

**Yuma Elementary School District Number One  
Governing Board  
Special Meeting**

The Governing Board for Yuma Elementary School District Number One held a Special Meeting on **January 29, 2026** at **5:16 P.M.** in the District Administration Office, 450 West Sixth Street, Yuma, Arizona.

**Members present:** Mr. Keith Ware, President; Mr. David Ibarra, Vice President; Mrs. Cori Rico, Member; Mrs. Lisa Anderson, Member; & Mr. Jeff Stoner, Member

**Members absent:** None

**Others present:** Mr. Denis Ponder, Superintendent, Mr. Bob Casillas, (Stifel), Jim Giel (Gust Rosenfeld) and Other District Administrators

**Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 5:16 P.M.

**Stifel Bond Refunding –**

Mr. Bob Casillas and Mr. Giel provided a comprehensive presentation on bond refunding to guide the Board’s discussion and address questions regarding a potential refunding, should the Board choose to proceed in that direction. The presentation included a detailed overview of the bond refinancing process from start to finish, as well as an explanation of how the bond market operates and the role of investors.

Mr. Casillas also explained that their role is to attract as many investors as possible, as broader investor participation helps build long-term support for the District, particularly in the event of a future bond election. He noted that any refunding would be structured within the parameters of the resolution, including not exceeding the authorized principal amount, interest rate limits, and established savings thresholds, while working to secure the most favorable market position for the District.

Following the presentation, the Board raised several questions related to tax rates, debt service, potential savings to the District, and how restructuring and refinancing could occur simultaneously. Mr. Casillas and Mr. Giel addressed each question and provided clarification as needed.

**The board recessed at 6:23 P.M.**

**The meeting reconvened at 6:35 P.M.**

**Discussion of Board Communication and Customer Service Practices –**

Board members engaged in a discussion regarding Board communication and customer service practices. During the conversation, members provided feedback to Superintendent Ponder on current practices and shared what they feel is working effectively.

Superintendent Ponder asked the Board how much information they find beneficial and whether communications are meeting their needs. He inquired if they would prefer additional updates or adjustments and expressed that he is open to any ideas, suggestions, or recommendations to ensure communication remains effective and aligned with the Board’s expectations. Board members discussed the importance of clarity, consistency, and trust in communications, including the Friday Weekly updates. They shared their appreciation for timely emails, particularly those identifying urgent matters and highlighting current events and developments within the District.

Additionally, Board members discussed ways they can further support the District and the administrative team. Suggestions included continuing to build strong relationships with staff, visiting school sites, gaining a deeper understanding from leadership, and taking ownership as a Board in identifying ways they can be more supportive of the District’s goals and initiatives.

**Customer Service Practices**

The Board also engaged in dialogue regarding how the District can continue strengthening customer service for employees, students, parents, and the community. Members discussed the importance of fostering a positive school environment and addressing concerns that may contribute to negative experiences on campus.

Board members emphasized that providing excellent customer service to all stakeholders, students, staff, parents, and community members, must remain a priority. The conversation included how the District can better support

teachers and staff and ensure that supportive practices are consistently implemented. District turnover was also discussed. Board members inquired about the reasons employees are leaving the District and whether customer service training is currently provided to staff. They discussed strategies for improving employee morale and how leadership practices at the administrative level can positively influence staff culture throughout the organization.

Additional topics included identifying ways to better support all staff: teachers, bus drivers, custodians, paraprofessionals etc.; developing skills for having difficult conversations; implementing de-escalation techniques; and ensuring staff feel equipped to respond effectively to parent concerns. The Board emphasized the importance of making stakeholders feel heard, valued, and supported.

The meeting adjourned at 7:31 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

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Monica Navarro, Secretary to the Board

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Keith Ware, President

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David Ibarra, Vice President

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Cori Rico, Member

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Lisa Anderson, Member

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Jeff Stoner, Member