



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

**Special Meeting Minutes**

Wednesday, May 6, 2026

Closed Session: 4:00 p.m. | Open Session: Immediately Following Closed Session

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

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

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**1. OPENING OF MEETING**

1.1 CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m. by Board President Gloria Copple.

1.2 ROLL CALL

- **Trustees Present:** Gloria Copple, Jon McNeil, Scott Dean, Brad Arneson, Angel Ramirez, Stella Styers, Glenda Williams  
*Note: Trustees McNeil and Williams attended from the Needles Educational Center.*
- **Administrators Present:** Dr. Sam Robinson, Acting Superintendent/President / Acting Assistant Supt./VP of Instruction and Student Services, Stephanie Slagan, Assistant Supt./VP of Administrative Services and College Advancement

1.3 FLAG SALUTE

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

1.4 APPROVAL OF CLOSED SESSION AGENDA

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

**Moved by:** Jon McNeil

**Seconded by:** Gloria Copple

**Action:** Motion Carries

**Vote:**

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

**Board Discussion:**

Trustee Styers requested to make a statement prior to approval of the Closed Session Agenda and read the following statement into the record:

“I am formally requesting the presence of legal counsel during closed sessions to ensure full compliance with all applicable governance standards, including Title 5 regulations and Palo Verde College Board policies.

Additionally, legal counsel should verify alignment with the District’s Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Plan and corresponding administrative procedures. This review is necessary to ensure that all actions, processes, and documentation adhere to statutory requirements, institutional policy, and establish best practices for equity, transparency, and accountability.

Failure to ensure full compliance in these areas may expose the District to significant legal and financial liability, including potential violations of state regulations, EEO requirements, and due process standards. It is critical that the Board take all necessary precautions to mitigate risk, protect the integrity of its decisions, and uphold public trust.

For these reasons, I strongly urge that legal counsel be present and actively engaged in this process.”

Following the statement, Trustee Styers requested that legal counsel be present during Closed Session. Board President Copple responded that the Board would decide the matter. Trustee Styers stated that she had been informed legal counsel would not be present. Board President Copple stated that, as Board President, she had informed legal counsel that legal counsel's attendance was not necessary. Trustee Styers responded that the Board should collectively have the opportunity to express whether legal counsel should be present. Board President Copple stated that the matter could be voted on when the Board recessed to Closed Session.

Trustee Styers requested to make an additional statement for the record and read the following statement into the record:

“On April 24, 2026, a special meeting was scheduled for the appointment of an Acting Superintendent. However, Board President Copple cancelled that meeting upon being informed that Board Member Scott Dean would be unable to attend.

When I inquired about the reason for the cancellation, Ms. Copple stated that it was important for all board members to be present when making significant decisions. While I acknowledge the importance of full board participation, this standard does not appear to have been applied consistently, as the same consideration was not extended to Trustee Ramirez.

This inconsistency raises concerns regarding equitable treatment, procedural fairness, and adherence to governance standards.”

Board President Copple responded that she had sent text message notifications regarding the meeting to Trustees Arneson, Ramirez, and Styers. Trustee Styers responded that the meeting was not cancelled when it was learned that Trustee

Ramirez might be unable to attend and questioned why the same consideration provided to Trustee Dean had not been extended to Trustee Ramirez. Trustee Styers noted that she was happy Trustee Ramirez was ultimately able to attend the meeting. Board President Copple then moved the meeting forward and requested a motion on the item.

Trustee Dean stated that he had a statement he wished to read into the record prior to approval of the Closed Session Agenda. Trustee Dean read a written statement regarding governance, election by acclamation, Board responsibilities, transparency, and institutional accountability. The written statement is attached to and incorporated into these minutes as Attachment A – Trustee Statement (Scott Dean).

Following his written statement, Trustee Dean stated that his goal is to be responsible to the public, the Board, District staff, and the College community. He emphasized that his service on the Board is not motivated by personal pride or ego, but rather by a desire to support the institution and its long-term success. Trustee Dean further stated that the Board should remain focused on strengthening the College as a viable institution that offers programs responsive to student and community needs.

