding arbitration was part of the faculty contract and raised concerns related to regressive bargaining. Mr. Castillo responded that binding arbitration had previously been in place but that, due to the contract having expired, arbitration was currently advisory in nature. He stated that faculty were attempting to maintain the status quo while negotiations continued.

8.2 ACADEMIC SENATE - SARAH FRID, PRESIDENT OF ACADEMIC SENATE

Sarah Frid was not present at tonight's meeting.

8.3 CSEA, CHAPTER 180 - ALICE DEAN, PRESIDENT OF CSEA CHAPTER 180

Alice Dean, President of CSEA Chapter 180, thanked Kandus for her work in processing reimbursements, stating that the reimbursements were completed quickly and that CSEA appreciated her efforts. Ms. Dean stated that CSEA looks forward to receiving reimbursement related to health and welfare back pay.

Ms. Dean then stated that, in her capacity as a Board member and not on behalf of CSEA, she wanted to share a perspective related to negotiations. She stated that, in her experience, Board members receive information regarding what the District is negotiating and what is being offered to the unions, and emphasized that it is important for Board members to have that information in order to approve negotiated agreements. She stated that without a clear understanding of what is being offered, it is difficult for Board members to make informed decisions regarding approval of compensation, funding levels, or other negotiated items.

Ms. Dean extended holiday well wishes to the Board, wished everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year, and invited Board members to attend the CSEA end-of-year potluck on December 16 at 12:00 p.m. in CS 123–124.

8.4 ASSOCIATED STUDENT GOVERNMENT - MELINA RANGEL-RUIZ,  
STUDENT TRUSTEE

Melina Rangel-Ruiz reported that on December 11, ASG will host a book fair from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. The event is being hosted by one of the student clubs and will include multiple booths. She stated that bookmarks will be sold and that attendees will have the opportunity to decorate their own cookies for a fee. Ms. Rangel-Ruiz noted that the event is a fundraiser to help support the club and assist with funding future events.

Ms. Rangel-Ruiz also reported that she, along with an ASG officer and a fellow student who now serves as an alternate delegate, recently attended an academy event as delegates for the College. She stated that this was the first time the College participated in the academy and that Region Nine representatives were pleased with the College's participation. Ms. Rangel-Ruiz stated that the experience was very positive and that ASG hopes to make participation in the academy an annual opportunity to support student growth, leadership development, and personal confidence.

8.5 ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT/VICE PRESIDENT OF  
INSTRUCTION AND STUDENT SERVICES - CLINT COWDEN

Clint Cowden was not present at tonight's meeting.

8.6 ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT/VICE PRESIDENT OF  
ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES AND COLLEGE ADVANCEMENT -  
STEPHANIE SLAGAN

Stephanie Slagan stated that her report was provided as an attachment.

8.7 SUPERINTENDENT/PRESIDENT - DR. BRUCE MOSES

Dr. Bruce Moses extended holiday greetings to the Board and the campus community and wished everyone safe travels during the holiday season. He stated that it had been a great year and expressed appreciation for the work of the administration, faculty, staff, and students. Dr. Moses concluded by wishing everyone safety and well-being until the new year.

## 8.8 BOARD OF TRUSTEES

### **Trustee Jon McNeil**

Trustee McNeil stated that he was looking forward to the budget presentation scheduled for January and emphasized that it would be helpful to receive updated and corrected budget information. He referenced the budget presentation provided in June and stated that there were questions about some of the numbers presented at that time. He stated that he had expected a corrected budget following that presentation and expressed appreciation that updated information would be provided so that everyone could be looking at the same numbers, including information related to Needles.

Trustee McNeil reported on the opening of a new industrial center operated by Mohave Community College in Kingman, which opened in September. He stated that he has spoken with representatives of the center and that they are very excited to host Palo Verde College for a visit. He stated that he would like to organize a visit during the second or third week of January and invited Board members, administrators, and others to attend. Trustee McNeil stated that the center focuses on workforce development and economic development and described it as a model that has helped attract significant business investment to the region, including a steel mill investment of approximately \$600 million. He stated that the center serves as a catalyst for economic growth and that it could provide ideas and inspiration for similar opportunities in Blythe and Needles.

Trustee McNeil reported on a winter festival held in Needles that centered around the College. He stated that the event included a Santa's workshop, free pictures with Santa, bake sales, and a Christmas tree display organized by community members and local businesses. He stated that the parade was a major highlight of the event and that a Palo Verde College float participated and placed first in its division. Trustee McNeil thanked Jaclyn Randall for her leadership and coordination of the event.

Trustee McNeil stated that the McNeil household would be hosting the annual Needles Christmas gathering on December 18 and noted that the event had been very successful the previous year. He stated that the gathering would include games and holiday activities and expressed appreciation for the opportunity to bring people together.

Trustee McNeil further stated that he spent time on campus during the recent community event and observed strong attendance and a great deal of positive energy. He stated that he spoke with many community members and heard excitement about upcoming classes in Needles. He expressed appreciation for the collaborative work being done to expand instructional offerings in Needles and specifically thanked Dr. Sam for her efforts related to scheduling and coordination. Trustee McNeil concluded by expressing his excitement for the future of the College and wished everyone a Merry Christmas and a safe and happy New Year.

### **Trustee Glenda Williams**

Trustee Williams reported that she visited the campus on Saturday and initially planned to stay only a couple of hours, but remained for most of the day. She stated that she had a wonderful experience, describing the campus as busy and full of people coming and going throughout the day. She stated that she spoke with many community members, received numerous hugs, and noted that the atmosphere felt similar to how downtown events used to be, with strong community presence and positive energy.

