M I N G U S U N I O N H I G H S C H O O L D I S T R I C T
1801 East Fir, Cottonwood, AZ 86326

GOVERNING BOARD
MINUTES OF MEETING
Mingus Union High School Library
Thursday, October 8, 2026 6:00 PM

Governing Board:

Ms. Taylor Bell
Ms. Ashley Koepnick
Mr. Austin Babcock
Mr. Frank Nevarez
Mr. Will David

Also Present:

Melody Herne – Superintendent
Mr. Kurt Steele – Contract Board Secretary

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I. **OPENING**

1. **Call to Order**
   Meeting called to order at 6:00 PM by President Bell
2. **Roll Call**
   Members present: President Bell, VP Nevarez, Member David, Member Chavez (Member Babcock was absent)
3. **Pledge of Allegiance**
4. **Moment of Silence**
5. **Adoption of Agenda**
   Motion to adopt the agenda by Member Nevarez, second by President Bell
   President Bell – Aye
   VP Nevarez – Yes
   Member David – Yes
   Member Chavez – Yes
   Motion passes 4-0

   Possible reorder: None

III. **REPORTS**

The Superintendent and Board Member(s) reports will consist of brief summaries of current events. These reports will be without any discussion or feedback.

1. **Superintendent's Report**
   RECOGNITION

   >Flag Football – September 28th win over Prescott. They are now 7-1 and ranked 7th in the 4A Conference. AIA Article written about the 9/28 win.
   >ATORT Treasure Island. It had 24 actors and 38 technicians behind the scenes. It was the largest post-COVID attendance with over 1000 patrons.
   >ATORT Theatre was voted "Best of the Best" by the Verde Independent for the third consecutive time.
   >Yavapai College opened up their new dorms and the Tiny House programs for a tour by Verde Valley Superintendents. The College Students built the Tiny Homes.
   > Lady Marauder Golf on Oct. 5. They were awarded a $1500 grant from the Thunderbirds Foundation. Hailey Landsberg is headed to the States to compete on Oct. 26-27.
   > Outdoor Education and Conservation Field Trips. Focused on fishing with the AZ Fish and Game Department. They went to the Page Springs Fish Hatchery and had a fishing tournament at

the Deadhorse Ranch State Park. Each student received a hunting and fishing license. The new CTE program started with 3 classes and a total of 90 students. Outdoor ed received a $5000 grant from the Rocky Mountain Elks Foundation.

CURRENT EVENTS

Boys Golf– October 9 at Agave Highlands vs. Basis Flagstaff
Varsity Football– October 9 vs. Maricopa
Fall Break– October 12-16 No School
Volleyball– October 20 vs. Flagstaff
Unified Swim- October 20
Swim – October 20 vs. Mohave (Senior Night)
Site Council - October 20 MUHS Library

3. **Board Member Report(s)**

Board Members will report on their attendance at the Fall ATORT performance, Treasure Island.
Member Chavez felt that it was an incredible show from the sets to the acting.
Member David this was remarkable and shows incredible flexibility and focus of our students as they deliver show after show throughout the season. It was not two-dimensional as they are always out in the audience. Hats off to Mr. Ball and Ms. Enright and the entire group.

IV. PRESENTATION AND INFORMATION

1. **STORY Field Trip** — Presentation on the Ivy League/Tier I college tour (Staff: Ms. Garcia and Ms. Bodam)

Ms. Bodam presented. This was a last-minute opportunity that presented a challenge to make it happen, but Ms. Garcia stepped up and took it on. STORY is a consortium of Ivy League and Selective colleges that focus on rural and small-town students, preparing them for the college search and application process, with the aim of expanding access to higher education. This program even helped us with transportation costs when it became a challenge. Many of the students that went were also part of our AVID program and overall, our students made up 30-40% of the total attendance. Students listened to a presentation and were able to go to individual tables and talk directly to school admission personnel. Columbia was by far the most popular college with our students. While this was great for our students, it also was an opportunity to connect and build meaningful relationships with these college professionals from across the county with the hopes of Mingus hosting STORY college fair in the future.

