



# GOVERNANCE COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, March 21, 2023 @ 5:00pm

Meeting Room: Via Zoom

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85435162262?pwd=VWIMRIRDQkdDVUV2YUVKKzRGUVBiZz09>

Meeting ID: 854 3516 2262 Passcode: 487404

10301 Candelaria Rd. NE, Albuquerque, NM 87112

<b>BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT</b>	<b>BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT</b>	<b>ALSO IN ATTENDANCE</b>	<b>PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE</b>
Deborah Burns Shannon Carpenter Debra Jensen Eileen Johnson Larry Stotts	Michael Hamel	Christine Lutz Lisa Mora Denise Dixson Joe Hines Jill Brame Susan Fox	

**MINUTES RECORDED BY:** Debra Jensen      **Transcribed by:** Dana Smith

*These minutes were approved on* March 28, 2023

DocuSigned by:  
 President: Deborah Burns  
 DocuSigned by:  
 Recorded by: Debra Jensen  
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**\*\*SSLC policies are available to the public.** Please e-mail Dana Smith ([dsmith@sslc-nm.com](mailto:dsmith@sslc-nm.com)) to request a copy of the policy/policies as referenced within this document.

## **OPENING BUSINESS**

### **1. CALL TO ORDER**

Mrs. Burns called the Southwest Secondary Learning Center (SSLC) Governing Council Board (GCB) Meeting to order on Wednesday, March 21, 2023, at 5:01 pm via Zoom.

#### **a. ROLL CALL**

Mrs. Burns, present  
Ms. Carpenter, present  
Mr. Hamel, absent  
Mrs. Jensen, present  
Ms. Johnson, present  
Mr. Stotts- present

#### **b. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Mrs. Burns asked everyone to join her in the Pledge of Allegiance.

### **2. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

Mrs. Burns asked for a motion to adopt the agenda.

Agenda Changes: Larry Stotts made a motion to add items to be discussed on the agenda. Mr. Stotts was advised that if items were to be included on the agenda, then counsel would not advise the board on those items in open session. If those items were discussed in closed session counsel would be available to advise.

Mr. Stotts requested the following amendments to the agenda for discussion and Ms. Lutz shared on screen:

I wish to make an amendment to the agenda for tonight's meeting. I would like to discuss the possible violation of the Open Meetings Act Section 10-15-1(B)(1) regarding a rolling quorum and violation of Article 12 Section 2 of the SSLC Governance Council approved By-laws. Specifically in reference to the following concerns:)

- 1) The private email from Michael Hamel to Deborah Burns and Eileen Johnson on Tuesday March 14 at 7:27 pm and the private email from Deborah Burns to Michael Hamel and Eileen Johnson at 8:55 pm on the same day. This email was then forwarded to Debra Jensen and myself on Thursday March 16th and which may constitute a rolling quorum of five.
- 2) Discussion of Article 12 section 2 of the SSLC governing Council by laws signed by the SSLC governing Council members.
- 3) Questionable violations of the open meetings act associated with the governance council selection process for the head administrator.
- 4) Possible violations of Article 12 section 2 of the Governing Council by Laws associated with the governance council selection process for the head administrator.

5) Agreement by the SSLC board for the record on the statements and findings in Deborah Burn's email on March 14 at 8:55pm describing the dysfunction of SSLC, the staff and teachers and specifically Denise Dixson's performance and other defamatory comments made regarding the culture and health of the SSLC staff.

Mr. Stotts' made a motion to include these items on the agenda. Concern was expressed about discussing items without counsel and the motion to amend the agenda did not receive a second.

Motion requested to adopt the agenda as presented.

Shannon Carpenter made a motion to adopt the original agenda and Eileen Johnson seconded the motion. Mrs. Burns called for a roll call vote, unanimous yes, Motion passed.

### **3. REVIEW /APPROVAL OF MINUTES 3-15-23 Regular Meeting\***

Mrs. Burns asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Ms. Johnson made a motion to approve the minutes and Mrs. Jensen seconded the motion. Mrs. Burns called for a roll call vote, unanimous yes, Motion passed.

### **4. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Denise Dixon read a letter to the Governing Council, included.

Chris Lutz read a letter to the Governing Council, included.

Lisa Mora urged the council to ask questions of her directly and to delay the vote until full membership is present.

#### **Comment made by Denise Dixson:**

Good evening board members,

Myself, Elizabeth, and Stan were voted by the entire staff to represent their voices on the search committee. I have represented them to the best of my ability and will continue to do so.

