



**PALO VERDE COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
SPECIAL MEETING/STUDY SESSION
Tuesday, January 28, 2025
Open Session 4:00 p.m.
One College Drive, Blythe, CA – CS 209
(Livestream held at PVC Needles Center, 725 W. Broadway, Needles, CA)**

MINUTES

1. OPENING OF MEETING

1.1 Call to Order

- The meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m. by Board President, Stella Styers.

1.2 Flag Salute

- The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

1.3 Roll Call

- Trustees Present:
 - Stella Styers, President of the Board
 - Gloria Cople, Vice President of the Board
 - Jon McNeil, Clerk of the Board
 - Angel Ramirez, Trustee
 - Brad Arneson, Trustee
 - George Thomas, Trustee
 - Glenda Williams, Trustee

- Administrators Present:
 - Dr. Bruce Moses, Superintendent President
 - Clint, Cowden, Asst. Supt./V.P. of Instruction and Student Services
 - Stephanie Slagan, Asst. Supt./V.P. of Administrative Services and College Advancement

1.4 Approval of Agenda

- Action: Approve the Agenda for this meeting.

Motion by Brad E Arneson, second by Angel Ramirez.
 Yes: Stella C Styers, Gloria A Cople, Jon E McNeil, Angel Ramirez, Brad E Arneson, George W Thomas, Glenda K Williams
 Final Resolution: Motion Carries

1.5 Announcement of Recusal From Agenda Items

- No recusals were declared.

2. HEARING OF CITIZENS – AGENDA ITEMS

2.1 Members of the public have this opportunity to directly address the Board on agenda items.

Each speaker will be allowed a maximum of five (5) minutes per topic. Fifteen (15) minutes shall be the maximum time allotment for public speakers on any one subject regardless of the number of speakers at any one board meeting.

- Rick Daniels addressed the Board regarding agenda item 4.1.

3. STUDY SESSION

3.1 Board Duties and Responsibilities, Standards of Practice, Code of Ethics and Self-Evaluation

- Informational documents were attached to the agenda for the Trustees' reference and review.
No discussion took place.

4. DISCUSSION ITEMS

4.1 Needles City Council Resolution No. 2025-8

Trustee McNeil began the discussion by reading the following excerpt from a January 15, 2025, article published by the Needles Desert Star: “The resolution tries to emphasize that “this is not a competition between campuses but a shared effort to ensure PVCC’s long-term success by improving services, enrollment and opportunities for all communities.” “The resolution passed unanimously”. The full article was distributed to the Trustees and put on file. Mr. Arneson asked Mr. McNeil where the information from the resolution came from. Mr. McNeil answered that the information came from a variety of places, including Mr. Rick Daniels and himself. Mr. Arneson shared his concerns with Mr. McNeil, noting that Mr. McNeil presents this [resolution] as [Palo Verde College] not having a plan in place that encompasses the City of Needles. He also said that Mr. McNeil presents this [resolution] as though Needles is a campus as opposed to a center and questioned why Needles feels that it is eligible for or equal to a campus. Mr. Arneson stated that it appears that the City of Needles voted on a resolution that was based on misinformation obtained from Mr. McNeil. Mr. Arneson expressed his concern with Mr. McNeil’s integrity and behavior.

Mr. McNeil asserted that there is no budget for Needles, stating, “That’s what this resolution says.” He mentioned that the Dean doesn’t have the budget. Mr. McNeil stated that he has personally requested the budget multiple times. Mr. McNeil stated, “Every program should have a budget, and every Program Director and Dean should be responsible for their program, and that’s how you hold them accountable.” He posed two questions: “How much money are we generating in Needles?” and “How much is being spent in Needles?” Mr. McNeil said that knowing the answer to the two questions will answer the question, “What should be going on in Needles?” Ms. Styers reported that we can have that budget information at the next study session. Mr. McNeil responded that it would be terrific. He stated that he had requested the information from the previous Superintendent, who refused to provide it, and the Interim Superintendent did not have the information, so he could not provide it. Mr. McNeil said that it’s critical to know about our operation, asking the question, “Are we draining the budget, or are we adding to the budget?” Mr. McNeil stated that in a meeting he had with Dr. Moses last week, it was mentioned that Needles was draining the budget; Mr. McNeil commented that he believed that to be true. Mr. McNeil questioned the accuracy of the student data on the District website, stating that he can’t make heads or tails of it.