Trustee Williams stated that she spoke with individuals about enrolling and signing up for classes and expressed excitement upon seeing multiple pages of class listings available for courses planned to be offered in Needles. She stated that seeing the course offerings made her very happy and expressed appreciation that everyone is working together to expand instructional opportunities in the Needles area.

Trustee Williams thanked Dr. Sam for her efforts and for managing the work involved in offering classes in Needles.

She stated that she has grandchildren and a son who are impacted by these efforts and expressed her desire to see the College community continue to grow and thrive.

Trustee Williams concluded by wishing everyone an amazing Christmas, a safe and fun New Year's Eve, and stated that she looks forward to the coming year.

### **Vice President/Acting as President Gloria Copple**

Vice President/Acting as President Copple, read the following statement:

*"I have a responsibility to speak honestly about this growing crisis within this Institution. I'm publicly acknowledging what many of our employees have been experiencing a pattern of retaliation, intimidation, and attempts to silence them from speaking to their elected Board members. Let me state this plainly for everyone. Employees have the legal right to communicate with Trustees. No administrator at any level has the authority to tell an employee that they cannot speak to me or any other Board members. Doing so is a direct violation of basic governance principles. It undermines transparency and it erodes public trust. Board Policy 2715, our Code of Ethics, makes it clear that Trustees are responsible for ensuring the College operates with integrity, accountability, and respect for employees. Oversight is not optional; it is our duty, and when employees report retaliation, hostile treatment, or administrative actions that appear punitive rather than corrective, those issues fall squarely into the Board's oversight role. Over these past months, I have received far too many calls from employees who are frightened, discouraged and unsure of where to turn. These are not isolated concerns. They reveal a pattern, a culture, a climate that no healthy college should tolerate. When employees fear speaking up, when administrative leave becomes a weapon, when morale collapse, those are red flags of serious organizational dysfunction. I want the community to understand that I will not ignore what is being reported to me. I will not be intimidated into silence, and I will not allow employees to be bullied into believing they cannot come forward. This college belongs to the public, and the public deserves transparency, not secrecy, not*

*retaliation and not fear-based management. Our employees deserve due process. They deserve consistent, lawful treatment. They deserve respect, and they deserve leadership that values their contributions instead of punishing their voices. Tonight, I'm calling on this board to confront this reality directly. We cannot continue to overlook the harm being done. We cannot protect systems or individuals at the expense of our employees and our students. Accountability must apply to everyone at every level. I intend to continue listening. I intend to continue speaking up, and I intend to ensure that every employee who reaches out knows that they do have a voice and that at least one Trustee is willing to stand up for them when retaliation becomes the norm instead of the exception. The days of dismissing or downplaying these concerns must end. Our employees deserve better, and this community deserves better. Thank you."*

Trustee McNeil stated that he shares Trustee Copple's sentiment.

## **9. PRESENTATIONS**

### **9.1 Umoja Task Force Presentation**

Dr. Sam Robinson provided an update on the work of the Umoja Task Force, noting that the task force includes students, faculty, and administrators. She stated that the task force was charged by Dr. Moses with addressing specific priorities and that the work has been organized in ranked order to ensure compliance and sustainability.

Dr. Robinson stated that the task force's top priority was to ground Umoja in curriculum and instruction. She explained that the program must be accountable to the Chancellor's Office and the Umoja Community Education Foundation through tracking of student outcomes, including first-year completion, English and math completion, retention, success, and transfer rates. She noted that the decision for her to serve as facilitator was based on the need for instructional accountability.

Dr. Robinson reviewed staffing and support requirements, stating that Umoja guidelines call for approximately two full-time equivalent staff, which may be achieved through a combination of positions. She explained that the task force proposed beginning with a half-time classified support position and a half-time student worker, with the understanding that this may scale and that the Foundation may require a full-time position. She also discussed proposed counseling support at approximately a 0.25 FTE level, faculty advisor reassigned time pending an MOU with the union, and instructional faculty participation that would scale as the program grows. She stated that she anticipates contributing administrative support at a 0.10 FTE level during the initial implementation period.

Dr. Robinson reported that the task force developed a proposed Umoja Scholars Program Certificate of Achievement, grounded in the CSU “Golden Four” areas. She stated that the certificate would include fully articulated, transferable courses across five general education areas, along with a one-unit interdisciplinary capstone course. She emphasized that the certificate institutionalizes both faculty commitment to teach the courses and administrative commitment to offer them, and that completion would be reflected on student transcripts. She stated that the program is designed as a cohort model and is scalable over a three-year period, beginning with local students and expanding to incarcerated students by year three.

Dr. Robinson stated that faculty participating in Umoja would engage in the Summer Learning Institute and noted that three faculty members are currently certified, with the ability to certify up to five additional faculty each year. She explained that the phased implementation allows for training and capacity building.

Dr. Robinson provided an update on reporting and compliance, stating that the task force has been collaborating on the required three-year plan in the Chancellor’s Office NOVA system. She reported that all budget and reporting

requirements are currently up to date and that a cost extension has been filed for unspent funds.

Dr. Robinson addressed space requirements and stated that Room FA 119 has been tentatively identified as the Umoja Village space. She explained that the space would function as both an instructional and non-instructional space, with Umoja faculty teaching in the room and students using it for gatherings and support when not in class. She noted that the space will still require review through the formal space utilization process.

Dr. Robinson stated that program activities have not yet been fully launched, as the task force is awaiting approval to relaunch the immersion program. She stated that planning has begun for recruitment activities, with a focus on building cohorts for Fall 2026, and that the Umoja club constitution and bylaws are being reviewed to ensure alignment with the redesigned program.

Dr. Robinson outlined next steps, which include finalizing the Umoja Scholars Program Certificate of Achievement, refining cohort tracking in coordination with Admissions and Records, formalizing the Umoja Village space, finalizing staffing based on feedback from the Umoja Community Education Foundation, and launching the program in Fall 2026 pending approval. She stated that student ambassadors may be used to assist with outreach and recruitment.

