



# PERRIS UNION

## HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

### MINUTES

#### SPECIAL MEETING OF THE PERRIS UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD OF TRUSTEES July 14, 2020

### ROLL CALL

#### **Present:**

Trustee Anthony T. Stafford, Sr., President  
Trustee Dr. Jose Luis Araux, Vice President  
Trustee Edward Garcia, Jr., Clerk  
Trustee David Nelissen, Member  
Trustee Dr. Randall Freeman, Member

#### **Administrative Staff Present:**

Grant Bennett, Superintendent; Candace Reines, Deputy Superintendent – Business Services; Dr. Charles Newman, Assistant Superintendent – Educational Services; Joseph Williams, Executive Director – Technology; Judy Miller, Director – Risk Management and Environmental Safety; Art Fritz, Director – Facilities Services; Dian Martin, Director – Learning Support Services; Charles Tippie, Director – Learning Support Services; Amil Alzubaidi, Director – Special Education; and James Heckman, Assistant Director – Technology

#### **Others Attending:**

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 Meeting to Order**

**CALL TO ORDER** (cont.)

The President of the Board of Trustees called the meeting to order at 4:02 p.m.

**INVITATION TO ADDRESS THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
ON CLOSED SESSION ITEMS ONLY**

**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 CONFERENCE WITH LABOR NEGOTIATORS - Pursuant to Government Code §54957.6**
  - **Employee Group: Perris Secondary Educators Association (PSEA), Agency Representative: Kirk Skorpanich, Assistant Superintendent - Human Resources;**
  - **Employee Group: California School Employees Association (CSEA), Agency Representative: Kirk Skorpanich, Assistant Superintendent – Human Resources**

**ORIGINAL - Motion**

Member **(David Nelissen)** moved, Member **(Dr. Jose Luis Araux)** 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 CONFERENCE WITH LABOR NEGOTIATORS - Pursuant to Government Code §54957.6
  - Employee Group: Perris Secondary Educators Association (PSEA), Agency Representative: Kirk Skorpanich, Assistant Superintendent - Human Resources;
  - Employee Group: California School Employees Association (CSEA), Agency Representative: Kirk Skorpanich, Assistant Superintendent – Human Resources."

Upon a roll call vote being taken, the vote was: Aye: **4**, Nay: **0**, Absent: **1 (Edward Garcia, Jr.)** The motion **PASSED 4 - 0 - 1.**

Dr. Jose Luis Araux	Yes
Dr. Randall Freeman	Yes
Edward Garcia, Jr.	Absent
David Nelissen	Yes
Anthony T. Stafford, Sr.	Yes

## **RECONVENE IN PUBLIC SESSION/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

### **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 5:44 p.m. and led the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.

## **INVITATION TO ADDRESS THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

### **6.1 INVITATION TO ADDRESS THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES: Non-Agendized Items**

The following individual public comments were received and read by Joseph Williams, Executive Director of Technology:

#### **Amy Frahn, Parent submitted the following written statement:**

To the Perris Union High School District. As a parent, we were sent surveys that questioned which route would be best for our specific child. The options were traditional school or distance learning, I chose traditional school for my daughter. Clearly it is understood that every child is different, and learns in a different format, so why were we given the option, only to be told it was decided unanimously for us, and that all children would be distance learning? I don't worry about my daughter academically, she does well with learning. However, we know our daughter's mental health is something we have to be concerned about. Due to her having an extensive brain surgery a year and a half ago, she was out of school for a while and we homeschooled her. She did very well, however her mental health suffered as a result of being home and not interacting with her peers. We spoke with her neurosurgeon and he 100% agreed that she needs to have the socialization to keep her mentally stable, so he released her to return to school a month sooner due to the well being of her mental health. Of course my daughter's situation is different than most but it is just one example to show that we have to understand that every child is different and have different home life scenarios, some may excel at Distance learning but some may fail, some may not have the support at home, or be required to babysit their younger siblings due to parents working, and some may just need to be in school because it is a safe place for them to be. It is important for each parent to be given an option for their own child(ren). The teachers should also be given the choice for their own specific situation.

At this point we need to be concerned for our children's mental health as much as we are their physical health. I am asking that our children are given options that would better fit what they each need to ensure the best possible scenario for their education and futures.

**INVITATION TO ADDRESS THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES** (cont.)

**Tonya Capuano submitted the following written statement:**

If online learning is in place, will the prerequisites for graduation be altered? How can a student be expected to get their units for PE? Or Arts classes? The extracurricular classes that are not necessarily as important as English, math, sciences, history. Those should be the subjects most invested in to create a learning arena that gets them moving forward towards their next years in High School or college bound courses. How is this online course instruction going to work in regards to units needed for graduation?

