



GUAM EDUCATION BOARD

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ANGEL R. SABLAN
Chair

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

**GUAM EDUCATION BOARD
REGULAR MEETING
Tuesday, April 15, 2025
4 pm
Gallery, GDOE Building B
MINUTES**

VOTING MEMBERS

Angel R. Sablan, Chair
Mary A.Y. Okada, EdD, Vice-Chair
Peter Alecxis D. Ada
Felicitas B. Angel
Christine W. Baleto
Karlyn RCG Borja
Judith Guthertz, Dr. PA
Maria A. Gutierrez
Ron L. McNinch, PhD

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS

Segundo Garrido
IBOGS Representative

Timothy Fedenko
GFT Representative

Mayor, Peter Benavente
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 4:01 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:

Okada, Dr. Mary A.Y. – Chairwoman
Sablan, Angel R. – Vice-Chair
Angel, Felicitas B.
Baleto, Christine W.
Borja, Karlyn RCG (via Zoom)
Guthertz, Judith
Gutierrez, Maria A.
McNinch, Dr. Ron L.

Non-Voting Members:

Fedenko, Timothy – GFT Representative
Eliaana, Aundrea - IBOGS Representative (via Zoom)
Zialcita, Aprilia - IBOGS Representative (via Zoom)

Legal Counsel:

Wolff, Matthew

Absent:

Ada, Peter Alecxis D.

Non-Voting Members:

Benavente, Peter – MCOG Representative

The Superintendent announced that seven (7) members of the Board were present in person, and one (1) via Zoom, constituting a quorum.

- II. CELEBRATE SUCCESS** – The following were recognized: George Washington High School and Tiyan High School for their achievements and participation in the 2025 Pacific Regional Drill Meet Competition in Honolulu, Hawaii, and Dr. Andria Macaraeg who was the recipient of the 2025 Adaptive Physical Education/Activity Program of the Year Award for SHAPE America.

Mr. Sablan wished Mrs. Gutierrez a happy birthday and also acknowledged the passing of Mr. Robert Klitzkie, the former director of education and author of the 14 Points of the Adequate Education Act, who was buried today.

-EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mrs. Gutierrez motioned, seconded by Mrs. Angel, to go into executive session. The Board voted by voice with a vote of 8-0. The motion passed. The Board moved into executive session at 4:10 pm.

Mrs. Gutierrez motioned, seconded by Mrs. Angel, to rise from executive session at 5:28 pm. The Board voted by voice with a vote of 8-0. The motion passed.

- III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION** – Attorney Daniel Somerfleck informed the board that, as of June 28, 2021, there were 9 non-operating elevators in the school system. These included elevators at Simon Sanchez High, Finegayan Elementary, Tamuning Elementary, George Washington High, Jose Rios Middle, Inalahan Middle, and Southern High. He emphasized that these issues fall under the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act, as they affect people with mobility disabilities. Attorney Somerfleck noted that these problems, first raised in 2021 under Superintendent Jon Fernandez, persist today, and he warned the Board that they would be hearing more about them soon.

Mr. Sablan asked Dr. Swanson if the list of non-working elevators was accurate.

Dr. Swanson confirmed it was.

Mr. Sablan then inquired about any action being taken.

Dr. Swanson explained that funding had been set aside to repair one of the elevators at Southern High School, and the process was already underway. He also mentioned plans for a package procurement to repair all elevators, as part of the \$51 million the department was seeking to recover, with \$1.5 million specifically budgeted for repairs.

Mr. Sablan noted that this was one of the corrective actions listed once the \$51 million reimbursement was received.

Dr. Swanson replied that it was correct.

Mr. Sablan asked that this be documented for Attorney Somerfleck.

- IV. COMMUNICATIONS** – Mr. Sablan asked if there was communication from Washington, DC after April 1st.

Dr. Swanson stated that he hasn't received any communication since April 1st, with the last communication being on March 28.

Mr. Sablan asked if they received any updates on the department's appeals.

Dr. Swanson replied that the appeals were submitted last Friday, but they have not received a response yet.

Mr. Sablan asked if they had received an official notice from Head Start.

Dr. Swanson replied that they had not, but there has been media coverage regarding the President's new budget, which excluded Head Start.

Mr. Sablan asked Head Start Program Director Angelina-Marie Lape if Region IX was no longer in existence.

Ms. Lape confirmed that 5 out of the 10 regional Head Start offices are closed, including Region IX. She mentioned that they have not yet received official notice regarding which office they now fall under.

Mr. Sablan said even without that notice, they were getting messages from various news media that the entire Head Start Program is on the chopping board.

Ms. Lape shared that the article on USA Today states that Head Start is not part of Trump's budget bill.

Mr. Sablan then acknowledged Senator Borja's presence in the meeting and expressed that they don't want the program to end, emphasizing the need to preserve it as they have done in the past.

Dr. Okada mentioned that a correspondence received on April 4 outlined the process to appeal to the U.S. Department of Education (DOE). It included a list of 10 items that must be submitted for reconsideration for each of the current projects funded by ARP funding. The correspondence was from Hayley Sanon, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary and Acting Assistant Secretary.

Mr. Sablan explained that Dr. Swanson and Deputy Paul were following the appeals process, noting that three appeals had been submitted so far – regarding contracts for the twelve schools, completion of FBLGMS, and additional air conditioning work. He added that appeals for other ARP-funded projects were also being prepared and asked if there had been any responses.

Deputy Paul replied that they have not received any replies yet.

Mr. Sablan stated that they had just come out of an executive session and were following a process outlined in Dr. Swanson's contract and statute.

