



PERRIS UNION

HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

MINUTES

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES March 5, 2024

ROLL CALL

Present:

Trustee Edward Garcia, Jr., President
Trustee Steve Campos, Vice President
Trustee Anthony T. Stafford, Sr., Clerk
Trustee David Nelissen, Member
Elizabeth Vallejo, Member

Administrative Staff Present:

Grant Bennett, Superintendent; Candace Reines, Deputy Superintendent – Business Services; Kindy Mackamul, Interim Assistant Superintendent – Educational Services; Kirk Skorpanich, Assistant Superintendent – Human Resources; Joseph Williams, Assistant Superintendent – Innovation and Technology Services; Mimi Capistrano, Director – Fiscal Services; Dian Martin, Director – Learning Support Services; Amil Alzubaidi, Director – Special Education; Dr. Casaundra McNair, Director – Diversity, Equity & Inclusion; Hector Gonzalez, Director – Facilities Services; Audrey Mitchell, Director – Nutrition Services; Sylvia Hinojosa, Director – Purchasing; Marvin Atkins, Director – Pupil Services; Maribel Escobar, Director – Human Resources; John Hannon, Director – Security; James Heckman, Assistant Director – Technology; Nathan Camara, Supervisor – Accounting; Chad Goodwin, Supervisor – Facilities; Dr. Erika Tejeda, Principal – Liberty High School; Juan Santos, Principal – Perris High School; Lee Alfred, Principal – Perris Lake High School; and Shameeka McKenzie, Assistant Principal – Pinacate Middle School

Others Attending:

Jason Miller, Devin Blankenship, Helen Stimach, Crystal Perry, Jonathan Belloso, Rocco Neims, Jasmin Altamirano Diego, Noelle Cammon, Mary Venerable, Robert Brown, Crystal Perry, Jaiheim Grant, Jaizmine Grant, Charlitha Dotson, Priscilla Grijalva, Janice Rooths, Ashley Williamson, Shereta Montgomery, David Rabb; Myles Ross; Anna Fetzner, Sarah Rico, and others

PUBLIC NOTICE

1.1 PUBLIC NOTICE: The writings, documents, or public records described in SB No. 343 are available at the District Office, currently located at 155 East Fourth Street, Perris, CA 92570

CALL TO ORDER

2.1 CALL TO ORDER: The President of the Board of Trustees Will Call the Perris Union High School District Special Board Meeting to Order

The President of the Board of Trustees called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

INVITATION TO ADDRESS THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

3.1 INVITATION TO ADDRESS THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES: Closed Session Items Only

There were no requests to address the Board of Trustees on Closed Session items.

ADJOURN TO CLOSED SESSION

4.1 ADJOURN TO CLOSED SESSION: The Board of Trustees Will Discuss Items Listed in This Section:

- **4.2 PUBLIC EMPLOYEE EMPLOYMENT/APPOINTMENT - Pursuant to Government Code §54957.**
- **4.3 PUBLIC EMPLOYEE DISCIPLINE/DISMISSAL/RELEASE - Pursuant to Government Code §54957.**

ORIGINAL - Motion

Member **(David Nelissen)** moved, Member **(Steve Campos)** seconded to approve the **ORIGINAL** motion, "It is recommended that the Board of Trustees adjourn into Closed Session to discuss the items listed in this section:

- 4.2 PUBLIC EMPLOYEE EMPLOYMENT/APPOINTMENT - Pursuant to Government Code §54957.
- 4.3 PUBLIC EMPLOYEE DISCIPLINE/DISMISSAL/RELEASE - Pursuant to Government Code §54957.

Upon a roll call vote being taken, the vote was: Aye: **5**, Nay: **0**. The motion **PASSED 5 - 0**.

Steve Campos	Yes
Edward Garcia, Jr.	Yes
David Nelissen	Yes
Anthony T. Stafford, Sr.	Yes
Elizabeth Vallejo	Yes

RECONVENE IN PUBLIC SESSION

5.1 RECONVENE IN PUBLIC SESSION/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: The Board Meeting Will Reconvene at Approximately 5:00 p.m.

The President of the Board of Trustees reconvened the meeting at 5:52 p.m. and led the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.

REVISION/ADOPTION/ORDERING OF AGENDA

6.1 REVISION/ADOPTION/ORDERING OF AGENDA: March 5, 2024

ORIGINAL - Motion

Member **(Anthony T. Stafford, Sr.)** moved, Member **(David Nelissen)** seconded to approve the ORIGINAL motion, "It is recommended that the Board of Trustees approve any revision/adoption/ordering of the Agenda of the Special Meeting of the Perris Union High School District Board of Trustees for March 5, 2024."

AMENDED - Motion

Member **(Elizabeth Vallejo)** moved to pull the following item from the Agenda:

- Item (9.4) Resolution No. 21:23-24 - Elimination/Discontinuation and Layoff of Certain Certificated Management Employee for the 2024-25 School Year

Due to lack of a second, the motion failed.