Dr. Robinson concluded by expressing gratitude to Dr. Moses for his leadership and openness to exploring an alternative direction for Umoja, to Clint Cowden for his collaboration, to Dr. Julian West and state-level Umoja leadership for guidance, to Haley Wolfinbarger for support and coordination, and to the Umoja Task Force members and students for their commitment and work. She then invited task force members, to address the Board.

## **Umjoa Task Force Member Remarks**

**Lilian Jones**, Vice President of ASG and a former Umoja student, addressed the Board and shared her experience participating in the Umoja Task Force and related activities. Ms. Jones stated that she was initially unsure what to expect when joining the Umoja Task Force and meeting new people, but over time she began to feel more at home and described the group as becoming like family.

Ms. Jones stated that, although some individuals who had hoped to attend the conference were unable to do so this year and were missed, the experience was positive and enjoyable. She described the atmosphere as welcoming and full of positive energy and shared that Dr. Sam Robinson helped create that environment by encouraging participation, engagement, and enthusiasm throughout the event.

Ms. Jones commented on Dr. Robinson's energy and support, noting that she was actively involved, checking in with students, and ensuring they had what they needed. She shared that Dr. Robinson provided Umoja bracelets as keepsakes from the experience and also supported the purchase of artwork and other items intended for the future Umoja Village space.

Ms. Jones concluded by stating that, as the experience continued, she increasingly felt a sense of belonging and connection, and expressed appreciation for the Umoja Task Force and the supportive environment it created.

**Robert Murillo**, ASG President, addressed the Board and stated that he was unable to sit with the rest of the Umoja Task Force members due to a knee injury. He expressed gratitude to the College for the opportunity to attend the Umoja conference alongside his Vice President and members of the Umoja Task Force. He stated that, while he wished additional members of the Umoja Task Force had been able to attend, the experience was meaningful and impactful.

Mr. Murillo stated that attending the conference helped him understand, on an emotional level, what some students felt when Umoja was no longer present. He shared that at one point he felt like an outsider and described feeling isolated as one of the few Hispanic and Native individuals in the space. He stated that this experience helped him connect more deeply with students who felt hurt, angry, or targeted when Umoja was previously impacted. He explained that taking in those emotions changed his perspective and allowed him to better understand why students reacted with pain and frustration when they felt their “family” was being targeted.

Mr. Murillo stated that, despite some challenges during the conference, the experience was positive and meaningful. He shared that seeing his Vice President fully engaged and connected to her culture was motivating and reaffirmed his commitment as ASG President.

Mr. Murillo expressed appreciation to Dr. Sam Robinson, Hailey Wolfinbarger, and others for creating an environment where his Vice President felt supported and where Umoja felt like it was truly coming back stronger, with a clearer voice and renewed purpose. He stated that the experience also motivated him to advocate for the return of Puente and emphasized the importance of restoring the same energy, respect, and sense of belonging. Mr. Murillo expressed that he believes that Puente can come back the same way as Umoja.

Mr. Murillo concluded by stating that the experience provided healing for him, as he deeply missed the sense of family Umoja represented. He shared that being surrounded by supportive individuals, including Dr. Sam Robinson and other Umoja leaders, was meaningful and touched him in a deeply personal way. He thanked the Board for the opportunity to speak.

**Dr. Julien Sperling**, Speech Instructor, addressed the Board and thanked those involved for creating space for

collaboration and for working together to formally bring Umoja back. He expressed appreciation for those who worked on Umoja in prior years without the level of support currently being provided and stated that the College is now moving in the right direction by taking concrete steps forward.

Dr. Sperling emphasized the importance of belonging and stated that every student should feel that they belong, whether they are on campus for a short time or as the program expands over the next several years. He referenced comments made earlier and noted that faculty teaching in the Fall, including himself and Ms. Kaylene Elliott, will be teaching in Needles so that Needles students will have access to modified Umoja-supported courses. He stated that the work is not limited to the Blythe campus and that efforts are being made to expand access where possible. He also noted that additional course sections may be offered in the Spring semester.

Dr. Sperling shared that he did not attend the conference this year for the first time in three years and remarked humorously that he was disappointed to miss it, particularly because Cornel West attended and participants had the opportunity to take photos with him. He reiterated the importance of honoring the work of those who came before and stated that acknowledging that foundation is critical.

Dr. Sperling gave special recognition to faculty members involved in the Umoja work, stating that they have worked extremely hard and collaborated extensively. He also acknowledged the support being provided by counseling services and noted that counselor involvement is increasing. He concluded by stating that the work is coming together and expressed appreciation for the collective effort.

Trustee McNeil commended Dr. Julien Sperling for standing up for the Umoja program.

## **Closing Remarks**

Dr. Sam Robinson stated that the District has always intended to ground Umoja in curriculum. She stated that the proposed Certificate of Achievement and capstone course are not merely ideas, but are scheduled for consideration by the Curriculum Committee at its meeting on Thursday. Dr. Robinson stated that she expects the curriculum items to be approved and forwarded to the Board for consideration in January, with the intent of including the program in the Fall 2026 catalog if the Umoja program is relaunched.

Dr. Robinson further stated that, in her view, this process reflects what can be accomplished when Palo Verde College works collaboratively as a unified institution.

Dr. Robinson asked Dr. Moses whether the College could move forward with submitting a three-year plan for the Umoja program, and Dr. Moses responded affirmatively.