Although the decision likely has already been made amongst you, I once again ask that you take into consideration the staff and faculty's wishes. We did not arrive at our decision lightly. All staff members shared their individual views. We weighed both options with careful consideration - despite what some of you might think. I have over 38 pages of notes I took on each candidate with pros and cons for each. I know Elizabeth and Stan also did something similar.

I don't like bringing this up publicly, however, I feel I have no other choice given the current circumstances. I was recently provided with a communication that makes it clear that I and others have been labeled as being resistant to new ideas and innovations to the detriment of the school. I will remind you all that some of the latest innovative successes at the school such as Smart Lab backpacks, CTE grant, 3 years of STEM team win, and the Professional Certification program, I have had a large hand in - but I digress.

Is our staff cohesive and tight knit? Absolutely. Are some of us scarred by past administrations? Once again, absolutely. But to paint our cohesiveness as a bad thing is troubling. Most organizations strive for a collaborative and truly cohesive workforces while spending lots of time, energy, and money to achieve such an effective team as ours.

It is remarkable to me that our cohesion is inexplicably seen as an impediment to the future success of our school. This cohesion should be leveraged, not dismantled one by one.

The idea that our staff is so immersed in its own groupthink to the extent that we shun any outsiders or outside ideas to our own detriment is patently false. And as evidence here are Elizabeth and Stan, our two newest teachers on the committee. They have not only been welcomed but are so valued, respected, and trusted that they were voted by all to be part of this important process. That doesn't sound like a group of people that don't want outsider opinions or ideas.

I would like it noted that for 19 years from 2001-2020 when Covid put an abrupt stop to well...everything... I helped administer a robust summer program that included PE, Camp Smart Lab, and Extended Learning, a program that is still active today. While bouncing back from Covid has been a challenge but perhaps hard instead of assuming I or others were unwilling an honest discussion was warranted.

We do not object to others using the Smart Lab for legitimate purposes that benefit the school and its students. We object to uses that have no clear value to the school and others using a million-dollar lab without training or knowledge. That's not an excuse, it's a legitimate concern. We have a responsibility to protect and care for our equipment, so it remains usable during the school years.

Unelected board members that are not educators and do not recognize the value of a staff that has a collective 370+ years of educational service are concerning to us as a staff as the opinion that we have lost the ability to recognize outside innovations. We are veterans in this profession and have spent lifetimes of servitude as such.

It might seem I'm stepping outside my bounds here, however; my mother was an APS board member for 8 Years and she served as Board President for 4 Years. She insisted that board members visit the schools they represented and speak to staff to get the true picture of what was occurring on campuses. At any time, the board could have visited us and spoken directly with us in an informal setting to get a clearer picture instead of painting us all with a broad brush behind our backs.

It would be remiss of me to not point out the obvious; disregarding staff input without offering a truthful explanation and recognizing their concerns is not the way to gain trust or build a healthy environment going forward.

Thank you for your time and for allowing me to speak.

**Public Comment made by Christine Lutz:**

Good evening, Council Members:

First, thank you for the time and energy in the search for a new head administrator. SSLC will be in good hands with either candidate. And we are lucky to have found two candidates with the qualifications they possess. Either will bring strengths to the school as you move forward.

My concern this evening is not the qualifications of the candidates, but the non-transparent steps taken in the latter stages of the hiring process and the sharing of defamatory written communication regarding staff members. This communication between board members constitutes a rolling quorum as defined by the Open Meetings Act 10-15-1 (B)(1) and subsequently denied a candidate an equitable chance in the hiring process.

An email was sent to Mr. Hamel and Ms. Johnson on March 14<sup>th</sup> at 8:55 pm by the council president after a hiring committee meeting the evening before. It was then sent on to Mr. Stotts and Ms. Jensen. This email disparages staff members and results in a forgone conclusion regarding the next head administrator and goes as far as to start contract the negotiations. All final board decisions are required to be taken in a noticed, and open meeting. This email was produced before our noticed regular meeting on March 15. Sending the email to five of the six members of the council constitutes a rolling quorum even if not sent to all at the same time. The rolling quorum is explained in the Open Meetings Act Reference Guide, pages 7 and 8, on the New Mexico State Attorney General's page. Both the rule and an example are given.

