



ANGEL R. SABLAR
Chair

GUAM EDUCATION BOARD

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MARY A.Y. OKADA, Ed.D.
Vice Chair

GUAM EDUCATION BOARD REGULAR BOARD MEETING Tuesday, December 16, 2025

4 pm

Gallery, GDOE Building B
MINUTES

VOTING MEMBERS

Angel R. Sablan, Chair

Mary A.Y. Okada, EdD, Vice-Chair

Peter Aleixis D. Ada

Felicitas B. Angel

Christine W. Baleto

Judith Guthertz, Dr. PA

Maria A. Gutierrez

Ron L. McNinch, PhD

Carl E. Torres, II

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS

Kohen Diego

IBOGS Representative

Timothy Fedenko

GFT Representative

Mayor Brian Jess Terlaje

MCOG Representative

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

K. Erik Swanson, Ph.D.
GDOE Superintendent

I. MEETING CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Angel Sablan, Chair, called the meeting to order at 4 p.m.

ROLL CALL OF MEMBERS

Dr. K. Erik Swanson, Superintendent and Executive Secretary, took the roll call. The following members were **present** for the meeting:

Voting Members:

Sablan, Angel R. – Chair

Okada, Dr. Mary A.Y. – Vice-Chair

Ada, Peter Aleixis D.

Angel, Felicitas B.

Guthertz, Dr. Judith

Gutierrez, Maria A.

McNinch, Dr. Ron L.

Torres, Carl E. II

Non-Voting Members:

Fedenko, Timothy – GFT Representative

Terlaje, Brian Jess - MCOG Representative

Tia Jackson– IBOGS Representative

Legal Counsel:

Wolff, Matthew

Absent:

Baleto, Christine W. (Excused)

Dr. Swanson announced that eight (8) members of the Board were present in person, constituting a quorum.

Mrs. Gutierrez asked for a moment of silence for several people who passed away, including support staff Christie Lyn San Nicholas, whose funeral she attended on behalf of the Board, Mr. Conrad Stinson, who she remembered as respectful despite occasional differences, and Ms. Angelina Lape's father-in-law.

Mr. Sablan spoke about the weekend incident at Brown University, where two students were killed, and nine were injured, emphasizing student safety, expressing concern for Guam's education community, and asking for prayers for strength, peace, and calm.

II. CELEBRATE SUCCESS – The following were recognized: Carolyn Haruo and Melanie Blas for being recognized by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Ocean Guardian School Programs.

Mr. Sablan said the agenda seems long, but items will be deferred to accommodate the incoming superintendent, and noted that this was Dr. Swanson's last Board meeting, with members given a chance to speak in his honor before he leaves Guam this weekend.

Mrs. Gutierrez said that Dr. Won Pat wasn't present because she was feeling ill and was watching the meeting live via live stream.

III. CONSENT CALENDAR

1. Minutes of November 6, 2025, Special Meeting
2. Minutes of November 25, 2025 Regular Meeting
3. Superintendent's Report November 25, 2025

Dr. Okada motioned, seconded by Mrs. Angel, to approve the items on the consent calendar. The Board voted by voice with a vote of 8-0. The motion passed.

IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – Mr. Sablan said several people participated in public comment, including one about Faniyakan CHamoru. He affirmed the Board's commitment to making the former LBJ Elementary School the Faniyakan CHamoru site, noted a new law requiring GDOE to form a committee for unused facilities (with three Board members on it), and emphasized supporting and promoting CHamoru in schools, concluding with a message in CHamoru.

Jimmy Teria (Chamory Studies Administrator) – Mr. Teria responded in CHamoru.

Bob Pelkey (Young Men's League of Guam (YMLG) President) - On behalf of YMLG, he thanked the Board for the opportunity to speak, praised their earlier decision to support the organization, and highlighted YMLG's mission to promote and defend CHamoru language and culture, including supporting education through programs like the Andrew T. Laguana Scholarship in CHamoru studies in partnership with the University of Guam.

