



## **PALO VERDE COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT**

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

SPECIAL MEETING

### **MINUTES**

Wednesday, December 17, 2025

**Closed Session** 4:00 p.m. | **Open Session** 4:30 p.m.(approximately)

*Open Session will reconvene at 4:30 p.m. or immediately following the conclusion of the Closed Session.*

**Physical Meeting Location:** One College Drive, Blythe, CA - CL 108

**Livestream Meeting Location:** PVC Needles Center, 725 W. Broadway, Needles, CA 92363 - B13

### **1. OPENING OF MEETING**

#### **1.1 CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 4:11 p.m. by Vice President/Acting President Gloria Copple.

#### **1.2 ROLL CALL**

- **Trustees Present:** Gloria Copple, Stella Styers, Jon McNeil, Glenda Williams, Melina Rangel-Ruiz(Student Trustee)
- **Trustees Absent:** Angel Ramirez, Brad Arneson
- **Administrators Present:** Dr. Bruce Moses, Superintendent/President

**Note:**

- *Trustee McNeil and Trustee Williams attended from the Needles Educational Center.*

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

1.3 FLAG SALUTE

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

1.4 APPROVAL OF CLOSED SESSION AGENDA

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

**Moved by:** Stella Styers

**Seconded by:** Jon McNeil

**Action:** Motion Carries

**Vote:**

- **Yes:** Stella Styers, Gloria Copple, Jon McNeil, 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

**Alice Dean**

Alice Dean stated that she was disappointed in the Board for the decision made the previous week and reminded the Board that the decisions made are not just representing numbers, but represent people with lives, including good people who have provided many years of service to the college. She stated that she was interested to know what the Board was told that resulted in a 6-0 vote. Ms. Dean reminded the Board that they are there for the people, the students, and the people who run the college, not for the people making six-figure salaries who sit with them. She stated that she was speaking for herself only and that her comments had nothing to do with anything else she does at the college. Ms. Dean stated that she was speaking as a person who works at the college and as a taxpayer, and reminded the Board that this is an important job and that

they were elected because people trusted them to do what is best for the college. She stated that she felt the Board's responsibility had been trampled and reminded the Board that when they go into closed session, the matter is about people and about what is right and what is true.

### **Irma Gonzalez**

Irma Gonzalez read the following statement into record:

"I'd like to address the allegations brought against me at the last board meeting. The allegations made against me by Elizabeth Cusick, asserting my involvement in fraudulent activity, are false, unsubstantial, and made with reckless disregard for the truth. These statements constitute defamation of character through both libel and slander as they were communicated in written and verbal forms on December 9th. They have no factual basis and have caused harm to my professional reputation.

I formally dispute these allegations in their entirety and request that they be dismissed. These allegations are categorically false. At no time have I engaged in fraudulent behavior, misrepresentation of grant activities, or misconduct of any kind. The claims made against me lack factual basis, are contradicted by documented evidence, and appear to be made with reckless disregard for the truth to harm my professional reputation.

I have not worked directly with Ms. Cusick since last summer. During the period in which I did supervise the TRIO grant and Ms. Cusick in her role as a Director with close communication with the Department of Education. I consistently provided guidance, oversight, training, and Institutional support consistent with District expectations and federal grant requirements.

Ms. Cusick has repeatedly misrepresented program goals,

grant outcomes and fiscal responsibilities. These concerns were documented and addressed through multiple supervisory meetings, written, follow-up and clarification emails, joint meetings with fiscal services, HR involvement, along with coaching and intervention by senior administration. A detailed timeline of remediation efforts and staff concerns is documented in a March 4, 2024, write up, which directly contradicts Ms. Cusick narrative and establishes a clear pattern of mismanagement, communication failures and refusal to follow established chain of command.

Ms. Cusick's accusations against me constitute defamatory statements made without evidence and with apparent intent to shift responsibility for her own documented errors, misrepresentations and compliance failures. These statements have been communicated in ways that damage my professional standing and credibility.

Further, multiple TRIO staff members have shared, confidentially, I might add, out of fear of retaliation, that Ms. Cusick made derogatory and negative statements about me directly to them. Additionally, members of the community have independently approached me to report similar derogatory statements made by Ms. Cusick outside the workplace. These actions were unprofessional and contributed to a hostile work environment, further supporting the documented pattern of bullying and intimidation reported by the staff.

