



METRO EDUCATION COMMISSION

Minutes of Commission Meeting

Pursuant to A.R.S. 38.431.02, notice was given on February 25, 2025, to the members of the Metropolitan Education Commission and to the public, that the **Metropolitan Education Commission would hold a Zoom meeting on Monday, March 3, 2025, convening at 4:00 p.m.** Meeting ID: 870 6055 1447. Join the meeting: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87060551447?from=addon>
Find your local number: <https://us02web.zoom.us/u/khjG6lcAv>

1. Call to Order

**Mark
Hanna**

Chair Mark Hanna called the meeting to order at 4:05 p.m. Present were Commissioners Rocque Perez, Rex Scott, Lane Santa Cruz, Leslie Ferre, Jennifer Vasquez, Alejandro Tavera-Reyes, Dave Mason, Karla Silva, Michael Wilkerson, Jake Bluementhal, Jose Gastelum, Rich Nickel, Robert Ramirez, and Irene Robles-Lopez.

Sharon O'Brien joined at 4:48 p.m. Commissioners not present included Dustin Williams, Matthew Schmidgall, Adriana Grijalva, Kathy Prather. With 14 of the 20 Commissioners present, a quorum was established.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Mark Hanna conducted the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Land Acknowledgement

Chair Mark Hanna conducted the land acknowledgement.

**Rocque
Perez**

4. Consent Agenda

- 4.1. Approval of 1.23.2025 Commission Meeting Minutes
- 4.2. Approval of Q1 Report to Pima County Economic Development
- 4.3. Approval of Q2 Report to Pima County Economic Development

Motion to approve the consent agenda by Alejandro Tavera-Reyes and seconded by Rich Nickel, with a unanimous vote of approval. Motion carries.

5. Old Business

5.1. Completion of Loyalty Oaths

Mr. Perez explained that loyalty oaths will be distributed through an online notary service at no cost to the Commissioners. Commissioners are to complete one set of documents at the request of Pima County and an additional set by the City of Tucson for a total of two loyalty oaths.

5.2. January Financial Review

5.2.1. Statement of Activity as of March 3, 2025

5.2.2. P&L Actual vs. Budget as of March 3, 2025

Treasurer Jake Blumenthal presented both documents noting that despite the agenda heading, each was a reflection of spending as recent as March, 3, 2025. Chair Mark Hanna sought clarity regarding the high amount for In-Kind Professional Services to which Rocque Perez explained that line item accounts for the Peer Coach Education Awards and Youth Team Lead Stipends afforded by Arizona Serve through Prescott College. The expense equivalent being "Stipends, Scholarships & Cash Awards".

Mr. Perez sought the advice of Commissioners who manage budgets with comparable purposes to which Rich Nickel offered to connect offline and lend advice and the advice of his finance personnel.

Motion to approve the Statement of Activity and Actual vs. Budget as of March 3, 2025 by Robert Ramirez and second by Dave Mason, with a unanimous vote of approval by the Commission. Motion carries.

6. New Business

6.1. Programs and Initiatives Update

6.1.1. Pima-Tucson Read Aloud Week

Mr. Perez explained that MEC's resolution requesting a proclamation of Pima-Tucson Read Aloud Week has been reviewed and will be presented by Pima County on April 1 at roughly 9:30AM. The City of Tucson equivalent is also under consideration with an anticipated presentation in early April. Mr. Perez invites commissioners to attend alongside Literacy Connects, Make Way for Books, Pima County Public Library, Tucson Festival of Books, ReadOn Arizona, and Education Forward Arizona.

6.1.2. An Evening to Empower(ED)

- Nominations open until March 10, 2025.

Mr. Perez shared there have been several dozen nominations for the anticipated Evening to Empower(ED), the reprisal of the Commission's annual award celebration. The nomination deadline has been extended to March 10 at 5pm.

Information regarding award categories, nomination processes, and sponsorships are accessible at mectucson.org/empowered.

6.1.3. Peer Coach Program

- Proposed partnership with the Arizona Board of Regents

Mr. Perez shared there are existing and potentially further impacts by the Trump Administration's divestment in efforts to support post-secondary navigational support and assistance in completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid. In recent years, the Arizona FAFSA Coalition has pursued funds from ECMC, which

facilitates funding in this area on behalf of the U.S. Department of Education. As a member of the Coalition, MEC sought \$320K of what has been a historical \$1 Million investment in the State of Arizona. To strategically align resources and programs, MEC sought to partner with the Arizona Board of Regents to merge the Peer Coach Programs under the respective organizations. Through a cost share agreement, MEC would serve as a steward of the program in Southern Arizona, particularly Pima County, increasing the number of Peer Coaches from 23 to 78 across 28 high schools in the Tucson Metro Area and greater Pima County.