Mr. Sablan clarified that the Faniyakan CHamoru request does not require Board approval and is an operational matter for the superintendent. Dr. Swanson will defer the decision to incoming superintendent Dr. Judith Won Pat, following a new law on managing vacant GDOE facilities, with three Board members on the committee. He stated the Board supports Faniyakan CHamoru and noted that, despite potential perceptions of a conflict of interest due to his ex-wife and daughter's involvement with Hurao Academy, he views it as a harmony of interest, fully supporting both programs.

Mr. Pelkey said they wished Dr. Swanson well in the rest of his journey in life and that they looked forward to working with the new superintendent, his classmate, Dr. Judith Won Pat.

Mr. Sablan told Mr. Teria that since his daughters and others signed up for public participation and the Board has already shared its views, he should inform them.

Dr. Guthertz volunteered to be a part of the committee.

Mr. Sablan said he will inform Dr. Won Pat and noted that Mr. Ada and Mrs. Gutierrez volunteered for the committee, giving Faniyakan supporters the backing of Dr. Guthertz, Mrs. Gutierrez, and Mr. Ada. He also acknowledged for the record that Mr. Fedenko is present at the meeting.

Tia Jackson - Ms. Jackson reported that students from all public high schools strongly oppose BP 705 after reviewing it collectively. They said removing exemptions for food-based fundraisers would severely limit funding for student councils, clubs, athletics, and graduating classes, including essential activities like prom and graduation. While students support healthy choices, they emphasized that these activities are student-funded and eliminating food fundraisers would place financial strain on families and reduce student engagement and leadership opportunities. She summarized concerns from each school: JFK High School highlighted the importance of fundraisers for leadership development and senior activities; Tiyan High School said limiting fundraisers to culturally related foods is impractical and could reduce participation; George Washington High School emphasized financial impacts and the real-world learning gained through food fundraisers; Simon Sanchez High School stressed the social and emotional benefits and school spirit tied to fundraisers; and Okkodo High School warned that banning sales during the school day would make fundraising unsustainable. Overall, all schools agreed that BP 705 does not align with how student organizations currently fund their activities.

Mrs. Gutierrez thanked IBOGS for submitting comments on BP 705 and commended them for defending their positions. She expressed concern that policy revisions keep appearing without principals or other stakeholders being informed, questioning whether GDOE alone is being consulted. She noted that parent representatives will now reach out to PTOs. She criticized management for bringing recommendations to the Board without adequate stakeholder input and emphasized that Board policies are the Board's responsibility, not management's. She requested that consideration of the policy be deferred until the new superintendent and management team are in place, noting it is not urgent and that students have been excluded from the process. She also thanked Tia for representing IBOGS and reiterated opposition to amending BP 705 without clear justification and a defined list of healthy snacks.

Mr. Sablan said a retreat with the incoming superintendent and her team is scheduled for Sunday, the 28th, or Monday, the 29th, and any policy concerns will be noted, but no action will be taken until brought before the Board with the new superintendent.

Dr. Guthertz requested that the Board be provided with information with respect to what the legislative changes are, as they could affect policy.

Mr. Sablan said certain CFR mandates must be followed to avoid losing federal funds and noted that while they are currently in Public Participation, agenda items will be discussed when reached.

Dr. Ron McNinch - Dr. McNinch thanked Mr. Sablan for his transparency and urged Board members to openly disclose any conflicts of interest. He shared positive feedback about meeting IBOGS representative Tia Jackson and commended Mrs. Gutierrez and the students for their

strong participation. He recommended making legislative updates a standing agenda item and encouraged Board members to be more vocal with legislators, including calling them out for not attending meetings. He reminded members about an upcoming public meeting and urged their participation. He offered suggestions for Board reform, including electing all nine members, lowering the eligibility age to 18, extending terms to six years with staggered elections, and strengthening the Board's governing authority. He emphasized the need for Board input on laws affecting education, stating the Board serves students, not itself. He also encouraged awareness of upcoming federal changes and urged the Board to seek greater federal funding and work with the legislature to maximize available resources.

