

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING

GOVERNING BOARD OF THE HEBER-OVERGAARD UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 6

Tuesday, April 14, 2026 | 7:00 PM | Performing Arts Center, 3375 Buckskin Canyon Rd,
Heber, AZ 85928

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Tim Leedy, Wendy Hall, Craig Blackburn, Pattie Weber, John Piva
ALSO PRESENT: Ron Tenney (Superintendent), Nathan Stoelk (Principal, Mountain Meadows Primary & Capps Middle Schools), Reed Porter (Principal, Mogollon Jr. High & High School), Andrea Despain (Business Manager), Amanda Crandell (Board Secretary/Clerk)

CALL TO ORDER

Board President Tim Leedy called the Regular Meeting of the Heber-Overgaard Unified School District Governing Board to order at 7:00 PM.

PRAYER & PLEDGE

Mr. Blackburn offered the opening prayer. Mrs. Hall led the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MOTION: *Mrs. Hall moved to approve the agenda as presented. Mrs. Weber seconded. Motion passed unanimously.*

CALL TO PUBLIC

Per Board Policy 1-302, one individual had submitted a request card to address the Board. The requested topic pertained to Regular Agenda Items 8.1 and 8.2 (Athletic Director Position). President Leedy noted the speaker's comments would be heard when the Board reached those agenda items. No other members of the public requested to speak at this time.

INFORMATION

Good News

President Leedy noted the District had received approximately one-quarter inch of rain. A board member shared that their daughter is expecting a baby, announcing an upcoming grandchild. No additional good news items were presented.

Leadership Team Information

Mountain Meadows Primary & Capps Middle Schools — Mr. Nathan Stoelk

Mr. Stoelk reported the following highlights:

STEAM Night: The school hosted a successful STEAM Night in March, featuring a portable planetarium dome set up in the gymnasium. Students, including young children, were captivated by the interactive star experience. The event was well-attended and well-received.

Pony Express Assembly: Mountain Meadows welcomed representatives from the Pony Express, who shared historical stories including one about delivering correspondence at the request of President Ronald Reagan. The assembly generated enthusiasm among students and staff.

Community Garden Connection: Mr. Stoelk received a visit from HOCRN regarding the community garden located on school grounds. Discussions focused on expanding student involvement through enrichment classes during the school year and potential summer planting activities. He noted that the scale and quality of the garden — including a nearly greenhouse-like structure — was a pleasant surprise to many staff members.

Staff News: The school community celebrated the birth of a baby to Mrs. Pearce, a staff member. The school also mourned the passing of a beloved aide, Kelsey Hartman, who had made a lasting impact on students and staff. In keeping with the school's year-long theme of "Leave Your Mark," tributes were paid to Ms. Hartman's many contributions, including artwork on the science lab door, activities in the gymnasium, and her consistent care for students. School Counselor Mr. Dana made himself available to students in the days following her passing.

Mogollon Jr. High & High School — Mr. Reed Porter

Mr. Porter reported the following highlights:

Staff Appreciation: Mr. Porter expressed gratitude for the dedication and effort of the high school staff.

FCCLA State Competition: The culinary club attended the FCCLA State Competition. Of the 12 students who attended, 7 placed in the top three in their respective events. Mrs. Cochran, the advisor, was very pleased with the results. Mr. Porter also recognized Mrs. Martineau and Mr. Long for taking students to EAC for additional academic and extracurricular opportunities.

Parent-Teacher Conferences: Conferences were recently held, with 28% of high school parents and 31% of JH parents in attendance. Mr. Porter noted that with expanded access to grades through PowerSchool, administration is exploring the possibility of replacing traditional parent-teacher conferences with themed parent-teacher nights focused on topics such as cell phone policies, state testing, Senior scholarships, and other items of high relevance to families. No decisions have been made; the concept is in early discussion.

Athletics & Activities: Spring sports are in full swing, including high school track, JH track, baseball, and softball. Mr. Porter reported that sportsmanship ratings — scored by officials following each event — are up this year. These scores are publicly accessible through the AIA online portal.

