

MINGUS UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT
1801 East Fir, Cottonwood, AZ 86326

GOVERNING BOARD
MINUTES OF MEETING

Mingus Union High School Library
Thursday, February 27, 2025 5:00 PM

Governing Board:

Misty Cox
Austin Babcock
Ashley Koepnick
Taylor Bell
Frank Nevarez

Also Present:

Melody Herne, Superintendent
Bridget Hillman, Admin Asst.
Josh Fant, IT Director

OPENING

Call to Order

President Cox called the meeting to order at 5:00 PM

Roll Call

President Misty Cox, Vice President Ashley Koepnick, Board Member Austin Babcock, Board Member Taylor Bell, and Board Member Frank Nevarez were all present.

Pledge of Allegiance

The pledge was led by Board Member Babcock .

Moment of Silence

A moment of silence was observed.

Adoption of Agenda

Motion was made by Vice President Koepnick to adopt the agenda as presented. Second was made by Board Member Nevarez.

Roll Call Vote:

President Misty Cox – Aye
Vice President Ashley Koepnick - Aye
Board Member Austin Babcock - Aye
Board Member Taylor Bell - Aye
Board Member Frank Nevarez - Aye

Motion passed 5-0.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Jason Teague, Cottonwood resident and teacher at Mingus Union High School, expressed that the Board has had a number of discussions regarding the Curriculum Audit from 2019. What has been lacking in those discussions is past history that had effected that audit. Mr. Teague explained that from 2017 to 2019 Mingus Union High School had a large turn over in Administration. During the years of 2017 and 2019 Mr. Teague, a then and current teacher, worked for four to five Superintendents and three Principals. The Mingus Union High School teaching staff did the best it could under the revolving door of Leadership during that time. The school struggled without clear direction and constant Leadership. This information needs to be understood when reviewing the 2019 Curriculum Audit. Under the stable Leadership of previous Superintendent Mike Westcott and then Principal Genie Gee improvement steps were implemented, and progress was made. There has been a tremendous amount of work done in the last six years and it needs to be recognized. Mr. Teague also thanked Vice President Koepnick, Board Member Bell, and Board Member Nevarez for coming to the campus taking a tour and participating in the WICOR walkabouts. He looks forward to seeing Board Member Babcock for his scheduled campus visit on Friday. Mr. Teague also expressed that he is waiting for President Cox to find time to come to the campus and see the students and staff in action.

Paula Herald, Cottonwood resident, thanked the Board for their focused work to improve education in the Verde Valley and especially at Mingus Union High School. Ms. Herald stated that at the last few Board meetings the issue of weighted grades has been a topic of discussion. She has felt that gifted and advanced students are many times left behind. She is grateful for those Board Members who have stood up and pushed to move forward the modification of the GPA. This will give a more accurate reflection of the rigorous courses taken like honors and dual enrollment classes. While Ms. Herald agrees with the comments made by Superintendent Herne at the last meeting regarding overall proficiency as a high priority. She also has confidence that we can work concurrently to make sure that the gifted and advanced students feel appreciated, acknowledged, and rewarded. Ms. Herald also expressed concern at the last meeting there was a motion to tie the course catalog to the curriculum or to a future curriculum that will be designed. It has been her experience that the development of a strategic plan will take time. If the thinking of the Board is to wait for the strategic plan to be finished before working on the curriculum she would like to caution the Board in doing so. She has read the 2019 Curriculum Audit and maybe we need to have another audit done, however by that indication our curriculum is not constant by class or by grade to the state standards therefore the point of proficiency is moot. The need for consistency in the curriculum is essential. She urges the Board to move forward with a leader in the curriculum position as soon as possible.

INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

Policy 1st Reading

Superintendent Herne reviewed updates and read Policies IJM and IKC.

Discussion regarding Policy IJM occurred.

President Cox and Board Member Nevarez requested modifications to Policy IJM. Superintendent Herne instructed all modifications to be sent to her. Policy IJM will come back to the Board on a future agenda for a first reading. Superintendent Herne stated that the update to Policy IKC is to bring us into compliance to do weighted grades. Policy IKC will move forward with the second reading on the next meeting agenda as an action item.

