Southern Arizona Education Council

Meeting Minutes

Pursuant to A.R.S. § 38-431.02, notice was given on August 14, 2026, to the members of the Southern Arizona Education Council, and to the public on August 27, 2026, that a virtual meeting of the Southern Arizona Education Council, and its Executive Committee would be held on **Thursday, September 3, 2026, from 12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m**.

These minutes summarize proceedings of the Southern Arizona Education Council and its Executive Committee during the duration of this virtual meeting.

1. Call To Order

Chair Marla Franco called the meeting to order at 12:04 p.m.

Rocque Perez confirmed eight council members were present, constituting a quorum of the Southern Arizona Education Council. Present were Rocque Perez, Marla Franco, Dustin Williams, Sharon O'Brien, Kasandra Urquidez, Jennifer Allen, Karla Silva, and Lane Santa Cruz. Not present were Jennifer Vasquez and Irene Robles-Lopez.

Among the eight council members present, three were Executive Committee members, constituting a quorum of the Executive Committee. Present were Marla Franco, Sharon O'Brien, Kasandra Urquidez and Karla Silva. Not present was Jennifer Vasquez.

Throughout the meeting, some items were reserved for action by the full Southern Arizona Education Council, while others were reserved for action by the Executive Committee. Items were identified by the applicable acting body as appropriate.

Chair Franco moved to the Consent Agenda.

2. Consent Agenda

The Council may approve the following items collectively unless a member requests that an item be considered separately:

2.1. Approval of Meeting Minutes

2.1.1. 7.14.2026 - Council Meeting [Minutes]

2.2. Approval of Filings and Financial Activities

2.2.1. 2025-2026 Tax Filing [Prepared Draft]

2.2.2. 2026 Arizona Corporate Commission Filings

2.2.2.1. 2025 Annual Report Correction [Submittal on 8.25.26]

2.2.2.2. 2026 Officer Change Report [Submittal on 8.25.26]

2.2.3. Statement of Financial Activity [Report as of 8.31.2026]

Chair Franco deferred to Mr. Perez to present the Consent Agenda.

Mr. Perez presented the Consent Agenda, which included the July 14, 2026 Council meeting minutes; the prepared draft of the 2025–2026 tax filing; the 2025 Annual Report correction and 2026 Officer Change Report submitted to the Arizona Corporation Commission; and the Statement of Financial Activity through August 31, 2026.

Mr. Perez provided additional context regarding the 2025–2026 tax filing, noting the continued recurring investment of Pima County, the most significant increase in the City of Tucson's contribution in more than a decade, and cultivated sponsorships and partnerships that generated additional monetary value for the organization.

Mr. Perez opened the floor for questions and discussion. Mr. Perez addressed questions from Mrs. Allen regarding the inclusion of in-kind contributions in accounting practices. Mr. Perez affirmed the intentions to include in-kind contributions in the ongoing fiscal year with the necessary accounting practices now in place to do so. With no further discussion, Chair Franco entertained a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Mr. Williams moved to approve the Consent Agenda, seconded by Mrs. O'Brien. With no further discussion, the motion carried with 8 ayes, 0 opposed, and 0 abstentions.

Chair Franco moved to new business and deferred to Mr. Perez to present program engagements.

3. New Business

3.1. Program Engagements

3.1.1. Peer Coach Orientation - Sept. 14, 2026

3.1.2. Southern Arizona College & Career Night - Sept. 29, 2026

3.1.3. Teen Town Hall - Nov. 16. 2026

3.1.4. 20 Under 20 - Dec. 10, 2026

Mr. Perez presented program updates highlighting:

- *The continuation of the Peer Coach Program in partnership with the Arizona Board of Regents, with 57 Peer Coaches and 19 Peer Coach Advisors representing 19 public high schools across five public school systems scheduled to participate in the annual orientation.*