I will be filing an official workplace complaint with HR on these false accusations.”

### **Scott Dean**

Scott Dean addressed the Board and asked whether there were plans to fill Staci Lee's position or whether others would be expected to take on the work she previously performed. He stated that Ms. Lee did a great deal for the

college during the many years she worked there and that it would be very hard to replace her, adding that he did not believe she could truly be replaced. He stated that he hoped the Board had a plan, noting that Ms. Lee is not coming back, and expressed that the Board may have made a huge mistake because of that fact. Mr. Dean stated that he did not know what occurred in closed session, what information the Board had, or whether that information was true. He stated that if the information was not true, then the Board really screwed up big time, and concluded by stating that he thought the Board really messed this up real bad.

### **Richard Castillo**

Richard Castillo, President of the Palo Verde College Association Faculty Union, stated that he was speaking on behalf of the Union. He stated that the PVC Faculty Union met the previous evening to discuss recent events at Palo Verde College. During that meeting, the union membership discussed the ramifications of those events and how they would affect faculty and their work at the college. He stated that the discussion included current issues, negotiations with District administration, the lack of faculty involvement on matters pertaining to faculty or teaching load, course cancellations and enrollment issues, the lack of student support services, especially for students who are deaf, blind, or physically disabled, and the most recent accusations lodged against District administration by a current employee at the Board meeting held the previous Tuesday.

Mr. Castillo stated that after long deliberation, the Faculty Union voted on three votes of no confidence for administrators whom the Union believes are responsible and accountable for these issues: Irma Gonzalez, Associate Dean of Counseling; Stephanie Slogan, Assistant Superintendent/Vice President of Administrative Services; and Clint Cowden, Assistant Superintendent/Vice President of Instruction and Student Services.

Mr. Castillo further stated that the votes of no confidence regarding Ms. Gonzalez and Ms. Slagan are continuing and have been ongoing since May 2023, noting that this was the seventh time the Union has reported votes of no confidence for those two administrators.

### **Elizabeth Cusick**

Elizabeth Cusick stated that she was the TRIO Director and a community member. Ms. Cusick turned to Irma Gonzalez and stated, “Irma, thank you,” and then turned back to address the Board.

Ms. Cusick addressed the Board Members and stated that the leaders of the Institution, whose names grace the college buildings, envisioned an institution that uplifts the community, expands opportunity, and serves as a trusted public institution grounded in integrity and accountability. She stated that what she, along with many students, faculty, staff, and community members, have witnessed during the last several administrations, not just the current administration but prior administrations as well, does not adhere to that vision. She stated that instead, there has been a growing pattern of unresolved concerns, governance failures, and a lack of meaningful response to individuals who have raised issues through appropriate channels.

Ms. Cusick stated that due to these concerns, multiple complaints and referrals have been submitted to the Chancellor’s Office requesting independent administrative reviews of institutional practices, fiscal oversight, and leadership conduct at Palo Verde College. She stated that these referrals reflect sustained and credible concerns raised over time, not isolated dissatisfaction. She further stated that despite this, the Board majority has continued to approve, retain, and protect senior administrators who are under scrutiny, referencing three administrators

previously mentioned. She stated that rather than exercising independent oversight, this inaction has undermined trust and placed the college at academic, physical, legal, and reputational risk.

Ms. Cusick stated that for these reasons, she was formally stating her intent to pursue a recall of Trustees Angel Ramirez, Stella Camargo-Styers, and Brad Arneson. She stated that the action was not personal, but a governance matter rooted in the Board majority's repeated failure to respond appropriately to serious concerns. She referenced prior Board meetings where students spoke about administrative issues and stated that despite those comments, the Board continued to approve contracts, noting that this has occurred numerous times. Ms. Cusick stated, "Where are we leading our students? Where? Where have you taken us? To here, really?" She questioned whether the situation is fair to students or the community and stated, "Is that fair to your students, to the community? Think about it." She further stated, "Do you think we want to stand up here and do this?"

Ms. Cusick stated that the recall effort is not personal and reiterated that it is a governance matter rooted in the Board majority's repeated failure to respond appropriately to serious concerns, including concerns elevated to the state level. She stated that in recent weeks, individuals who had worked at the college for over 20 years were placed on administrative leave and released. Ms. Cusick questioned whether any reasons were provided. She stated that staff have been told repeatedly to go to Human Resources and that if they go to the Board they would be terminated. She stated that staff have been told they have no rights to go to the Board, no rights to report fraud, and emphasized, "Zero rights."