Mr. Sablan said that when Dr. Guthertz joined the Board, they asked her to chair a legislative committee. He noted that the Board cannot testify to the legislature without meeting first to decide on official testimony, so members can only speak personally, not on behalf of the Board. He instructed Administrative Officer Kathleen Lamorena to ensure the legislative committee remains a standing agenda item.

V. COMMUNICATIONS –None

Mr. Sablan said many agenda items would be deferred until after the retreat and that they would move on to the Policy Review and Strategic Planning Committee to discuss the amended Board policies, asking if the committee had met.

Dr. Okada replied that policies have already gone through the first and second readings and have been on the agenda for a couple of months.

VI. EX-OFFICIO MEMBER REPORTS

1. Islandwide Board of Governing Students (IBOGS) Report – Mr. Sablan said he wanted to ensure they had already heard from IBOGS and asked Ms. Jackson if she was presenting the same information, which she confirmed.
2. Guam Federation of Teachers (GFT) Report – Mr. Fedenko raised concerns about GDOE paraprofessionals, school aides, and bus drivers. While HR reports show increased hiring, parapros and aides are unclear about their roles and are often asked to substitute teach without proper training, sometimes juggling multiple duties in one day. He said this strains their ability to work professionally and does not support long-term educational quality, noting parents' concerns about the lack of certified teachers in classrooms. He also highlighted transportation issues, including broken special education buses and shortages of drivers. As a result, students with disabilities are being placed on regular buses without trained chaperones, sometimes accompanied only by relatives. He warned that this creates dangerous situations, as DPW drivers are not trained for special education needs. He urged the Board to address these safety concerns, find proper alternatives, and ensure student safety, calling the issue deeply concerning and relevant to the Safe and Healthy Schools Committee.

Mr. Sablan told Mr. Ada to coordinate with Mr. Fedenko and treat the issue as both his concern and the Board's concern.

3. Mayor's Council of Guam (MCOG) Report – Mayor Terlaje followed up on their previous meeting about unused recreational facilities in the villages, expressing interest in utilizing them and requesting copies of the policies and rules needed to move forward. He also raised serious safety concerns about stray dogs, particularly students being threatened or

attacked while traveling to and from school bus stops. He said the mayor's offices are not trained to handle animal control issues and noted that while the Department of Agriculture is responsible, it is understaffed. Citing numerous incidents in Yona and other villages, he asked whether the Board has any plans or ways to assist, stressing that the issue is urgent during the current school year and should not continue into the next.

Mr. Ada told Mayor Terlaje that the matter falls under the Safe & Healthy Schools Committee and said they would raise it there and include the Department of Agriculture in the meeting.

Mrs. Gutierrez told Mayor Terlaje that he could review BP 620 on the use of school and Department of Education facilities, noting that aside from use as a school shelter, the policy prohibits religious instruction or services, political activities, and social gambling.

Mr. Ada said he could think of Chief Brodie Memorial Elementary School (CBMES), Lyndon B. Johnson Elementary School (LBJES), and another vacant facility he considers a hazard, specifically referring to JP Torres Success Academy in Santa Rita, and asked Mayor Terlaje if there were any other vacated school facilities.

Mayor Terlaje stated that, to his knowledge, there are no similar situations currently. He noted unique cases like MU Lujan Elementary School, where the field is split between two jurisdictions (their own and MULES under GDOE), which complicates efforts to get a military sister squadron to fund mitigation projects due to dual property authorization. He mentioned that some villages might have public facilities from the old "pari pari" system and said he will bring the matter back to the MCOG for further consideration.

Mr. Ada said there is another facility, Oceanview Middle School (OMS), noting that there are about six to eight buildings on the left side of the campus that they need to look into.

Mayor Terlaje said they will review BP 620 to explore how village facilities can benefit their communities. He noted that mayors will likely want to use these recreational facilities and seek funding or partnerships to support them. Using the JPTSA situation in Santa Rita as an example, he emphasized the need to follow policy to understand the proper procedures for funding, sponsorship, or adoption of such facilities.