Goals and Direction for Strategic Planning

- **Curriculum Position**

Before open dialogue regarding goals and direction for Strategic Planning and Curriculum Position President Cox requests to address the Board.

President Cox states, *we have all seen the 2019 Curriculum Audit while it has been demonstrated that improvement and measures have been taken over the last few years, which is appreciated, it is evident that a lot of work needs to be done. Mingus does not have a complete and unified curriculum, yet we wonder why we are not proficient. We are not providing the very foundation that our students need to be successful. We all ran on improving academics and preparing students for life after high school. We need to fulfill our promises and take steps to establish and adopt a rigorous and relevant curriculum. A Strategic Plan is absolutely necessary and will be instrumental to project three to five years ahead. Thank you to Superintendent Herne for leading us in that direction. However, we already know from two different and separate sources that we need a curriculum. We have uncovered a major issue, and we need to act quickly and efficiently to develop a complete curriculum. We were elected to focus on academics and getting the curriculum is the first step. We do not want to continue down the same ineffective path as our predecessors. We need to provide the tools necessary for our students and teachers to succeed. I think one way to address this issue is to immediately post for a Curriculum Director. Do we have any other ideas on how to immediately and efficiently condense working on improving academics. The Strategic Plan is paramount, but we do not want to wait for a third professional to tell us that we need a curriculum. We need to add the Curriculum Director job position description on the March agenda as an action item so that it can be posted immediately. In the meantime, I would like a report sent to the Board on measures and steps that are currently being taken to make improvements in these areas.*

Superintendent Herne asked if the report is to be sent via email.

Board Member Bell requests a presentation on where current curriculum is so we know where the curriculum is at before we bring in an outside company. She would like the presentation to consist of what measures have been taken and what areas we lack. She does not feel that the Board has been given a recent curriculum and proficiency update.

Superintendent Herne asked for clarification.

Board Member Bell requests the presentation she appreciates the context that comes from a presentation.

President Cox reiterates that we are still lacking in a number of areas and in a presentation, we may see things that have been done however, we still do not have a solid base or foundation in the curriculum. She is thankful for the efforts of the teachers and administrators to build on what we did not have but we are still lacking in many areas. She urged the Board to get on the same page.

Board Member Nevarez states that he agrees with Board Member Bell in a sense Board Member Babcock and President Cox have had the last two years of experience on the board that the rest of the current Board was not part of. He would like a presentation regarding curriculum.

Board Member Bell states that she does not feel comfortable posting a new curriculum position without understanding what the current curriculum job description task and duties include. She requests that this information be added to the presentation. Her fear is if we move forward before a very deep dive internally and with ASBA to see our current state, we do not know whether we could possibly build upon the position that currently exist before we choose to post another. She is not comfortable with voting on this issue at this moment in time.

Superintendent Herne states that a presentation on curriculum will consist of steps that have been taken coming from strengths and weaknesses point of view and an update of the current curriculum position job description daily tasks. On the measures that have been taken President Cox would also like to see how they are tied to proficiency in a positive or negative way. Board Member Bell also states that we are doing a lot at once under new Leadership. She would like Superintendent Herne's perspective on our current state, where we are lacking, growing, and going.

President Cox stated, how much longer are we going to let students fall behind.

Board Member Babcock request clarification regarding what the context of the word curriculum is it is being used. Superintendent Herne reviews what curriculum is in this context and how it is related to state standards and used in a scope and sequence perspective. She also reviews what a well laid out curriculum should be. Superintendent Herne reiterates that we do have state standards and scope and sequences for our courses so to say we do not have curriculum is inaccurate.

President Cox spoke directly to Board Member Babcock stating in the two years they have been on the Board has the curriculum ever come before them to adopt as it states per policy the board will adopt. Board Member Babcock could not recall. President Cox reiterated as a Board Member they have never been presented with a curriculum or voted to adopt a curriculum which states in policy. Again, Board Member Babcock did not recall. Board Member Nevarez stated there was a lack of Leadership and now we do have Leadership that is a big difference. He wants to follow our current Leadership and for the Board to be on the same page. What do we want to do, how do we want to do it with our current Leadership. Not having Leadership hurt us, but now we do have Leadership and we need to take advantage of that.