ORIGINAL - Motion

Member **(Anthony T. Stafford, Sr.)** moved, Member **(David Nelissen)** seconded to approve the ORIGINAL motion, "It is recommended that the Board of Trustees approve any revision/adoption/ordering of the Agenda of the Special Meeting of the Perris Union High School District Board of Trustees for March 5, 2024."

Upon a roll call vote being taken, the vote was: Aye: **4**, Nay: **1**. The motion **PASSED 4 - 1**.

Steve Campos	Yes
Edward Garcia, Jr.	Yes
David Nelissen	Yes
Anthony T. Stafford, Sr.	Yes
Elizabeth Vallejo	No

ORAL REPORTS

7.1 Report Out of Closed Session

ORIGINAL - Motion

ORAL REPORTS (cont.)

Member **(David Nelissen)** moved, Member **(Edward Garcia)** seconded to approve the ORIGINAL motion, "It is recommended that the Board of Trustees approve the agreement resolving OAH Case No. 2023110026, which is now final."

Upon a roll call vote being taken, the vote was: Aye: **5**, Nay: **0**. The motion **PASSED 5 - 0**.

Steve Campos	Yes
Edward Garcia, Jr.	Yes
David Nelissen	Yes
Anthony T. Stafford, Sr.	Yes
Elizabeth Vallejo	Yes

ORIGINAL - Motion

Member **(Edward Garcia, Jr.)** moved, Member **(Steve Campos)** seconded to approve the ORIGINAL motion, "It is recommended that the Board of Trustees approve the appointment of Adam Estrada as Director of Risk Management and Environmental Safety with an effective date to be determined."

Upon a roll call vote being taken, the vote was: Aye: **3**, Nay: **2**. The motion **PASSED 3 – 2**.

Steve Campos	Yes
Edward Garcia, Jr.	Yes
David Nelissen	No
Anthony T. Stafford, Sr.	Yes
Elizabeth Vallejo	No

ORIGINAL - Motion

Member **(Edward Garcia, Jr.)** moved, Member **(Anthony T. Stafford, Sr.)** seconded to approve the ORIGINAL motion, "It is recommended that the Board of Trustees approve the promotion of Joseph Williams as Assistant Superintendent of Innovation and Technology Services effective March 6, 2024."

Upon a roll call vote being taken, the vote was: Aye: **4**, Nay: **1**. The motion **PASSED 4 – 1**.

Steve Campos	Yes
Edward Garcia, Jr.	Yes
David Nelissen	Yes
Anthony T. Stafford, Sr.	Yes
Elizabeth Vallejo	No

7.2 Overview of the District's Current Fiscal Condition

Candace Reines, Deputy Superintendent, and Dr. Scott Price, Chief Business Official, Riverside County Office of Education, provided the Board with an overview of the District's current and future fiscal conditions.

INVITATION TO ADDRESS THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

8.1 INVITATION TO ADDRESS THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES: Non-Agendized Items

Jason Miller, PSEA President, shared the following statement.

"Thank you very much. In the future, I think I will have my own perspective on numbers. It is clear there will be a deficiency in mental health services for students in the coming school year. We are asking for a real plan to not overwhelm counselors with these services. The counselors in our districts have a lot of things to do with a broad spectrum of responsibilities in their job. I'm a teacher. I can take my grade. I can take my papers home and grade them. These counselors cannot take a kid in crisis home and work on that at home. We cannot have anything extra added to their plate. That doesn't just include extra services but also extra work in their responsibilities. They already do. It is easy to say that certain responsibilities are part of their job. But what happens when their regular job responsibilities have too much of a workload in and of themselves? There needs to be a level of regular job duties that, if exceeded, becomes too much. And we say, please hire somebody or do something to offload the too much for these counselors. Counselors right now are close to, or over, that level even now. Nobody wants to have less staff. And if we cannot keep staff, then what is the plan to shield these counselors from inundating them with too much work? From what I have observed, our counselors work hard and put a lot of time in for our students, and we do thank them for that. I admit I do not fully understand what counselors do. I will be requesting from counselors throughout the district if I can shadow them for a few hours to see what they do with the intention of understanding their job better. I hope that others can look to understand their job better as well. Thank you for this time to speak."

Jonathan Belloso shared the following statement.

"Good evening, board members. More than anything. President Edward Garcia, I just want to address that this is not a business meeting. This is the public sector. This is public administration. We are not here to just write things off check off boxes. I stand before you as a director of a nonprofit, a businessman, a consultant, an uncle who understands the importance and the necessity of these services. Allow me to say that we cannot just keep reviewing. We have to look at the optics that these are now necessities. These are not additional programs that were once valued. And now we're going to be able to write them up. No. I need you to understand that this isn't about coming down to arbitrary numbers or percentages of kids dealing with mental health. What will it take? What do we need to explain to you? How many times do we have to give a story about kids failing and taking problems home and then just suffering day in and day out? If this was the private sector, we would go ahead and turn and look to the administration, those in charge of finance. And we would cut them. They would be the first to go. So I'm curious. Why is everyone else suffering for the incompetence of those in charge? If this was the private sector, you would be the first to go. I dare you to look at the children and ask them, am I being paid too much? What do you think of my salary? You know you won't have those services. But hey, I'm going to get a nice raise here. So I ask you to truly think. Think about it. Are we really, really marching on to being like Temecula on the news? No. Not here, not Perris. No, because we have the opportunity to stop this. We have the opportunity to show the people, the people we serve, the people you represent, that we're doing everything possible. So I ask you, have you been doing everything? When was the last time any of you spoke to the students, participated, have gone to their events? Talk with the teachers and truly say, what do you need? What do you need? Because that is public service. And if you're going to

