



COUNCIL MINUTES

February 18, 2004,

The City Council of the City of Mesa met in a Joint Meeting with Mesa Unified School District No. 4 Governing Board at the Administrative Services Center, 63 E. Main Street, on February 18, 2004 at 7:30 a.m.

COUNCIL PRESENT

Mayor Keno Hawker
Rex Griswold
Kyle Jones
Dennis Kavanaugh
Janie Thom
Mike Whalen
Claudia Walters

STAFF PRESENT

Mike Hutchinson
Debra Dollar
Dennis Donna
Jack Friedline
Pat Granillo
Joe Holmwood
Eric Norenberg
Ellen Pence
Bryan Raines
Julie Rice
Dan Stubbs
Paul Wenbert
Bob White

GOVERNING BOARD PRESENT

Cindi Hobbs, President
Suzanne Davis
Mike Hughes
Elaine Miner
Tom Rhodes

MESA SCHOOL DISTRICT STAFF PRESENT

Debra Duvall
Jill Benza
Joan Conner
Mike Cowan
David Eagleburger
Mike Kalember
David Petersen
Jane McGee Rafal
Linda Rottman
Steve Smith
George Zeigler

1. Welcome.

Governing Board President Cindi Hobbs welcomed everyone to the meeting and commented that this gathering provides Mesa Public Schools and the City of Mesa with an opportunity to exchange ideas and discuss issues that jointly impact the community.

2. Overview of Current City Issues.

Mayor Keno Hawker highlighted the formation of the Ad Hoc Committee to Study Police Oversight, the Ad Hoc Redevelopment Advisory Board, and the "Financing the Future" Citizen

Committee which have been charged with improving communication between the Mesa Police Department and the citizens of Mesa, assessing the City's redevelopment boundaries, and financing the City at build out respectively. He also provided a short synopsis of the City's participation in regional security efforts; an expanded downtown presence by Mesa Community College; freeway landmark monuments; VaShly'ay Akimel Salt River Restoration Project; the Mesa Arts Center; the Aquatic Center; and the November 2004 election for the extension of the half-cent sales tax.

Mayor Hawker invited the Councilmembers, after their introduction, to highlight issues that they consider to be significant priorities.

- a. Introduction of Councilmembers with briefing of their key issues.

Priorities mentioned by the Councilmembers included improving public safety response through more effective interoperable wireless communications; arts education; County Island building challenges; the impact of the Red Mountain Freeway on surrounding neighborhoods; Williams Gateway Airport area; changing demographics in the City of Mesa; increasing healthcare costs; improving Mesa's aging neighborhoods; immigration; economic development; the revitalization of the Fiesta Mall area; and budgetary constraints.

3. Overview of Current School District Issues.

Governing Board President Cindi Hobbs commented that she is extremely proud of not only the positive working relationship between Mesa Public Schools and the City of Mesa, but also the strong foundation that exists between the Governing Board and the Mesa School District staff as well. She provided an overview of some of the school board's primary concerns including ever-increasing healthcare costs; the hiring and retention of employees; the fact that the District's funding is tied to enrollment and that enrollment has not grown as rapidly as in the past; and assessing ways in which to reduce funding, but not impact enrollment.

Ms. Hobbs invited the Boardmembers to introduce themselves and provide a brief overview of some of the District's key issues.

- a. Introduction by Governing Boardmembers with briefing of their key issues.

Governing Boardmember Tom Rhodes commented that this is his eighth year on the school board. He remarked that one of his biggest concerns for the District is providing a good education to those students who do not speak English as their primary language. He noted that it is also imperative to encourage students who possess the academic potential to attend college, but have not received the encouragement to do so, to reach beyond their parents' horizons and explore the possibility of pursuing a higher education. Boardmember Rhodes also expressed concerns regarding the issue of school overcrowding and the importance of obtaining funding to build new schools to alleviate the problem.

Governing Boardmember Suzanne Davis introduced herself and advised that this is the eighth year she has served as a Boardmember. She provided a brief overview of Proposition 301 and discussed the \$19.5 million funding that the District receives on a yearly basis as a result of the law. She explained that Proposition 301 requires that the funds are directed into specific

categories, including 40% for teacher base pay, 40% for performance pay, and 20% for various discretionary “menu” items.

Governing Boardmember Elaine Miner stated that she has been a member of the school board for six years. She commented that with regards to the AIMS Test, this year’s tenth graders are the first grade level that will be required to pass the test in order to graduate from high school in Arizona. She noted that Mesa Public Schools is faced with many challenges relative to this issue, including providing all students, including non-English speaking and special needs individuals, with sufficient skills and knowledge to pass the test.

