

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

GOVERNING BOARD MINUTES OF MEETING  
Mingus Union High School Library  
Thursday, September 3, 2026, 6:00 PM

**Governing Board:**

Ms. Taylor Bell  
Mr. Frank Nevarez  
Mr. Austin Babcock  
Mr. Will David  
Mr. Matthew Chavez

**Also Present:**

Melody Herne, Superintendent  
Tari Garrison, Board Secretary  
Dave Beery, Principal

Meeting Started at: 6:00 PM

**I. OPENING**

**I.1. Call to Order**

**I.2. Roll Call**

- President Bell – Here
- Vice President Nevarez – Here
- Member Babcock – Here
- Member David – Here
- Member Chavez – Here

**I.3. Pledge of Allegiance**

**I.4. Moment of Silence**

**I.5. Adoption of Agenda**

Motion to Adopt the Agenda as presented by Member Chavez and seconded by Vice President Nevarez.

- President Bell – Aye
- Vice President Nevarez – Aye
- Member Babcock – Yes
- Member David – Yes
- Member Chavez – Yes

**Motion passes 5-0**

**II. 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.

**II. 1. Superintendent's Reports**

Superintendent Herne provided updates on recent District activities and recognitions, including Fall Picture Day, the Arizona School Safety & Security Summit, A.T.O.R.T.'s Riverfront Park event and upcoming *Treasure Island* production, the Utah Shakespeare Festival, and the Student Council Spirit Conference.

The Mingus Swim Team volunteered at the Special Olympics Mountain Area Swim Meet, where Unified Athletes Charity York, Rhys Pritchard, and Annie Walker competed, with Charity and Rhys earning silver medals.

Ms. Selna and Mr. Bowers received the APS Supply My Class Award, which provided each with \$500 for classroom supplies.

Upcoming events include varsity football, Labor Day/no school, swimming, Senior Sunrise, and flag football.

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II.2. **Board Member Report(s)** - Board Members will report on attendance at the TRUST Governance Summit.

**Vice President Nevarez** reflected on the Crisis Reality Training, noting the importance of recognizing school staff as the first responders already on campus during an emergency. He expressed appreciation for the training MUHS staff have received and thanked staff and teachers for the significant responsibility they carry in supporting and protecting students.

**Board Member Chavez** also discussed attending the training and appreciated the keynote speaker's approach and "outside-the-box" perspective. Member Chavez also attended a First Amendment seminar, which addressed the rights of students and adults, including what they may and may not say or do, along with relevant case studies.

**III. PRESENTATION AND INFORMATION**

III.1. **Administration Information**-- Principal Beery will discuss the 2026 School Safety & Security Summit.

Principal Beery provided an overview of information and takeaways from the 2026 School Safety & Security Summit. Topics included Emergency Operations Plans, the roles of School Resource Officers (SROs), School Safety Officers (SSOs), grant recipients, and the importance of planning and conducting drills for likely emergency situations.

Principal Beery recognized the MUHS team that attended the summit, which included Dean of Students Katherine Forbes, ESS Director Shelley Hillman, SRO Officer Matt Strickland, Counselor Tara Trezise, School Nurse Jennifer Downey, and Transportation Coordinator Sharon Ackerman.

The presentation also connected school safety efforts to the District's 2026–2029 Strategic Plan, particularly the focus areas of Community Engagement & Partnerships and School Climate & Culture.

Principal Beery also highlighted summit presenters Jeff Gentry, Undersheriff for Maricopa County, and Nicole Hockley, Co-founder/CEO of Sandy Hook Promise.

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

IV.1. **Meetings** -- August 13, 2026, General Meeting minutes.