INVITATION TO ADDRESS THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES (cont.)

administer, if you're going to wear the title, if you're going to probably take home that check, be sure to ask yourself, did I do everything possible to serve my community? Thank you."

ACTION ITEMS

9.1 PERSONNEL: Certificated Personnel Action Items

Trustee Vallejo addressed the Board and Cabinet on a number of issues she had, including saving the positions with grant monies, Medi-Cal, and furlough days. In addition she has requested additional information regarding the data of other grants that may become available.

Candace Reines, Deputy Superintendent, explained that there is a team working diligently on other revenue options, including applying for grants, possibly billing for services, and others.

ORIGINAL - Motion

Member **(David Nelissen)** moved, Member **(Steve Campos)** seconded to approve the **ORIGINAL** motion, "It is recommended that the Board of Trustees ratify and/or approve the Certificated Personnel Action Items as presented."

Upon a roll call vote being taken, the vote was: Aye: **4**, Nay: **1**. The motion **PASSED 4 - 1**.

Steve Campos	Yes
Edward Garcia, Jr.	Yes
David Nelissen	Yes
Anthony T. Stafford, Sr.	Yes
Elizabeth Vallejo	No

9.2 PERSONNEL: Resolution No. 14:23-24 - Elimination/Discontinuation and Layoff of Certain Classified Management/Unrepresented Employees for the 2024-25 School Year

The following public comments were addressed to the Board:

Rocco Neims shared the following statement.

"I just want to start off by saying thank you for inviting me to speak. Today I'm not speaking from a script. I'm speaking from my heart. You all, as elected board members, have made a promise to our community and not only to our community, but to us as students. And I say this with the hurt in my heart. You have not been carrying out that promise. I am the one who was doing your guys's jobs from behind the scenes. I am the one who is staying up after hours after doing my schoolwork, looking for grants and programs. I am the one emailing our state assembly members and the office of the governor of California. I am the one who found a grant by, or that is endorsed by the governor of California. I am the one who gave you guys the idea to reach out to medical offices in Riverside via email, and I just feel that it's unfair that I, as a student, have to do the

ACTION ITEMS (cont.)

work that you guys promise us as a community to do. And with that being said, I also want to say that I have seen my own friends struggle with their mental health. I will not name this person, but they have come to me many times and worries for their lives. They have told me they do not believe that they can make it to wake up another day. And I worry I'm the one who has to deal with that burden. And I just want to let you know that it takes one student, one student, to end their life to have the district sued and not only the district being sued. It will be you guys making that call to their parents, saying, I am so very sorry we could not save you. So like I said before, there must be alternative budgeting solutions. We have seen this in California over and over again. We have seen budgets go down. We have seen debts. But it's your guys's job to make sure that those are not always there. It is your guys's job to make sure we stay out of the red. It is your guys's job to make sure we can go home to our families and not worry that they can't eat or they cannot have a place where they can sleep. And I think you guys forgot to realize that. Me and the minorities on our campus are the ones who struggle the most. As a foster child, other people who are foster children, LGBTQ youth, we all struggle. I'm sorry if I'm going over a little bit of my time, but this is unacceptable, and we expect more from you. Thank you so much."

Jasmine Altamirano shared the following statement.

"Good afternoon, Board of Trustees. My name is Jasmine Altamirano. Diego. I come to you as a first-generation Latina daughter and older sister, an active student of the poorest school district who struggles with her own mental health. In my culture, mental health isn't something normal, and those who have it are simply seeking attention. But even I, as a well-rounded student who is involved in four extracurriculars, do community service, am an active member in my church, and still has time to spend with my family members and friends. I'm here to enlighten you that even the strongest one of us has moments and manner mentally challenged. I've spent sleepless nights running through my thoughts, thinking about my own life, how I've struggled, and how to keep pushing forward. It's not only me who continues to struggle with these moments. It's also the community that surrounds me. We, as a community, have found solace in the environment that the wellness center provides for us. It's become a space safe for many. How are students expected to continue pushing forward without the counselors whom they've created a bond with? I, as well as Rocco Neims, have been going around collecting signatures from the student body. That the wellness center is a need and not a want. Our support is, our claim is supported by the 190 signatures that we've collected. I collected signatures because it was my responsibility. As someone who suffers from mental health and who has friends but also as an older sister, I have younger sisters, and I have talked to them about the opportunities and the ones that the wellness center provides. But I'm unable to continue having these conversations. Why? As an older sister, what I read to them about resources that aren't going to be there for them. I worry that even when explaining to the students that go to the school this year about the petition, they felt like they were blindsided, that they didn't even know that this was happening. How are you guys going to make these budget cuts when the students at the current schools don't know what's happening? Why are you taking these resources from the community? What's our alternative? Who will be there to support the students? Are we, as a community, ready to watch our students struggle? Are we, as a community, ready to see how dire mental health impacts someone's life? With all honesty, I'm not willing to watch those who I love struggle so heavily with mental health. Why are we going to take their help? Are we supposed to be helping them? Aren't you guys supposed to be helping us help ourselves? Why are counselors and wellness centers not being prioritized? Why can't we reallocate funds? Why can't we make fundraisers? Why can't we do anything to stop this? I feel like we do. I feel like it's your responsibility to take action on this. And you guys are simply not. I've seen this from a student's perspective.