2. **Other Information for Reading**

1. **September and October Newsletter**

V. ACTION ITEM

1. **Annual Financial Report** — Presentation of the FY26 Annual Financial Report (AFR), Food Service AFR, and an annual update on the M&O Budget override expenditures budget and support for programs, in compliance with A.R.S. 15-481. The Governing Board will vote to approve the AFR and Food Service AFR. (Staff: Finance Director Lynn Leonard)

Finance Director Lynn Leonard presented the Annual Financial Report that is due every October. She showed a comparison of this year versus last year's funds with some increasing a little but not significantly. She then went over the individual funds, the changes and what comes out of these funds. She then focuses on Food Service, which lost roughly $110,000 this year. (Hard to make money when many students leave campus for lunch). She then compared this year versus last year and explained why revenue was up, but also expenses were up, mostly due to the federal commodities line. Many of the revenue lines were up. She then went over the requires Override Update. In 2026 we used the whole $954,000 towards our goals and programs. This will go down in 2031 and 2032 if we do not renew.

Motion to approve the FY2026 annual financial report as presented by President Bell, second by Member Chavez.

President Bell – Aye
VP Nevarez – Yes
Member David – Yes
Member Chavez – Yes
Motion passes 4-0

VI. **BOARD MEETING MINUTES NOT PREVIOUSLY APPROVED**

1. **Meeting Minutes** — Approval of September 3, 2026 General Meeting minutes

Motion to approve the September 3, 2026 minutes by President Bell, second by VP Nevarez
President Bell – Aye
VP Nevarez – Yes
Member David – Yes
Member Chavez – Yes
Motion passes 4-0

VII. **ACTION ITEMS - CONSENT**

1. **Approval of Routine Vouchers**

9. **Expense**

Voucher 1008
Voucher 1009
Voucher 1010
Voucher 1011
Voucher 1012
Voucher 1013
Voucher 1014
Voucher 1015

13. **Payroll**

Voucher 6
Voucher 7
Voucher 8

14. **Bookstore Activity**

6. Personnel — HR Report

HR Report
PA-1
PA-2
PA-3

7. **Job Description** — Instructional Aide at The Academy; part-time position
8. **Donation**
9. **Project Prom Closet**
10. **Out of State Travel Request**

Instructional Coaching Group- Teaching, Leading, Coaching Conference, 10/25/26-10/28/26, Dallas, Texas

11. **Agreements**
12. **ARBITER** — Athletic Subscription Service
13. **TurfTank** — Line Marking for Mingus Union High School
14. **Apple Jack Ranch** — Club Support Service
15. **Marble Health MOU** — Health Referral Service
16. **NicelyDone Consulting** — E-Rate Services
17. **School Facilities Division** — FY2026 Preventive Maintenance Plan

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18. **Authorized Designees** for Asset Disposal

Motion to approve the Consent Agenda by President Bell, second by Member Chavez
President Bell – Aye
VP Nevarez – Yes
Member David – Yes
Member Chavez – Yes
Motion passes 4-0

VIII. **ACTION ITEMS - DISTRICT BUSINESS**

1. **Superintendent Evaluation** — Model for final Domain Ranking
   - Average of current Domain Rankings

Motion to base the FY2027 Superintendent Evaluation off the average of the current domain rankings model by President Bell, second by VP Nevarez.
President Bell – Aye
VP Nevarez – Yes
Member David – NO
Member Chavez – Yes
Motion passes 3-1

2. **Policy Advisory** —
Volume 38, Number 4
Volume 38, Number 6
Volume 38, Number 7
Superintendent Herne reviewed the individual Policy Advisories effecting policies DGD, DGD-R, DGD-E, BCB, BCB-E, KI, and KI-E
Board members acknowledge that they have read the Policy Advisory, Volume 38, Number 4, 5 and 6
President Bell – Yes
VP Nevarez – Yes
Member David – Yes
Member Chavez – Yes

3. **District Culture Survey** — Discussion and possible approval of conducting a District Culture Survey
President Bell went over her hopes and intention are and the purpose. This comes directly from the Strategic Plan. We really need to engage with our staff…What are we doing well and what do we need to work on? There are several key features that make sense. 1) Surveys need to be completely anonymous. 2) They results need to be transparent and brought to the board in public session. 3) Any results need to drive actual actions. 4) It needs to be third party administered.
Member David: A well-designed climate survey can be useful. We need to focus on understanding the conditions that affect teaching, student learning & engagement, and staff retention versus just whether people are happy. It should establish a credible baseline and monitor organizational conditions. He proposed in light of a new Board coming in in January that there is value in completing the survey design and methodology and then allowing the incoming Board to review and authorize the actual administration. You must also be aware of the minimal sample size, control outliers and provide confidentiality measure. He supports using an outside firm.
Member Chavez: Agreed with President Bell and Member David. He echoes the concern of overall participation and agrees that authorization should wait until the new Board is seated. He supports keeping the survey anonymous.
VP Nevarez: Loves the idea. We need to have action points with whatever comes forth and ensure absolute anonymity. He also supports waiting until the next Board is in place before implementing it.
Superintendent Herne: Has gone through many, many surveys in her career and there is a place for cultural surveys. However, the Board needs to be careful not to overreach and to be tied down into the details of the execution of it. A recommendation to do this type of survey is fine, but that is where the