Mr. Arneson reiterated that Needles is a center, not a campus, as the Mayor of Needles referred to it when she addressed the Trustees at the previous Board meeting. Mr. McNeil stated that it’s helpful for everyone to know what’s going on within the College and that budgets drive programs. He stated that we can’t have a high-quality program unless we know what the budget is, and he made reference to item #3 of the resolution. Mr. McNeil stated, “I applaud Bruce, who talks about the data that all decisions are data driven.” Mr. McNeil referenced item #1 of the resolution, and Ms. Williams spoke about a time when her son called multiple times and was not able to speak to anyone in financing. Ms. Williams stated that she feels that they need someone [at the Needles Campus] who can be their counselor and [Financial Aid] person. Mr. Arneson questioned the need for a dedicated counselor

and Financial Aid person at the Needles Center. Mr. McNeil spoke about the "On Broadway" event that happens once a month at the Needles Campus. He said that at the last event, they were told that they could only afford to send one person from Blythe. He stated that they would like to see that expanded and include an Academic Counselor. Mr. McNeil expressed that most of the questions seem to be centered around academic counseling. Mr. McNeil stated, "I sit in on those monthly meetings, wander around with a cup of coffee and poke my head in and say hello to people and act like I'm interested, and what I find is that many of the students are first-time students that need a lot of hand holding. We do not get the students coming out of high school; they all go across to community college on the other side of the river, where they have outstanding services."

Mr. McNeil stated that the online counseling doesn't seem to be working for the kind of student they are getting. Mr. Arneson asked Mr. McNeil why that was put in a resolution as opposed to a conversation with the Board and Dr. Moses. Mr. McNeil spoke about course cancelation issues and referenced item #2 of the resolution. He stated that he sends all counseling to Jaclyn and that she is overwhelmed due to doing all the counseling. Mr. McNeil stated that almost every week, he's told, "I'll never take another class there at that college again because I signed up for classes, and they canceled them out from under me." Mr. McNeil acknowledged Mr. Cowden for putting forward classes that were not canceled. Mr. Arneson stated to Mr. McNeil that it takes a certain number of students enrolled to make a class, whether the class is in Needles, online, or on Main Campus, and if the class doesn't have the minimum number of students, it's not financially solvent for the College. Mr. Arneson questioned why this was put into a resolution as opposed to a constructive conversation, stating that it feels like a set-up. Mr. Arneson asked Mr. McNeil why this wasn't a conversation with the City of Needles as opposed to a resolution. Mr. McNeil expressed to Mr. Arneson that he did not set up the resolution, stating that he did not go and ask for a resolution or lay the groundwork for them to make a resolution. Mr. Arneson stated that the information did not come from the College, saying that Mr. McNeil stated earlier it came from him. Mr. McNeil agreed with Mr. Arneson and stated, "I've been a salesperson for our College here in Needles, selling all the positive stuff that he can." Mr. Arneson asked Mr. McNeil where the positivity is in this [resolution].

Ms. Williams stated that Rick [Daniels] started studying on colleges and how important they were for our town back before he spoke at the Board Meeting. She stated that Mr. Daniels has been working on this for two years. Ms. Williams asked Mr. Daniels where he got his information from. Mr. McNeil stated, "From me, from Jaclyn, from Board agendas." Mr. Daniels stated that he got a lot of information from a lot of different sources, including the State Board, the College's budget documents and website, discussions in the community, and discussions with employees of the College. Mr. McNeil addressed Mr. Arneson and stated that the person who drove [the resolution] was Mr. Daniels. He said that Mr. Daniels stood before the City Council and presented all the ideas. Mr. Arneson asked the question, "Why did Mr. Daniels do a resolution as opposed to a meeting with our administration?" Mr. Daniels stated, "The Comprehensive Education Plan was discussed in public, and the City Council is a party to this, and they wanted to weigh in and express the opinion of the residents of the City of Needles, and that's what planning processes do, is they are all done in public, and anybody and everybody can make a comment. Some people send letters. Some people testify orally. And in the case of cities, they communicate via resolutions. So, the resolution merely expresses what was intended to be very positive that these are the hopes and expectations of the people of the City of Needles." Mr. Arneson asked where the advanced invite was for the President and Vice President who are hired to represent [PVCCD]. Mr. Daniels replied, "There is a basic structure of government. You communicate, and there was no criticism of Palo Verde in that resolution. It was an expression of hopes, desires, and expectations." Mr. Arneson stated that he felt the resolution listed several shortcomings from Palo Verde College based on misinformation. Mr. Daniels concluded, "It was merely an expression of hopes, desires, and wishes for the College District as a whole, and it was intended that the entire program be raised and that we were able to get more students in the seats."

