

**DOUGLAS UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT #27**  
**DOUGLAS, ARIZONA**

Board Room  
Central Administration Building

10:00 AM  
May 5, 2020

**Special Board Meeting**  
**Minutes of the Board**

**I. PRELIMINARY MATTERS:**

CALL TO ORDER: Mr. Ray Borane, President

PRESENT: Mr. Mario Ramos, Member (Telephonically)  
Mr. Mitch Lindemann, Member  
Mr. Natalio Sabal, Member (Telephonically)  
Dr. Edward Gomez, Member (Arrived at 10:01 AM)

ABSENT: Fernando Nuñez, Assistant Superintendent

Others Present: Ana C. Samaniego, Superintendent  
Cesar Soto, Chief Financial & Operations Officer  
Jimena Lamadrid, Ex-Officio Student Member  
Alma Valenzuela, Superintendent's Secretary

Mr. Borane stated the purpose of this meeting. We had a meeting a week ago regarding high school graduation. Considering all of the adversity going on regarding planning and kinds of things that would have to take place to put on a graduation ceremony like the students deserve has been very difficult because of the inability to meet, not only the Board members but the inability of parents to meet with administration. The conversations that have taken place since our last meeting, and the interaction and all the discussion regarding what was done here last Tuesday, has been incredible. Board members have been contacted not only by parents but by students. The difficulty has been that they felt that there was not enough communication, because of the circumstances, to be able to have the Board arrive at an acceptable discussion and decision regarding graduation. Everyone needs to understand that the reason that it is here as a Board matter, is that graduation is a school district policy, and if that policy is changed or it's revised, it has to be done by the Board. The Board didn't come up individually with all of the options, the Board was given the options by administration after lengthy discussions. After these discussions, as Board President, felt they merited, warranted, and deserved more discussion. Having said that, we want to make sure that all of our senior students, present and future, that they are recognized in the manner that they deserve. They've worked 13 hard years to get to this point, not only for them but for the parents and families as well. We want to honor the seniors and do it right. We want them to have a celebration that will be memorable for the students and families. The situation that we are in now is that there is a lot of different feelings and there is a disparity in what the date should be and where it should take place, and all of the logistics involved in that. We want to

---

<sup>1</sup>A unanimous (5/0) vote will show the members voting in this manner throughout the minutes:

Name	Aye	Nay	Abstain
Mr. Mario Ramos	√		
Mr. Mitch Lindemann	√		
Mr. Natalio Sabal	√		
Dr. Edward Gomez	√		
Mr. Ray Borane	√		

make sure that whatever is done today is a decision made by the seniors. We are going to hear from Mr. Walker but most importantly from the seniors. It is your celebration, it is your recognition, and we want to honor you; you deserve it.

**Public Comments:**

Due to COVID-19, public comments were submitted via email and were read by Mrs. Samaniego. Public comments were received from the following:

- Ms. Zuraya Lugo, parent, regarding DHS graduation.
- Ms. Ivonne Sañez Rios, DHS senior, regarding DHS graduation.
- Mr. Alexandro Ochoa, DHS senior, regarding DHS graduation.
- Mr. Mark and Mrs. Sonia Wilkinson, parents, regarding DHS graduation.
- Mrs. Celena R. Galaz, parent, regarding DHS graduation.
- Ms. Laura Duarte, parent, regarding DHS graduation.

**II. ACTION ITEMS:**

**A. Discussion/action on the reconsideration of the Douglas High School Class of 2020 Graduation Ceremony.**

Mr. Borane commented that the reason for the language of reconsideration is that the Board had already approved and had acted on a decision.

