

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

**GOVERNING BOARD**  
**MINUTES OF MEETING**

Mingus Union High School Library  
Thursday, January 23, 2025 5:00 PM

**Governing Board:**

Misty Cox  
Austin Babcock  
Ashley Koepnick  
Taylor Bell  
Frank Nevarez

**Also Present:**

Melody Herne, Superintendent  
Lynn Leonard, Finance Director  
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, are all present.

**Pledge of Allegiance**

The pledge was led by Bridget Hillman.

**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 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.

President Cox states during the meeting there will be discussion between board members and the audience will only speak if called upon.

## **INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION ITEMS**

### **Governing Board Training**

Superintendent Barbara U'ren introduced herself as the proud retired Superintendent of Cottonwood Oak Creek School District. She is currently the County Coordinator, Trainer with the TRUST.

Superintendent U'ren continued board training covering Board roles and responsibilities with highlights on; Policies and Visions, Ethical Responsibilities, Four Functions of Governance, Communication Process for Governing the Legislative and Executive Functions, and Day to Day Do's and Don'ts.

Superintendent Herne thanked Superintendent U'ren for her presentation.

### **Strategic Planning**

Superintendent Herne reviewed possible vendors for the creation of a Strategic Plan for Mingus Union High School District #4. Selected vendors are: ASBA, Cognia, and Dr. Clement. The process for how each vendor would conduct structuring a strategic plan, price and quotes if available were presented. The recommendation that Superintendent Herne received from Principal Beery and Guiding Coalition (MUHS teacher leader group) is Cognia. She expressed thanks to Principal Beery and Guiding Coalition for their input. Superintendent Herne expressed to the Board the need for a rich discussion regarding the direction they would like to pursue.

President Cox asked all Board Members for questions or concerns regarding the vendors.

Board Member Babcock asked if we had a rough estimate of the cost from Cognia. Superintendent Herne stated that a similar single school district which used Cognia cost was \$25,000.00 and the timeline for that district was little over one year. A quote from Cognia would not be generated until the first meeting took place where we would outline the scope of the work needed which could include continued monitoring. ASBA would be comparable to Cognia. The difference between ASBA and Cognia would be the monitoring that we could request in the scope of work from Cognia. Continued monitoring is not part of what Dr. Clement's proposal.

Vice President Koepnick is apprehensive if Mingus went with a large company would we experience a one-to-one feeling that a single person could offer. Mingus is a one district school and she wants to make sure that the vendor we choose can give a personal one-to-one commitment. Superintendent Herne stated that no matter if we choose a large company like Cognia or ASBA, each would be very specific to the needs of Mingus Union High School District #4. The person that we would work with would be the same from start to finish.

Board Member Babcock also asked for Superintendent Herne's opinion regarding timelines of the vendors. There is a huge difference between them, Cognia and ASBA timelines are about a year and Dr. Clement a month. Superintendent Herne's opinion is that we will need to spend at a minimum six months. The time it will take to hold meetings and ask our community to be involved is going to take time. We will need to work around several schedules to have a successful outcome. It would also be the same for Dr. Clement although he states a shorter timeline, the concern is we may lose out on valuable

stakeholders with the small meeting window Dr. Clement utilizes. Superintendent Herne realistically feels that we could have our Strategic Plan in place for Fiscal Year 2026.

Board Member Babcock asked if the six-month timeline would include one to two meetings a month for the next six months. Superintendent Herne states it could even be more, and the Board needs to also talk about time commitment for this project. The Strategic Plan is a three-to-five-year plan to drive the direction of the school, and it will take time to produce a plan. Superintendent Herne wanted to remind the Board that Dr. Clement timeline is less however, we (Mingus Union High School) would be creating all SMART goals, and majority of the work would fall on us (MUHS staff). We are about to head into a very busy part of the year with high stakes testing with everyone feeling stress. She knows we have excellent staff members who could write different pieces of the plan and create SMART goals, but all of this takes time. If we went with Cognia or ASBA they would do that for us.

Board Member Nevarez asked why the teachers feel that Cognia is the best choice. Superintendent Herne states the accreditation process is huge with hundreds of documents being shared, reviewed, and evaluated. With the recent 2024 Accreditation Engagement Review performed by Cognia during the last school year, it is a natural progression to move forward with Cognia to develop a Strategic Plan.

Board Member Nevarez agrees that going forward with Dr. Clement would put a lot of responsibility onto our teaching staff and he does not feel we should do that. The cost between a larger company and Dr. Clement is huge, however the amount of the work it would put onto the staff is too much. Dr. Clement is not an option for him. Board Member Babcock agrees. President Cox does not agree.

Board Member Bell asked if going with Cognia would include any monitoring time. Superintendent Herne stated that the plan would be implemented in six months then we could have three-to-six-months monitoring for a total of a nine-to-twelve-month process. The request for monitoring time will be discussed when we set the scope of work needed.