Senior Milestones: Seniors are preparing for the annual senior trip and senior presentations, scheduled for early May. Students research and present on a career field of their choosing. Several seniors have also been recognized for the quality of their local scholarship applications.

Staff News: Mr. Porter shared the sad news of the passing of Diane Stevenson, a former member of the cafeteria staff. He described her as a kind and well-loved member of the school community and visited her husband to extend condolences.

State Testing: All state assessments have been administered. Makeup testing remains ongoing.

Business Manager Information — Mrs. Andrea Despain

Mrs. Despain addressed the following items:

Financial Status: The district's cash position remains in good standing. The business office has been actively closing open purchase orders, processing outstanding payments, balancing budgets, and identifying remaining funds to direct toward end-of-year projects.

Secure Rural Schools / Forest Service Payment: The district received the Forest Service payment that had been outstanding since FY2024. The Navajo County Board of Supervisors approved the payment, which has now been posted. This is the first of an anticipated two to three catch-up payments, which will provide some flexibility for end-of-year expenditures.

Performance Audit & USFR Compliance Review: Mrs. Despain reported that the Auditor General's office requested one final item for their review. Supervisors are currently reviewing the submission, and an exit interview has been scheduled for Thursday morning. Staff has been informed that the district's audit results are looking very positive. The Auditor General's team specifically commended the district's staff for their gracious and cooperative response throughout the audit process — a quality that stands out compared to other districts.

Food Service Restructuring: Effective May 1, 2026, the district will transition to a centralized food preparation model as a cost-saving measure. All meals will be cooked in the high school kitchen and transported to the two elementary campuses using Cambro carts (and lighter Styrofoam containers as needed). The Transportation Director has arranged a suitable vehicle for transport. Administration toured another district operating this model — one that serves approximately 600 students per day — and determined the transition is feasible at HOUSD's smaller scale. The trial period beginning in May will allow staff to identify and resolve logistical issues before a full implementation at the start of the 2026–27 school year. The change is expected to reduce labor costs.

Audit Findings: While the FY25 audit still contains a number of findings, the number represents a notable improvement over FY24. A board member recommended establishing a tracking mechanism for outstanding audit findings to help staff stay current.

Superintendent Items for Discussion — Mr. Ron Tenney

Mr. Tenney addressed the following items:

Audit Staff Recognition: Mr. Tenney echoed thanks to the district office staff and campus secretaries for their efforts during the audit process. He also specifically recognized IT staff for extensive behind-the-scenes work to bring IT infrastructure into compliance with audit parameters.

Classroom Site Fund Increase: The per-student rate in the Classroom Site Fund (CSF) is projected to increase from \$842 to \$883 per student for FY2026–27, representing a modest improvement in available resources.

Aggregate Expenditure Limit: The district's aggregate expenditure limit will be exceeded for the coming year. However, the state legislature passed a two-year reprieve, meaning this will not result in penalties for the 2026–27 school year.

Legislative Update: A bill under consideration in the state legislature would prohibit school districts from calling bond elections or modifying voter-approved capital project purposes if the district's enrollment-to-capacity ratio falls below an unspecified 50% threshold. Based on ADE data, HOUSD would be affected if this bill passes. The bill is still moving through the legislature.

Cell Tower Lease: Negotiations continue with American Towers on the cell tower lease agreement. Attorney Laura Blanco of Gus Rosenfeld is representing the district. A number of outstanding legal items remain under negotiation, and resolution is anticipated by May 2026.

HOCRN Flagpole MOU: A Memorandum of Understanding between HOCRN and HOUSD regarding the flagpole installation has been prepared and is presented for approval later in the agenda. Mr. Tenney confirmed that the flagpole has been delivered to the high school campus.

Zenith Property: The district has not yet received a response from attorneys working on the Zenith property matter. If no response is received before the next board meeting, an alternative approach will be considered.