Mrs. Samaniego commented that during one of the meetings held in March it was stated that we didn't have any graduation information but as soon as it was received it would be shared. During this time, Mr. Walker and DHS administration started working on options for graduation that could be presented to the Board. We needed to provide the students and parents with options. The rumor of the decision for the May 8<sup>th</sup> date being the responsibility of City of Douglas officials, for clarification, is completely false. Conversations with city officials were mainly to organize a community type celebration or parade. Mrs. Samaniego has been working with city officials as their assistance would be needed if there was a parade. During this time, Douglas Police Department felt that we could not have a community event, such as a parade, due to the stay at home orders. This decision is not the responsibility of city officials; this is a decision made by our Governing Board. A community event is something that is being worked on with the City, as it will require their support. This administration wants to give the students a proper celebration but there are things beyond everyone's control.

Mr. Randy Walker stated that the DUSD School Board, Superintendent Samaniego, DHS Administration, counselors, teachers, and staff, all feel that our seniors deserve a full ceremony. The question is what can or will we be able to give them during this pandemic? At the beginning of the outbreak when the first stay-at-home orders began there was a State Board of Education meeting. During that meeting, many seniors called in saying please don't take this away from us, our one goal is to walk that stage. We also heard these comments at DUSD. DHS administration brought an idea to Superintendent Samaniego because we all felt there was a real possibility that our seniors would not get an opportunity to walk the stage and receive their diploma. As we all began working on ideas, there were many obstacles to overcome, the most important is the safety of everyone involved, students, parents, community, and staff. In total, we developed nine (9) plans. The latest one that was Board approved was plan #10. The plans were discussed with

leadership, student leadership, and with the City involving issues with crowd control. We have been adhering to the state guidelines, Arizona Department of Health Information, and forecasting models for the State of Arizona to the COVID-19. At no time did anyone at Douglas High School state that we wanted to get rid of our seniors. We wanted to ensure that they have an opportunity to receive their diploma. Why May 8<sup>th</sup>? Our concern was the timeframe given the spread of COVID-19. That was the issue, the timeframe. If we wait too long, the seniors may get nothing. If we act too soon, some seniors may not be eligible to graduate. Eventually, we were able to get to plan #10. This all began based on the facts and what was the best plan to give our seniors an opportunity to walk the stage and receive their diploma. Why not out at the football field? That was plan #1. We had planned to have the students seated six-feet apart and conduct the ceremony in smaller groups, again the issue became social distancing and avoiding gatherings of 10 or more. The consensus was that we could not prevent students, etc., adhering to social distancing guidelines. Additionally, we could not control the crowd outside the stadium. We at DUSD could not control crowds from gathering outside the stadium. We know that parents and family members would want to watch their students walk the stage and receive their diploma. Even if we allowed parents to enter at that time, the issue would be other family members gathering outside the stadium. Again, taking safety into precaution and complying with the Governor's Order, we don't want anything to jeopardize our student's health, the community health, and the parents. Here is what we know at this time, the COVID-19 virus continues to grow. From April 26 to May 2, there were 1,838 new cases in Arizona. There are 14 cases in Douglas. On May 2, Yuma went from 29 cases to 60 cases, and as of yesterday jumped to 110 cases. There are two (2) models that were presented on April 22, from the AZ Department of Health Services (ADHS). Model #1 from ADHS, ASU, and UArizona, predicts Arizona's peak will be May 22. Model #2 from CDC, ASPR, and FEMA predicts that Arizona's peak will be June 11. Governor Ducey extended the Stay-at-Home Orders until May 15. When we were first formulating the plans, we were at stay-at-home until April 30. As stated by Governor Ducey, physical distancing is making a difference, we are slowing the spread. The last thing we want to do now is undo these gains. Arizona is eager to reenergize our economy and we will continue to take gradual step-by-step approach that is guided by data and public health. We don't know what Governor Ducey will do on May 15. What will be able to give our seniors at a later date? A full ceremony is the best-case scenario and a drive-thru diploma pick-up is a possibility. Tucson USD delayed their graduation. DUSD School Board, Superintendent Samaniego, and DHS administration's goal is to be able to guarantee graduation to those deserving seniors, unlike most schools.