Mrs. Gutierrez cited AsTumbo Gym as an example, saying it belongs to GDOE but has been maintained by the Dededo mayor, and recalled Mayor Savares asking whether the MOU had gone through.

Mayor Terlaje said they want to identify which facilities have been used without proper oversight and determine who actually has the authority to use them. He plans to bring the issue to MCOG to discuss it, clarify the protocols involved, and decide how to move forward.

Mr. Sablan said he should prepare a proposal and submit it to the Board, with the superintendent copied. He explained that OHS has a joint agreement with a private organization to manage its baseball fields, and similar arrangements require proposals from the organizations seeking to take over. He said any agreement must be mutually beneficial and noted efforts to pursue similar partnerships for Southern High School, whose facilities are in poor condition. He added that the Department of Parks and Recreation is helping seek funding and grants to repair and enhance the facilities so they

can be used by both the school and the Santa Rita community through joint-use agreements.

Mayor Terlaje said they'll look into the Board Policy and make sure they follow the protocols.

Dr. Guthertz said she was surprised the issue is only being raised now, emphasizing that public schools are community assets meant to be used beyond school hours for athletics, cultural events, training, and educational programs. She said increased community use would build pride, reduce vandalism and crime, and provide positive opportunities for youth, provided proper agreements and security measures are in place. Drawing from her own experience, she noted that schools were widely used after hours in the past. She urged leaders to clearly support community access to school facilities and expressed hope that Mr. Ada's committee and the Department of Parks and Recreation would help facilitate this effort.

Mr. Ada recalled a past storm when a Southern High School bleacher was reported stolen but was later found in the swimming pool, and said that the idle pool could potentially be leased to organizations, with proceeds going directly to Southern High School (SHS).

Mr. Sablan said the swimming pool issue is part of a broader discussion about restoring all SHS recreational facilities, which have been unused due to typhoon damage. These include the gym, basketball and baseball fields, swimming pool, tennis court, and other areas. He said the Department of Public Works, Department of Parks and Recreation, the governor's office, SHS, and the superintendent are working together to finalize a draft plan needed to access Department of Interior funds. He added that the matter is actively being worked on and that Southern mayors were invited to the meeting.

Mrs. Gutierrez informed Mayor Terlaje that Dr. Won Pat was listening and noted that a public law passed by the 23rd Legislature applies. She explained that the AsTumbo Elementary School Gym is a GDOE facility used by the community, where assistance has been provided by Mayor Savares and now Mayor Benavente.

Mr. Sablan noted that Mr. Carl Torres had just joined and did not have a report yet, adding that they would hear from him at the next meeting.

VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. Superintendent's Report – Not discussed
 - a. JFKHS/SSHS Double Session Status Report –
 - b. FEMA Project Status Report –
 - c. FBLG Renovation Status Report –
 - d. Mold Mitigation/Fencing Status Report –
 - e. Dashboard Status Report –
 - f. Management and Curriculum Audit Status Report –
 - g. Speech Therapists' Licensure Requirements -
2. Executive Committee – Not discussed
 - a. National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) –
 - b. Ad Hoc Committee Update
 - c. Request for Travel: Board Chair and Superintendent
 - d. Legal Representation for GEB

3. Instructional & Academic Support Committee
 - a. December Head Start Report – Mr. Sablan said Ms. Angelina Lape was on leave due to a death in the family, asked Mr. Alan Cruz if the report was included, and directed him to submit it to be taken as read since there were no action items.
4. Safe & Healthy Schools Committee – Not discussed
 - a. Facilities & Maintenance
5. Policy Review & Strategic Planning Committee – Dr. Okada said the amended board policies have been on the agenda and asked Mr. Sablan whether to suspend them until the incoming superintendent could review them or to proceed with a vote.

Mr. Sablan said he prefers to suspend the matter until the new superintendent arrives, unless other Board members wish to proceed and take action.