Board Member Babcock asks what the curriculum director will do. Will this person get teachers together to map out the curriculum. Superintendent Herne clarifies and reminds the Board this is a curriculum position as three options were presented at the previous meeting.

Vice President Koepnick states it would be nice to know where we are and where we would like to be as she is not in the classroom everyday; what we need to do to get there. She gives an example from her personal business on doing an invoice start to finish and how anyone could follow the process. She agrees with Board Member Bell that she would like to know what we already have and what is working well and what we can change.

Board Member Bell and Nevarez both state they would like to have more information on the current state of the curriculum before moving forward with a curriculum position job description.

Board Member Bell appreciates the professional development presentation (2/13) from Principal Beery and Ms. Ventura. She got to do the WICOR Walkabout and was impressed with the way in which the teaching method was being rolled out and way in which every student was locked in and learning and presenting to each other. Board Member Bell tied this into the Strategic Plan and the board being on the same page about getting to where we want to get to.

President Cox agrees with Vice President Koepnick on her example from the personal business; this should apply to school and parents accessing the curriculum. Superintendent Herne reminds the Board about a presentation done at a Fall Board Meeting regarding Teacher Google Sites. President Cox stated that was more of a syllabi. State standards are important. We are 48-49 in the country even as the 2019 Curriculum Audit told us we are not aiming higher above state standards to maximized achievement. So, I just don't understand where (frustration)...

The Board moves into discussion regarding goals and direction for Strategic Planning. Collaboration by all parties aids in the creation of goals and direction for the phase 0 meeting with ASBA that will be held next week.

Exceptional Student Services

Director Chad Scott updated the Board on current Exceptional Student Services information and guidelines.

ACTION ITEMS - DISTRICT BUSINESS

Meet and Confer--Salary And Benefits Committee Guidelines for 2025

Superintendent Herne presented information regarding Meet and Confer, Policy HA and HA-R, BDF, and reviewed guidelines and assurances.

Motion was made by President Cox to approve the Salary and Benefits Committee guidelines and assurances as presented. Second was made by Board Member Bell.

Roll Call Vote:

President Misty Cox – Aye
Vice President Ashley Koepnick - Aye
Board Member Austin Babcock - Aye
Board Member Taylor Bell - Aye
Board Member Frank Nevarez - Aye

Motion passed 5-0.

Meet and Confer--Selection of the Governing Board Representative on the 2025 Salary and Benefits Committee

Superintendent Herne presented information regarding the Board representative on the Salary and Benefits Committee as prescribed by Board Policy BDF (Advisory Committees).

Motion was made by President Cox to appoint Board Member Nevarez to sit on the Salary and Benefits Committee as prescribed by Board Policy BDF. Second was made by Vice President Koepnick.

Roll Call Vote:

President Misty Cox – Aye
Vice President Ashley Koepnick - Aye
Board Member Austin Babcock - Aye
Board Member Taylor Bell - Aye
Board Member Frank Nevarez - Aye

Motion passed 5-0.

Gifted Education Program

Director Genie Gee and Director Chad Scott presented information regarding the Mingus Union High School gifted scope and sequence. Questions by the Board were answered during the presentation.

Motion was made by Board Member Nevarez to approve the gifted scope and sequence as presented. Second was made by Board Member Bell.

Roll Call Vote:

President Misty Cox – Nay
Vice President Ashley Koepnick - Aye
Board Member Austin Babcock - Aye
Board Member Taylor Bell - Aye
Board Member Frank Nevarez - Aye

Motion passed 4-1.

Superintendent Herne thanked the Board Members and Director Gee and Director Scott. Superintendent Herne will send the Board what the requirements look like and what we need to do to be in compliance with the state is huge. The work that has been done for this grant is enormous. Superintendent Herne expresses her sincere thank you for the work put in by Director Gee and Director Scott.

REQUEST FOR FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

ADJOURNMENT

Motion was made by President Cox to adjourn. Second was made by Vice President Koepnick.

Roll Call Vote:

Board President Misty Cox – Aye

Vice President Ashley Koepnick - Aye

Board Member Austin Babcock - Aye

Board Member Taylor Bell - Aye

Board Member Frank Nevarez - Aye

Motion passed 5-0.

Adjournment: 6:32 pm

Board President Misty Cox

Vice President Ashley Koepnick