



# PERRIS UNION

## HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

### MINUTES

#### SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES March 3, 2021

### ROLL CALL

#### Present

Trustee Jose Luis Araux, President  
Trustee Anthony T. Stafford, Sr., Vice President  
Trustee Randall Freeman, Clerk  
Trustee David Nelissen, Member  
Elizabeth Vallejo, Member

#### Administrative Staff Present

Grant Bennett, Superintendent; Candace Reines, Deputy Superintendent – Business Services; Robert Brough, Assistant Superintendent – Educational Services; Kirk Skorpanich, Assistant Superintendent – Human Resources; Joseph Williams, Executive Director – Technology; James Heckman, Assistant Director – Technology; Amil Alzubaidi, Director – Special Education; Dr. Casaundra McNair, Coordinator – Special Education; Hector Gonzalez, Director – Facilities; and Alisha Fogerty, Director – Fiscal Services

#### Others Attending:

Fred Good, Sarah Rico, Anna Fetzner, 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**

### **CALL TO ORDER** (cont.)

The President of the Board of Trustees called the meeting to order at 4:05 p.m.

### **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

#### **3.1 PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: The President of the Board of Trustees Will Lead the Audience in the Pledge of Allegiance**

The President of the Board of Trustees led the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.

### **REVISION/ADOPTION/ORDERING OF AGENDA**

#### **4.1 REVISION/ADOPTION/ORDERING OF AGENDA: March 3, 2021**

##### **ORIGINAL - Motion**

Member **(Dr. Randall Freeman)** moved, Member **(Elizabeth Vallejo)** 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 3, 2021."

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
David Nelissen	Yes
Anthony T. Stafford, Sr.	Yes
Elizabeth Vallejo	Yes

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

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

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

**Delfina Loustaunau, Heritage High School parent submitted the following written statement:**

Dear Board:

My name is Delfina Loustaunau, my daughter is a Senior at Heritage High School. Today, I am reaching out to you to ask that you reconsider your decision to hold drive thru graduations this year. I was shocked to hear that the decision had already been made when graduations are still months away. I am sure there is a lot of planning involved and that the safety of the students and the community is of extreme importance. However, I

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

cannot help but think that the decision was made rather early and I am asking that you commit to reviewing the decision again.

I realize the pandemic has had many turns and there is no guarantee that in June we will be in a much better situation where in person graduations may be possible. However, I am asking that you agree to reconsider the possibility of traditional graduation ceremonies. There are many factors that I feel can be reviewed before deciding such as:

- What the current situation of the pandemic is in June.
- Creating committees at each school consisted of staff, students, and parents to help determine the guidelines required to hold in-person graduations.
- How many people can fit in the stadiums and still allow for social distancing.
- Holding two ceremonies if needed, including allowing drive thru for those who do not feel safe for in person.
- Temperature checks at the gates.
- Less attendees (maybe only 3-4 per graduate)

I am aware that the task would be a large one, but I believe it is important that we try and give this Senior class something to hold onto. The cost of this pandemic has been enormous, and many student's mental health is holding on by strings. Your commitment to review the decision would create hope and I believe also motivate many students to continue their efforts to meet graduation requirements.

I would also like to ask that you allow schools permission to open in other senses. For example, allowing clubs and ASB to meet in person. I believe this is fair as we have allowed athletes to return to practice and competition. I feel most of the schools have large quad areas where a few students can gather while maintaining all the safety guidelines. Being able to meet up again in small groups (such as the clubs and ASB) would start to bring some sort of normalcy and great hope to the students. Many students are suffering from depression and anxiety, symptoms I am sure are affecting their grades and motivation. With the permission to hold a few things on campus, I feel students would begin to feel relief from these very crippling symptoms.

I thank you for your time and consideration to the topics mentioned. Thank you.

**Jeana Fuentes, community member submitted the following written statement**

Requesting to hear why we can't open up the high school as the classrooms are set up for social distancing. Sports have been ok for a season.

**Shira Smith, Heritage High School parent submitted the following written statement**

Good Afternoon Members of the School Board, Superintendent Bennett, and others:

At the February board meeting, it was quickly decided to not have our students return to school in some type of capacity this school year. Your reasoning was that it would be a disruption for our students to acclimate to this decision in a short amount of time. During this quick discussion, Dr. Jose Luis Araux, reminded the board

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

that you had previously voted to address the return to school every 6-week grading period. Unfortunately, the vote was still taken, to not return our students to school for the 2020-2021 school year. Our students have been disrupted and have struggled with distance learning for 12 months now, I believe they would be happy to acclimate to an in-person learning situation.

Since your board meeting in February, the numbers in Riverside County have drastically declined and outdoor high school sports are being allowed and some school districts in our area are preparing to send their high school students back to school in April. Is it possible that our school board could re-evaluate this situation and send our students in some type of capacity back to school in April? I believe our Seniors would love to have one last opportunity to be on campus before they graduate in June.