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Board's obligation ends.
President Bell: The Board should have the final approval of the vendor so that we can ensure that they align with what our intentions and desires are for this survey.
Superintendent Herne: When the Board approved the Strategic plan, the parameters for this survey are in the plan, so operationally it is up to us to find a vendor that is going to align with what we have in our Strategic Plan.
Motion that the district conduct a climate and culture survey within the 2026-27 school year by President Bell, second by member Chavez.
President Bell – Aye
VP Nevarez – Yes
Member David – Yes
Member Chavez – Yes
Motion passes 4-0

VIII. INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

1. **MUHS Paragon Dog Protocol** — Administrative overview on the use of the Paragon dogs on the MUHS Campus (Staff: Principal Berry)
   Principal Berry presented on the Paragon dog program in the school, the process, oversight and rational. He went over what happens when a dog enters the campus. The administrator addresses the class, they are offered an opportunity to self-surrender (if they do self-surrender, then we do not do the full disciplinary process but contact the parents and offer resources), then the students are escorted out of the classroom, the dog searches the classroom and any hits result in the bag being searched. Any finds result in a discipline process. If there is a false alarm, the student is notified and that their bag has been searched. Dogs do not search a person because that would be a 4th Amendment violation. The rational for this is that while law enforcement needs probable cause, school administrators only need to meet the threshold of reasonable suspicion. This has been upheld in case law. We have ridged oversight to ensure consistent results. School administrators are present during the the search, we communicate with students our goals of keeping vapes out of school and offering resources, school administrators handle the process completely after a surrender or a hit, and the SRO is present but only participates when appropriate. Our rational is based on it being a deterrent and we see vape alerts drop dramatically for 3-4 days after a visit. We are realistic though as the research is mixed. Law enforcement referrals result in lower graduation rates or future incarcerations. Some research show a higher perception of campus safety when dogs are used. There are also unintended consequences with students having increased anxiety and fear reactions even in students who do not vape. Optics also matter in that is sends a message that we do not want or tolerate vaping on campus, it is consistent with Board goals and community values and it is highlights the perception of campus security.
   Member Chavez: Are the dogs specifically trained to only sniff out vape products versus other hardcore drugs? Principal Berry answered that the threshold for law enforcement referral is if a student is caught with any of the 15 illegal products as listed in the student handbook. The only exception is a voluntary self-surrender. Most dogs are trained to hit on a number of products with the newer dogs being specifically trained to hit on the electronics. (i.e. vape batteries, hidden cameras and other electronic devices).
   Member David: I'm not a big advocate of dogs, except for specific purposes that we qualify with evidence and that evidence, as you admitted is a mixed bag. So I ask, what is it that dogs are actually going to achieve? What are the parameters? How does this fit into the broader plan as an educational institution? How does this relate to counseling or referrals related to nicotine or other drug addictions? We do not want to engage in security theatre. There are also 4th Amendment concerns regarding student rights, search authority, documentation and the treatment of false alarms. If there is an alert on a bag during a sniff, what is the procedure? Principal Berry reviewed the procedure again. Member Daid asked if we had the certification and records on the dogs and how many false hits they have had? If not and you act upon a false hit then you may be in violation of their 4th Amendment rights when you search their bag and you could have a legal case on your hands. He also suggested not using the terms false alarms or hit and say "no prohibited items located". We are also assuming compliance by students. What happens if a student takes their bag with them? Principal Berry answered that

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we would deal with them as an administration and pull them aside and talk to them to determine what's going on.

President Bell: Are the sniffer dogs the only issue we have in place to fight vapes and drugs in school and the answer for me is that we do have resources and we are not going to say that because we have dogs we've solved the problem.
Superintendent Herne: Schools all across the country are struggling with the issue of vaping, we are trying to do, beside being a deterrent, is to help our students get through the day without having to be bombarded with these substances or relying on them. The issue is everywhere and we are just trying to do our part to protect and work with our students.