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I'm there. I have friends who struggle, and I'm the one who also knows that without the wellness center, I'm going to have more friends. I'm not willing to let my circle slowly, slowly go down in numbers because you guys made a decision to take away their support. Thank you."

ORIGINAL - Motion

Member **(David Nelissen)** moved, Member **(Anthony T. Stafford, Sr.)** seconded to approve the **ORIGINAL** motion, "It is recommended that the Board of Trustees approve Resolution No. 14:23-24 - Elimination/Discontinuation and Layoff of Certain Classified Management/Unrepresented Employees for the 2024-25 School Year."

Upon a roll call vote being taken, the vote was: Aye: **4**, Nay: **1**. The motion **PASSED 4 - 1**.

Steve Campos	Yes
Edward Garcia, Jr.	Yes
David Nelissen	Yes
Anthony T. Stafford, Sr.	Yes
Elizabeth Vallejo	No

9.3 PERSONNEL: Resolution No. 19:23-24 - Elimination/Discontinuation and Layoff of Certain Certificated Management Employees for the 2024-25 School Year

ORIGINAL - Motion

Member **(Steve Campos)** moved, Member **(David Nelissen)** seconded to approve the **ORIGINAL** motion, "It is recommended that the Board of Trustees approve Resolution No. 19:23-24 - Elimination/Discontinuation and Layoff of Certain Certificated Management Employees for the 2024-25 School Year."

Upon a roll call vote being taken, the vote was: Aye: **4**, Nay: **1**. The motion **PASSED 4 - 1**.

Steve Campos	Yes
Edward Garcia, Jr.	Yes
David Nelissen	Yes
Anthony T. Stafford, Sr.	Yes
Elizabeth Vallejo	No

9.4 PERSONNEL: Resolution No. 21:23-24 - Elimination/Discontinuation and Layoff of Certain Certificated Management Employee for the 2024-25 School Year

The following public comments were addressed to the Board.

Devin Blankenship shared the following statement.

"Hello, everyone; my name is Devin Blankenship, and I'm a current employee with the Perris Elementary School District. The cuts on DEI, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion are a great concern for me because I don't see how

ACTION ITEMS (cont)

students can succeed without proper representation of students in their educational environments. So I work in a special day class with students that have disabilities, and I see the intersection between persons with disabilities and race. Many of my students who are of Latin and African American descent, most likely will be in this district within the next ten years, and it is critical for them to be properly supported throughout their educational career. And according to US news, for education, it says a district's minority enrollment here is 90%. So it's imperative that a district that serves a predominantly minority population prioritizes diversity above anything. Also, black and Latino students are less likely to meet college requirements and take advanced courses. So cutting this perpetuates the inequities we see today. Even with affirmative action being now forbidden in our country. If we want to see our students go to campus and be integral to our word, we have to put these students first. So, hopefully this is something that you guys will be able to work out. I trust everything will work out good. Thank you."

Noel Cammon shared the following statement.

"Hello to all of you members of our educational community. My name is Noel Cammon, and I'm a proud teacher at Heritage High School. I do the world's most important work. I'm here to address these line items that would cripple the very important work that I do. I'm here to express my sadness and frustration at the proposal to cut my work off at my knees. What you may not know or understand is that these support and administrative personnel make my work possible. They free me up to do the very precise and intentional work that I do with our children. Without them, my work becomes less efficient and less precise. Picture a surgeon going into an operating room without an anesthesiologist, surgical tech, or nurse. Their work is less efficient and less precise. Who suffers the patient? Our students suffer when we don't have support. You are tasked with a different type of precise work you are being asked to cut. I implore you to cut with precision. I implore you to look for cuts with a mind to the quality of life of your patients. Our students. What I see so far is more akin to butchery. Please don't just look for joints to cut off. Precision is necessary, and so is assistance. Please consult the experts in the room. Please consult the people most affected. Please do your homework. The last thing I want to say is that when you fail to plan, you plan to fail. These proposed cuts seem like a colossal failure in planning to my mind. I hope there is a plan in place going forward. No, I expect a plan. I expect you to come up with solutions. I expect leadership to serve. Our educational community with precision and intention. Thank you."

Mary Venerable shared the following statement.