Board Member Bell likes the local aspect and price of Dr. Clement. This is a big financial decision and should not be taken lightly. The development of a Strategic Plan is one of the most important items we will be undertaking as a Board. Mingus has not had a Strategic Plan in a very long time. Everything we do moving forward will depend on a very solid Strategic Plan. The monitoring element is critical, if time and effort is put forth to make a wonderful plan but we do not have monitoring our efforts, time, and money could be wasted. Board Member Bell is concerned if Dr. Clement is selected as the vendor because he does not have any continued monitoring incorporated into his service. Will we obtain a quality product in such a short time frame and the amount of work and effort that the Board & MUHS staff would need to dedicate to this project is enormous. She would rather see us utilize the experts to do the writing of the documents of the Strategic Plan and monitoring is key therefore Board Member Bell would like to see us go with ASBA or Cognia.

President Cox states her preference would be to go with Dr. Clement. With ASBA and especially Cognia not willing to give us a direct quote of services is off putting. Cognia should be more willing to work with us. We have a relationship with them due to the accreditation process that they just conducted in the spring of 2024. President Cox feels that Cognia should be more forthcoming. We are getting ready to spend thousands of dollars of taxpayers' money and it is frustrating that they will not comply. President Cox also feels that the standards used by Cognia for the accreditation process were not academically rigorous enough. As a District we want to be better than average academically. President Cox feels Dr. Clement can offer a more organic process. If the Board and Mingus staff have more of an active role in

the development and writing of the Strategic Plan it will instill a buy into the process and the Strategic Plan. Regarding monitoring of the Strategic Plan, President Cox's feels that Superintendent Herne is very capable to guide and monitor the use of the Strategic Plan for the Mingus Union High School District.

Board Member Nevarez states that Dr. Clement does not offer any monitoring. It is critical that we have the support of monitoring. This is an area that we have fallen short of in the past.

Superintendent Herne recommends the board be prepared to decide on a vendor in February.

President Cox agrees that the selection of a vendor to develop a Strategic Plan should be put on the February agenda as an action item.

President Cox asked for a discussion regarding key measures, pillars, and goals that they board would like to achieve for a Strategic Plan.

The following ideas were expressed by the Board and Superintendent Herne.

Board Member Koepnick – Academic excellence

Board Member Babcock agrees with Board Member Koepnick, he stated that this process would be an activity that will take place once a vendor is selected. He questions if there is enough time during this meeting to devote the time needed for this discussion.

President Cox – increase student proficiency in the core subjects, academic achievement, robust and rigorous curriculum, and enhanced professional development

Board Member Bell – the review of policies, professional development, relationship with feeder schools

Superintendent Herne – Career and Technical Education

Board Member Nevarez – relationship with feeder schools

### **2024 Accreditation Engagement**

Superintendent Herne reviewed the 2024 Accreditation Engagement Review performed by Cognia in 2024. The biggest finding that came out of the Accreditation Engagement Review is the need for a Strategic Plan.

### **2019 Curriculum Audit**

Superintendent Herne reviewed the 2019 Curriculum Audit conducted by Curriculum Management Solutions. Three recommendations from the 2019 Curriculum Audit: policy alignment that states direct planning for the critical functions around curriculum (Strategic Plan), need to improve the scope and use of our curriculum documents, and Professional Development. Superintendent Herne also reviewed steps taken after the 2019 Curriculum Audit. This document will help guide us as we move forward with the development of a Strategic Plan.

President Cox sees the need for a Curriculum Director. She would like Superintendent Herne to formulate or review the job description for a Curriculum Director. Superintendent Herne is to review the

cost with the Finance Director Lynn Leonard to see if the budget would accommodate the position of Curriculum Director. President Cox request this item to be placed on the February agenda.

Board Member Babcock asked with the changes that need to be made in policy, do we need to wait until we have a Strategic Plan in place.

Superintendent Herne states we can begin to work on policy now. A good place to start would be with our Mission and Vision.

President Cox request that policy A and AD be put on the February agenda as information and discussion.

Board Member Babcock suggested that the board begin to review policy identified by the Curriculum Audit, possibly one a month. President Cox and Board Member Nevarez agree.

Board Member Bell asked that the current Professional Development plan be presented to the board in the February meeting.

### **Policy Update**

Superintendent Herne reviewed policy IJM. She also reminds the board that as a part of policy IJM we have a regulation, IJM-R. This regulation was built out in 2024 with specific recommendations from our legal team. This regulation currently sits in PolicyBridge. She instructed the board to review the current regulation then give her any current updates or adjustments. Superintendent Herne stressed that updates to regulations are permitted. If the Board is looking to update policy IJM, this would be a different process with any update going to legal for review then, first and second readings needed for approval.

President Cox states she would like to make changes to policy IJM.

Superintendent Herne request that President Cox send her change to policy IJM via email. She will then send the information off to legal for their review. Once returned from legal the policy change would then undergo the first and second readings for approval.

Discussion regarding the regulation IJM-R took place. Updates to the regulation were given to Superintendent Herne. She will send the updates to the Board Members in her weekly update. She instructed the Board to send her any feedback until the regulation wording reads to their liking. Once completed the updates to regulation IJM-R will be submitted to PolicyBridge.

### **Requests for Future Agenda Items**

President Cox – selection of a vendor for the development of a Strategic Plan, Curriculum Director position, policy updates

Board Member Babcock – policy updates

Board Member Bell – Professional Development

*(the above requests came as the meeting took place)*

### **ADJOURNMENT**

**Motion** was made by President Cox to adjourn. Second was made by Board Member Nevarez.

**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: 7:10 pm**

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Board President Misty Cox

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Vice President Ashley Koepnick

DRAFT