Mrs. Samaniego asked Mr. Walker that if ceremony were to take place on May 8<sup>th</sup> or sooner than the May 22<sup>nd</sup> date, is there a problem with students not having a cap and gown? Mr. Walker replied that a representative from Herff Jones was here to deliver and Mrs. Rosadillo has been in the office working with students. It may be a concern for those students and parents that did not order anything. Mrs. Samaniego also asked if all the medals and awards have been received? Mr. Walker replied yes. Will the students be able to wear their stoles and cords? Mr. Walker replied no, as they have not been received yet but will be delivered on May 10<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Walker commented that Mrs. Hill and Mrs. Rosadillo have been working very hard on making sure that all these things are in place such as the diplomas, caps and gowns, collecting the fees, awards, etc. as best as available. We would like to thank them for their hard work.

Mr. Sabal asked if the students are being charged for the caps and gowns? Mrs. Samaniego replied yes, they are sold by a company. Mr. Sabal asked if the company could waive the cost? Mrs. Samaniego replied that it is up to the company but most students have ordered them. If a student doesn't have a cap and gown, they can contact the bookstore.

Ms. Regina Ramirez, who is the DHS Senior Class President, introduced the DHS senior class officers that are present to speak if needed.

- Ms. Andrea Borbon, Senior Class Secretary
- Ms. Katherine Toscano, Senior Vice President
- Ms. Jimena Lamadrid, Senior Student Body President

Mr. Borane asked Ms. Ramirez to comment about graduation. Mr. Borane commented that the Board was willing to listen because maybe the decision that was made the last time may not have been in the best interest of everybody and there were unanswered questions. We are very grateful that the students did wait and are back to give some information today that will be all encompassing, meaning that you've spoke to your classmates and parents. We are not going to please everybody but will do the best we can, based on what the students tell us.

Ms. Ramirez commented that they held a survey and asked the senior class what they wanted because nobody was really asking them, so that is why they lashed out. We held the survey and had 199 responses and 123 students voted for a June or July graduation and 76 voted to have it this Friday. So a lot of people right now have a lot of different opinions, everybody is entitled to that and every student has a right to feel the way that they feel right now. There are some students right now who really don't care about graduation, they just want to get their diploma and be over with it. Because in a way we do have to move on, like in August we are going to be going to a university or college, we are going to be moving on, no matter what. There are other students who don't care about a piece of paper, it's not about the diploma, it's about seeing everything happen. This is about closure; this is our senior year. We want to be able to see our friends and all of our other classmates walk that stage, with our cords, with our gowns, and our medals. We worked hard for four (4) years. This is a moment for us to look back at all of our education. We've grown up with these people. We want to get to see them graduate. Whether it is on May 8<sup>th</sup> and we just get our diplomas or whether it is on May 22<sup>nd</sup>, the Class of 2020 shouldn't be dismissed like that. Because a lot of people felt that having on May 8<sup>th</sup>, we were just being let go and that really hurts. So what the class wants is for it to be postponed for a later time when it is safe and for us to be able to experience graduation, like everybody else did. Like the Class of 2019 and the Class of 2018 and every single class before us, they got to experience what it is like to have an actual graduation. To sit on that football field for the last time and see everybody get their diplomas. It doesn't have to be a diploma, it's just the recognition that we are done. That this is the end of our childhood.

Mr. Borane asked Ms. Ramirez if the students want it postponed and if she is speaking for the majority of the class? Ms. Ramirez replied yes. Mr. Borane asked if there is an idea on what date because there are logistics in putting it together. It's going to be done; however, it needs to be done, it is going to be done, whatever the date. The administration is going to support the Board on that. Is there an idea as to what date the students are looking at? Ms. Ramirez replied that given the circumstances right now, all they need is time due to social distancing and for the corona

virus to calm down. Maybe mid or end of July because June is too soon. The virus is spreading. It isn't about us; it is about everybody's health. Holding it now or on May 22<sup>nd</sup>, we don't know if it's safe. Even if the stay-at-home order is lifted, other states have already lifted their home orders and the cases are still going up, so it is not safe. As much as we want to have graduation on May 22<sup>nd</sup>, we understand that it is not safe; at mid or end of July would be best because we need time.