**Motion to Approve Minutes as presented by President Bell, and seconded by Member Chavez**

- President Bell – Aye
- Vice President Nevarez – Aye
- Member Babcock – Yes
- Member David – Yes
- Member Chavez – Yes

**Motion passes 5-0**

**V. ACTION ITEMS – CONSENT**

V.1. **Approval of Routine Vouchers**

V.1.1. **Expense**

Voucher 1056 – Encumbrance

Voucher 1057 – Encumbrance

Voucher 1005

Voucher 1006

Voucher 1007

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V.1.2. **Payroll**

Payroll Voucher 4

Payroll Voucher 5

V.1.3. **Bookstore Activity**

Account Summary

V.2. **Personnel - HR Report**

PA-1

V.3. **FY2027 Fall Athletic Stipends**

V.4. **FY2027 Academic and Extra-Duty Stipends**

V. 5. **Donation**

Mingus FFA Program

V.6. **Agreements**

Paragon Service Group – K9 Detection Services Agreement 2026-2027

V.7. **School Facilities Division**

Resolution for Submission of FY2027 Capital Plan

V.8. **American Sign Language Textbook Approval**

Books to compliment the approved American Sign Language Course.

V.9. **Policy Second Read — Volume 38, Number 3 and 5**

Member Babcock Pulled V.3 FY2027 Fall Athletic Stipends.

Member Babcock raised concerns regarding assistant flag football coaching stipends. He noted that three assistant coaches are currently sharing the funding allocated for two positions and questioned why flag football has fewer paid assistant positions than some other sports

Discussion followed regarding the number of coaching positions allocated to each sport, the stipend tier system, prior coaching experience, and ensuring any changes are applied fairly across athletic programs. Superintendent Herne explained that the Board approves the stipend schedule and has the authority to modify it.

The Board agreed that the overall athletic stipend structure should be reviewed rather than making a broader change that evening. Superintendent Herne recommended approving the current stipend list and bringing the stipend structure back as a future agenda item.

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Motion to **Approve V.3 FY2027 Fall Athletic Stipends (with a request for it to be a future agenda item to review)** as presented by **Member Babcock**, and seconded by **Member Chavez**

- President Bell – Aye
- Vice President Nevarez – Aye
- Member Babcock – Yes
- Member David – Yes
- Member Chavez – Yes

**Motion passes 5-0**

Member David Pulled **V.6. Paragon Service Group – K9 Detection Services Agreement 2026-2027, V.7 School Facilities Division, and V.8. American Sign Language Textbook Approval**

**V.6. Paragon Service Group – K9 Detection Services Agreement 2026-2027**

Member David discussed the proposed K9 Detection Services Agreement and emphasized the importance of ensuring that K9 services are part of a comprehensive, evidence-based security plan rather than simply a visible security measure.

He was **supportive of the contract**, but wanted staff to provide additional information regarding how K9 detection fits into the District's overall safety and security strategy and how the District will measure its effectiveness. The Board agreed that answering those questions was important and that additional discussion would be beneficial.

Motion to **Approve V.6, the Paragon Service Group K9 Detection Services Agreement for FY2026-27 (with the understanding that staff would return with information regarding the plan in an appropriate session, potentially an executive session)** as presented by **Member David** and seconded by **Member Babcock**.

- President Bell – Aye
- Vice President Nevarez – Aye
- Member Babcock – Yes
- Member David – Yes
- Member Chavez – Yes

**Motion passes 5-0**

**V.7 School Facilities Division**

Member David raised concerns regarding the enrollment projections included in the FY2027 Capital Plan, noting that the slight projected increase appeared inconsistent with previous District discussions and Strategic Plan data indicating an overall downward enrollment trend. He emphasized that his concern was transparency and ensuring the Board understood and discussed the projections before approval.

Board Member Chavez stated that when he reviewed the document, he also questioned the small increase because the information the Board had previously received indicated the opposite. He stated that the question deserved further discussion and should be answered.