2. **Athletic Positions and Stipends** — Discussion on the current athletic positions and stipends and the budgetary impact of changes to the system (Staff: A.D. DeVore and Superintendent Herne)
Superintendent Herne: This was part of a future agenda item, so we'd like to touch on what our systems looks like now and what would be the implications to our budget. She and A.D. DeVove reviewed the current tiers and ways in which those tiers are staffed. They started with Team Sports. (baseball, softball, basketball, soccer, volleyball and flag football) Traditionally, Coaches have split their stipends to allow for additional coaches at the lower level all to get paid or teams have utilized volunteer Coaches. Some teams use their specific tax credits to pay additional coaches, most of which started as volunteers. Individualized sports (tennis, cross country, track & field, golf, swimming and wrestling) have a different system of coaches. We also look at football as its own program as it is a high-profile sport with a lot of liability involved, it's a contact sport and there is a need for specifically trained coaches for various positions.
Looking at the budget impact of what we are considering. Anytime MUHS brings in a new sport into the athletic program, it costs a minimum of $10,000 just for coaches. These costs sit in the M&O part of our budget. Any change we make would create a precedent that would have to be followed in subsequent year and could create a burden on the budget.
A.D. Devore want to focus for a second of the football coaches. The liabilities on a football coach is a lot higher than any other coach on our campus. The CDC study found that there were 4.36% injuries per 1000 athletes compared to 2.5% in wrestling and 2.4% in soccer. This really justifies more eyes on the field and different positions require different and specific coaching knowledge.
Superintendent Herne: The fall stipends, which have been approved, cost about $70,000, that is with three vacant positions. Note, in FY2026 the average teacher salary was $73,826. Looking at FY2026 numbers, Winter coaching stipends were over $60,000 and Spring stipends were over $50,000. Most teams use volunteers, MUHS is blessed to have volunteers. In FY2026 there were about sixteen (16) athletic volunteers. If stipends were given to all volunteer positions it would add an additional $36,000 to the budget making the total Athletic Stipend budget over $216,000. Then you must consider in increases based on Meet & Confer and Board approved action. We need to be careful of utilizing vacant position stipends as this may not be sustainable in subsequent seasons.

Member David: Is the issue with Flag Football volunteer stipends or salaried employee stipends?
A.D. Devore answered that the stipends you approved last month looked less because the coaches got together and decided to split their stipend and give every coach, salaried or volunteer money.
Member Davis also brought up a caution that we don't pay additional stipends to programs that are winning and strong and not taking care of others. Everyone needs to be treated fairly and equitably over time.
President Bell: We need to continue to support our athletics programs because a lot of our families use them to determine where their children will be going. I'm all for continuing to invest in our coaches as they invest their time in our sports programs.
Member Chavez: Focused on the individual sports and said that many of them also need multiple coaches for meets and for specific and targeted expertise. A.D. Devore said that he was aware of this and has worked with coaches as they have shown a legitimate need for more assistance.
Superintendent Herne: This has been an informational discussion; the future agenda item, from the previous meeting, was to look into the stipend for flag football. As the Board has already approved the FY2027 Athletic Stipend schedule and the employees receiving the stipends, the Board can suggest/recommend any type of change or not. Keep in mind the impact of the recommendation, the

Board may put something in place that might, in the future, need to be reversed if it is not sustainable.
There was a discussion on what the actual recommendation was and it was stated that the previous future agenda item was to move forward with giving stipends to the flag football coaches. Board Members noted a concern about fairness for all sports. Again, it was stated that the agenda item was for a recommendation to pay only the stipend to one sport and that felt unfair to many on the Board Members.
Board Members ended the discussion by reconsidering their support of the previous future agenda item and not moving forward as it was originally laid out.

XI. PUBLIC COMMENTS

At the conclusion of the call to the public, Board members may respond to any criticism made by an individual who addressed the Board. Board members may also direct staff to review the concern or request the item be discussed at a future meeting. Board members may not discuss or take legal action on matters raised during this open call to the public. If you have submitted a Request to Speak form, the Board President will call upon you and ask that you **please identify yourself by clearly stating for the record your name and address**. Citizens are asked to restrict their comments to three (3) minutes. Groups wishing to speak should select a spokesperson to represent the view of the group. **(Board President may refrain from reciting this section if no RTS forms have been submitted).**
1) Erin Whitesitt – Transparency of the Paragon Contract

X. REQUEST FOR FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Member David: Would like to see data on applications, acceptances and matriculations against specific tiers off colleges. Secondly would like to see the implications of the upcoming election on MUHS in terms of policy and budget concerns

XI. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn by President Bell, second by Member Chavez
President Bell – Aye
VP Nevarez – Yes
Member David – Yes
Member Chavez – Yes
Motion passes 4-0

Meeting adjourned at: 8:17 PM

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Board President Vice President

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