Ms. Styers voiced her concerns, stating that in her 35-40 years in the legal business, she has never seen an entity just go out and do its own thing. She expressed that she was disappointed that Needles put the resolution on the agenda without any discussion with the President and made their own assessment without Board discussion. Ms. Styers mentioned that money has been invested in the Needles Campus, noting that \$75,000 was allocated for welding materials. She also remarked that money has been used for marketing and that there is a Counselor for Adult Education. Ms. Styers referred to the statement in the resolution that alluded to the community of Blythe not being in a position of growth and said that statements made regarding the City of Blythe are disturbing and could be detrimental to the community. Ms. Styers referred to the statement in the resolution regarding "potential declining enrollment" and said that she does not view the resolution as a positive one. Ms. Styers questioned why, if Mr. Daniels has been working on the resolution, he has not come up in any discussions and has never spoken to the Board collectively. Ms. Styers referred to the statements, "unlike Blythe," "jeopardizes the college's financial stability," and "depleted within three years," stating that they are detrimental to the College. Ms. Styers referred to the statement, "PVCC must work with the City of Needles..." stating that we don't tell the City of Needles how to handle their business, and she doesn't think it's fair that they tell us how to handle our business and what our priorities need to be.

Dr. Thomas stated that having served on the City Council, as Vice Mayor of Blythe, and currently serving on the College Board, the need for the Trustees to learn to work together, rather than working apart. Dr. Thomas expressed that he believes the City of Needles should have engaged in a discussion with the College rather than putting forward a resolution. He stated that he would like the Board to start working together as one Board emphasizing that we are one entity. Dr. Thomas posed the question, "What are we going to do to pull this thing back in so we can work together as one group, as opposed to working as two separate entities?"

Mr. McNeil asked the group to point out where in the resolution it said anything negative about the City of Blythe. Ms. Styers responded to Mr. McNeil by reading the following from the resolution "Whereas, Needles is positioned for growth with access to a larger student base, unlike Blythe, Needles is positioned to serve as a hub for workforce training programs such as:" Mr. McNeil explained that the statement refers to the population within 50 miles, noting that there are significantly more people in the Needles area than in the Blythe area. He mentioned that if you draw a circle around the cities, Needles has a considerably larger population of over 25,000 people. Mr. McNeil clarified that the statement in the resolution was not negative but rather a true statement. Ms. Styers addressed Mr. McNeil and said that he told her that Mr. Daniels got this information from the Blythe City Manager, Mallory Sutterfield, and that she told Mr. Daniels that the City of Blythe is dying. Mr. McNeil made mention of the Grand Jury report and various newspaper articles. He stated that Blythe and Needles have a very positive relationship and work closely together on many things, stating that the City Managers are fast friends. Mr. McNeil emphasized that this isn't about the City of Blythe but rather about helping the College improve. Ms. Styers noted that the Grand Jury report was completed five years ago, and since then, a new report has been issued.

Mr. Ramirez stated that his concerns match those of Ms. Styers and Mr Arneson. Ms. Copple mentioned that it is the same for her. Ms. Copple expressed her concern that the Board did not convene as a whole for a discussion, stating that this should have happened before involving the Needles City Manager. Mr. McNeil said that he neither initiated nor moved this [resolution]. Mr. Arneson disagreed and referenced the childcare facility that Jon spoke about months prior in a previous board meeting. Mr. McNeil mentioned a meeting that Mr. Cowden attended at an elementary school in Needles. He mentioned that it was a large group, including the Superintendent of Schools and the Mayor, all of whom strongly wanted a Child Development Center. Mr. McNeil reiterated that this [resolution] did not originate from him, but rather from the community.

Dr. Moses referred to the Comprehensive Education Plan, stating that we are not done with that process. He stated that the process has not yielded the overarching themes about where this Institution may look for opportunities in both the Blythe and Needles areas and expressed that the resolution undermines this process. Dr. Moses spoke about the three visits to the Needles Center in which he presented the State of the College and his goals and objectives as a Superintendent/President. He spoke about the CEP meeting that he, Mr. Cowden, and Ms. Correa facilitated, which was attended by over 30 individuals from the Needles Community, including the City Manager, Mayor, and Mr. Daniels. Dr. Moses stated, "You knew that we were working towards a vision, goals, and objectives for this Institution and you put out a resolution that undermines that." Dr. Moses expressed his disappointment, stating that the resolution says that the College has no goals or vision for Needles, despite being knee-deep in that process. Dr. Moses affirmed that he knows the Board is committed to upholding the standards of shared governance and addressing matters in a transparent way. He stated that he has great concerns that there are individuals within our organization who participated in providing information, the majority of it being inaccurate, to form this resolution. Dr. Moses went on to say that if seen by the California Community College System Chancellor's Office and the legislators in Sacramento, the statement in the resolution makes it seem as though our Board and our Administration are not supporting equity for the Needles Center.