- *The third annual Southern Arizona College & Career Night, returning to the Tucson Convention Center with a goal of hosting 60 colleges and universities alongside nonprofit and community organizations, including reduced-cost participation opportunities for nonprofit exhibitors.*
- *The continuation of the Teen Town Hall following two convenings in 2024 and the 2025 event that was delayed and ultimately replaced by the Tucson Democracy Forum in December 2025, which expanded participation to include teens, college students, and young professionals. The 2026 Teen Town Hall will continue the use of facilitated dialogue circles, with opportunities for volunteers and subject-matter experts to participate in discussions.*
- *The debut of the Council's outstanding teen citizen awards as 20 Under 20, to be held in December, with opportunities for members and partners to promote nominations and participate in the eventual selection process.*

Chair Franco reflected on the value of the Teen Town Hall's shift toward facilitated dialogue circles, noting that findings from prior discussions informed work that contributed to the pursuit of a federal U.S. Department of Education grant awarded to the University of Arizona. Mrs. O'Brien also shared her experience participating in a dialogue circle as a subject-matter expert and emphasized the value of incorporating student perspectives into community decision-making.

Mr. Williams expressed interest in a formal program report memo outlining program insights for use in public disclosure and communications. Mr. Perez was amenable to that additional reporting.

With no further discussion, Chair Franco moved to New Appointments and Organizational Action and deferred to Mr. Perez to present Items 3.2.1 through 3.2.5 for consideration by the Southern Arizona Education Council and its Executive Committee.

3.2. New Appointments and Organizational Action

3.2.1. Consideration and possible action by the Executive Committee to appoint new members, reappoint existing members, establish staggered membership term cycles, and direct development of corresponding bylaw provisions for the Southern Arizona Education Council. [Memo]

Mr. Perez presented a memorandum recommending the appointment of three new members to the Southern Arizona Education Council, the reappointment of current members whose terms had expired, and the establishment of a uniform membership-term schedule pending incorporation into the SAZEC bylaws.

The proposed schedule is intended to address recurring inconsistencies in appointment and expiration dates by aligning membership administration with SAZEC's July 1–June 30 fiscal year and establishing predictable staggered cohorts. The framework also provides for continuity of *unaffected appointments through anticipated amendments to the Council's authorizing resolutions by Pima County and the City of Tucson.*

Mrs. Urquidez noted the incorrect spelling of her name. Mr. Perez affirmed a correction would be made.

Mr. Perez welcomed a motion to appoint Marcus Castillo to a Learner seat, Alex Randall to an At-Large seat representing the broader community, and Jennifer Arenas-Cárdenas to the educator seat for grades K–5; to reappoint Sharon O'Brien, Marla Franco, and Kasandra Urquidez, accounting for the necessary correction in name, to their respective seats; to approve the membership-term schedule and administrative framework presented in the memorandum; to reaffirm and continue those appointments upon amendment of the Council's authorizing resolutions by Pima County and the City of Tucson, provided the respective seats and appointing authority remain substantively unchanged; to direct staff to maintain and reconcile SAZEC's membership records accordingly; and to incorporate the framework into proposed SAZEC bylaws for future consideration.

Executive Committee member Mrs. Urquidez moved to approve the recommended action and item, accounting for the necessary correction in name, seconded by Ms. Silva. Chair Franco invited discussion. With no discussion, the motion carried with 3 ayes, 0 opposed, and 0 abstentions.

With the appointment and present attendance of Mr. Randall and Ms. Arenas-Cárdenas, 10 of 12 council members were present, continuing a quorum of the Southern Arizona Education Council.

Chair Franco moved to item 3.2.2 and deferred to Mr. Perez for presentation.

3.2.2. Consideration and possible action by the Southern Arizona Education Council to make new appointments, and to reaffirm existing appointments, to the Executive Committee through June 30, 2027. [Memo]

Mr. Perez presented a memorandum recommending the appointment of Alex Randall to the Southern Arizona Education Council Executive Committee as Treasurer, filling the vacancy previously held by Jake Blumenthal, and the reaffirmation of the existing Executive Committee membership and officer designations through June 30, 2027.

Mr. Perez noted that Mr. Randall brings experience in accounting, financial administration, higher education, and institutional operations, including prior service as a Fund Accountant at the University of Arizona.

Mr. Perez invited a motion to approve the item and appoint Alex Randall to the Executive Committee and elect him to serve as Treasurer, filling the vacancy previously held by Jake

Blumenthal; and to reaffirm Marla Franco as Chair, Kasandra Urquidez as Vice Chair, and Jennifer Vasquez and Karla Silva as members of the Executive Committee, with each appointment and officer designation continuing through June 30, 2027, subject to continued service and eligibility as a member of the Southern Arizona Education Council.