In addition, the council violated their own approved by-laws in Article 12 Section 2, Commitment to Collaboration and reads in part as follows:

Council members shall refrain from non-constructive or personality-based comments that do not advance SSLC's mission. Because the Council makes decision as a deliberative body, it is expected that, except in extraordinary circumstances, Council members will voice their opinions to other members about council matters in the context of a Council a council meeting.

On several occasions I have witnessed a single board member forcefully sway others' opinions by engaging in long-winded orations about their superior knowledge of the circumstances. Other members often succumb to that pressure and follow that board member's lead, even when it is not in the best interest of school finances, culture, or in this case selection of a new head administrator. In the student world, we call that bullying. Too often, one member speaks for the entire council, which is against all NMPED approved training. In one discussion regarding the head administrator selection, Ms. Johnson warned the hiring committee about "group think" as the same was mentioned in the 3/14 email. I would propose that this applies to the governance council as well. Members have not checked each other's comments and/or non-productive actions. It is now time for the board to speak with one voice. If the opinions expressed in Mrs. Burn's email are accurate, then they should be stated in a public meeting by all and not be used to influence other members in specific decisions. I have provided to the best of my ability, a path to a smooth transition to new leadership, no matter who that might be. If the view taken by Mrs. Burns in her March 14<sup>th</sup> email regarding the staff is NOT indicative of the entire board's view, I would ask that the board consider action to remove Mrs. Burns as president. Please see a description of the Board President's duties, page 8, of the council by-laws.

Regarding the disparagement of the staff in the email crafted by Mrs. Burns on March 14. I am more than willing to take one for the team, but I will not allow any further disparagement of staff members. They are hardworking, open to new ideas, and think things through thoroughly. Yes, those ideas may be different than the board president's personal agenda, but they ALWAYS focus on what is best for students and may be better than the original idea. Please be sure that not all staff members are painted with the same brush due to a member's animosity towards me. It is unprofessional, embarrassing to the school, and should not be tolerated by any member of the governance council.

There is still much work to be done to finish out the school year. I would ask that the council address the other matters before them before deciding on a new head administrator. The circumstances are not conducive to a fair and just decision. As early as February 2022 when the board asked if I were willing to stay for another year, I committed to a supported and smooth transition to new leadership. My plan is to fulfill that commitment, but not at the expense of the

staff members who make SSLC what it is... a cohesive, innovative, student-centered, and intellectually curious environment. Please consider your actions carefully and be sure that student success remains at the forefront of any actions taken this evening.

Thank you for your time.

### **Public Comment from Lisa Mora:**

My name is Lisa Mora, and I am the Assistant Principal for SSLC, as well as a candidate for the Head Administrator position. I wish to begin by once again thanking the Governance Council members for their dedication and time invested throughout this process. I have done all I can to compete fairly and to represent myself truthfully and realistically, and I trust the members of the board to make the very best decision that they can for the school. That decision should be based on facts, merit, and each of your own personal convictions. As a firm believer in transparency, I understand you have heard negative comments about me personally and the rest of the staff that are frankly untrue. I urge the members of the council to not make decisions based on potential falsehoods or misinformation. If you have questions or you'd like to hear my perspective, please ask! I would be happy to meet with any members of the board to present the other side and clear up any misconceptions.

If you believe the other candidate to be a better fit for SSLC, then I expect you to vote accordingly! I believe each of you are strong individuals who know your own mind and will vote your conscience. I am simply asking for the opportunity to dispute any potentially false information that may be weighing on you as you make this very difficult decision and ask that the governance council delay vote on a head administrator until full board can be present. Thank you for your time.

### **Closed Session**

Motion: Pursuant to section 10-15-1(H)(2) the governance council will meet in closed session to discuss limited personnel matters for the purpose of reviewing school year 23-24 Head Administrator applicants to include an internal candidate.

Mrs. Burns asked for a motion to go into closed session. Mrs. Jensen made the motion above and Ms. Johnson seconded the motion. Mrs. Burns called for a roll call vote, unanimous yes, Motion passed.

Legal counsel was invited into closed session.

### **Recorder Off**

**Time into closed session: 5:31pm**

**Time back from closed session: 6:35pm**

Return from closed session at **6:35 pm**. Statement made that no matters were discussed in closed session other than as articulated in the agenda and no action was taken. No decision has been made on the head administrator as information gathering and fact-finding process are still in process. A vote will be made in the future in an open meeting.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Next Scheduled Meeting: April 19, 2023, at 5:00pm via the Zoom platform

Time adjourned: 6:38 pm.