#### **Attachments:**

[Attachment A - Trustee Statement \(Scott Dean\)](#) 

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

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

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**Helen Pouvi, Student at Palo Verde College**, addressed the Board and read a written statement expressing support for Dr. Sam Robinson serving as Acting Superintendent/President. The written statement is attached to and incorporated into these minutes as Attachment B – Public Comment Statement (Helen Pouvi).

Ms. Pouvi also distributed two handouts to the Board of Trustees consisting of petitions signed by students and by faculty/staff in support of Dr. Sam Robinson serving as Interim President.

**Sarah Frid, Academic Senate President**, addressed the Board and read a written statement requesting written responses to questions regarding the process for appointing an Acting Superintendent/President, Board policies and procedures, accreditation considerations, and institutional governance. The written statement is attached to and incorporated into these minutes as Attachment E – Public Comment Statement (Sarah Frid).

**Maria Gamez, ESL Faculty and Dreamers' Liaison**, addressed the Board and read a written statement expressing support for Dr. Sam Robinson and discussing support provided to Dreamer students and student advocacy efforts at the College. The written statement is attached to and incorporated into these minutes as Attachment F – Public Comment Statement (Maria Gamez).

**Attachments:**

[Attachment B - Public Comment Statement \(Helen Pouvi\)](#) 

[Attachment C - Public Comment Statement \(Sarah Frid\).pdf](#) 

[Attachment D - Public Comment Statement \(Maria Gamez\).pdf](#) 

**3. RECESS TO CLOSED SESSION**

The Governing Board recessed to Closed Session at 4:24 p.m.

3.1 Public Employee Appointment - Acting Superintendent/President (Gov. Code 54957)

**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

Board President Copple reported the following action taken in Closed Session:

“Pursuant to Board Policy 2432 – Superintendent/President Succession, the Board directs the Assistant Superintendent/Vice President of Administrative Services and College Advancement, Stephanie Slagan, to assume the responsibilities of Acting Superintendent/President until such time as the Board can complete recruitment to appoint an Interim Superintendent/President. This was a unanimous decision of the Board.”

**5. CLOSING OF MEETING**

5.1 POSSIBLE FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Trustee McNeil requested possible future agenda items regarding compensation for the prior Acting Superintendent/President, compensation for the newly appointed Acting Superintendent/President, and the process for conducting the search for an Interim Superintendent/President and Superintendent/President.

5.2 ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned at 5:59 p.m.



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**Ed Knudson, Interim Superintendent/President**

**Minutes approved at June 09, 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.*

Recently, someone at last month's Palo Verde Unified School District Board Meeting stated that I, Scott Dean, had run for office and lost, then tried to get on the board by being appointed and failed, but after Dr. George's seat became available, I was appointed in March.

This person was not entirely correct in what she said.

When I attended high school, there was a required class titled "Civics". In most California high schools, "Civics" is no longer used as often. "Civics" is now listed as U.S. Government and often includes the study of politics. I think it is time for a civics lesson.

Under California Elections Code § 10515, when the number of qualified candidates does not exceed the number of seats to be filled, an election is not required, and the candidate is declared elected.

This principle exists throughout California law. For example, California Elections Code § 5326 reflects the same rule in other types of local districts: when there are not more candidates than seats available, no election is held, and candidates are declared elected.

This process is commonly referred to as election by acclamation. It is a lawful and recognized outcome under California law. It is, in fact, an election. The only difference is that, because there are no opposing candidates, the election is not placed on the ballot and is not held, saving public funds.

So, to be clear: I was not appointed. I was legally elected to office by acclamation.

In communities the size of Blythe, this is not unusual. In fact, it is common for local offices to be filled this way when there are not enough candidates to require a contested election. Several members of this Board have also, at one time or another, been elected in the same manner. That means my vote carries the same legal weight as every other trustee seated here, and my responsibility to participate in governance is exactly the same. For that reason, it is important that when this matter is discussed, the facts are stated correctly and the proper terminology is used.

I want to address something else directly. Some do not want me on the board. This is not unusual for anyone who holds office. This is part of the political process. However, I have been told by a religious leader in town that many are glad I am on the board and want me to be accountable and responsible to the taxpayers who fund almost all of the college's programs and activities. This is one of my goals as a Trustee on the board.