Ms. Cusick stated that the recall effort is about restoring accountability, transparency, and responsible leadership, and realigning Palo Verde College with the vision upon

which it was founded so that it may continue to serve students and the community with integrity.

Ms. Cusick addressed Trustee Stella Camargo-Styers directly, stating that she believes Trustee Styers is a good person, and asked her to make the right choice for the community.

Ms. Cusick then turned to address Irma Gonzalez and stated, “Ms. Irma, you have so many concerns. Like I said, let’s do a forensic audit.”

Trustee Cople advised Ms. Cusick that she could only speak to the Board.

Ms. Cusick apologized and stated that information she shared with the Board the previous week was confidential and given in confidence, and questioned how it was shared with other administrators, stating that she believed this constituted a violation.

**Trustee Cople** asked whether there were any other speakers.

**Naomi Alaniz** asked whether the comments were limited to closed session items.

**Trustee Cople** responded affirmatively.

**Christina Felix** stated that previous speakers had addressed items that were not closed session matters.

**Trustee Cople** stated that the public does not really know what is discussed in closed session, other than what is listed

on the agenda, which indicates litigation, and that based on what occurred at the prior meeting, individuals are assuming it has to do with comments made by Ms. Cusick.

**Christina Felix** stated that she also had an assumption, explaining that a Board member had made a comment she believed related to her and that the matter may be discussed in closed session because it was requested to be handled that way. She stated that she wished to speak.

An **audience member** stated, “If they want to talk, let them talk.”

**Trustee Copple** responded that they could speak.

**Christina Felix**

Christina Felix read the following statement into record:

“Good evening, Board Members. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak tonight. My name is Tina Felix, and I am the DSPPS Program Assistant for the Accessibility Resource Center (ARC) formerly known as DSPPS.

I am here this evening because, as a program and as people who care deeply about our students, we have stayed silent for too long while our department and our commitment to student access have been questioned. Those criticisms have often been made without a full understanding of the work we do or the obstacles we face daily. I cannot speak to what existed before my time here, but I can speak with certainty about what we do now. Every day, ARC works tirelessly to bridge the gap between accessibility and education so that our students are not just present-but truly able to succeed.

Recently, we lost the interpreter supporting one of our Deaf students. Whether that was due to personal choice or the non-renewal of an MOU, I do not know, and I will not speculate. What I do know is this: since that loss, we have worked relentlessly to find a replacement. There are no available interpreters within a 100-mile radius willing to travel to our campus. Faced with that reality, we provided the required accommodation available at the time, a captioning tablet. The student did not express that this was insufficient until halfway through the semester, despite ongoing encouragement from our staff to communicate any concerns. When students do not-or cannot-tell us they are struggling, our ability to help them is limited, no matter how much we care.

It has also been said that faculty must inform students of their accommodations because students are unaware of what is available to them. I want to be very clear: that is simply not true. When students enter our program, they meet one-on-one with our counselor, who carefully explains the accommodations they qualify for. Students sign their accommodation forms and request official accommodation letters, which are then sent to their instructors. Both the student and the faculty member are fully informed. This process exists so that students are empowered-not overlooked.

Another student who has been discussed publicly has been deeply mischaracterized. He shared with us, "Everyone is talking about me, but no one is talking to me." Those words matter. At ARC, we talk to our students. We listen. We ask what they need, and we do everything within our power to provide it. But we cannot do this work in isolation. Student success requires partnership, communication, and trust.

I apologize if my words sound strong, but I need you to understand why. When anyone suggests that this program is failing students, it cuts deeply. I am disabled myself. This work is not theoretical to me-it is personal. I would never

knowingly place a barrier in front of a student that I would not want placed in front of my own path.

I can share that we are implementing a virtual interpreter thanks to special funding from the chancellor's office for our current student and any new student that enters the program in the coming semester.

I can also share that over 16 nursing students have succeeded because of the efforts of the ARC programs accommodations. Every student success, even just one, is an accomplishment that we can all be proud of.

Working together with Irma, Ger, and Clint, the ARC team approaches every decision with students at the center. Their success is not an afterthought; it is our driving force. I ask you to remember that every story has more than one side. There is the emotional narrative, and there is the factual reality-and both deserve to be heard before judgment is passed.