**Sean Zdunich, Parent submitted the following written statement:**

Good Evening,

The 2020-21 school year will be our 7th year in this school district as parents of students. Watching the July 8th Special Board Meeting was painful to say the least. From our living room, it appeared the board was blindsided by the fact that surveys were sent to parents asking which learning model they wanted for the 2020-21 school year. They also appeared surprised that information was released that we were returning to a regular school year for 2020-21. Is someone being held accountable for that? With 4 weeks until the school year is supposed to start, we are just now developing a return plan? Please tell me that is not the case.

Superintendent Bennett indicated the grading system for the 2020-21 school year will return to normal but then indicated students will only get "live instruction" 2 to 3 days a week. It seems unreasonable that your grading expectation is rated on 5 days of in-person instruction if the students are not receiving 5 days of live instruction. How can you promise to "...Ensure high quality instruction and rigorous learning experiences..." with 2-3 days a week of instruction? Last year's distance learning shouldn't have even been titled that. There were teachers who provided no lessons or material for their students to learn from. I want to know how a student who was not provided their education last semester, but passed because when this all started they had a passing grade, is going on to the next level in math is expected to pass without the prior education, but also less lesson time with their teachers. As a parent it is our job to support our children's education, not to be their teachers.

Parents, students, and teachers are all aware that the Pandemic is uncharted territory for everyone. Distance Learning allows everyone to stay in the safety of their own homes, but if teachers are paid to teach five days a week, then they should teach five days a week.

I would like to thank Mr. Araux, for speaking to ensure that IEP students receive the state mandated assistance. As a parent of a student with an IEP, I look forward to seeing what that will look like. It should be a surprise to no one that the IEP contracts were not met for the 2019-20 school year. It is our hope that the

**INVITATION TO ADDRESS THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES** (cont.)

school board sees the sense of urgency to get these learning plans off the ground and have some kind of back-up plan in an effort to minimize the loss of education for our students.

**Shira Smith, Parent and Community Member submitted the following written statement:**

Good Afternoon Members of the School Board, Superintendent Bennett, and others,  
I am sending to you today my concerns and comments regarding the most recent decision made by the Perris Union School Board on Wednesday, July 8. Your decision to only offer "Distance Learning" in our district for the upcoming school year.

First, I would like to start off with I believe if the board meeting had been publicized in such a way that more parents were aware that the meeting was taking place, the public comments would have had more parents than teachers voicing their opinions and concerns for the 2020-21 school year plan.

I have spent many hours researching the pros and cons of distance learning and traditional school for this upcoming school year when it comes to our children, our future.

According to research conducted at Stanford University they have found the following to be true:

- Children rarely transmit the virus to adults; this has been proven by contact tracing
- Data indicates that children are far more at risk for Influenza than the COVID-19, therefore why don't we close our schools every year when we have an influenza outbreak within our schools?
- If the COVID-19 sets the new standard for health safety, the country will need to close its schools each year from November to April to guard against influenza.
- While we focus on exceptional rarities, learning is in a free-fall. The situation is going to become what has often been called "The Summer Slide" (in student achievement) but on a larger scale.
- Low income students suffer the most from this decision. Many lack WIFI and the mentors at home to help guide them. Studies show that "Elementary students may have lost 30% of their reading skills during this time".
- Closure of the schools will endanger the health of our children. Schools are the place where many learn that they need glasses, or if they are seriously ill, they are guided by the school nurse on what actions to take.
- Children are being denied opportunities for social and emotional development that come with play, exercise, sports, and socialization. Reports already indicate that suicide rates among the young are on the increase. More certain is the loss of human capital that lasts a lifetime. Closing schools this past spring translates into a 3 percent or more cut in lifetime earnings for those whose education is being sidelined.

### **INVITATION TO ADDRESS THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES** (cont.)

- With our students not being in school in front of an educator, so many child abuse cases will be missed and have been missed during this past spring. Many students receive their only nutritional meals at school.
- What about the adults – the teachers, guidance counselors, bus drivers and kitchen staff? No one wants to endanger the health of educators but, fortunately, risks to adults in schools are much less than those encountered in grocery stores, pharmacies, and other essential businesses who continued to work during this time.
- No less important, COVID-19 mainly targets the elderly and those with underlying conditions. For people under 60, the fatality rates are so low that they are less than or equal to those associated with the Flu. However, teaching is a young person's occupation. Teachers' median age is 41; more than 80 percent are under the age of 55. These teachers at higher risk could offer the distance learning to those parents who wish to have this kind of environment for their child. While the other teachers can offer the in-class teaching to those who would like to choose this way of learning.
- Never have schools subjected children to such an unhealthy, uncomfortable, and anti-educational environment, so science cannot precisely define the total harm it will cause. But science does tell us that risks from COVID-19 are too minimal to sacrifice the educational, social, emotional, and physical well-being – to say nothing of the very health – of our young people.
- According to reports, sending children back to school in other countries did not send a surge of new cases of COVID-19 into their population.