Mr. Borane commented that for the benefit of the Board, the Board will again give the Superintendent the authority and that will be part of the motion, that unless something severe happens or it's drastic or there's something the Board really needs to rule on, she has the authority. They will be given the authority and the flexibility. When the students come back with a date, then the Superintendent will have the authority to enact that date. Mr. Borane recapped that the students want to wait to preferably the end of July and have the ability to continue to work with all the classmates, important thing is that parents need to be involved, and administration.

Ms. Lamadrid commented that they appreciate the Board giving the students an opportunity to express their opinions. Everyone has been trying to give the students a decent graduation or diploma distribution, but a lot of parents and students don't understand that. It is hard for them to understand that on May 8<sup>th</sup> it's guaranteed for the students to receive their diplomas in person, with 2 guests. We do deserve something nice rather than what we wanted to do on May 8<sup>th</sup> but it's really hard. Whether things get better or not, they're not going to blame anyone else but the students because it was our choice to postpone it. If we have the event on May 8<sup>th</sup>, and things do get better, they're going to complain. It is not going to be the Board's fault, it's not going to be the school's fault, it's going to be ours because that is what we wanted. That's what we gave them, we gave them the option. They chose it and we can't do anything about it but just wait.

Dr. Gomez commented that at no time did the Board want to do something less than event for the student. Last time there was a meeting we decided on the auditorium because that is what we were going to do on based on the information we had at that time. If the students want to wait until June or maybe even July, we will probably be able to have a full ceremony then. Maybe we should have it on the graduation date of May 22<sup>nd</sup>, but not any time before. We don't know what the Governor is going to do and we have to wait.

Ms. Ramirez commented that they have been discussing Plan B. If by June they can't have a regular ceremony, then they will have to settle for a diploma distribution or pick them up in their cars. It is something they can change. For now, postponing it is having a sense of hope, a hope that things are going to get better, and a hope that there will be a normal graduation. It's what everybody wants. Everything is so ugly right now and everyone just wants hope. Ms. Lamadrid commented that the students are aware of that because the survey clearly stated that postponing graduation is not a guarantee and other plans would have to be looked at.

Mr. Lindemann commented that he liked the idea of postponing it and hopefully things will get better. TUSD is also waiting for more information even if they have it planned for June. We will move forward as we have information.

Mrs. Samaniego commented that everyone is standing behind the students in postponing it. What she prefers doing before leaving the meeting and due to the magnitude of being able to have a

regular ceremony, is to leave with a date in mind. Because it is not only to inform the class but parents. Having a date would help in working with the DHS administration and following up on the guidelines to decide on whether the date will suffice and work for the type of ceremony we have. The end of July is concerning because if all goes well and we can open our schools, our teachers return to work and registration begins at the end of July. The other thing we are dealing with right now is not being able to have summer school however, we are discussing the possibility of a jump start program. A later July date complicates for the many things that this district has to do in preparation for the new school year.

Ms. Borbon commented that maybe diplomas should be distributed before and have a ceremony later when it is safe. She doesn't think the situation is going to get better soon and it is irresponsible to have a ceremony now. It would be smart to wait until it's safe not when the stay-at-home orders are lifted. Maybe even in August when things are hopefully better and have a proper graduation by walking the stage and getting the diploma covers.

Mr. Borane commented that a date needs to be decided otherwise this can continue for a while. Mrs. Samaniego commented that walking out the meeting with a date in mind is important so that parents know and make plans for the summer. The responsible thing to do is to at least come up with a date and allow us to make those adjustments if need be depending on what the situation is.

Possible dates and scenarios were discussed in great length.