## **10. DISCUSSION ITEMS**

## **11. INFORMATION ITEMS**

11.1 REPORT OF PURCHASES AND WARRANTS - NOVEMBER 2025

11.2 NOTIFICATION OF EMPLOYEE RESIGNATION – ISRAEL CLASS, CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER

## **12. CONSENT ITEMS**

**All Consent Items will be considered for approval in a single motion. A total of 15 minutes will be allotted for questions or clarifications from Board members and for public comments on Consent Items. Following this period, any Board member may request that one or more items be moved to the Action Agenda**

12.1 APPROVAL OF CURRICULUM ACTIONS – NOVEMBER 2025

12.2 APPROVAL OF PERSONNEL ACTIONS REPORT – DECEMBER 2025

12.3 APPROVAL OF MINIMUM WAGE INCREASE TO STUDENT WORKER HOURLY SCHEDULE

12.4 APPROVAL OF CONSENT ITEMS FOR DECEMBER 2025

**Motion:** Approve Consent Items as presented and/or amended.

**Moved by:** Brad Arneson

**Seconded by:** Stella Styers

**Action:** Motion Carries

**Vote:**

- **Yes:** Melina Rangel-Ruiz, Stella Styers, Gloria Copple, Jon McNeil, Angel Ramirez, Brad Arneson, Glenda Williams

**13. ACTION ITEMS**

13.1 APPROVAL OF FOUR (4) MEMORANDA OF UNDERSTANDING (MOUs) BETWEEN PVCCD AND PVCCA/CTA FOR EXTRA DUTY AND SPECIAL ASSIGNMENTS COMPENSATION

**Motion:** Approve the four (4) Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) between the Palo Verde Community College District and the Palo Verde Community College Association/CTA for Extra Duty and Special Assignments Compensation.

**Moved by:** Stella Styers

**Seconded by:** Brad Arneson

**Action:** Motion Carries

**Vote:**

- **Yes:** Stella Styers, Gloria Copple, Jon McNeil, Angel Ramirez, Brad Arneson, Glenda Williams

13.2 APPROVAL OF AMENDMENT TO AGREEMENT WITH CAMBRIDGE WEST PARTNERSHIP, LLC (CWP) FOR ZERO-BASED BUDGETING SUPPORT SERVICES

**Motion:** Approve the amendment to the agreement with Cambridge West Partnership, LLC.

**Moved by:** Stella Styers

**Seconded by:** Angel Ramirez

**Action:** Motion Carries

**Vote:**

- **Yes:** Melina Rangel-Ruiz, Stella Styers, Gloria Copple, Jon McNeil, Angel Ramirez, Brad Arneson, Glenda Williams

### **Discussion / Questions & Answers:**

Trustee Williams asked whether the agreement involved training and whether the consultant would be training District staff or providing ongoing services. Stephanie Slagan responded that the District is moving from a rollover budgeting system to a zero-based budgeting system and stated that it is a completely different budgeting methodology. She stated that the purpose of the transition is to increase transparency and support equity-minded resource allocation. Ms. Slagan explained that Cambridge West Partnership is being engaged to help the District transition from the rollover budgeting method to the zero-based budgeting methodology. She stated that this process involves learning the methodology while implementing it and that Cambridge West has been working with the Budget and Planning Committee and other college committees to help implement zero-based budgeting across the institution.

Trustee McNeil stated that the Board had approved a contract with Cambridge West several months earlier and that the Board had not received a report back regarding progress. He stated that he recalled making comments at the time of the original contract and that, based on his familiarity with zero-based budgeting, he was surprised that the District was requesting an extension of time. He stated that, in his experience, consultants typically teach the process and the institution then implements it, rather than the consultant continuing the work. He further stated that he was surprised the Board had not received a report on how zero-based budgeting was being used for the budget.

Ms. Slagan responded that the Budget and Planning Committee has been meeting with the consultant throughout the process and determined that additional time was needed. She stated that while the District initially planned to implement zero-based budgeting during the current budget cycle, the Committee felt the College was not ready and that implementation should instead occur in the 2026–27 fiscal year. She stated that the College did not want to rush

implementation and risk doing it improperly. Ms. Slagan explained that zero-based budgeting will be integrated across the entire institution and will affect program review, departments, and divisions. She stated that the consultant has been meeting with the Assessment and Accreditation Committee, Cabinet, and the Budget and Planning Committee to support implementation and develop an appropriate timeline. Ms. Slagan stated that administration hopes to bring a study session to the Board in the coming months to provide an updated presentation on zero-based budgeting.

Trustee McNeil asked how many meetings had occurred with the consultant. Ms. Slagan responded that the Budget and Planning Committee has been meeting monthly and has been reviewing fixed assets and fixed costs, noting that those costs must be identified and excluded before zero-based budgeting can be implemented. She stated that the Committee has been reviewing prior years' budgets and that the preparatory work required for zero-based budgeting has taken a significant amount of time.

Trustee McNeil commented that implementing zero-based budgeting involves a great deal of work and stated that while he was surprised the College was taking this on, he was very pleased. Ms. Slagan responded that zero-based budgeting was a recommendation that emerged from the Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP), which is why the District is moving forward with implementation.

Trustee Copple asked whether zero-based budgeting would affect budgets and funding allocated to specific programs. Ms. Slagan responded that the methodology is intended to support innovation and allow departments and divisions to request funding based on need. She stated that programs will submit projected budget needs annually and that funding decisions will be based on what programs need to grow, innovate, and support student success, rather than relying on prior-year funding amounts. She stated that this differs from

the rollover method, where departments typically receive the same amount year after year regardless of changing needs.

Trustee McNeil stated that the model provides greater accountability and gives faculty and unions more input into resource discussions. Ms. Slagan stated that the approach supports data-driven spending.

He stated that zero-based budgeting allows the College to build programs first and then build the budget around those programs, rather than limiting programs based on existing budgets. He thanked Ms. Slagan for the explanation and stated that he looked forward to a future presentation to the Board.