6.2. Resolutions of the Commission

6.2.1. 2025-002 Budget Request of Pima County and the City of Tucson.

Mr. Perez explained that as prescribed by authorizing documents of Pima County and the City of Tucson, MEC is mandated to submit a detailed budget request to the City of Tucson and Pima County by March 1 of each year for funding consideration. This resolution outlines this budget request and focus of programming to be directed to both municipalities.

Mr. Perez shared that his understanding of our current funding arrangement with Pima County is a continuation of our more recent process of renewal of contract under the budget of Pima County Economic Development, subject to contract renewal by vote of the Pima County Board of Supervisors.

Mr. Perez sought a confirmation of that process to which Commissioner and Pima County Board Supervisor and Chair Rex Scott confirmed.

Motion to approve by Michael Wilkerson and seconded by Lane Santa Cruz with a unanimous vote of approval by the Commission. Motion carries.

6.2.2. 2025-003 In Solidarity with DEIA Initiatives at the University of Arizona and Call for Support by Pima County and the City of Tucson.

Mr. Perez explained this resolution responds to the recent removal of DEIA language and resources at the University, aligning with faculty, students, alumni, and community members who have called for their reinstatement. Given MEC's role in advocating for educational access, student success, and workforce development, this matter has direct implications for learners in Pima County.

Mark Hanna and Lane Santa Cruz expressed the first sentiments of support in joining students, faculty and staff at the University of Arizona in a call for actions as outlined in the resolution. Michael Wilkerson, Leslie Ferre, and Jennifer Vasquez joined in sentiments of support and the intention of joining a vote to approve this resolution.

Mr. Perez noted that he would understand abstentions in the event there were any and additionally expressed his intention to remove any mention of Commissioner's professional titles and solely use the seats they represent.

Motion to approve by Mark Hanna and seconded by Lane Santa Cruz with a vote of 11 yays, 0 nays, and 4 abstentions from Jose Gastelum, Rich Nickel, Irene Robles-Lopes, and Robert Ramirez. Motion carries.

6.3. Bylaw Amendment & Elections

6.3.1. Amendment to the Bylaws

- Notice of Intent to Amend, explanation and redline draft

Mr. Perez shared that in accordance with MEC Bylaws, a notice served to inform Commissioners of proposed amendments to MEC Bylaws as previously adopted August 8, 2024. These amendments consisted of additional language regarding the role of the executive director, prescribing dual duties as coordinator of the Commission as a public body on behalf of the City of Tucson and Pima County; that the Board may elect one Chairperson or two Co-Chairpersons, with shared responsibilities in a Co-Chair model; that the Chairperson(s) will oversee the selection, evaluation, and compensation of the Executive Director; and adjustments to Vice Chairperson, Secretary, and Treasurer roles to align with public body-nonprofit functions and best practices.

Motion to approve by Robert Ramirez, seconded by Alejandro with a vote of 10 yays, 0 nays, and 1 absention by Mark Hanna.

6.3.2. Election of Chair(s) and Vice Chair

Mr. Hanna explained his intention to part from both his role as Chair and a Commissioner having dedicated 15 years of partnership and direct service to MEC. Mr. Perez gave thanks to Mr. Hanna for his time and allyship in the last year. Mr. Hanna noted his comfort in knowing Mr. Perez has taken on his role as executive director and put MEC on a path to sustainability with expanded impact. Commissioners Leslie Ferre, Michael Wilkerson, Jose Gastelum, and Irene Robles-Lopez also gave thanks of service to Mr. Hanna.

Although Mr. Hanna's departure as Chair and Commissioner leaves vacancies in both seats, Mr. Perez asked that the Commission not appoint an interim or permanent replacement until the next meeting with the anticipation of a retreat. In the meantime, the Board will move to transfer financial oversight responsibilities to the Board Treasurer.

To address the reduction to the Board, a motion to nominate Jennifer Vansquez and Karla Silva as Board Members was made by Mark Hanna. With the acceptance of this nomination, Mr. Hanna motioned to appoint Ms. Vasquez and Ms. Silva as Board members, seconded by Dave Mason with a unanimous vote in favor.

7. Adjournment

Mark Hanna

Motion to adjourn by Alejandro Tavera-Reyes and seconded by Jake Bluementhal with a unanimous vote in favor.

Pursuant to A.R.S. § 38-431.02, notice is given that a meeting will be conducted at the time and date set forth above. Questions and requests for reasonable accommodations or a copy of the agency can be directed to Rocque Perez, Executive Director for the Metropolitan Education Commission, by calling (520) 462-3806 or rocque@mectucson.org.