Mrs. Angel motioned, seconded by Dr. Guthertz, to have the amended Board policies (105, 105.10, 115, 120.2, 120.4, 125.3, 125.12, 130) discussed when the superintendent comes in. The Board voted by voice with a vote of 8-0. The motion passed.

Mr. Sablan said that these amendments will be kept on the next regular Board meeting in January for voting.

- a. Amended Board Policies
 - i) 105 – Board Officers – Election
 - ii) 105.10 – Duties of the Board Officers
 - iii) 115 – Committees
 - iv) 120.2 – Board Policy Dissemination
 - v) 120.4 – Administration in the Absence of Board Policy
 - vi) 125.3 – Distribution of Board Meeting Materials
 - vii) 125.12 – Executive Sessions at Board Meetings
 - viii) 130 – Board Work Sessions
- b. Board Policy 705 Food and Nutrition Services Management - Dr. Naholowaa emphasized the need for a proper turnover to her successor before their term ends at 11:59 p.m. on December 31 to ensure a smooth transition. She said they want to avoid any blame after January 2 by making sure they've fully done their part. While all documents have already been submitted, she noted that much of her work requires detailed explanation and in-person turnover to the incoming deputies.

Mr. Sablan said that, as Mrs. Gutierrez noted, Dr. Won Pat is listening. He added that the incoming counterparts have not yet been announced, and they will not know or meet them until the 29th.

Dr. Naholowaa said names were floating around.

Mr. Sablan said he has not seen any confirmed names for the next deputies until Dr. Won Pat puts them in writing. He assured Dr. Naholowaa that her concerns are heard and that Dr. Won Pat hears them. He added that Dr. Won Pat has been holding transition meetings with the Superintendent and hopes

all deputies will be included so documentation can be properly handed over to the incoming deputies.

Dr. Naholowaa said they have already submitted the requested documentation, but noted that some ongoing matters cannot be fully captured on paper and need to be explained directly to their replacements.

Mr. Sablan reiterated that a retreat is scheduled for the 29th and said it will be up to Dr. Won Pat to decide whether to include both outgoing and incoming deputies.

Mr. Anderson thanked participants from yesterday's work session and explained that the proposed BP changes aim to remove operational language from the policy and place it into a Standard Operating Procedure. He clarified that this was not meant to bypass the Board or remove any provisions or exemptions, but to improve efficiency by handling operational matters under the Superintendent's authority. He added that the language would be moved largely verbatim into a new local wellness policy SOP, a draft of which would be presented at the next Board session, and that the BP would be updated to align with current CFRs and relevant food and nutrition guidelines.

Mr. Sablan said the intent is not to diminish the Board's jurisdiction, but to improve transparency and the flow of issues from the superintendent to the Board.

Mr. Monforte said there has been concern from teachers and others who believe the proposed changes are meant to take something away from schools, but he emphasized that this is not the case. He said he and Dr. Adamos have been working with Senator Borja to waive sanitary permit fees for fundraiser food sales. He stressed that the changes are not an attack on schools or an attempt to take or consolidate power, but rather an effort to protect the Board policy and ensure the Child Nutrition Program remains compliant with federal guidelines. He said the goal is to enhance, not harm, school food programs.

Mr. Sablan said no one wants to harm the students or schools. He suggested that Mr. Monforte draft a message and share it with the superintendent and Dr. Won Pat, who can decide whether it reflects what she wants to communicate to principals and teachers and, if so, send it out.

Mr. Anderson said the work session included a strong discussion about balancing schools' fundraising needs with regulatory requirements. He noted that Board members understand why schools raise money to support activities, but emphasized the need to protect the meal program because compliance with CFRs affects reimbursement funding. He said Mr. Monforte and his team are trying to maintain program integrity while encouraging students to eat nutritious food. He identified low student meal count participation—especially at the high school level—as a major challenge, pointing out that food quality drives participation and that popular fundraisers are often food-based. He concluded that the proposed policy changes are not meant to weaken existing rules, but to move details into operating procedures while supporting both the program and schools' goals.