- **Action:** Dr. Moses requested that the Board give him the authority to investigate what local officials in Needles played a role in putting out this damaging resolution about our College. He stated that he feels that the information in the resolution is very damaging to the integrity of the Institution, the Board, and the Administration. Dr. Moses stated that the resolution clearly undermines the CEP process, which all the Board members in Blythe and Needles voted for prior to him becoming Superintendent/President. He noted that the Board voted to allocate resources and hire a third-party outside entity to facilitate the project.
- **Motion:** Mr. Ramirez made the motion [per Dr. Moses above request]. Dr. Thomas seconded the motion.
Yes: Yes: Stella C Styers, Gloria A Copple, Jon E McNeil, Brad E Arneson, George W Thomas, Glenda K Williams
Final Resolution: Motion Carries
- **Discussion:** Mr. McNeil noted that he understood Dr. Moses and President Styers would be meeting with the Needles City Manager and Mayor. Ms. Styers stated that while emails have been exchanged, she was uncertain whether the City of Needles proposed date of the 24th had been confirmed. Mr. McNeil stated, "That's terrific, that's the beginning of the investigation for Bruce." Dr. Moses disagreed, stating that the meeting should have been the start of the conversation before a resolution was added to the City of Needles agenda, asserting that the meeting was not the beginning of the investigation.

5. HEARING OF CITIZENS NON-AGENDA ITEMS

5.1 Members of the public have this opportunity to directly address the Governing Board on items of interest to the public, subject to five (5) minute time limitation per individual.

- There were no comments from the public.

6. POSSIBLE FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

- Mr. McNeil asked to put a confidential personnel issue on the next closed session agenda. Dr. Moses explained to Mr. McNeil that a Board member does not have the authority to put personnel items on the agenda. Ms. Styers denied Mr. McNeil's request.

7. ADJOURN

- The meeting adjourned at 4:48 p.m.

Minutes approved at February 11, 2025, Regular Board Meeting


Dr. Bruce Moses, Superintendent/President

Minutes generated by Naomi Smith, 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.)*

https://www.needlesdesertstar.com/news/city-of-needles-authorizes-loan-for-affordable-housing-project/article_e50681d0-d384-11ef-b0a7-67126d494d8c.html

ENTERPRISE

City of Needles authorizes loan for 'affordable' housing project

By BILL McMILLEN Needles Desert Star
Jan 15, 2025

1 of 2



Needles Mayor Janet Jernigan, right, presents a plaque of appreciation to Frank Valenzuela, who recently retired after many years of service as the foreman for the City of Needles water department. Jernigan made the presentation at the Jan. 14 City Council meeting.

By Bill McMillen
Needles Desert Star



NEEDLES — The Needles City Council struggled with the phrase "affordable housing" at its Jan. 14 meeting before approving authorization of a loan from a state program designed to help provide something that fits into some definition of that term.

The loan of \$135,000 from the California Prohousing Incentive Pilot Program will assist Dannie and Cynthia Brayboy to renovate a former commercial building at 108 Chestnut Street into two 1,100-square-foot residential units.

Needles' need for housing is growing; its need for affordable housing is acute. The Prohousing program is attempting to help communities meet those needs by providing available the incentives of low-interest loans and grants "to address barriers to housing production through accelerated production, equitable zoning, sustainable land use, reduced development costs or financial subsidies," according to the California Department of Housing and Community Development, which administers the program.



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The building, currently vacant, is owned by the Brayboy Family Trust. The Brayboys own several other rental properties in Needles.

In describing the PIP program in broad terms, City Manager Patrick Martinez used income caps provided by the state, the litmus test for eligibility. Housing and Community Development uses thresholds of \$82,000 or lower total household income for a family of four and \$73,800 or below for a family of three as the maximum income for renters to be eligible for program housing.

But doing some math, using the standard 30% of income figure to determine how much should go toward housing produces a monthly rent of more than \$2,000 for a family of four and more than \$1,800 for a family of three.

The income maximums for eligibility are based on a percentage of the median household income. California's median is about \$91,000; in San Bernardino County, the figure is a little higher but in Needles it is substantially lower, around \$40,000.

Council members couldn't avoid looking at the discrepancy and stating the obvious: Few residents in Needles currently pay \$2,000 a month for rent and even fewer would willingly consider doing so.

But lost in the discussion was that the figures provided income maximums to determine eligibility for renters, not the rental figure they would be paying. Several council members suggested that anyone with \$2,000 or more to go monthly toward housing probably would buy or build a home rather than rent one.