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Superintendent Herne explained that the enrollment projections submitted to the School Facilities Division are estimates based on approximately 15–20 years of historical enrollment trends. She noted that while the District is not experiencing significant enrollment growth, there was a welcomed increase in freshmen this year. She emphasized that the report is a required formality that allows the District to remain eligible for School Facilities Division funding for potential future capital needs. She recommended discussing FY2027 and future enrollment projections in greater detail as a future agenda item but encouraged the Board to approve the required report that evening.

**Motion to Approve V.7 School Facilities Division** as presented by **Member David** and seconded by **Member Chavez**.

- President Bell – Aye
- Vice President Nevarez – Aye
- Member Babcock – Yes
- Member David – Yes
- Member Chavez – Yes

**Motion passes 5-0**

**V.8. American Sign Language Textbook Approval**

Member David expressed concern regarding the timing of approval of the American Scientific textbook because the school year had already begun.

Member Babcock explained that the textbook was supposed to be on the previous meeting agenda, but he missed the item. He stated that he had not had a chance to go and read it and asked that it be pushed out one month.

**Motion to Approve V.8. American Sign Language Textbook Approval** as presented by Member David and seconded by Vice President Nevarez.

- President Bell – Aye
- Vice President Nevarez – Aye
- Member Babcock – Yes
- Member David – Yes
- Member Chavez – Yes

**Motion passes 5**

**VI.. ACTION ITEMS - DISTRICT BUSINESS**

VII. **Superintendent Evaluation Procedures** — the Board will vote to modify the current 2026 process to that of the 2024 and 2025 protocol.

Motion made by President Bell, no second

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VIII. **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

1. **Wyatt Edwards**

Recent school decisions made by the School Board have allowed NWEA to take 10% out of all students' grades. This system allows all classes, including electives, to be given a 10% share of the overall grade for improving on the NWEA. Ten percent may look small at first, but not when you consider the difference between getting a C versus a B, getting an A versus a B, or even a D instead of a C. With the massive influence NWEA has on all of our grades, I'd expect the test to at least align with my learning material. Especially if you're thinking about college, 10% of an entire grade is no joke. Do you think the amount of authority given to the NWEA was a final test? In what realm of logic or reality would a weight class or an art class ever constitute the need for a test based on math, science, and English? What's more, the NWEA's initial purpose was designed so that an automatic 50% of the test will most likely fail. This is done by assigning you harder and harder questions. The NWEA can rank your understanding of the core subjects in school, but it does not directly cover the more specific content you cover on a unit test or a benchmark test. The stakes are much too great for sets of tests. At every decimal, my GPA counts. Many students panic and guess through everything, while others intentionally fail the first time so they may see growth. And by many, I mean I'm willing to bet over half of all students are currently doing that, from what I've seen. This obviously creates a massive inconsistency in the data that incorrectly measures teachers and performance. I myself acknowledge that our school must have a way of measuring teacher performance and where students at Mingus are at. However, the current system is broken, and I propose our school works to provide a better solution.

IX. **Executive Session** -- Pursuant to A.R.S. 38-431 .03 the Governing Board may convene in Executive Session as a separate meeting. The Executive Session is closed to the public except as authorized by law. No legal action will be taken during the Executive Session.

IX.1. **Superintendent Evaluation** -Discussion of Governing Board with Superintendent on the final Evaluation Domain Rating.

**The Board entered Executive Session, located in Superintendent Herne's Office, at 7:12 PM.**

**The Board concluded the Executive Session at 9:27 PM and re-entered the General Board Meeting at 9:31 PM, minus Board Member David.**

X. **REQUEST FOR FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

**President Bell** requested review of the Superintendent's Evaluation Final Domain Rating Process.

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XI. **ADJOURNMENT**

Motion to **Approve Adjournment** as presented by **Vice President Nevarez**, and seconded by **President Bell**

- President Bell – Aye
- Vice President Nevarez – Aye
- Member Babcock – Yes
- Member Chavez – Yes

**Motion passes 4-0**

Meeting Ended at 9:35 PM

**Board President**

**Board Vice President**

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