Mrs. Urquidez moved to approve the item as presented, seconded by Ms. Santa Cruz. With no further discussion, the motion carried with 10 ayes, 0 opposed, and 0 abstentions.

Chair Franco moved to item 3.2.3 and deferred to Mr. Perez for presentation.

3.2.3. Consideration and possible action by the Executive Committee to approve a memorandum amending authorized access, signatories, and administrative provisions associated with the organization's community banking account. [Memo]

Mr. Perez presented a memorandum recommending updates to the authorized individuals associated with the Southern Arizona Education Council's Vantage West Credit Union accounts to reflect changes in the organization's Executive Committee.

Following the vacancy created by the departure of former Treasurer Jake Blumenthal and the appointment of Alex Randall as Treasurer under Item 3.2.2, Mr. Perez recommended removing Mr. Blumenthal from all authorized access, signatory authority, and banking privileges; adding Mr. Randall as an authorized individual and signatory; maintaining Rocque Perez, Chief Executive Officer & President, as the primary account holder and authorized administrator with existing authority unchanged; and authorizing the Chief Executive Officer & President to execute any administrative documentation necessary to effectuate the changes.

Executive Committee member Mrs. Urquidez moved to approve the recommended action, seconded by Ms. Silva. Chair Franco invited discussion. With no discussion, the motion carried with 4 ayes, 0 opposed, and 0 abstentions.

Mrs. O'Brien left the meeting due to scheduling constraints. With 9 of 12 council members still present, a quorum of Southern Arizona Education Council remained with no impact to continued business.

Chair Franco moved to Item 3.2.4 and deferred to Mr. Perez for presentation.

3.2.4. Consideration and possible action by the Executive Committee to approve authorization of engagement with an accounting firm for year-round review and reconciliation of payroll activities, in addition to existing annual tax filing services. [Memo]

Mr. Perez presented a memorandum recommending authorization to expand the Southern Arizona Education Council's engagement with Pedroza & Hayes Accounting, the organization's existing accounting firm for annual tax filing services, to include year-round review, reconciliation, and consulting support related to payroll and financial records. The additional engagement would provide periodic professional review of payroll activity between Gusto and QuickBooks while maintaining the organization's responsibility for routine payroll processing and expense administration.

Mr. Perez noted that, while organizational policy does not require Executive Committee approval for contracts below $25,000, he believed the nature of the engagement—particularly its relationship to accounting oversight and annual financial reporting—warranted notice and formal consideration by the Executive Committee.

Mr. Perez invited a motion to authorize expansion of the Southern Arizona Education Council's engagement with Pedroza & Hayes Accounting to include periodic review and reconciliation of payroll activity between Gusto and QuickBooks and related accounting consultation, at a cost not to exceed $1,600 annually, in addition to the firm's existing annual tax filing services; and to authorize the Chief Executive Officer & President to finalize the scope, frequency, and administrative terms of the engagement within the approved amount.

Executive Committee member Ms. Franco moved to approve the recommended action, seconded by Ms. Silva. Chair Franco invited discussion.

Mrs. Allen asked where the existing and prospective accounting engagements are reflected in the organization's financial reporting. Mr. Perez explained that both are categorized as professional services. He noted that the anticipated year-round services are budgeted in the current fiscal year, while annual tax filing costs are accounted for in the subsequent fiscal year because the filing occurs after the close of the current fiscal year.

With no further discussion, the motion carried with 4 ayes, 0 opposed, and 0 abstentions. Chair Franco then moved to Item 3.2.5 and deferred to Mr. Perez for presentation.

3.2.5. Consideration and possible action by the Executive Committee to approve the final fiscal year 2026-2027 budget, tentatively approved 7.14.2026. [Proposed Final Budget]

Mr. Perez presented the final budget, which had been tentatively approved on July 14, 2026, and incorporated actual revenues confirmed by the City of Tucson and Pima County, as reflected in a QuickBooks overview. Ms. Urquidez identified an error in the Net Operating Revenue calculation, and Mr. Randall noted that corresponding adjustments were needed in QuickBooks.