Mr. Ada said his main concern is ensuring the department does not lose any federal meal grants. He emphasized that everything must be put in writing, properly followed, and shared with the granting agencies. He added that while he would take the blame if necessary, he would not allow the department to lose federal funding for student meals.

Dr. Okada thanked Mr. Monforte and Mr. Anderson for a productive work session and explained that the Board had only reviewed documentation so far. She said the Board has identified which policy elements are being moved into operating procedures, but needs to review those procedures alongside the policy changes to “trust but verify” that nothing is lost. She emphasized the importance of ensuring all changes comply with updated CFR requirements, which she described as the foundation for policy development. Once that foundation is in place, details like timing and logistics can be worked out to benefit students. She said that with all pieces together, the Board should be able to move the policy forward at the next work session.

Mr. Sablan said the BP is actively being worked on and should be ready by the next Board meeting with the new superintendent. He emphasized to Mr. Monforte, echoing the vice chair, the need to have everything in writing so everyone is on the same page.

- c. Board Policy 377 Bonuses, Rewards, and Incentives Program (BRIP) - Mr. Sablan said the involved parties met with the Governor last week about a previously discussed issue and are now awaiting something from the Superintendent.

Dr. Okada said the BRIP has gone through several iterations, and they are still waiting for a final or updated document before it gets to the Board, after they put it through committee.

Mr. Sablan acknowledged.

- 6. Fiscal Management Committee – Mr. Sablan said they would postpone this until meeting with the new superintendent, and then asked Dr. Swanson if he had anything to add or discuss.

Dr. Swanson said there was nothing at this point.

- a. GDOE Financial Report
 - i) Accounts Payable Aging Report –
 - ii) Declaration of Financial Status Designation – April, May and June
 - iii) Unaudited Statement of Appropriation, Expenditures, and Encumbrances for Fiscal Year 2026 –
 - iv) Grant Status Report for Fiscal Year 2026 –
- b. US Department of Education Specific Conditions Report –
- c. FY 2024 Audit Progress –

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

- a. Faniyakan Chamoru Chamoru Medium-Immersion Program Permanent Site - Mr. Sablan said

they had already heard from the Faniyakan CHamoru.

b. GDOE Management & Curriculum Audit Report - Dr. Okada said the Board reviewed the report, identified serious "errors of fact," and recommended the consultants update it. The GEB will also provide areas for further discussion and implementation.

Dr. Okada motioned, seconded by Dr. Guthertz, to suspend voting on the GDOE Management & Curriculum Audit Report until they correct the errors of fact. The Board voted by voice with a vote of 8-0. The motion passed.

Dr. Okada noted that the report incorrectly listed Mrs. Gutierrez as a sales consultant and highlighted other minor factual and cosmetic errors that should be corrected before an official document actually goes out.

Dr. McNinch asked Mr. Sablan if there was any way they could get the money back from the report.

Mr. Sablan asked how much was paid for the report.

Deputy Paul replied that it was about \$400,000 some.

Mrs. Gutierrez strongly criticized the report, calling it "trash" and saying it amounted to tattletelling and finger-pointing rather than a proper management audit. She objected to the auditors' use of the Evergreen Report, noting the Board never accepted it and that she had informed auditors not to reference it. She cited multiple factual inaccuracies, including claims about the website, Board activities during Mr. Fernandez's tenure, and conflict-of-interest filings with the Guam Election Commission, noting that the only ones who filed conflict of interest are the appointed members. She also faulted the auditors for failing to return to the Board to validate information. Based on these issues, she said she would not vote for the audit.

Dr. McNinch asked who in the legislature requested the Management and Curriculum Audit Report.

Dr. Okada replied that she believes the bill is sponsored by Senator Barnett.

Dr. McNinch asked if they could ask him if he got his money's worth.