My focus continues to be, and will remain, on the responsibilities of this position—not on personalities, conflicts, taking sides, or avoiding difficult issues

The Board must be accountable and transparent in its workings to all stakeholders involved with the college. To that end, I must be accountable as well.

At the beginning of the month, I attended a Board Member conference that offered several helpful and educational sessions. This was important because I am new to the Board, and there is much to learn about the college's governance and the Board's role.

Before attending that conference, I also attended another conference where Vice Chancellor Shears, the Vice Chancellor of Student Services at the Chancellor's Office, spoke about upcoming legislation that will directly affect community colleges, including Assembly Bills 2694, 537, and 934, among others, currently moving through the Legislature.

These are not minor changes. These are the types of laws that impact how we operate, how we serve students, and how we are expected to govern.

So it is important that we are not only aware of these changes but also actively preparing for their effects on this college and the decisions we make going forward.

And that requires a system—so that information like this does not stay at the conference level, but is brought back, discussed, and acted on by this Board. That is not a one-time issue. That is a system issue.

Decisions made by this Board do not end at the vote. They require follow-up—especially on items involving financial commitments, staffing changes, or temporary measures that were expected to be revisited.

This Board should be willing to revisit those decisions and account for them. I also want to address another point that has been raised.

Some of the matters currently being discussed by this Board predate my taking office. I understand that. However, once a trustee is lawfully seated, that trustee has both the right and the responsibility to understand prior actions and ongoing matters that affect the institution.

Governance does not begin only on the date someone takes office. Part of governance is reviewing past decisions, understanding institutional history, and asking questions when those past actions continue to affect the present. A trustee cannot properly fulfill fiduciary responsibilities by ignoring the past simply because he or she was not physically sitting on the dais at that time.

Good evening, Board of Trustees and Admin,

My name is Helen Pouvi, and I am a student at Palo Verde College. I am not here to discredit anyone. I am here to represent myself, and the student's voices behind the petition voices that deserve to be heard with fairness and respect. I believe in values, speaking up for what is right, and advocate for others when it matters.

With that being said, I have provided two sets of signatures for your review, one from students and one from staff and faculty. This effort was initiated on my own will as a reflection of the voices and lived experiences within our campus community. The petition includes over ~~200~~<sup>160</sup> student signatures and more than ~~50~~<sup>44</sup> signatures from staff and faculty who support Dr. Sam Robinson remaining as Acting President of Palo Verde College. The petition also includes written reasons from signers explaining why they believe she is the right fit to continue leading our institution. *tricks over 100 signatures*

I want to begin by centering student voices, because that is who I am here to represent. As students, we recognize leadership not just by title, but by presence, consistency, and care. Dr. Robinson is visible on this campus. Despite holding multiple roles including Dean of Instruction, Umoja Coordinator, Director of Rising Scholars, Vice President, and Acting President she still makes time to engage directly with students. She greets students, checks in on us, and makes herself accessible. Per students, it has been rare to see a leader who is consistently present on campus in this way. That level of engagement matters because it builds trust.

Students are beginning to feel heard. This includes all students especially undocumented students, who often face additional barriers to speaking up. Under Dr. Robinson's leadership, there is a growing sense of inclusion, safety, and visibility for voices that are often overlooked. We are also seeing progress on campus. Programs are being rebuilt, and collaborative workgroups are forming. There is a clear effort not only to restore systems, but to strengthen relationships across students, staff, and faculty. Dr. Robinson also leads in a way that uplifts others. She consistently credits people where credit is due and does not diminish anyone's contributions. That type of leadership builds respect and unity across campus.

In addition, I personally took the time to speak with staff and faculty to better understand their professional perspectives. What I found was a consistent level of respect for her leadership, work ethics, and commitment to this institution. That alignment across

students, staff, and faculty is meaningful, but important. On behalf of students, I ask the Board to consider this seriously: if the goal is truly changing, then that change must be guided by policy, fairness, and logic not emotion or opinion. I respectfully encourage you to set aside personal feelings and focus on what is best for the institution as a whole.