Information from Governing Board

The Board was informed of upcoming Governing Board election deadlines. The following three seats are up for election with terms expiring December 31, 2026: Craig Blackburn, Wendy Hall & John Piva. Mrs. Crandell noted that election packets are available through the Navajo County website and provided a direct link in the board packet for members to download filing information.

CONSENT AGENDA

MOTION: *Mr. Blackburn moved to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. Mrs. Weber seconded the motion. All those in favor – motion carried.*

Items approved under Consent Agenda:

Minutes: Minutes of the Regular Board Meeting of March 17, 2026

Auxiliary and Student Accounts: February 2026

Vouchers for March 2026:

Payroll Voucher	#19: \$220,974.68
	#20: \$159,642.13
Expense Voucher	#9036: \$40,952.40
	#9037: \$36,274.88
	#9038: \$6,872.07
	#9039: \$63,424.06

New Hire:

Evangeline Smith — Substitute

Reassignment:

Shawna McLaws — Bookstore/Sports Secretary to Jr/Sr High School Secretary

Laura Tomlinson — Capps Secretary to Bookstore/Sports Secretary

Resignation/Termination: None

Volunteers:

Bill Kerr — HS Baseball

Trace Porter — HS Baseball

Fundraisers: None

Revised AZ Tax Credit Form 2026

NAVIT IGA — FY2026–27

AZ School for the Deaf and Blind IGA — FY2026–27

SW Food Service Excellence Contract Renewal — FY2026–27

NPC Concurrent Enrollment Courses (TALON) IGA — FY2026–27 (Amendment)

NPC Dual Enrollment Courses IGA — FY2026–27 (Amendment)

Fixed Assets Disposal Listing

Note: Regarding Items 7.13 and 7.14, Mrs. Weber clarified for the record that the Board was approving amendments to the existing NPC TALON and Dual Enrollment IGAs, not the IGAs themselves.

REGULAR AGENDA

Athletic Director Position — Josh Edwards, JH/HS Athletic Director

Prior to opening this item for a motion, President Leedy recognized one public comment speaker whose request card indicated Items 8.1 and 8.2.

Cash Tenney addressed the Board and stated he was not appearing on behalf of either candidate but rather to speak to the principle of internal hiring. He urged the Board to give preference to full-time, in-house, qualified candidates before considering outside applicants, citing the cultural and retention benefits of an internal-first hiring philosophy. He encouraged the Board to consider the long-term precedent their decision would set for staff loyalty and organizational culture.

President Leedy explained the procedure: Item 8.1 would be addressed first. If a motion was made and seconded, a vote would be called. If no second was received, or if the motion failed, the Board would proceed to Item 8.2.

MOTION: Mr. Piva moved to approve Josh Edwards as Athletic Director, as recommended by the hiring committee. No second was received. Item 8.1 died for lack of a second.

Athletic Director Position — Ben Robinson, JH/HS Athletic Director

MOTION: Mr. Blackburn moved to approve Ben Robinson as the Junior High/High School Athletic Director. Mrs. Hall seconded. All those in favor – motion carried.

FY25 Annual Comprehensive Financial Report & Single Audit — Roll Call Vote

Mrs. Despain confirmed that the FY25 Annual Comprehensive Financial Report and Single Audit have been completed. A roll call vote is required by the auditors for approval of this item.

MOTION: Mrs. Hall moved to approve the FY25 Annual Comprehensive Financial Report and Single Audit. Mrs. Weber seconded.

ROLL CALL VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

Tim Leedy — Aye

Wendy Hall — Aye

Craig Blackburn — Aye

John Piva — Aye

Pattie Weber — Aye

I.T. Password Policies

Mr. Tenney explained that the IT Password Policy was identified as a required component during the performance audit. While the district has already implemented the password practices contained in the policy, the Auditor General required the document to receive formal Board approval before being incorporated into the district's official IT policy framework. The district now maintains five separate IT policies, which will be reviewed and brought to the Board for approval annually. The password policy also establishes industry-standard credential requirements. The Board noted that disaster recovery is addressed under a separate IT policy.