Dr. Okada said the report has not yet been distributed and should first be corrected for factual errors, including proper titles and removal of references to the Evergreen Report. She emphasized that the Board should be allowed to review and provide feedback before auditors revise the report, noting this is standard practice for accreditation reports. Because of existing inaccuracies, she prefers not to vote on the report now and instead revisit acceptance or rejection later. While acknowledging flaws, she noted the report includes useful elements tied to the contract's implementation component, and since funds have already been spent, corrected portions could still move forward with guidance.

Dr. McNinch said Board members should consider that Guam Community College and the University of Guam could have produced a more inclusive report that reflected aspects the current report could not.

Mr. Sablan said that it's the pleasure of the Board to hold the report in abeyance until corrections are submitted and accepted, or reject it if it doesn't address the key issues in GDOE as far as management is concerned.

Dr. Okada asked Mr. Sablan to serve as the liaison to the consultants and coordinate with Dr. Won Pat to keep her informed of the request for updates.

Mr. Sablan confirmed Dr. Okada as the liaison since there were no objections and noted that the final agenda item, the Declaration of Financial Status for April, May, and June, required no action.

Dr. Okada explained that the Declaration of Financial Status for April–June is reviewed by a committee that monitors GDOE spending against the budget. When overexpenditures occur, the committee assigns codes to help the department identify issues early and avoid year-end deficits. She added that most issues are due to timing differences between drawdowns and general fund allotments. Reports are brought to the Board only after the superintendent has submitted a corrective action plan to address any “code red” issues.

Mr. Sablan said there’s no need for an executive session and noted that, since this is the superintendent’s last meeting before leaving for the weekend, he has already appointed an acting superintendent in his absence.

Dr. Swanson announced that Mr. Morgan Wade Paul will serve as acting superintendent in his absence, while he stays in the email loop to complete tasks before leaving. He said it’s a matter of caretaking and keeping the lights on.

Mr. Ada said that upon consulting with Dr. McNinch, he has spoken with new member Carl Torres II about whether he would accept being a part of the Safe & Healthy Schools Committee.

Mr. Torres said he accepts.

Dr. McNinch thanked Dr. Swanson for his service as GDOE Superintendent, recognized the job’s difficulty, and expressed strong support and appreciation for his future endeavors.

Dr. Guthertz expressed deep appreciation for his hard work and dedication over the past few years, noting his commitment to the community, staff, students, and stakeholders. She admired his patience in attending frequent legislative meetings, navigating tough questioning, and representing the department effectively. She also praised his leadership in keeping the department on top of federal initiatives, resulting in multiple reimbursements, and emphasized the importance of this vigilance continuing with the next superintendent to ensure accountability, flexibility, and progress in public education.

Mrs. Gutierrez expressed pride in Dr. Swanson, said she has no regrets nominating him as superintendent, acknowledged the challenges he faced, appreciated his dedication, noted their respectful disagreements, invited him to the next NASBE conference, and wished him the best of luck and a safe trip home.

Dr. Okada thanked Dr. Swanson, emphasizing “trust but verify,” and praised his leadership in refurbishing school campuses after the typhoon, addressing academic gaps identified by the Smarter Balanced Assessment, and engaging teachers and administrators to support student success. She also acknowledged his wife’s support and wished him the best.

Mr. Fedenko said he already told Dr. Swanson during their meeting last week.

Mrs. Angel thanked Dr. Swanson for his dedicated service from the start of his term to his last day, wished him good health, encouraged him to rest and enjoy time with his family, expressed pride

in serving with him, and wished him and his family a Merry Christmas, Happy New Year, and hoped he would come back to Guam.

Mr. Ada told colleagues that Dr. Swanson will return in June for another reason and praised him for his handling of school closures, noting how smoothly CBMES and LBJES were managed compared to past challenges with Simon Sanchez High School. He thanked Dr. Swanson for his leadership and mentioned he accepted his resignation on one condition, asking if Dr. Swanson remembered it.

Dr. Swanson said no.

Mr. Ada jokingly asked Dr. Swanson if he expected him to go back to work again with his short memory.