Thank you for listening and thank you for allowing me to speak on behalf of our students and our program.”

### **Helen Pouvi**

Helen Pouvi addressed the Board and stated that she was still a student at Palo Verde College and had been advised by someone she respects to do her research before speaking. She stated that she walked around campus and spoke with a lot of faculty today. She noted that some of the faculty members in the room she admires and others she does not, but that she remains honest with herself and stands firm in her beliefs that right is right and wrong is wrong.

Ms. Pouvi stated that she conducted research regarding changes being made on campus by a Vice President. She stated that while she may not personally like him, she believes he may be doing his job, noting that she has seen

data and numbers that support this. She stated that as a student observing what is happening on campus, it is concerning that leadership is not providing a strong foundation for students, especially since students look to campus leadership as role models.

Ms. Pouvi stated that she has spoken with staff members who expressed that while they may not like the Vice President personally, they believe he is doing his job. She questioned why the Vice President would be removed if he is performing his duties and stated that if there are issues related to grants or unmet needs, there should be clear reasons behind those decisions. She stated her belief that the truth will eventually come to light.

Ms. Pouvi stated that if the District wants students to understand the decisions being made, there should be a way for students to be involved or represented in discussions, suggesting that level-headed students be included or able to communicate with leadership and other students. She encouraged the Board to do thorough research before making final decisions.

Ms. Pouvi concluded by stating that if the Vice President is doing what is required of him, he should be retained, and if not, the decision is ultimately up to the Board. She stated that students do not always know the full details of situations and that without clear information, students may come forward without understanding the full context of the issues being discussed.

### **Melina Rangel-Ruiz**

Melina Rangel-Ruiz, Student Trustee, addressed the Board and stated that she wished to clarify comments she made the previous week on behalf of an interpreter. She stated that she is working on a resolution with other colleges regarding the interpreter issue as a volunteer effort undertaken on behalf of students, noting that the effort is

not limited to Palo Verde College but is intended to address interpreter access across colleges.

Ms. Rangel-Ruiz stated that her comments were not intended to attack or threaten any programs and apologized to any programs that felt that way. She stated that her comments were intended as a “wake-up call” to ensure that funds are being used as intended. She stated that she intends to continue working on the resolution and is conducting additional research to support it.

Ms. Rangel-Ruiz stated that the effort may result in increased attention to the campus and occasional visitors, but that the goal is to improve conditions for students. She stated that she is speaking from her experience as a student who previously felt unseen and unheard, noting that she has been at the college for three years and is now speaking publicly. She stated that she is committed to advocating for all students, including those who cannot speak for themselves, and noted that while some students may not be reaching the appropriate resources, they are sharing their concerns with someone who will speak on their behalf.

Ms. Rangel-Ruiz reiterated that her comments were not meant to be directed at or intended to harm anyone and expressed hope that the campus community could be supportive of what is to come. She stated that she hopes the college can grow from the situation, but said that “we just keep showing how dysfunctional we are, and it keeps going.” She stated that she knows Board members and staff are working very hard and that she has seen those efforts, but emphasized that these issues have been going on for a long time and that solutions have not been seen. She concluded by stating that after being at the college for several years and seeing these issues continue, she felt she needed to speak.

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

The Governing Board recessed to Closed Session at 4:42 p.m.

- 3.1 CONFERENCE WITH LEGAL COUNSEL - ANTICIPATED LITIGATION; SIGNIFICANT EXPOSURE TO LITIGATION (GOVERNMENT CODE 54956.9(d)(2) or d(3))

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

- 1 (one) Matter

### **4. RECONVENE TO OPEN SESSION**

The Governing Board reconvened to Open Session at 5:58 p.m.

- 4.1 REPORT ON ANY ACTION TAKEN IN CLOSED SESSION  
Vice President/Acting President Cople announced that no action was taken in Closed Session, and the Board would reconvene on Monday, December 22nd.

### **5. CLOSING OF MEETING**

- 5.1 POSSIBLE FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS  
There were no requests for future agenda items.
- 5.2 ADJOURN  
The meeting adjourned at 5:59 p.m.

*Bruce Moses*

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

**Minutes approved at February 10, 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.*

# 12.17.25 BOT Special Meeting Minutes

Final Audit Report

2026-02-11

|                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| Created:        | 2026-02-11                                   |
| By:             | Naomi Alaniz (naomi.alaniz@paloverde.edu)    |
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