"Good afternoon, Superintendent Bennett, members of the Board. My name is Mary Venerable, and I'm here today representing the Southwest Riverside County NAACP branch 1034. I am here in keeping with our mission to secure the political, educational, social, and economic equality of rights, to eliminate race-based discrimination and to ensure the health and well-being of persons. I also reviewed your vision statement, which indicated that Perris Union High School will be a caring, diverse, supportive learning environment in which all are committed towards working in the relationship to foster innovative and creative learning. My major reason for being here is to speak to you about your plans to cut the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion department. I have

ACTION ITEMS (cont)

been reduced in time, so I have provided the clerk to provide you with a copy of my presentation so I won't go into the details that I have been cut with. I ask that you review my remarks and that you give due consideration to stop the elimination of this position, this very important position. I hope I've given you in my outline the insight and information about the need to continue the objection, the operation and support for the Diversity and Equity Inclusion department in Perris. Thank you for allowing me the time. Thank you."

Mary Venerable provided the following original statement to add to the minutes.

While I do not know your reasons for considering the elimination of this important department, I want to remind you of the good such a department provides to our young people in our community. The words "diversity, equity, and inclusion" have become political flashpoints in our society today, and I find that the science and evidence on why diversity matters are often ignored. Psychology's insights can help teachers manage behavior problems, motivate student learners, handle stress, support gifted and talented youth, and more. I ask you to consider what diversity, equity, and inclusion means. How has our understanding of racial and ethnic identity changed over the years, and how has research informed diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts? What does the research say about why we should all care about diversity in our schools, workplaces, and other institutions? And what can psychological science add to discussions about diversity?

When I heard about the plans to cut the DEI Department, I reviewed remarks made by experts who have studied the question regarding "Why diversity matters." I referenced information provided by Dr. Robert Sellers, who served as the University of Michigan's Vice Provost of Equity and Inclusion and was the Chief Diversity Officer from 2016 to 2021. His research focused on ethnic and racial identity and the role of race in the psychological lives of African Americans. He has studied the significance and meaning that African Americans have placed on race in defining themselves, the ways in which parents transmit messages about race to their children, and ways in which Black people cope with racial discrimination.

During Black History Month, I received a complaint from a mother of a third grader who experienced racial slurs from her fellow classmates. The classmates called the third grader the N word based on their finding that that was a name used for "Black people," so they determined that the child was a "N...er". The youth decided they could not associate with the child. While it was determined that there was no vicious intent because name-calling was an innocent act, the youth eventually became friends again.

An important part of the DEI program is to understand and study African Americans and other ethnic groups that have traditionally not been studied. DEI helps in the understanding of their humanity and individual differences and aids in seeing people as being different.

Unfortunately, DEI has been defined in ways that have nothing to do with the DEI efforts. Psychology's insights can help teachers manage behavior problems, motivate student learners, handle stress, support gifted and talented youth, and more. There are many benefits to having an effective DEI program.

Finally, I hope I have given you insight and information about the need to continue the operation and support for the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Department in the Perris School District. Thank you for allowing me the time to make these remarks.

ACTION ITEMS (cont)

Helen Stimach made the following statement.

"Good Evening President Garcia, Members of the Board, Superintendent Mr. Bennett, and Cabinet. My name is Helen Stimach and I am Dr. Casaundra McNair's secretary in DEI. I want to appeal to you regarding action item 9.4, which will eliminate Dr. McNair's position and the Equity Division of PUHSD. I understand we are in a budget deficit and need to sharpen pencils and eliminate unnecessary contracts, consultants, and positions. But I can't begin to understand how this district, which prides itself on being the first in innovation, as a leader, not a follower and continuously maintains that everything we do is for the benefit of our students and families, would consider eliminating one of the most beneficial programs ever implemented. To release Dr. McNair, a leader who is proactive, innovative, caring, articulate, dedicated, and beloved by staff, parents, and students, without a full understanding of what she has done to achieve such positive results for PUHSD is absurd. Besides creating Equity and Ethnic studies committees of both certificated and classified members of parents and students that meet with the superintendent quarterly, she has been able to bridge the gap between people and cultures. She models the vision of a caring, diverse, and supportive learning environment and has proven success with restructuring DAAPAC, AAPAC, and BSU, and that's just the beginning. Plans are in the works for other cultural celebrations and affirmations for the Hispanic and Asian populations in our district. She has written a 12 million dollar Community School Grant to bring positions and services to our students. What happens when next year the grant committee has questions for her, and we say she doesn't work here and we do not have a DEI Division? Then the committee asked to speak to her supervisor, and we say sorry the superintendent retired. Do you really think this grant committee will want to invest in us? Dr. McNair has done so much in such a short time, and she has so much more to do. California Healthy Kids Survey is under her purview. She is in discussions with committees on novel adoption, and the pilot program for the Ethnic Studies course has just been approved for 2024-25. Who will be directed to take on these and other responsibilities? Dr. McNair has attended conferences, not for her own personal gain but to network and bring to this district the most innovative ideas to empower and connect staff, students, and families to build capacity and to have a voice. She embodies our district mission in creating quality relevant learning opportunities for all in a safe and caring environment. Many do not see the behind-the-scenes work that goes into DEI, newsletters, monthly flyers of events, and continued collaboration with administration, staff, parents, and students cannot go unnoticed. Maybe other districts are taking the easier route to eliminate what they are afraid of or who don't have the appropriate personnel to guide and direct the forward-thinking vision that I always believed this district had. Don't be foolish; we have the right person with the right vision for the future. I chose to work with Dr. McNair about a year ago. I wasn't sure where I fit into the DEI model and could never have imagined how Dr. McNair has impacted me in my own personal growth because of DEI. It's an honor and privilege to work with her. This district needs to re-examine and re-consider other areas that do not support the vision, mission, and goals for students, families, administration, and staff at PUHSD. Thank you."