I am asking that you, the trustees of the school board for the Perris Union High School District, please take another look at your decision. Take the time to look at how your decisions will affect each of our students in the district, give the parents a chance to express their feelings and opinions. Let us look at other districts in neighboring cities and see what decisions they are making, and how they have arrived at these decisions. The Menifee school district put together task forces to explore all the options of returning to school and today these committees made up of administrators, teachers, parents, and stakeholders will be presenting their findings and suggestions. Our neighboring districts, Temecula and Murrieta are still looking into deciding and are leaning towards offering three options, one being traditional learning in class.

Our children deserve to have the opportunity to return to school next month if their parents deem it safe for them too. The district has sent out many surveys to the stakeholders asking what we want to see when returning to school in August. The survey came back with 65% of them wanting to send their child back to traditional learning, and yet the decision was made by the board to only offer distance learning. Why can't two models of learning be offered to our children? Have the teachers in all our schools been polled to see how many would like to return to traditional learning in the class? Maybe there are enough of them, who classify themselves as "Essential Workers" and they would like to report back to the classroom in August.

**INVITATION TO ADDRESS THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES** (cont.)

Please take into consideration all my facts, thoughts, and opinions that are shared by many parents in our community and take another look at the decision that was made.

In closing, I will leave you with these thoughts.

You as a school board, had a very important decision to make, and without taking in consideration the opinions of all the stakeholders you made the decision to ignore the two surveys that were sent out to the parents. I prayed that you would choose wisely when the final decision was made, for your students, our students, you know the ones that we always preach "No Child Left Behind". By not giving our children and parents the option to send our kids back to school next month, you have failed us. You failed us as an educational institution, you will have failed us as a support system, and you will have failed our community. All I ask is you take a moment and look towards the child who has an abusive Dad at home, and those 6 hours at school are his saving grace. The child who struggles with depression and has been sitting in her room for the past 4 months, spiraling, losing all will to go on, but the few smiles she got from passing people in the hall were the little bit of positivity she needed to keep going. Look towards the special needs' students, whose parents need to return to work, and cannot afford to have an in-house caretaker, and school was all they had. Even look towards the kids who hate school, and aren't going to graduate unless they have a teacher, a friend, a mentor, or a coach, keeping them accountable, and school is the place where all those people are there for them when their parents are not. The stories could go on forever, but they are just a few people that exist in our school community. From personal experience I can tell you, not everyone is blessed with the ability to have a meal every night, but school breakfast and lunch gives them nourishment when their own parents cannot. Not everyone is blessed to have a two-parent household with a stay at home mom to take care of them all day while their father works. Not everyone has a positive home environment that promotes personal and educational growth, some even discourage it.

So, in this moment, put yourselves in the shoes of the silent sufferers. Put yourselves in the shoes of those not lucky enough to be blessed with a perfect home life. Because I promise you, while you can easily attribute the success of students to yourselves, teachers, administrators and the district, the demise of these students will be on your mind in days, weeks, and months to come.

**Vicki Estes submitted the following written statement:**

Are you also putting the plan together to immediately switch to in class education when the number of COVID-19 cases/deaths are back to a flattened curve?

**INVITATION TO ADDRESS THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES** (cont.)

**Misty Patton-Stephenson submitted the following written statement:**

Please do not consider opening campuses to students until COVID-19 cases are significantly reduced in Riverside County, and sufficient measures to ensure student safety can be implemented. The health and safety of our entire community is at stake.

**Jeannette Shipek submitted the following written statement:**

COVID-19 death rates are down and suicide rates are up!! give parents the freedom of choice to send their kids back to traditional school.

**Vickey Mueller submitted the following written statement:**

Dear Board of Trustee and Cabinet,

Thank you for your brave decision to start the school year via distance learning. My hope however is that we are careful and we front load students and parents with expectations during the teacher PD days. I am writing this as I travel up Highway 395 using my hotspot on my phone. It is possible to do distance learning but it will take planning. This can work but it will be a community effort. I do believe that it is what is best for students, parents and PUHSD employees.

**STUDY SESSION**

**7.1 STUDY SESSION: The Board of Trustees Will Conduct a Study Session Regarding the Following Categories as a Part of the 2020-21 Reopening Plans: English Learners, Special Education, Cleaning/Disinfecting, and Safety**

Charles Tippie, Director of Learning Support Services and Amil Alzubaidi, Director of Special Education provided the Board of Trustees a presentation on how English Learners and Special Education students are going to be supported through Distance Learning.