Mr. Perez recommended continuing the item to the next meeting of the Executive Committee so the corrected materials could be presented for review, with the organization continuing to operate under the tentatively approved budget in the interim.

With no further discussion, Ms. Urquidez moved to continue the item to the next meeting of the Executive Committee. Mr. Randall seconded the motion. The motion carried with 4 ayes, 0 opposed, and 0 abstentions.

Chair Franco then moved to Item 4 and deferred to Mr. Perez for presentation.

4. Continuing Business

4.1. General Election Ballot Measures

4.1.1. Consideration and possible action or approval of a resolution, concerning positions of support or opposition on 2026 General Election ballot measures affecting educational systems and the welfare of learners, educators, and the institutions that serve them. [Draft Resolution]

Mr. Perez presented a draft resolution concerning statewide and local measures appearing on the November 3, 2026 General Election ballot that affect educational systems, learners, educators, and community institutions in Southern Arizona. The item had been continued from a prior meeting for further discussion.

Mr. Perez summarized the proposed positions as follows: The Southern Arizona Education Council opposes Proposition 320, concerning school district budgets, instructional expenses, and operational spending; Proposition 142, concerning preferential treatment, discrimination, and prohibited acts; and Proposition 318, concerning interscholastic and intramural athletics and biological sex. The Council supports Proposition 430, the Pima Community College General Obligation Bond; Proposition 427, the Pima JTED General Obligation Bond; Proposition 423, the Vail Unified School District Maintenance & Operations Override Continuation; Proposition 428, the Sahuarita Unified School District Maintenance & Operations Override Continuation; Proposition 429, the Tanque Verde Unified School District Maintenance & Operations Override Continuation; and Proposition 422, the Reid Park Zoo Tax Reauthorization.

Mr. Perez stated that the resolution was intended to establish a consolidated set of education-related policy positions and provide guidance for future issue-based advocacy by staff.

Mrs. Allen asked for consideration of Proposition 425, concerning Pima County's expenditure limitation, noting that failure to increase the County's expenditure authority could eventually require reductions in General Fund-supported services. During discussion, Mrs. Allen clarified that the County's Outside Agency program is supported through the General Fund and could therefore be affected. Mr. Perez indicated that staff would follow up with County representatives *regarding the measure's potential effect on education-related programs and consider incorporating it into a revised resolution.*

Mr. Williams raised concerns regarding the Council taking formal positions on ballot measures, including the legal authority of a 501(c)(3) organization receiving public funding to engage in such activity, the use of public resources, the potential effect on the Council's public perception, and conflicts or limitations that individual members may face because of their official positions or institutional affiliations. He requested additional legal guidance regarding the Council's authority to support or oppose ballot propositions.

Mr. Perez responded that SAZEC is supported by both public and private funding and that advocacy has historically been included within the organization's mission and predecessor activities. He distinguished issue advocacy and ballot-measure activity from candidate endorsements, which are prohibited for 501(c)(3) organizations. Mr. Perez stated that staff would obtain additional written legal guidance, provide further information regarding funding sources and staff time associated with advocacy, and consider whether additional safeguards or limitations should be incorporated into the resolution.

Mrs. Allen noted that 501(c)(3) organizations may engage in lobbying and advocacy subject to federal limitations and discussed the distinction between the substantial-part test and the Section 501(h) expenditure election. Mr. Perez indicated that a revised proposal should include a clearer accounting of the amount of organizational time and resources that could be devoted to advocacy of positions in the resolution.

Members agreed that additional review was warranted before final action, including consideration of Proposition 425, clarification of legal authority and funding restrictions, and development of clearer parameters regarding staff activity and organizational resources.

With no further discussion, Ms. Franco moved to continue the item to the next meeting. Ms. Silva seconded the motion. The motion carried with 9 ayes, 0 opposed, and 0 abstentions.

Chair Franco then proceeded to adjournment.

5. Adjournment

Chair Franco motioned to adjourn. Ms. Silva seconded the motion. The motion carried with 9 ayes, 0 opposed, and 0 abstentions.

The meeting adjourned at 1:11 p.m.