Charlitha Dotson shared the following statement.

"Hi. Good afternoon. Board, Superintendent Bennett. My name is Charlitha Dotson. I'm a teacher at Heritage High School, and I'm also a parent of a sophomore at Heritage High School. I didn't come in with a speech

ACTION ITEMS (cont.)

because when I speak, I speak from my heart, so I'll make this quick. A year and a half ago, when Dr. McNair came in, we had some higher-up folks from the district office come in and hoo-ha about how great things were going to be. You've given out surveys, and you've gotten information from us, and you see the concern. And you see the need for our students and then we go to these district AAPAC meetings. She comes in, she makes these grand presentations about how we can better the situation and culture in our district for our students. And then now you come in, and you tell us she's going to be gone. I mean, it's just like. I'm really, truly at a loss for words. Our counselors just this past August, the Cares team, Bob Brough, comes in and he, all around our theater, tells us how great this team is going to be. And they're going to come in, and they're going to do all of these great things for our students. And then what? Now they're going to be gone. At what point are you guys going to start thinking about our children? Like, really and truly, when are you going to start thinking about our children? And what's going to happen is just what happened after Covid. You see what the need is. There's a reason why you brought everybody in. Now you take everybody out, and the same thing is going to happen. It's cyclical; everything is going to just avalanche. We're going to be the teachers, the counselors that we have left over, are going to be the ones meeting the needs of all of these kids, wearing all of these hats. And all this is going to happen. I'm just so upset. It's going to work on the mental health of the teachers as well. The same thing is going to happen. Teachers are going to be taken off, and then you're going to have all of these subs, no one. And it's at the end of the day, it's just going to hurt the children, period. So you keep saying you're listening, but I don't think you're listening because the votes are continuing to be 4 to 1."

Priscilla Grijalva shared the following statement.

"Evening board, superintendent, and cabinet. My name is Priscilla Grijalva. I serve on a national school counseling board and committees. I'm here to support school counselors, mental health, and the Equity director. According to your mission statement, it is to create a safe and caring environment. I won't read it all to you because you know it. Eliminating the Director of Equity and Inclusion, as well as school counselors, is detrimental to our students. These positions create a safe and supportive environment. This will send a ripple effect across the district. Ethnic studies will be a state requirement in the coming years. An equity director is needed. FAFSA is a completion requirement in our state. Mental health needs are rising. School counselors are needed. Their caseloads will rise once you cut them, and they'll be about 530. This will create less time for direct services for our students. School counselors assist students with their mental health needs, college careers, and so much more. They save lives. The Equity director position helps close achievement gaps. The US Department of Education has released the 2023 Equity Action Plan as part of the Biden-Harris administration's continued commitment to advancing racial equity and support for underserved communities through the federal government. This plan aligns with one of the president's first executive orders, 13985, advancing racial equity and support for underserved communities through the federal government, according to the Educational Trust research. In particular, students of color and students from low-income families benefit from having more school counselors. For example, black students are more likely than their white peers to identify their school counselor as the person who had the most influence on their thinking about post-secondary education. My question for you is, do you think cutting these positions supports your mission statement and will help your students with educational equity? As board member Elizabeth Vallejo stated, look at the data and other items. Put students first. Please consider removing school counselors and your equity director from elimination. Thank you."

ACTION ITEMS (cont.)

Janice Rooths shared the following statement.

"My name is Janice Rooths. I'm the Executive Director of the Center Against Racism and Trauma. We cover the entire Inland Empire and are particularly interested in instances where school districts are getting rid of their Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion departments. I'm listening here to both your board members as well as staff and parents and teachers. And, of course, it makes no sense to get rid of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in a district where you have such great diversity. But you have what might be respectable graduation rates but very, very low achievement in math and English, and even for English language learners, and high, you know, rates of suspension. So these are measures. These are your work measures. These are your work measures, staff. And you need to have somebody who's going to be looking at what people need, students, teachers, staff, in order to be successful in their jobs, which is to ensure that children learn and are supported in that learning with a variety of things. But my question to you in my few seconds is why is the county telling you about your finances and why wasn't this session a whole session on what the budget is in Perris? With all the data you need to help make the decisions you want to make in terms of doing that surgical work and cuts. That's the question you should be asking the staff. Thank you."