***Mr. Borane called for a 10-minute recess at 11:11 a.m. to allow students to discuss a possible date. Meeting reconvened at 11:23 a.m.***

Ms. Ramirez commented that the students believe it's best to get the diplomas beforehand and have a ceremony for recognition on Saturday, June 20<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Walker commented that it could be coordinated through the parking lot and have the students pick up their diploma in their vehicle. Mrs. Samaniego commented that the diploma pick-up is not going to be a major thing, it will just be picking up the diploma. Mr. Borane stated that this is something that the students wanted and it is satisfactory to the majority of the people. We hope that people understand the difficulty that this whole situation presented.

Mr. Borane and the Board thanked the seniors for being present and working with the administration. We did the best we could under the circumstances and with 99% recommendation from the senior class and its officers.

Mr. Lindemann motioned to approve the Douglas High School Class of 2020 Graduation plans to have the distribution of diplomas on May 8, 2020 in a drive-by pickup at DHS as set forth by DHS administration. To include a full graduation ceremony to take place on June 2020, if possible and depending on social distancing guidelines and COVID-19. Any administrative detail or decision that needs to be made is going to be vested in the Superintendent as presented. Dr. Gomez seconded the motion. Motion carried 5/0. <sup>1</sup>

Mr. Walker commented that the information for the distribution of diplomas will be sent out by tomorrow afternoon.

**III. EXECUTIVE SESSION:**

**The Governing Board may vote into executive session, pursuant to A.R.S. § 38-431.03 (A) (1) for the following personnel matters:**

- A. Consideration of 2020-2021 employment contracts and benefits for the following administrative staff.
  - a. Ana Samaniego, Superintendent
  - b. Cesar Soto, Chief Financial & Operations Officer

**No Board action is taken during executive session. Should either employee wish to have the executive session dealing with the matter pertaining to that employee held in open session, it shall be conducted in open session following the executive session at this point in the agenda.**

Mr. Lindemann motioned to enter into executive session. Mr. Ramos seconded the motion. Motion carried 5/0. *Meeting moved into executive session at 11:37 a.m.*

*Return to open session at 11:54 a.m.*

**IV. OPEN SESSION:**

- A. *Discussion/action on the approval of 2020-2021 employment contracts and benefits for the following administrative staff.*
  - a. *Ana Samaniego, Superintendent*

Mr. Lindemann motioned to approve with the terms of a 3-year contract, \$132,380.48 to include all benefits, as presented. Mr. Sabal seconded the motion. Motion carried 5/0.

- b. *Cesar Soto, Chief Financial & Operations Officer*

Mr. Lindemann motioned to approve the contract, \$102,758.88 to include all benefits, as presented. Mr. Sabal seconded the motion. Motion carried 5/0.

Both contracts reflect a 4% increase as given to all the administrators.

Mrs. Samaniego thanked the Board for approving her 3-year contract. It has been a pleasure being the Superintendent and with its many challenges but it also brings many successes. I really enjoy what I do, I love working for DUSD. Thank you! Mr. Borane and the Board thanked Mrs. Samaniego and Mr. Soto for their services during these trying times.

Mr. Lindemann commented that in honor of Teacher Appreciation Day he would like to thank the teachers, administration, and staff for their dedication to our students, families, and community. Especially during this time of stress and uncertainty. Our support together will strengthen our resolve to strive for excellence in our schools, education, and for our students. On behalf of the Board, thank you!

**V. ADJOURNMENT:**

There being no further business, Mr. Lindemann motioned to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Sabal seconded the motion. Motion carried 5/0. The meeting was adjourned at 11:59 a.m.

Minutes prepared by Alma Valenzuela, Superintendent's Secretary.

The Board at their meeting on February 2, 2021, approved these minutes.

**Public Comments:**

Effective immediately and until further notice, the DUSD Governing Board will be enforcing the Center for Disease Control's health precautionary recommendation limiting all public gatherings to 10 people. There will be no call to the public. All Governing Board meetings will be live-streamed and available to view via DUSD's YouTube channel.

Details regarding presentations and discussions are available on the audio and video recordings posted on the Governing Board page on the DUSD website at [douglasusd27.schoolinsites.com](http://douglasusd27.schoolinsites.com) (For exact statements made during the board meeting, you may request a copy of the audio).