Art Fritz, Director of Facilities Services and Judy Miller, Director of Risk Management and Environmental Safety provided the Board of Trustees a presentation on cleaning/disinfecting and safety measures the District is taking during COVID-19.

The following comments were received by the Board of Trustees:

Trustee Freeman stated teachers are teaching five days per week. The format of the teacher's learning changes out of necessity. It actually requires teachers to work more than previously required. He illustrated



### **STUDY SESSION** (cont.)

by explaining how his wife uses a laptop to attend webinars, comparing COVID-19 with flu or other illnesses. There is no comparison possible, as it would be comparing apples to oranges. Trustee Freeman respectfully disagreed with the speaker who said parents are not their children's teachers. The main priority of parenting is to teach their children. The District survey was not intended to serve as a menu to choose the instructional method flavor and the Superintendent has addressed this misunderstanding.

The number of school districts selecting only virtual distance learning is overwhelmingly large. It includes the largest districts, Los Angeles, San Diego, Oakland and many here in the Inland Empire. In making his decision, Mr. Freeman expressed that he leaned on 30 years experience as a teacher, twelve years as a school board member, and twenty-three years as a father and concluded that the health of everyone is priority number one. The year 2020 has taken everyone by surprise. The past several months have been spent properly and effectively to provide a high level of learning for the 2020-21 school year and beyond. Perris Union High School District has not been sitting on their hands. Technology provides the means to bring the appropriate education for every student. The format is evolving and change is hard. Mr. Freeman shared that the great and amazing thing is he feels humans have the ability to accept change and to progress as a society, and as an individual.

Trustee Araux thanked the staff for the presentations. He mentioned that he was glad to see the District addressing a lot of the concerns that the board presented at the previous meeting. He stated the online structural model is not ideal, but at this time it is the best thing that can be done to ensure the safety of staff in our schools. These are unprecedented times and Dr. Araux is asking for the collaboration of all stakeholders, parents, and students to work together and be united during these difficult times. Other options will be analyzed like the hybrid instructional model, if it's possible, where staff can significantly reduce the risk of having a student or another staff member infected.

Trustee Araux requested that at the next Special Board meeting, there be a presentation on how the District is addressing the needs of foster youth students for the upcoming school year. He had asked if a parent is not able to pick up meals on Tuesdays how is the District supporting families? Is the District able to add additional pick up days? Finally, he asked why are families being rejected if they are on foot and not in a car?

Trustee Garcia stated he also agreed with his board colleagues regarding their decision. The Board analyzed the data and all information that was available. It wasn't just a split decision; it took a lot of time and a lot of information reviewed. He explained that he did listen to everyone within the community including students, parents, teachers, and classified employees. Mr. Garcia noted that there is misinformation that's being spread out in the community resulting in negative attacks. He shared that as a parent, when you want something your way, you're going to say and do things to make other people look negative, and it's not about that. PUHSD is a family that caters to multiple communities, not just Perris. It's important that everyone understands everything has to be factored in, especially the demographics, and the District wants to cater to all of our students. They are the priority, along with their families. Mr. Garcia reiterated what Dr. Araux said about not being able to live with one person getting sick and wants everyone who has input to understand that's why the Board made its decision, because life is precious and so are the students.

**STUDY SESSION** (cont.)

Trustee Garcia also concurred with Dr. Araux, regarding the need to keep providing meals for students. The District needs to adjust so that meals continue for students whether they are on foot or not. Mr. Garcia also reiterated that the decisions made are temporary. The Board and everyone in the PUHSD family want the students to come back to school and engage with their peers and teachers. Finally, Mr. Garcia applauded Mr. Bennett, and Cabinet, for the work that has been done during these difficult times and encouraged the community to continue to reach out to him and he will help as much as possible.

Trustee Stafford stated that he wants the best for the PUHSD students, parents and grandparents. They mean a great deal, so much more than material things. He wished everyone to be safe and have a good evening.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**8.1 ADJOURNMENT: Special Board Meeting of the Board of Trustees for July 14, 2020**

**ORIGINAL - Motion**

Member **(Dr. Randall Freeman)** moved, Member **(Edward Garcia, Jr.)** seconded to approve the **ORIGINAL** motion, "It is recommended that the Board of Trustees adjourn the July 14, 2020, Special Meeting of the Board of Trustees" at 7:32 p.m.

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

Dr. Jose Luis Araux	Yes
Dr. Randall Freeman	Yes
Edward Garcia, Jr.	Yes
David Nelissen	Yes
Anthony T. Stafford, Sr.	Yes

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Grant Bennett, Superintendent

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Anthony T. Stafford, Sr., President

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Edward Garcia, Jr., Clerk