Ashley Williamson made the following statement.

"Hello, my name is Ashely Williamson, and the parent of two Perris Union students and one former student. I came today to address the board about a poor proposal to eliminate some of the most crucial faculty members at PUHSD. Social workers, the Diversity and Inclusion director, support staff, drug intervention specialists, and assistant principals are absolutely vital to the students in our district who are the most in need. Schools can sometimes expect students to be comfortable with engaging faculty, and these kinds of relationships can lead to emotional support. Recommendation letters connecting with faculty are valuable to a student's GPA. One research study shows that each voluntary office visit corresponds to a 1.25 bump in their final grade for that course. Now that's in college, but how else to better prepare our youth for the world beyond high school than to start now? How else to better show our most vulnerable students that their school supports them by retaining specialized staff specifically for the purpose of support? Recently, my child had an issue with inappropriate content in the classroom by a teacher, and it was addressed immediately by both a counselor and an assistant principal, who called me today to let me know the issue was addressed and that there will be practices implemented to further monitor the situation. Our students rely on these staff members, and as a parent, I also rely on them to support my children when I can't be there to do so; I trust the administration and the counselors, DEI directors, wellness centers, and the accompanying staff are integral to the cultural competency of a community. So when families come in, they can see and hear themselves and their teachers, staff, and leadership. Diversity work can sometimes be lost in the everyday functions of a school, but that's exactly where it exists in the day-to-day, in the nuances and the lens we see the school is important. Just as we look at administration practices, advancement practices, or financial practices, you should want to look at your diversity practices. This brings inclusion to the entire community and leads to everyone having a voice at the table. Eliminating these valuable positions only serves to harm not just the LGBTQIA students, the black and brown students, or the differently abled and chronically ill students, but overall detriment to every student in the district. Stop these vital staff cuts and support the students that you were elected to support."

ACTION ITEMS (cont.)

Shereta Montgomery shared the following statement.

"Hello, my name is Shereta Montgomery, and I have an alumni from Perris High School, also have a student in Perris High School and one going into Perris High School. I think that the way our children are being treated is just disrespectful. Our children deserve a whole lot better than what they're doing and then taking the DEI out of the system is not good for our kids. It's not supporting our kids with the IEPs. They have mental disorders. I have one kid who's going crazy all the time, and they want to take this out of the school system. It's not good for our kids. Our kids need help. You hear the fires and the police running up and down the street right now. Kids are being killed. Kids can't even walk out the street out of the schools without feeling unsafe. And as a school board, you have to protect our children. Our children are number one important. That's the only reason you have a paycheck is because of our kids. And if you cannot take care of our kids, then you need to step down out of these seats and find somebody else that can take care of our kids the way that they need to be taken care of. I have a son who is being pushed from one school to the other school to the other school, but nobody has taken the time to help my son, and now they want to send him to RCOE in Riverside. He's only 13. I'm a single mom. I need help with my son, but to send him RCOE, and I got one kid here, one kid there. It's not fair to me. If you can't do your job, get out of your seat."

David Rabb shared the following statement.

"Good evening, members of the board. My name is David Rabb. I have the pleasure of serving on the Perris City Council. I'm here to echo the sentiments of my constituents and many people in the Perris Unified High School District. I would advise the board to vote no on cutting the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion role and all the counselor's roles. As a 2004 Perris High School graduate whose family has over 70 years in the high school, my dad's older sister graduated in 1947. I understand these things that blacks, particularly black students, have to face in Perris High. To go and cut the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, role in this in the city, in the high school. It's a role that's needed here, and it's a role that helps out a lot of students. I've had the opportunity to speak to the AAPAC multiple times. A lot of the students, particularly the young black boys, are not getting the needed guidance that the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion role plays in the city and in the school. And another thing is, here it is election day and you have a special meeting on election day. A lot of people are exercising their right to vote. And here you have a special meeting on election day. The meeting is not filmed. You just have the audio equipment in the meeting. And it's just unconscionable that a board is trying to do things in the dark. So once again, vote on getting rid of the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion role, cutting those counselors and, listen to the voice of your constituents in the voice of the residents of the district. Thank you,"

Myles Ross shared the following statement.

"Good evening, Myles Ross, NAACP branch 1034. Honorable members, thank you for hearing me out. I'll be short. We cannot say that all lives matter if black lives don't matter. We cannot say that all lives matter if you engage in academic apartheid. We cannot say that all lives matter if you engage in Jim Crow 2.0. Cutting benefits that help the least of us is not education; it is deprivation. We're here to help, to find solutions, to fix problems. We saw the issues. A school is not a business. You cannot strictly run it by the bottom line. Have to look at the impact, the negative impact that it has on your constituents, mainly the children who are your

ACTION ITEMS (cont.)

customers. You are depriving your customers of what they bargained for, which is an education. Then allow them to fully become who they are meant to be and to be a positive contribution to our community. If black lives don't matter, no lives matter. We ask that you vote no on this agenda in regard to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Thank you."

The Board of Trustees held the following discussion.