Dr. Swanson replied that the first sign is short-term memory loss.

Mr. Ada commended Dr. Swanson for his three years of service, thanked him and his family, and wished him Godbless, Godspeed, and to not work anymore.

Dr. Swanson said that's a dangerous statement coming from a family of preachers. He asked what that meant. He said not much and acknowledged the challenges he faced. He pointed out that all the success they've had is not his - it's a whole big team of people that put a lot of heart, soul, blood, sweat, and tears into their work. He said that while much has been accomplished, there is still more work to be done, and he wished Dr. Won Pat well in continuing the effort. He reflected that the journey began 25 years ago and shared that when he returns home this week, it will coincide with the day after Christmas, marking the 25th anniversary first celebrated at St. John's in Guam on December 26. He recalled that the church was already decorated at the time and that the celebration took place during a semester break. He said they have maintained long-standing friendships from 25 years ago, as well as from their recent time on Guam, which has always held special meaning for his family. He shared personal reflections about meeting his wife there and gaining an "extra daughter." He noted that his daughter, Sheena, has completed her first semester in a doctoral program at Tennessee State University, making all three of their children career educators. He thanked everyone and mentioned that their dog and cat would be leaving the island the next day. He highlighted the extremely high cost of transporting pets off Guam—about \$6,000—which he said exceeded the cost of two business-class tickets. He attributed this to current regulations and linked the expense to the island's stray dog problem, noting that many people abandon pets because they cannot afford to take them with them. He thanked everyone and reflected that the work had been demanding. He joked that he had become a YouTube influencer due to legislative exposure and shared that people now recognize him from television. He said he does not take the attention lightly and emphasized that his efforts were always focused on doing what was best for students. He added that if he continues working, it would be in a part-time consulting role to stay mentally active.

Mr. Sablan thanked Dr. Swanson and the team that supported him, noting that he was on the Board when Dr. Swanson was selected in July 2023. He recalled asking Dr. Swanson whether he was sure about taking the position, given the criticism he had heard in the media, and emphasized that despite those challenges, Dr. Swanson persevered. He praised Dr. Swanson as a true gentleman, noting his calm, respectful leadership style and his willingness to give everyone a chance to grow and make a difference. He expressed regret that this transition was necessary, while acknowledging the importance of prioritizing health and allowing Dr. Swanson to complete his contract. He emphasized that Dr. Swanson made a meaningful impact at GDOE, significantly

improving the department and setting it on the right path, even though more work remains. He said these improvements are recognized by parents, the Board, and the community, and expressed hope that Dr. Won Pat will continue the positive work begun under Dr. Swanson. He concluded by saying Dr. Swanson should be proud of the lasting legacy he leaves behind, which will continue even after his departure. He expressed his gratitude to Dr. Swanson, his wife, Susan, and their family, offering blessings, Christmas wishes, and safe travels home. He thanked Mrs. Swanson for sharing her husband with the community over the past few years and acknowledged the constant support of her and their family.

IX. EXECUTIVE SESSION –

X. ANNOUNCEMENTS & ADJOURNMENT – Mrs. Gutierrez thanked Mr. Paul for taking on to be the Acting Superintendent until December 31st.

Mr. Sablan thanked the deputy superintendents, noting that although he was not yet aware of the new team members, they played an important role in Dr. Swanson's success and should be proud of their contributions. He announced that the next regular meeting would be held on Tuesday, January 20, and wished everyone a Merry Christmas.

The meeting adjourned at 5:46 pm.

MINUTES SUBMITTED BY:


KATHLEEN LAMORENA
Administrative Officer

Date: January 9, 2026

MINUTES OF DECEMBER 16, 2025 REGULAR MEETING:

Approved as submitted
 Approved subject to corrections
 Other: _____


ANGEL R. SABLÁN
GEB Chair

Date: 1-27-26


K. ERIK SWANSON, Ph.D.
Executive Secretary/GDOE Superintendent

Date: 1-27-26