4. Format of this morning’s meeting.

Ms. Hobbs stated that two Boardmembers and two representatives from the City of Mesa would conduct two roundtable discussions. She stated that each table will be provided 15 minutes per topic, and that at the conclusion of that time period, staff, the Facilitators and Recorders will switch tables and join the other participants during their roundtable discussion. (See Agenda Item 6). Ms. Hobbs advised that at the conclusion of the timed discussions, the Recorder from each roundtable would provide a synopsis of the groups’ discussions.

5. View Video.

A video was played depicting various topics slated for the roundtable discussions.

6. Roundtable discussions.

Topic 1: City and School Facilities Issues – *Upcoming bond election, ballot issues, and state school facility funding status.*

Facilitator: David Eagleburger Recorder: Ellen Pence

Topic 2: Finance and Budget Issues – *Home Rule Election, 2005 Override Election, impact of state education proposals, health care costs*

Facilitator: Debra Dollar Recorder: Jill Benza

7. Reports by each table.

Assistant to the City Manager Ellen Pence stated that she was the chosen spokesperson for Topic 1, “City and School Facilities Issues.” She reported that both groups identified the School Facilities Board as a real concern, but explained that she would not restate the analysis of the Board that was provided to both groups by Dave Peterson. Ms. Pence commented that schools can still ask for voter approval on bonds, but it puts a “tax on tax” and would be Class B bonds, which is not a good idea. She noted that another area of discussion consisted of the ballot issues on the March 9th City election, particularly Proposition 104, which would limit City spending. She commented that Councilmember Thom indicated that the initiative is not intended to impact the building of soccer fields, but rather to stop the construction of multipurpose facilities in Mesa. Ms. Pence added that the roundtable participants also discussed the initiative’s impact on City/school projects and said that mention was also made

regarding consideration by the Tourism and Sports Authority (TSA) to fund various City of Mesa projects.

Ms. Pence stated that the second group discussed the impact of cutting back on open gyms and commented that there appeared to be minimal impact for the schools. She explained that because the gyms were used for the City's adult programs, the City worked closely with the District to ensure that the cutbacks were not restricted to one area, but rather were spread throughout the City. Ms. Pence advised that there was additional discussion on the upcoming bond election, and limited discussion on illegal immigration and its impact on Mesa schools.

Jill Benza, a representative of Mesa Public Schools, and the selected Recorder for the Topic 2 "Finance and Budget Issues" roundtable, provided brief historical background of the 2000 Override Election, which funded five additional school days for Mesa Public Schools. She stated that with regard to the 2005 Override Election, the group discussed the importance of including language on the ballot that would provide the Governing Board with a certain degree of flexibility regarding the spending of the funds to ensure that teacher salaries remain competitive. Ms. Benza noted that there was brief discussion on the Home Rule Election. She added that the group reflected on Mesa Community College's bond election slated for this fall, Mesa Public Schools' 2005 Override Election, and also possible recommendations that may come out of the City's "Financing the Future" Citizen Committee. She stressed the importance of educating Mesa's taxpayers on these upcoming issues so they can make informed decisions at the polls.

Additional topics of discussions reported by Ms. Benza included the following: whether it is more appropriate to include "money issues" on election ballots in March or November; the State legislative proposal to consider full day kindergarten; decreased enrollment in the Mesa School District; and the lack of incentives to use less medical care.

Ms. Benza advised that as a result the group's discussion regarding the skyrocketing cost of healthcare, it has recommended that the City of Mesa and the Mesa School District explore the benefits of establishing a partnership relative to healthcare purchases. She stated that in addition, the group has requested Jim Lowell to contact Deputy City Manager Debbi Dollar in an effort to pursue this matter further.

Governing Board President Hobbs thanked everyone for their participation and attendance at the meeting.

8. Adjournment.

Without objection, the Joint Meeting between the Mesa City Council and the Mesa Unified School District No. 4 Governing Board adjourned at 9:35 a.m.

KENO HAWKER, MAYOR

ATTEST:

BARBARA JONES, CITY CLERK

I hereby certify that the foregoing minutes are a true and correct copy of the minutes of the Joint Meeting between the Mesa City Council and Mesa Unified School District No. 4 Governing Board held on the 18th day of February 2004. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

BARBARA JONES, CITY CLERK

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