13.3 APPROVAL OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER REORGANIZATION

**Motion:** Approve the Child Development Center reorganization as presented.

**Moved by:** Brad Arneson

**Seconded by:** Angel Ramirez

**Action:** Motion Carries

**Vote:**

- **Yes:** Melina Rangel-Ruiz, Stella Styers, Gloria Copple, Jon McNeil, Angel Ramirez, Brad Arneson, Glenda Williams

13.4 APPROVAL OF COLA INCREASE TO SUPERINTENDENT/PRESIDENT'S BASE SALARY

**Motion:** Approve the 2.3% COLA increase to the Superintendent/President's base salary.

**Moved by:** Stella Styers

**Seconded by:** Brad Arneson

**Action:** Motion Carries

**Vote:**

- **Yes:** Melina Rangel-Ruiz, Stella Styers, Gloria Copple, Jon McNeil, Angel Ramirez, Brad Arneson, Glenda Williams

13.5 APPROVAL OF EMPLOYMENT CONTRACT FOR CLASSIFIED ADMINISTRATOR

Trustee Copple read the following statement: “Within the agenda 13.5 the Board is being asked to approve an employment contract for Stephanie Slagan. The employment agreement term is from July 1, 2026 to June 30, 2027. The annual salary for the position of Assistant Superintendent/Vice President of Administrative Services and College Advancement is \$216,995 with health and welfare benefits consistent with similar level administrators of the District.”

**Motion:** Approve the Employment Contract for the Classified Administrator as presented.

**Moved by:** Angel Ramirez

**Seconded by:** Stella Styers

**Action:** Motion Carries

**Vote:**

- **Yes:** Stella Styers, Angel Ramirez, Brad Arneson, Glenda Williams
- **No:** Gloria Copple, Jon McNeil

**Board Discussion / Questions & Answers:**

Trustee Copple questioned the proposed employment contract, stating that it appeared to include a significant increase and asking why the Board would want to approve it. She stated that the administrator appeared to be receiving both an increase and what she described as a “two-step raise,” and questioned whether administrators typically move only one step at a time.

Dr. Moses asked Elena Rodriguez to respond to the questions.

Ms. Rodriguez explained that the administrator’s current contract is a multi-year contract that began several years ago and that, under the terms of that contract, the administrator was entitled to step increases each July 1. She stated that the proposed contract reflects the administrator’s current

placement after factoring in the step increases that were already earned under the existing contract.

Trustee Copple stated that the current contract expires next year.

Ms. Rodriguez explained that the contract includes a six-month non-renewal notice requirement and that because the contract expires on June 30, 2026, the deadline to issue a non-renewal notice would be December 30, 2025. She stated that this is why the contract was being presented to the Board at this time.

Trustee McNeil asked whether the administrator was receiving two steps at once or one step per year.

Ms. Rodriguez responded that the administrator receives one step each year. She stated that the administrator is currently at her present placement and would move up one step on July 1.

Trustee Copple restated her understanding that the administrator is currently on Row 16, Step 8, and that the proposed contract would place her at Row 16, Step 10, which she stated reflected an increase of approximately \$26,000. She questioned where the six-month notice requirement appeared in the contract.

Trustee Copple confirmed that the six-month notice requirement was included in the contract and read the following provision into the record: "At least six months in advance, if the Board determines that the Administrator is not to be re-employed by appointment or contract in their administrative position upon the expiration of the term of this agreement, the Administrator shall be given written notice of this determination at least six months in advance of the expiration of the appointment or contract."

Trustee Cople asked whether the Board could wait until the following July to take action.

Ms. Rodriguez responded that because the contract expires June 30, 2026, the six-month notice deadline is December 30, 2025. She stated that if the District does not issue a non-renewal notice by that date, the contract automatically extends for an additional year.

Trustee Cople asked whether voting no on the item would result in the contract extending for another year.

Ms. Rodriguez responded yes.

Trustee McNeil asked whether approving the item would result in a three-year contract.

Ms. Rodriguez responded that the contract being presented for approval is a one-year contract.

Trustee McNeil asked whether the contract would be effective in July and stated that it appeared to function as a two-year contract because of the step increases.

Ms. Rodriguez clarified that the contract being presented is a one-year contract covering July 1, 2026 through June 30, 2027. She stated that the step increase for the current year was already incorporated into the previously approved contract and that the new step reflected in this contract would not take effect until July 1, 2026.

Trustee Cople and Trustee McNeil commented that the contract appeared to reflect two years.

Ms. Rodriguez reiterated that the contract presented is for one year only and that the administrator would receive one step increase under the new contract.

Trustee McNeil asked again whether the Board was voting on two steps.

Ms. Rodriguez responded that the Board was voting on one step.

**Public Comment (taken after Item 13.6, per legal counsel's guidance):**

**Alice Dean** addressed the Board and stated that she is not a “numbers person,” but based on her understanding, the Child Development Center project, which fell under Stephanie’s responsibility, initially began as a \$4 or \$5 million project and increased to approximately \$15 million. Ms. Dean stated that, in her view, any general contractor would have been fired for that type of increase and what she described as misuse of funds.

Ms. Dean stated that, although she is not a finance professional, those were the numbers she understood based on reviewing agendas over time. She stated that additional change orders have continued to be approved for a project that she believed was already completed, resulting in continued expenditures. Ms. Dean stated that she believed this represented a misuse of District funds and taxpayer money for a Child Development Center that, in her view, should not have cost \$15 million or the amount ultimately expended.