It was asked at the last board meeting in February, the plans for graduation this year. Mr. Bennett responded with "at this time a drive thru graduation as it was done last year would more than likely happen again". Now that the COVID-19 case numbers are clearly dropping in our county, can an in person, socially distanced graduation be considered for the seniors? I am sure with some planning; this could become a reality for our students.

The Class of 2021 has not stepped foot on their high school campus for 12 months now, the last memory they have of their high school years was being told they could return to campus in 2 weeks. We all remember our high school senior year, it was filled with fun, laughter, last homecoming football game and dance, prom, grad night and lastly our graduation day. The day we all waited for when we entered high school, throwing up our cap, applauding for our peers, listening to our principal send us off one last time as a high school student and that last announcement "I would like to present to you, the Class of 2021, students you may now move your tassel to the other side". I am asking that all possibilities be explored for the "Class of 2021" to have a true in person graduation. The COVID-19 numbers are dropping and other districts in our area are looking at an in-person graduation as a possibility, please do not make this decision based on today's numbers.

**Valeria Castillo-Ortiz, Perris High School student submitted the following written statement:**

Good evening President Dr. Araux, Board Members, Superintendent Bennett and Cabinet. I am Valeria Castillo-Ortiz, the Senior Class President at Perris High School. To start off, I want to thank you for allowing me to speak in today's board meeting. I am here today to advocate not only for myself, but for my senior class as well.

This journey of high school began for us as freshmen in the school year 2017/18. We had in mind that we would finish this accomplishment together and say our last goodbyes to each other on the day of graduation. Unfortunately, we thought wrong and our high school careers were cut short because of the current circumstances we are living in.

Last year, the seniors of class of 2020 had a drive thru graduation. However, the class of 2021 desires to have a traditional graduation on the football field. Our whole senior year was stolen from us due to COVID-19 and we didn't get to enjoy school activities like: rallies, dances, and sports. One thing that we all looked forward to was to scream at the top of our lungs "SENIORS;" but didn't get the opportunity to do so. Having a

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

traditional graduation will allow us to have a small taste of being seniors, for the first, and last time. To be honest, it still feels like we haven't moved on from our junior year because of the way we suddenly left on March 13th, 2020.

I know that there are many things to consider regarding COVID and graduation. I respectfully ask on behalf of my class that you consider having a traditional graduation this year, or even a modified version of it. There are guidelines for sports to practice safely, I feel that we could do the same for a traditional graduation.

Graduation means more to us than just receiving a diploma. It is a closing of a chapter of struggles, joy, perseverance, and determination. Many of my classmates will be first generation graduates and have been waiting for years to hear their families, friends, and teachers cheer them on while walking across the stage and feeling prideful of countless hours of not sleeping, turning in those last minute assignments and overall the hard work we put in. Receiving a drive-thru graduation feels like all the memories that we created together will be less remembered. A drive-thru graduation means that we would not be sitting together as the Panther family that we are. Resulting in us missing the cherished moments of ecstatic joy, satisfaction, and the success that we achieved.

The preference that we have for traditional graduation is also because we want to experience hearing our classmates give speeches of all our victories, the turning of the tassel and lastly, having that confetti get blown into the air as a visual representation that "WE FINALLY DID IT!" A high school graduation symbolizes the entry into adulthood, and having a traditional graduation would be like one of my favorite movie quotes from Fast and Furious, where we get "One last ride" with our friends.

I hope you take into consideration our thoughts before committing to any decisions.

**Jeannette Shipek, community member submitted the following written statement:**

PLEASE allow an in person graduation for our seniors! they missed half their junior year, BOTH proms and their entire senior year! Graduation is a rite of passage. Riverside county has given the approval. There are many schools in our area, including ones as close as Murrieta allowing in person graduation. Just limit the number of tickets each kid has or do a few ceremonies, MORNING A- I , AFTERNOON I- Q AND EVENING R-Z. Please go out of your way to make this happen!

**JeanNate Fuentes, Heritage High School parent submitted the following written statement:**

Hello Members:

I'm writing you this email to let you know how my daughter and all her classmates of the class of 2021 would like to have some sort of Senior Year. Please allow our kids to finish up these last few months of the year in school to enjoy their Senior Year!! This is a crucial and exciting time in life all kids look forward to before they head out for college and the beginning of another chapter in life!! They truly deserve this as they missed out on everything that a Senior should experience in their last year of high school, the stuff they dreamed of and work so hard for to get to the finish line and have everything crudely taken away from them. Yes I understand there's

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

a pandemic but the high school has taken great measures in its classrooms to allow the children to return. I also understand parents should be able to have a choice to allow their children to attend or not. This should be a parent's choice! I think we need to let our seniors return, let them have some joy in their life. Most of these kids have already returned to sports so why can't they just return to class for the last few months. Again, PLEASE allow our kids this one thing. Their last year of high school! Thank you.