Change can be uncomfortable, but discomfort is often where growth happens. However, instability also has consequences. When leadership changes without clear direction, it creates a ripple effect staff are left in conflict; students become uncertain, and the institution's reputation can suffer. Starting over is also costly. It disrupts education, burns out staff, and weakens the foundation that has already been built. Progress takes time, and rebuilding repeatedly can set up a college backward rather than forward. Our college is also facing important accreditation-related concerns. This is a critical time that requires stability, focus, and strong leadership to move forward successfully. I also encourage the Board to walk around our campus, engage directly with students, staff, and faculty, and observe the work that is actively happening. Hearing and seeing things firsthand provide a clearer understanding of the progress being made and the needs that still exist.

In closing, I ask that you consider not only the number of signatures submitted, but the meaning behind them. They represent trust, lived experience, and a collective desire for stable, student-centered leadership. As a student and as an advocate, I respectfully urge you to allow Dr. Sam Robinson to continue serving as Acting President.

Thank you for your time, your leadership, and your service to Palo Verde College.



# PALO VERDE COLLEGE

WHERE KNOWLEDGE TAKES ROOT AND OPPORTUNITY GROWS

## ACADEMIC SENATE

May 6, 2026

As Academic Senate President, I have a few questions regarding today's item agenda for closed session. I understand that it may not be appropriate for the Board to respond to these questions now, so I am requesting a response in writing.

1. What are the specific regulations, policies, and expectations that differentiate an acting superintendent/president from an interim superintendent/president?
2. What is the timeframe allowed for an Acting Superintendent/President for a California Community College, and therefore, what is the specific date that the district will need an Interim Superintendent/President?
3. In July 2023, the district faced a significant vacancy after Dr. Wallace's resignation. Will the process that was utilized by the Board to address this same vacancy be utilized in this instance? Transparency and openness are significant tenets of accreditation. If the same process is not to be used, please provide information as to the reasoning.
  - Board Agenda July 20, 2023
  - Board Minutes July 20, 2023
  - Board Agenda August 8, 2023
  - Board Minutes August 8, 2023
4. As referenced in the ACCJC Action letter dated March 23, 2026, will the process the Board takes to fill this vacancy address the following Standard and Policy subject to the Special Report due August 1, 2026?
  - Standard 4.6: Does the Board follow its established Board Policies and Administrative Procedures in order to ethically function as a collective entity in the best interest of the institution and independent of undue influence? Does the Board follow documented procedures for self-governance, and does it appropriately address behavior that does not align with its policies?
  - Policy on Institutional Integrity and Ethics, Item 4: Do the institution's policies and procedures effectively prevent conflict of interest in governing-board decision making? Do the institution's policies and procedures effectively provide due process protection to employees, as appropriate?

I look forward to hearing from you and I appreciate your partnership and collaboration to ensure a successful accreditation cycle.

Thank you so much,  
Sarah Frid  
Academic Senate President

[sfrid@paloverde.edu](mailto:sfrid@paloverde.edu)

ONE COLLEGE DRIVE BLYTHE, CALIFORNIA 92225 | WWW.PALOVERDE.EDU | 760-921-5500

Good afternoon, Board Members,

My name is Maria Gamez, ESL Faculty and Dreamers' Liaison. After 22 years of working at PVC, this is the first time I stand before the Board, and I do so in support of Dr. Robinson.

Dr. Robinson has demonstrated a leadership style unlike any I have experienced in my 22 years here at PVC. It is a leadership style that motivates me to reach my full potential and gives me the strength that I need to continue advocating for our Dreamer students.

We are currently facing challenging circumstances where our Dreamer students need as much support as possible to continue growing both academically and personally. One situation we are navigating involves the detention of a very active student, who also has two daughters attending PVC—one of whom is set to graduate in June. We were able to connect her with legal support, and she has been allowed to continue working towards her GED while awaiting the judge's decision.

Dr. Robinson has supported my role as Dreamers' Liaison every step of the way, and her passion for all of our students is genuine and unwavering.

Thank you for your time.