13.6 APPROVAL OF EMPLOYMENT CONTRACT FOR EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATOR

Trustee Cople read the following statement: “Within the agenda 13.6 the Board is being asked to approve an employment contract for Clint Cowden. The employment

agreement term is from July 1, 2026 to June 30, 2028. The annual salary for the position of Assistant Superintendent/Vice President of Instruction and Student Services, is \$239,237, health and welfare benefits consistent with similar level administrators of the District.”

**Motion:** Approve the Employment Contract for the Educational Administrator as presented.

**Moved by:** Brad Arneson

**Seconded by:** Angel Ramirez

**Action:** Motion Failed

**Vote:**

- **Yes:** Stella Styers, Angel Ramirez, Brad Arneson
- **No:** Gloria Copple, Jon McNeil, Glenda Williams

**Public Comment:**

**Diana Navarro** addressed the Board and stated that she wished to shift the focus from negativity and instead highlight the positive changes she has observed under the leadership of Clint Cowden. Ms. Navarro stated that she would like to share her experience working with Mr. Cowden and then read the following statement into the record:

“I would like to share a brief overview of what my experience has been working with Clint Cowden over the past 18 months. Clint is the sixth Vice President of Instruction and Student Services that we have had in the past seven years. This significant turnover in leadership has previously left the Office of Instruction and Student Services without consistent support or guidance for two major departments on our campus.

Since Clint’s appointment, I have observed positive changes. Clint Cowden’s leadership qualities and contributions are the following. Clint operates with no hidden agenda and demonstrates consistent integrity and transparency in his actions. He is fair in principle and generous in practice. He

actively includes all constituent groups in decision-making processes.

Clint is deeply involved in community engagement, ensuring that student services participate in outreach efforts. He has implemented a system to guarantee Palo Verde College maintains a strong presence in the community. He has developed an eight-year planning calendar between 2025 and 2033 that incorporates compliance deadlines for all campus plans.

When faced with difficult decisions, Clint relies on data-driven analysis to support the decisions he makes. During the CEP plan development, he ensured every voice was heard, fostering collaboration and inclusivity. He maintains open communication and collaborates with CDCR, Palo Verde Unified School District, and Needles Unified School District. He has traveled to multiple institutions to strengthen partnerships.

Clint was asked to speak at the CIM graduation not long ago. He has successfully secured a \$1 million grant from Metropolitan Water to support employment with the Palo Verde Irrigation District. He demonstrates care for students, including hosting a meal for women's and men's athletic teams prior to the season. He also provides structure and holds his team accountable when needed.

Clint's commitment to transparency, strategic planning, and community engagement exemplifies strong leadership and dedication to student success.”

**Elizabeth Cusick** addressed the Board and stated that part of the reason she spoke earlier was because of Clint Cowden. Ms. Cusick stated that, in her view, there is no transparency and described coercion, miscommunication, discrimination, favoritism, and retaliation. She stated that these issues have

occurred since Mr. Cowden has been at the College and stated that the list of concerns “goes on and on.”

During her remarks, Ms. Cusick turned to Diana Navarro and stated, “Great speech, Diana.”

Ms. Cusick continued by stating that any positive changes that have been made are not the result of one person’s efforts, but rather the efforts of the community college as a whole. She stated that she was not saying that Mr. Cowden has not done a good job and stated that she believes everyone is trying to succeed. However, she stated that there are significant barriers, which she described as including threats, severe threats, harassment, discrimination, and retaliation.

Ms. Cusick stated that by harassment she meant conduct that is severe, ongoing, and does not stop. She stated that she is not someone who causes issues and that she comes to work, does her job, and enjoys her students. She stated that if these conditions continue, the College will continue to experience turnover, people will continue to be hurt, and the District will lose good employees, educators, and students who feel frustrated and hurt.

During her public comment, Ms. Cusick stated that the Board is not hearing certain voices because individuals are being threatened and are afraid to come forward, stating, “That is what’s happening,” and pointed to Student Trustee Melina Rangel-Ruiz when referencing a student present at the meeting.

Student Trustee **Melina Rangel-Ruiz** then addressed the Board and stated the following:

Ms. Rangel-Ruiz stated that she agreed with Ms. Cusick on behalf of the students. She stated that she did not know she was allowed to speak on the matter and clarified that she did not mean any harm toward Mr. Cowden, stating, “I get it,

we're all people." She stated that the majority of students do not trust Mr. Cowden and stated, "We don't trust the majority of you guys," adding that this has been known for some time.

Ms. Rangel-Ruiz stated that it is upsetting to see faculty members defending Mr. Cowden for what she described as a small amount of things he has done, stating that he could be doing more. She stated that although students may not experience the same situations directly, they observe behavior through body language, actions, and reactions. She stated, "We're not dumb and we're not blind," and added that students study psychology and learn that body language communicates meaning.

Ms. Rangel-Ruiz stated that there have been many troubling issues at the College and stated that, personally, she thought she was joining a good school and working with good people. She stated that once she became more involved, she felt the environment was "corrupted," "weird," and worse than expected. She stated that although she had heard the College was not political, it feels political upon entering the campus and no longer feels welcoming.

Ms. Rangel-Ruiz stated that high school students do not feel welcome at the College and do not want to attend. She stated that ASG has been trying its best to bring students back and to give them hope that the College can grow by listening to student voices. She stated that students struggle to do so when they do not see meaningful change. She further stated that faculty speak positively about certain individuals, but students have not seen positive results beyond financial matters, and questioned what money alone will do when the College is already losing funding. Ms. Rangel-Ruiz concluded by stating that these remarks reflected her perspective as a student.

Elizabeth Cusick thanked Student Trustee Melina Rangel-Ruiz for speaking and then concluded her public comment by stating that she did not mean any harm to anyone and

emphasized that she was being serious. She stated, “Please, you’re the Board.” Ms. Cusick stated that she does not agree with the proposed raises, stating that the amount of approximately \$26,000 is “another salary.” She stated, “What are we doing?” noting that enrollment is down.

