



## **PALO VERDE COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT**

BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
SPECIAL BOARD MEETING

### **MINUTES**

Monday, December 22, 2025

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

Physical Meeting Location: One College Drive, Blythe, CA - CS 123/124

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

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

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

The meeting was called to order at 4:04 p.m. by Vice President/Acting Board President Gloria Copple.

#### **1.2 FLAG SALUTE**

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

#### **1.3 ROLL CALL**

- **Trustees Present:** Gloria Copple, Stella Styers, Jon McNeil, Brad Arneson, Glenda Williams, Melina Rangel-Ruiz(Student Trustee)\*
- **Trustees Absent:** Angel Ramirez

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

**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.*

1.4 APPROVAL OF CLOSED SESSION AGENDA

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

**Moved by:** Stella Styers

**Seconded by:** Brad Arneson

**Action:** Motion Carries

**Vote:**

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

**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

**Elizabeth Cusick**

Elizabeth Cusick addressed the Board and stated, “Hi, everyone. This is the third time that I’m here. I don’t like to be here.” Ms. Cusick read the following statement:

“I am formally reporting a violation of Palo Verde College’s BP/AP 7700. It’s the whistleblower protection. After I reported under the whistleblower law, I was threatened for having reported. Threats or intimidation for whistleblowing constitute retaliation and are expressly prohibited under BP/AP 7700. BP/AP 7700 is clear. The District will not tolerate retaliation when retaliation occurs. The Board has an affirmative duty to act. California law places independent oversight responsibility on governing boards of community colleges. When retaliation is reported, failure

to take corrective action may itself constitute a violation of law and a breach of the Board's fiduciary duty. I followed the law and the college policy by reporting these concerns. I reported over and over. Retaliation continued to occur, and it continues to occur. The Board has an affirmative duty to act.

California law places independent oversight responsibility on governing boards of community colleges. When retaliation is reported, failure to take corrective action may itself constitute a violation of law. As I said before, I followed everything. I reported these concerns through lawful channels, including Department of Ed, Office of Internal General, California Community College Chancellor's Office, and other agencies as well. These actions are proceeded and protected under federal law, including 41 U.S.C. § 4712 and California Labor Code 1102.5.

I am formally requesting protection from the District against further retaliation, as required by BP/AP 7700 and the California Whistleblower law, the Federal Government, California Whistleblower Law. I also want the Board to know that additional employees have come forward, but are fearful. I am adding them to the witness list and request that their identity should be protected. Importantly, this concern is not limited to staff or faculty. Students have also come forward and are asking for protection. They have expressed fear of speaking publicly, a lack of trust and concerns about safety and leadership, and students don't feel safe to raise concerns. That is a serious institutional issue that warrants Board's attention. These concerns are not isolated to a single area, multiple programs, or an independent investigation. A recent comment from a student stating, 'I did my research,' mentioned last week, highlights a larger issue. Program reductions when there are known concerns involving mismanagement, funding irregularities, and data inconsistencies. I'm also deeply concerned by a pattern in which long-tenured staff and directors, many with over 20 years of service, have been

placed on administrative leave or separated without transparent justification, often after raising legal, ethical, or compliance concerns.

This is due to not wanting to do the right thing. The higher administration has let them go. The removal of experienced leaders who prioritize lawful and ethical operations undermines institutional stability, erodes trust and discourages employees and, most importantly, our students, to move forward. When programs are limited now and later restarted, it creates the appearance of resetting accountability. The question before the Board is straightforward. Who managed these programs during the period in question? Accountability rests at the administrative level, and restructuring must not be used to avoid oversight, or push it under the rug.

Given the seriousness of these issues, I strongly recommend that the Board direct the President and Human Resources to implement mandatory trainings to all employees, students, administrators, managers, supervisors, on whistleblower protections, including Palo Verde College BP/AP 7700, California Code 1102.5, and federal protections under 41 U.S.C. § 4712. This training is necessary to ensure compliance of the law and to prevent further retaliation.

The confidential evidence I previously submitted was improperly disclosed. By *(inaudible)* the confidentiality of this process has been compromised. For that reason, updated *(inaudible)* provided only to the Board President and its counsel. As I am following the BP/AP 7700. Finally, for the benefit of employees, students and public, BP/AP 7700 protects the right to report concerns, allows reporting internally or externally, prohibits retaliation, requires the District and this Board to protect whistleblowers and witnesses. Therefore, I highly recommend that everyone speak their voice and do not be afraid. Thank you.”

**Melina Rangel-Ruiz** stated that she had received a message from a student who wished to remain anonymous and asked whether she could speak on the student's behalf. **Vice President/Acting Board President Copple** indicated agreement.

**Melina Rangel-Ruiz, Student Trustee** (on behalf of anonymous student)

Ms. Rangel-Ruiz read the following statement on behalf of the anonymous student:

“Good afternoon, I am a student here at PVC, and as I try to get more involved on campus, the more I realize that this school has more serious issues. Every day I am greeted with smiles, but at this point, I can't tell if they are real or not. With the way our cultural based and other programs are handled, it makes me wonder what staff can I trust? It makes me wonder who I can feel safe around without the thought that the person is reporting to someone else. I want to believe that everything is for a reason and that people are trying to do good, but so far, I have not seen a reason to have faith. Things only seem to get worse over time.”