MOTION: Mrs. Weber moved to approve the IT Password Policies. Mr. Piva seconded. All those in favor – motion carried.

HOCRN and HOUSD Memorandum of Understanding — Flagpole Agreement

Mr. Tenney presented the Memorandum of Understanding between HOCRN (Heber-Overgaard Community Resources Network) and HOUSD regarding the installation of a 155-foot flagpole on the high school campus. The flagpole and its base have been delivered to the site, and an auger was also observed on location.

The MOU clarifies each party's responsibilities:

- HOCRN: Responsible for purchasing the flagpole, funding and overseeing subcontractors for construction and installation, and maintaining a maintenance fund for ongoing upkeep (including flag replacement, repainting, and lighting).
- HOUSD: Providing the land, removing fencing as needed to accommodate installation, and providing electricity for the flagpole's motor and lighting.

Board members discussed the scale of the project. The flagpole at 155 feet is approximately twice the height of the football field light poles (estimated at 70–75 feet). A board member emphasized, for the record, that the project is funded entirely through community donations and HOCRN — no school district funds are being used. HOCRN will maintain a maintenance fund for ongoing costs, including flag replacement due to high-wind conditions. A smaller 60×30 foot flag will be kept on hand for high-wind periods when the full-size 40×80 foot flag would sustain damage. President Leedy noted a signed copy from HOCRN representative June Call was on file with the district.

MOTION: Mr. Blackburn moved to approve the Memorandum of Understanding between HOCRN and HOUSD regarding the flagpole agreement. Mrs. Weber seconded. Motion carried with one abstention noted, Mr. Piva due to conflict of interest with HOCRN.

Preliminary Budget — FY2026–27

Mrs. Despain presented preliminary budget figures for FY2026–27 to secure Board authorization to proceed with budget preparations and contract and agreement processes. Key elements of the preliminary budget include:

Enrollment (ADM): The district is down approximately 5 students from the prior year as of the 100th-day count. This figure is being used as the planning baseline for FY2026–27.

State Funding Increase: The state is providing a 2% inflation increase, resulting in an additional \$102 per student. The base support level per student is projected at \$5,215.53.

Medical Insurance: The district's consortium — the Mountain Public Employee Benefit Trust, which includes NAVIT, Round Valley, Snowflake, MPC, and several fire districts, covering nearly 1,000 employee lives — absorbed the majority of a projected 12% premium increase. The district's net obligation is a 5% increase, which Mrs. Despain described as exceptionally low compared to peer districts. No plan design changes were required.

Arizona State Retirement System (ASRS): A reduction in the ASRS contribution rate is projected for the coming year, which will provide modest budget relief.

Forest Fees: The district continues to narrow the items funded through forest fees. The primary planned uses are the 6-hour stipends and Christmas payouts. Insurance, liability, and several other previously forest-fee-funded expenses have been transitioned to M&O.

Teacher Compensation: Teacher base contract amounts remain the same as the prior year; the increase comes in the form of supplemental pay stipends. This approach was used because budget allocations were uncertain at contract-issuance time and the stipend method allows increases to be provided above and beyond the base. Superintendent Tenney acknowledged that communication to staff about this structure had not been fully consistent across all campuses and committed to more thorough explanation at upcoming staff meetings.

Classified Staff & Administrators: Classified staff contracts will be issued at orientation at the beginning of the new school year. Administrator contracts (12-month positions) will be issued at the end of June. Administration will receive a step increase. Supplemental stipend increases of \$250 are proposed for director-level supplemental roles (Athletic Director, Special Education Director, Food Service Director, etc.). Superintendent compensation is reviewed separately by the Board during the annual evaluation process.

Budget Forms Timeline: ADE has confirmed that final budget forms will not be available in time for the statutory budget hearing and adoption deadlines. The district will proceed with preliminary forms, as it did last year, and will complete a formal revision by September 15, 2026, once final forms are released.