Ms. Cusick stated that leadership should be the first to say they would skip a raise or consider how they could help students more. She asked why those actions are not being taken. Speaking as a community member, Ms. Cusick asked the Board to not extend the contract and to not approve raises. She stated that she understood the decision may be difficult and stated that she believes there is information the Board may not be aware of. Ms. Cusick encouraged Board members to spend time on campus, talk to students, and hear their voices, stating that she believes that is why Board members hold their positions.

**Scott Dean** addressed the Board and stated that he recalled a prior Board meeting held upstairs in another building where Dr. Ger stated she was going to eliminate the TRiO program. Mr. Dean stated that Trustee McNeil asked who was making that decision, and Dr. Ger responded that she was. Mr. Dean stated that the decision was made by administration rather than the Board and asked, “So who’s in charge of the College?”

Mr. Dean stated that at the same meeting Trustee Cople asked what was happening and why the College did not have money. He stated that the largest expense for any organization, nonprofit or otherwise, is labor. He stated that when the College continues to give raises, labor costs continue to increase without necessarily hiring additional staff.

Mr. Dean stated that when the College hires individuals who, in his view, do not know how to do their jobs, the District then has to hire additional people to train and support them, which he stated costs even more money. He specifically

referenced Mr. Cowden and stated that when another individual must be hired to “hold his hand” and teach him how to do his job, that additional person often costs more than the original hire. Mr. Dean stated that hiring someone who does not already know how to do the job results in increased costs and that giving raises under those circumstances does not benefit the College.

Mr. Dean stated that the College has been giving raises “like crazy” and stated that doing so does not help the Board, the College, or employee performance. He stated that studies show increasing pay does not increase performance and stated that approving raises only hurts the College financially. Mr. Dean stated that despite repeated warnings from multiple individuals, including himself, the College continues to make decisions that will result in financial losses, including impacts related to CDCR.

Mr. Dean stated that the Board has placed itself “in the biggest pit” possible and urged the Board not to do this to the College or the City. He stated that his comments were not based on anger, but frustration, stating that he sees the same issues repeatedly. He stated that increasing labor costs without corresponding revenue leads to financial imbalance and questioned where the funding will come from as enrollment continues to decline. He concluded by asking where the money will come from to sustain the increased labor costs.

Student Trustee **Melina Rangel-Ruiz** added an additional comment and stated, “Just really quick, to add on to the raises.” She stated that if the District has that amount of money, there is a deaf student and a blind student who do not have interpreters and are failing their classes because they do not have that help. She stated that if that money could go toward providing an interpreter so students could have someone translating their classes and actually helping them, and having support in place for students to succeed, that would be a good way to spend the money.

**Richard Castillo** addressed the Board and stated that it is important for the public, and especially faculty, to be able to comment on employment matters because administrators make recommendations regarding continuation of employment following evaluations. He stated that faculty may receive positive evaluations and still be let go if they are untenured, and that even tenured faculty can face challenges.

Mr. Castillo stated that he wished to raise an issue that occurred in February of the current year involving the termination of Rachel Parker, a temporary part-time library employee. He stated that he was present as her union representative, along with Dr. Kim Dieu, and that representing the District at that meeting were Clint Cowden, Ger Xiong, and Elena Rodriguez. Mr. Castillo stated that Mr. Cowden informed Ms. Parker that complaints had been received from two students and staff alleging misconduct, and that based on those complaints, she was terminated on behalf of the Board.

Mr. Castillo stated that Ms. Parker attempted to respond but was not given the opportunity to present her case and that no investigation was conducted. He stated that the union requested copies of the complaints or notes documenting the complaints and was told to submit the request in writing. Mr. Castillo stated that the union submitted a formal written request for all complaints or notes related to Ms. Parker.

Mr. Castillo then read from the District's written response, which stated that the request did not seek identifiable or existing information, that the District had no obligation to disclose opinions or impressions of administration, and that the District did not indicate it had received any form of complaints and could not disclose documents or information that did not exist. Mr. Castillo stated that this response contradicted the justification given for Ms. Parker's termination and questioned how an employee could be terminated based on complaints that were later stated not to exist.

Mr. Castillo stated that Ms. Parker's account of the incident involved asking two students in the library to quiet down, which they did, and that she was terminated days later. He stated that Ms. Parker was given approximately five minutes to clear out her office and leave, and that the termination meeting lasted only a few minutes. Mr. Castillo described the process as cold, uncaring, and unsympathetic.

Mr. Castillo stated that he was glad the matter was being discussed publicly, noting that if administrators can speak privately to the Board about employees, transparency is critical. He stated that he was recommending the Board not approve the contract. He further stated that he has had ongoing issues with Mr. Cowden in negotiations, stating that Mr. Cowden leads negotiations, delays progress, and has engaged in actions that faculty have found problematic.

Mr. Castillo stated that when Mr. Cowden first arrived at the College, he found him workable and collaborative, but that beginning in August 2025, his demeanor changed significantly and that Mr. Cowden became unworkable. He described an incident involving Ms. Rene Roedel's prison teaching assignment where he stated that Mr. Cowden initially supported her decision, later attempted to reduce her load.

Mr. Castillo stated that the incident involving Ms. Parker was what ultimately changed his position and led him to conclude that the manner in which the termination was handled was unacceptable. He stated that he believes a significant portion of the problems faculty experience at the College would be resolved if Mr. Cowden were no longer employed, and stated that this was his personal view.

### **Board Discussion / Questions & Answers:**

Trustee Copple asked Elena Rodriguez to return to the podium to clarify the employment contract for Mr. Cowden. Trustee Copple stated that, with the prior contract item the

Board had just approved for Stephanie, it was “just one step,” but that with Mr. Cowden’s contract she was viewing it as Mr. Cowden receiving three steps, moving from Step 9 to Step 12.