**Melina Rangel-Ruiz, Student Trustee** (on behalf of herself)

Melina Rangel-Ruiz, Student Trustee, greeted the Board and those present and read the following statement:

“Today I am here to clarify statements I made two weeks ago during the last Board meeting. First, I want to be very clear, it was never my intention for anyone to be placed on leave or to lose their job. What I am asking for is transparency, transparency with students, or at the very least with student government. We want our institutions and programs to truly be student-run and student-centered.

Much of what I said was directed toward Mr. Cowden, and I want to explain why. Before becoming a Student Trustee, I was very much in the background of this campus. I personally witnessed a lack of transparency while serving as the secretary of Puente. Our program was barely notified that Puente was going to be taken away from us. When we tried to fight for it, we did not receive the same level of support that Umoja did. This is not a criticism of Umoja. Students in Umoja themselves notice the unequal treatment and the discrimination toward our program.

Since that experience, I have continued to observe what has been happening on campus. The challenges we are facing are not caused by one individual alone, but by the inability to replace people who were genuinely doing good work for students. As a result, our college is struggling not because it is failing outright, but because it is experiencing serious growth pains while losing key support systems.

I also mentioned the idea of hiring an interpreter. The raises that were discussed amount to an entire salary, and there are many other ways that money could be used to directly support students and accessibility on this campus.

I want to acknowledge that Mr. Cowden has strong ideas and vision. However, effective leadership also requires strong people skills, transparency, and trust, especially when decisions directly impact student programs and communities.

I would also like to address the discussion regarding the appointment of the new trustee. I believe Dale is the strongest candidate for this role. He is highly interactive with students, and constantly shows his support through actions such as scholarships and coaching. His involvement demonstrates a genuine commitment to student success, not just in words, but in practice. While Dale is not from Blythe and may not be fully familiar with all of our local

challenges, I see this as a strength rather than a weakness. An outside perspective can bring clarity and objectivity. Dale has the ability to approach our situation with a clear head, which is something that this Board needs at this moment.

We cannot ignore the fact that our institution is experiencing dysfunction. However, what matters is that we are actively trying to improve. We need leadership that can see both sides, focus on solutions, and help guide us forward rather than deepen divisions.

At the end of the day, my goal is not punishment or blame. My goal is accountability, communication, and a college environment where students feel seen, informed, and genuinely included in the decisions that affect them. Thank you for your time and listening to me.”

### **Robert Hope Murillo**

Robert Hope Murillo addressed the Board and stated that he did not come with a prepared speech because it was winter break and he did not feel up to speaking, but wanted to say a few things following comments made his Student Trustee. He stated that there were misconceptions regarding Puente and that there were individuals trying to harm the Puente program. He stated that he could not go into full details, but said that he knows who “aimed to destroy Puente” and who “took it down.” He stated that as a person who is Mexican and Native, he felt this was harmful to his community and described it as hatred toward his own community.

Mr. Murillo stated that if individuals “want to take down what’s part of me,” then he would “take away what is important to them, which is their job,” and stated that he would “aim for it.” He stated that he was not afraid to be honest and said he had already told multiple people that he is willing to file a grievance, make a report, and go further

than that. He stated that individuals should not harm his community and reiterated that he knows who they are, stating that some of them might be standing here today.

Mr. Murillo stated that some staff need to “get their stuff straightened up” and start acting like leaders. He stated that staff should stop focusing on what ASG needs to be doing or talking about and stated, “We know what we’re doing. We know what we’re going to talk about.” He stated that next semester ASG would be “talking more louder” and that ASG would be “louder than ever.” He stated that he would continue fighting for Needles and referenced speaking with the Needles representative about concerns and comments he had heard around the college. Mr. Murillo stated, “I try my best to be really nice and really kind person, but if you cross the line with my students and people who I’m fighting for, then you’re just not going to get the same respect that you’re going to get all the time.”

Mr. Murillo stated that he wanted everyone at Palo Verde College, including “bosses of bosses,” to “start getting your stuff straight” and “back in order,” and to pay attention to Puente, Needles, and what students and the community need. He encouraged staff to use the break to think about students and next semester. He stated that he was not relaxing during break and described continuing to work with ASG to prepare for next semester and support Needles. He stated that he appreciated Ms. Liz and Ms. Jacklyn, describing them as hardworking, and thanked them.

Mr. Murillo concluded by stating that next semester would be different and stated, “This is the last semester that we are going to be relaxing,” and that staff who are “scared” and “worried about their position” should “stay like that,” reiterating that “ASG will be louder than ever.” He concluded by thanking the Board.

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

The Governing Board recessed to Closed Session at 4:22 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**

Melina Rangel-Ruiz, Student Trustee, departed the meeting at 6:04 p.m. due to illness.

The Governing Board reconvened to Open Session at 6:53 p.m.

- 4.1 REPORT ON ANY ACTION TAKEN IN CLOSED SESSION  
Vice President/Acting Board President Copple reported the following: “After further discussion, an investigation will be conducted.”

**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 6:54p.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.*

# 12.22.25 BOT Special Meeting Minutes

Final Audit Report

2026-02-11

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