Demographic Study: President Leedy requested that the district obtain quotes for a demographic study to enable multi-year enrollment projections. Mrs. Despain confirmed she would gather that information and present it to the Board.

MOTION: Mrs. Hall moved to accept the Preliminary Budget for FY2026–27 as presented and discussed. Mr. Piva seconded. All those in favor – motion carried.

HOCRN and HOUSD Community Garden Agreement

Mr. Tenney presented the Community Garden Agreement between HOCRN and HOUSD. The agreement formalizes HOCRN's use of the fenced garden area located on Mountain Meadows Primary School grounds, along with a designated parking area just outside the fence perimeter for use by garden workers and visitors.

The agreement currently lacks a formal legal description for the fenced area, as that work has not yet been completed. Mr. Tenney indicated this is acceptable for the present as the garden area is clearly delineated by the existing fence, and a legal description can be added in the future if the Board determines it necessary.

HOCRN representative June Call has signed the agreement. Mr. Tenney also noted that a Facilities Use Agreement and corresponding insurance documentation will accompany the arrangement. The garden currently has 6–7 raised beds planted with cool-weather crops including broccoli, spinach, lettuce, and flowers. Irrigation is being extended to all beds this week.

Upcoming events: A community open house at the garden is planned for Saturday, May 2, 2026, from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM. HOCRN is also hosting a "Vegetable Abundance" class on Saturday, April 25, 2026, at 2:00 PM at the fire station.

A board member noted, for the record, that the garden is located entirely outside the children's playground fencing and that there is no direct contact between garden visitors and the school grounds during school hours.

MOTION: Mr. Blackburn moved to approve the Community Garden Agreement between HOCRN and HOUSD. Mrs. Weber seconded. All those in favor – motion carried with one abstention noted, Mr. Piva due to conflict of interest with HOCRN.

Limited Concession Sales During School Hours

Mr. Tenney introduced this policy item, noting it would remain in effect through July 1, 2026, at which point new federal and state guidelines may supersede it.

Background: Under current USDA wellness and Smart Snacks in Schools regulations, the sale of competitive food and beverages during the school day is restricted. This creates a challenge for school-sponsored athletic events that begin during school hours — such as baseball and softball games starting at 2:00 PM and basketball games at 2:30 PM — where concessions would otherwise benefit student groups and visiting fans.

This policy provides Board authorization to approve exemptions on a case-by-case basis for school-sponsored events held during school hours, allowing concessions to be made available to student athletes, spectators, and visiting teams. Any items sold must comply with Smart Snacks standards. The Board discussed that this is consistent with current ADE guidance allowing Board-approved exemptions.

Board members also discussed the transition of concession management at some events from student groups (such as the sophomore class) to other organizations (such as Little League), noting that factors including the inability to release students from class to staff the concession stand, limited revenue potential at some spring sports events, and staffing challenges made it impractical for the sophomore class to consistently run concessions. Mr. Tenney confirmed that revenue at outdoor spring sports events is modest and that letting students out of core classes to manage concessions is not advisable.

MOTION: Mrs. Hall moved to approve the Limited Concession Sales During School Hours policy. Mrs. Weber seconded. All those in favor – motion carried.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

No executive session was required.

Add Agenda Items — Future Business

Mrs. Hall requested that a review and update of the district's hiring procedures and policy language be placed on a future agenda. The current policy does not provide a well-defined structure for the hiring process. The Board concurred, and the item will be scheduled for a future meeting.

LAUNCH

Mr. Nathan Stoelk delivered the evening's closing thought:

"You only live once, but if you do it right, once is enough."

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Mrs. Weber moved to adjourn. Mrs. Hall seconded. All those in favor – motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 7:55pm.

The next Regular Board Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 12, 2026 at 7:00 PM, to be held at the Performing Arts Center, Capps Middle School, 3375 Buckskin Canyon Road, Heber, AZ 85928.

These minutes are respectfully submitted for Board approval.

Amanda Crandell, Board Secretary/Clerk
Date Approved: _____

Tim Leedy, Board President