Ms. Rodriguez responded that Mr. Cowden is currently under a multi-year contract and that each July 1 that has passed under that contract included a step increase. She stated that the new contract being presented reflects the step increases that accrued each July 1 under the existing contract. She stated that for the new contract, it would reflect his current placement plus one additional step effective July 1.

Trustee Cople asked whether Mr. Cowden is at Step 9 right now and whether he is going to Step 12. Trustee Cople stated that Mr. Cowden’s current contract started February 19, 2024 and ends June 30, 2026.

Ms. Rodriguez responded that for every July 1 that has passed, he would have had an additional step, and that the contract being presented reflects those additional years.

Trustee Cople asked whether the contract extended “all the way to 2028.”

Ms. Rodriguez responded, “Yes.”

Trustee Cople stated that the increase was about \$39,000.

Trustee McNeil asked whether it was a two-year contract.

Ms. Rodriguez responded, “Yes.”

**Additional Discussion/Public Comment – Procedural Clarification:**

Alice Dean addressed the Board and stated that she wanted to remind the Board about issues related to Mr. Cowden, noting that negotiations lasted approximately 18 months. Ms. Dean then asked whether there would be an opportunity for public comment on the prior employment contract item that had already been approved, stating that the public did not have the opportunity to speak on Stephanie's contract.

Trustee Copple asked whether Ms. Dean was referring to the contract that had just been approved.

Ms. Dean responded yes and stated that no one present knew public comment was allowed on that item until the Board reached Mr. Cowden's contract.

Naomi Alaniz stated that the procedure regarding public comment is stated on the front of the agenda as well as on the Speaker Request Form.

Ms. Dean responded that the Interim President did not announce public comment for the prior item as was done for Mr. Cowden's contract.

Ms. Alaniz responded that because she had received a Speaker Request Form, she knew there was public comment for the item. She stated that the District can improve its process so that when the Board reaches each item, including consent and action items, the Board can explicitly call for public comment.

Trustee Copple stated that she did not think the community was aware that this procedural change had been made.

Trustee McNeil stated that the procedure is clearly stated on the website and on the agenda.

Ms. Alaniz stated that while the procedure is stated, she agreed with Ms. Dean that the process is new.

Ms. Dean stated that the announcement regarding public comment was made for Mr. Cowden's contract but not for Stephanie's contract, and that this was when people realized public comment was allowed. She stated that, had the announcement been made earlier, there would likely have been significant public comment on the prior contract as well. Ms. Dean stated that she believed it was unfair to skip public comment on that item under those circumstances.

Trustee Styers stated that a motion had been made, seconded, and voted upon, and stated that as a Board, she did not believe the item could be brought back, noting that the action had already been taken.

Kathy Meola, District legal counsel, stated that it was correct that the item had already been voted upon. She stated that, as a conservative measure, she would recommend taking public comment on the previously approved item if there were speakers wishing to comment, even though the vote had already occurred. Ms. Meola stated that Education Code applicable to community college districts specifically allows for public comment on each agenda item as it is taken up by the Board. She recommended that the Board complete the item currently under consideration, including taking the roll call vote, and then allow public comment on the prior item without reopening or reconsidering the action already taken.

13.7 EXCUSAL OF TRUSTEE ANGEL RAMIREZ FROM NOVEMBER 18, 2025, REGULAR MEETING

**Motion:** Approve the excusal of Trustee Angel Ramirez from the November 18, 2025, Regular Meeting.

**Moved by:** Brad Arneson

**Seconded by:** Jon McNeil

**Action:** Motion Carries

**Vote:**

- **Yes:** Melina Rangel-Ruiz, Stella Styers, Gloria Copple, Jon McNeil, Brad Arneson, Glenda Williams
- **Recused:** Angel Ramirez

## **14. CLOSING OF MEETING**

### 14.1 POSSIBLE FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Trustee McNeil requested the following future agenda items:  
(1) Budget update and validation of numbers related to Needles; and (2) Prison/Rising Scholar program update.

### 14.2 ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 9:16 p.m.

*Bruce Moses*

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**Dr. Bruce Moses, Superintendent/President**

### **Minutes approved at January 13, 2026, Regular Board Meeting**

*Minutes generated by Naomi Alaniz, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent/President and Board of Trustees. These minutes are a concise summary of reports, discussions, and actions taken at this meeting. For detailed comments and discussion, a tape is available to the public for 30 days after the date of this meeting.*

# 12.9.25 BOT Regular Organizational Meeting Minutes

Final Audit Report

2026-01-15

|                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| Created:        | 2026-01-14                                   |
| By:             | Naomi Alaniz (naomi.alaniz@paloverde.edu)    |
| Status:         | Signed                                       |
| Transaction ID: | CBJCHBCAABAAxOR4qVwS0VbqHX29jPaLotr98kQMK3Uy |

## "12.9.25 BOT Regular Organizational Meeting Minutes" History

-  Document created by Naomi Alaniz (naomi.alaniz@paloverde.edu)  
2026-01-14 - 11:58:27 PM GMT
-  Document emailed to Bruce Moses (bruce.moses@paloverde.edu) for signature  
2026-01-14 - 11:59:32 PM GMT
-  Email viewed by Bruce Moses (bruce.moses@paloverde.edu)  
2026-01-15 - 0:28:22 AM GMT
-  Document e-signed by Bruce Moses (bruce.moses@paloverde.edu)  
Signature Date: 2026-01-15 - 0:28:33 AM GMT - Time Source: server
-  Agreement completed.  
2026-01-15 - 0:28:33 AM GMT