Trustee Vallejo had questions asking why the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion position was being cut when it wasn't slated to be cut until next year. She felt it was targeted, sexist, and racist. She also asked why the District is not salvaging all of the positions that are on tonight's agenda. She is asking for transparency before making these decisions.

Trustee Garcia replied that that was a question the Board would like to know. However, he stated that they have to make a decision based on information that is presented to them now.

Trustee Campos explained that the position the Board is currently in is a lose/lose. One side is asking why administrative positions aren't being cut. Now that some of them are, they are being asked why they are being cut. He stated that they have to look at the bottom line. However, he also stated that staff is currently working on other revenue options to be able to bring some of these positions back, most by way of grants, but other options as well. Trustee Campos also encouraged individuals to bring ideas to the Board and Cabinet and participate in the problem-solving process.

ORIGINAL - Motion

Member **(Anthony T. Stafford, Sr.)** moved, Member **(David Nelissen)** seconded to approve the **ORIGINAL** motion, "It is recommended that the Board of Trustees approve Resolution No. 21:23-24 - Elimination/Discontinuation and Layoff of certain Certificated Management Employee for the 2024-25 School Year."

Upon a roll call vote being taken, the vote was: Aye: **4**, Nay: **1**. The motion **PASSED 4 - 1**.

Steve Campos	Yes
Edward Garcia, Jr.	Yes
David Nelissen	Yes
Anthony T. Stafford, Sr.	Yes
Elizabeth Vallejo	No

9.5 PERSONNEL: Revised Job Description: Assistant Superintendent, Innovation and Technology Services

ORIGINAL - Motion

Member **(David Nelissen)** moved, Member **(Anthony T. Stafford, Sr.)** seconded to approve the **ORIGINAL** motion, "It is recommended that the Board of Trustees approve the Revised Job Description: Assistant Superintendent, Innovation and Technology Services."

Upon a roll call vote being taken, the vote was: Aye: **4**, Nay: **1**. The motion **PASSED 4 - 1**.

ACTION ITEMS (cont.)

Steve Campos	Yes
Edward Garcia, Jr.	Yes
David Nelissen	Yes
Anthony T. Stafford, Sr.	Yes
Elizabeth Vallejo	No

9.6 PERSONNEL: Employment Agreement - Assistant Superintendent, Innovation and Technology Services

ORIGINAL - Motion

Member **(Steve Campos)** moved, Member **(Anthony T. Stafford, Sr.)** seconded to approve the **ORIGINAL** motion, "It is recommended that the Board of Trustees approve the Employment Agreement - Assistant Superintendent, Innovation and Technology Services."

Upon a roll call vote being taken, the vote was: Aye: **4**, Nay: **1**. The motion **PASSED 4 - 1**.

Steve Campos	Yes
Edward Garcia, Jr.	Yes
David Nelissen	Yes
Anthony T. Stafford, Sr.	Yes
Elizabeth Vallejo	No

9.7 PERSONNEL: Selection of an Independent Auditor

The Board had clarification questions for Candace Reines, Deputy Superintendent - Business Services regarding the length and cost comparisons for the three recommended audit firms. She provided information on the work started and long term options for the Board for next year.

ORIGINAL - Motion

Member **(Steve Campos)** moved, Member **(Anthony T. Stafford, Sr.)** seconded to approve the **ORIGINAL** motion, "It is recommended that the Board of Trustees select an audit firm to perform the annual external independent audit. A contract with the selected firm will be brought forward for approval at the March 20, 2024 Board meeting."

AMENDED - Motion

Member **(Anthony T. Stafford, Sr.)** moved, Member **(Steve Campos)** seconded to approve the **AMENDED** motion, "The Board of Trustees selected Eide Bailly, LLP to perform the annual external independent audit. A contract with the selected firm will be brought forward for approval at the March 20, 2024 Board meeting."

Upon a roll call vote being taken, the vote was: Aye: **5**, Nay: **0**. The motion **PASSED 5 - 0**.

Steve Campos	Yes
Edward Garcia, Jr.	Yes
David Nelissen	Yes

ACTION ITEMS (cont.)

Anthony T. Stafford, Sr.	Yes
Elizabeth Vallejo	Yes

ADJOURNMENT

10.1 ADJOURNMENT: Special Meeting of the Board of Trustees for March 5, 2024

ORIGINAL - Motion

Member **(Anthony T. Stafford, Sr.)** moved, Member **(Steve Campos)** seconded to approve the **ORIGINAL** motion, "It is recommended that the Board of Trustees adjourn the March 5, 2024, Special Meeting of the Board of Trustees" at 7:48 p.m.

Upon a roll call vote being taken, the vote was: Aye: **5**, Nay: **0**. The motion **PASSED 5 - 0**.

Steve Campos	Yes
Edward Garcia, Jr.	Yes
David Nelissen	Yes
Anthony T. Stafford, Sr.	Yes
Elizabeth Vallejo	Yes

Grant Bennett, Superintendent

Edward Garcia, Jr., President

Anthony T. Stafford, Sr., Clerk