**Sarai Manfredi, Heritage High School parent submitted the following written statement**

Hello Esteemed Board Members of PUHSD:

My name is Sarai Manfredi and I am a mother of an HHS senior this year. I would first like to thank you for keeping the safety of our kids, faculty and community at the forefront of all of your decisions. While I imagine you have faced many defiances and grievances from all directions, I thank you for your continued support of our students.

My daughter has been an HHS honor student all 4 years and has played varsity track and soccer. She led the girls soccer team to their first CIF game in 7 years and holds the record for most goals. She was a part of ASB, Link Crew, National Honor Society and CSF. With the help of counselors and teachers she has achieved many accomplishments; however, COVID is now preventing her from celebrating the timeless tradition of walking for graduation. We are all thankful that sports are returning but would like to see our children walk the stage. The kids have been robbed of any kind of traditional senior activities and the least we can do is try and provide them a graduation other than drive through. May I suggest a hybrid graduation or a cohort graduation scenario?

Our children, through no fault of anybody, have been deprived of memorable activities and memories. Can we all work together to make it possible for an in person graduation? The community is willing to come together to provide any assistance to facilitate this request and is at your disposal. Please help our children keep at least one tradition alive. Thank you.

**Crystal Duran, community member submitted the following written statement**

PUHSD's Class of 2021 deserves a High School Graduation! Over the last 12 months, they have missed out on so many priceless memories such as prom, sports, scouting, senior night, homecoming, grad activities, school, friends and so much more...These students have worked so hard, many taking honor classes, ACT/SATs, participating in clubs, community involvement just to get the opportunity to walk across the graduation stage, look into the stands and see the pride and love of their family members recognizing their accomplishment! Not only do our students deserve this moment, so do the hard-working parents that have been waiting for this day to come. These are also the same hard-working parents that have spent years supporting PUHSD by volunteering, fundraising, donating, supporting teachers, and more. It's now PUHSD's turn to recognize and reward us with this graduation!

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

**Diana Cox, community member submitted the following written statement:**

Riverside county is allowing family members of the same household to attend sporting events! please make this happen for our football players and cheerleaders families! we have missed out on EVERYTHING ALL YEAR!

**Lisa Orosco Uribe, Perris High School student submitted the following written statement:**

Good Evening,

My name is Lisa Orosco and I am the Senior Class Secretary at Perris High School. Tonight I would like to ask the board to please consider allowing Perris High School seniors' to continue the tradition of Grad Nite. This year our Senior Class Advisor Mrs. Osuna was able to get a hold of a representative of Universal Studios named William Hoh, who assured us that attending Universal Studios would be a safe experience for all seniors. The park would be at 25% capacity, social distancing will be required, a mask would be required and in the event that it should be cancelled, all money would be refunded. Our Grad Nite would take place on May 28, 2021 from 8:00 PM to 2:00 AM.

This year has been extremely tough for all seniors, we have been waiting for this date for 4 years. I feel that I speak for all seniors when I say that we deserve a celebration that is safe and meaningful. This pandemic has taken a toll on our mental health and grad nite would bring back some sense of normalcy in a year where everything was not normal. I am not writing this letter lightly, I feel that COVID has ruined everything. This entire situation can be scary but life is scary and that doesn't mean we stop living. Please allow us to celebrate our senior year and have faith in the fact that we will be safe. We have had a whole year to prepare. Thank you for your time and consideration.

## **ORAL REPORTS**

### **6.1 Employee Demographic Data and Recruitment Plan Update**

Kirk Skorpanich, Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources, provided an update to the Board of Trustees on the current employee demographic data and recruitment plan.

### **6.2 State Budget Update**

Alisha Fogerty, Director of Fiscal Services, provided an update to the Board of Trustees on the Governor's Proposals for the 2021–22 State Budget.

### **6.3 COVID-19 Update**

Candace Reines, Deputy Superintendent and Robert Brough, Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services, provided an update to the Board of Trustees on COVID-19, Cohort Expansion, and Year End Activities.

**STUDY SESSION**

**7.1 STUDY SESSION: The Board of Trustees Will Conduct a Study Session Regarding Facilities**

Candace Reines, Deputy Superintendent, Hector Gonzalez, Director of Facilities, and Dr. Fred Good gave a presentation on Facilities Project Updates.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**8.1 ADJOURNMENT: Special Meeting of the Board of Trustees for March 3, 2021**

**ORIGINAL - Motion**

Member **(Dr. Randall Freeman)** moved, Member **(David Nelissen)** seconded to approve the **ORIGINAL** motion, "It is recommended that the Board of Trustees adjourn the March 3, 2021, Special Meeting of the Board of Trustees" at 8:28 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
David Nelissen	Yes
Anthony T. Stafford, Sr.	Yes
Elizabeth Vallejo	Yes



Grant Bennett, Superintendent



Dr. Jose Luis Araux, President



Dr. Randall Freeman, Clerk