"We'll try to make it affordable," Dannie Brayboy said, participating remotely. He said his current rental property goes for \$700 to \$1,000 a month. He said the new property might be a bit higher because it will be newly remodeled. But he said it certainly wouldn't be anywhere approaching the 30% of maximum allowable income figure of \$2,300.



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For a family of four making \$40,000 a year, 30% would result in a monthly payment of around \$1,000.

But council members continued the discussion with the higher figures in mind as potential rental costs, figures they insist Needles residents cannot pay,

"We don't need properties to sit," Zachery Longacre said, concerned that the money would be invested in property likely to remain vacant.

"We say the word a lot," Tana Belt said, with the word being "affordable." "But we need to know what that means."

Council members noted that because of the vast difference in household income, "affordable" in one part of San Bernardino County or the state wouldn't fit that definition in Needles.

Assurances that rents would be reasonable, in line with the Brayboys' other properties, did little to ease council minds.

"I still feel this is not affordable housing," Belt said.

But after agreeing that authorizing the loan — and converting a vacant property into something useful — would be better than not utilizing the available state money at all, council members voted 5-1 to approve it. Belt cast the lone vote of dissent.

- Council also approved a resolution urging Pal Verde Community College to increase its efforts for investments, equitable services and workforce development programs in the Needles Community.

Palo Verde Community College operates two campuses, the main one in Blythe and a satellite campus in Needles. The Blythe campus has more programs and classes available. Efforts to increase courses available to Needles students — either remotely or in person — haven't resolved that discrepancy.

The resolution crafted by Martinez and staff, with input from local Palo Verde College officials, was suggested last month by former City Manager Rick Daniels because, he said, "Palo Verde College is under-utilized by the community."

Only a small percentage of Needles High School graduates acquire four-year college degrees; some do attend PVCC, either to earn credits to transfer to a four-year institution or gain workforce development in technical programs that may or may not offer certification. Daniels said the city should encourage PVCC to expand those offerings and said the college is positioned to attract students from outside of Needles, including competing with Mohave Community College for Arizona students. He said the city might be able to leverage that expansion.

"Needles needs to speak with one voice, one statement about our hopes and expectations," Daniels said. The resolution, he said, accomplishes that.

In part, the resolution states: "The Needles community has continuously demonstrated its financial commitment to PVCC through two general obligation bond measures, totaling \$18 million, funded by local property taxes. Despite this support, the campus has yet to realize equitable services and investments."

"With Needles positioned for growth and access to a larger student base, the campus has the potential to serve as a hub for high-demand training programs and bolster enrollment for PVCC. However, urgent action is needed to address the current disparities and align PVCC's investments and services with community needs."

The city claims there is a lack of in-person counseling services for Needles students, a disproportionate number of offered courses being canceled resulting in frustrated students and disrupting their educational journey, a lack of equitable funding toward Needles programs when compared to funding for similar programs at Blythe and "no clear goals or vision for the campus."

The resolution suggests that Needles is "positioned: for technical programs including nursing, plumbing, electrical trades, home building, lineman training and water treatment and asks the college to "prioritize efforts to diversify its student population and concentrate on expanding educational opportunities in underserved communities such as Needles, which present significant potential for enrollment growth and community impact."

It also requests that PVCC establish a child-care facility to serve up to 40 children.

The resolution tries to emphasize that "this is not a competition between campuses but a shared effort to ensure PVCC's long-term success by improving services, enrollment and opportunities for all communities."

The resolution pass passed unanimously.

Also passing unanimously:

- A motion to provide \$2,500 of city funds for services during the upcoming Run for the Wall. The annual motorcycle caravan for Vietnam veterans is scheduled to ride through Needles on May 15 with a tribute scheduled at El Garces.

• Appointments of council members to a number of county, regional and state advisory boards and groups: Jamie McCorkle as primary and Mayor Janet Jernigan to the Mojave Desert Air Quality Management District; Jernigan as primary and JoAnn Pogue as alternate to the Southern California Association of Governments; Jernigan as primary and Vice Mayor Ellen Campbell as alternate to the San Bernardino County Transportation Authority; Belt, Jernigan and McCorkle to the California Joint Powers Insurance Authority; Campbell as primary and Pogue as alternate to the Mojave Desert and Mountain Integrated Waste Joint Powers Authority Board and Solid Waste Advisory Task Force; Campbell as primary and Pogue as secondary to the League of California Cities Desert Mountain Division; and Longacre to the budget committee.

Bill McMillen

Associate Editor

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