Dr. Guthertz motioned, seconded by Mrs. Angel, for Dr. Swanson to provide a written progress report addressing the specific department related concerns listed in the Board's April 4, 2025 letter to him to be submitted no later than May 15, 2025, which would be reviewed by the Board in conjunction with the continuing evaluation of Dr. Swanson. The Board voted by voice with a vote of 4-4. The motion did not pass.

Mr. Sablan asked Dr. Okada when Dr. Swanson's next evaluation was due.

Dr. Okada replied that the evaluation period runs from July 1st to June 30th, so the next evaluation will be after June 3, 2025.

Dr. McNinch asked if Dr. Guthertz's motion has any effect on the other motions.

Mr. Sablan stated that the process they began on April 4th is ongoing.

Dr. Okada, Mrs. Gutierrez, Ms. Baleto, and Dr. McNinch voted no.

Mr. Sablan explained that the motion failed because five votes were needed. He stated that the process started on April 4 would continue, with the Board returning to executive session at the next meeting or the one after. He then shared the official evaluation report by former chair Dr. Okada for the period from July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2024.

Dr. Guthertz asked if the Board needed to vote to continue the process or if it was automatic.

Mr. Sablan said the process has started, and it can only be stopped if they vote on it again.

Dr. Guthertz expressed that she would like the Board to vote on whether to continue the process, rather than proceeding automatically, especially since Dr. Swanson had not addressed their specific concerns. She noted that Dr. Swanson had only discussed procedural and scientific issues with the evaluation process, and she wanted to hear his responses to the concerns they had raised.

Dr. Okada noted that the Board's evaluation score was 1.65, an increase from 1.3 in the previous evaluation. She also mentioned that the next evaluation period would be from July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2025.

Ms. Baleto asked if a list of concerns was provided to Dr. Swanson at the time of that evaluation.

Dr. Okada responded that at the time of the evaluation, the list of concerns was submitted to Dr. Swanson, and the Board received responses when they had requested them.

Mr. Sablan stated that they were currently releasing only the composite number, which had increased slightly. He reiterated Dr. Swanson's next evaluation period.

Dr. Guthertz explained that her motion was made because Dr. Swanson has an upcoming evaluation. While they received a response from him regarding the expression in their letter, he did not address the specifics of their concerns, focusing mainly on the evaluation process. She wants Dr. Swanson to provide updates on the specific concerns they raised. Since the Board hasn't received a report on these concerns, she requested reconsideration of her motion.

Mr. Sablan acknowledged Dr. Guthertz's request for reconsideration but pointed out that one voting member was absent, meaning the outcome would be the same. He suggested she wait until the next meeting, when all members are present, to request reconsideration.

Dr. Guthertz agreed to wait for the next meeting and expressed hope that Dr. Swanson understood her concerns regarding her request.

Mr. Sablan emphasized that everyone wants that outcome and, as a public announcement, stated that until the Board takes any action, Dr. Swanson remains the Superintendent.

Ms. Baleto left the meeting at 5:55 pm.

V. EX-OFFICIO MEMBER REPORTS –

- 1) Islandwide Board of Governing Students (IBOGS) Report – IBOGS Representative Aprilia Zialcita provided updates on the IBOGS 6th Annual Conference and Mental Health Session held at Okkodo High School on April 5, 2025. She shared that the event featured social workers and psychologists as presenters, and students found the topics highly relevant to the challenges they face. The presenters created a welcoming environment for students to engage and ask questions about mental health. Students suggested continuing the event, expanding it to cover more topics, and incorporating mental health into the school curriculum. She also mentioned that IBOGS members encouraged students to share their experiences and voice their opinions on education, highlighting the value of speaking at Board meetings. Everyone received certificates, and the event was considered a great success.

Mr. Sablan congratulated the IBOGS. He shared that he was there at the start of the conference. He thanked the students who participated and those who helped with their conference. He also thanked Mrs. Gutierrez, the IBOGS facilitator.

Mrs. Gutierrez thanked those who donated. She thanked the principals who gave gifts to the former IBOGS. She said some students had to buy their own because they were not given by their school principal. She then mentioned that only one middle school did not participate, and she said she hoped they were not going through a social-emotional issue at their school. She thanked the 7 middle schools and all the high schools. She said she was so proud of the IBOGS because they didn't have money, but they were able to operate. She also shared that the CNMI Board of Education requested the IBOGS to help them with their mental health training. She also thanked the school psychologists and intern social workers: Nadine Cepeda, Sonya Pablo, Tony Cruz, Jesse Baletto, and the 2 social workers. She said they did it on a Saturday voluntarily. She said when they had the open discussion, students cried out for help – they wanted the type of training at their school and wished IBOGS could do it every month, and that they were going through a lot. She told Dr. Swanson to get his management team. She said the students are crying for help. She joked that Mr. Sablan was given 5 minutes to speak, but he took 10 minutes. She also thanked Senator Borja for joining the students. She said that was what the IBOGS was all about. She then commended the high school principals. She hopes that the one middle school that didn't participate will join their next event.

- 2) Guam Federation of Teachers (GFT) Report – Mr. Fedenko also acknowledged the importance of school counselors in supporting students' emotional well-being, noting that the counselor-to-student ratio of 250:1, as per the CBA Agreement, is not being met. He also reiterated the ongoing shortages of teachers and school aides, saying he brings it up every time like a broken record. He mentioned a CHamoru teacher who has to move between classrooms and said they are teachers and deserve their own classrooms to support the CHamoru language program in an underutilized school. He noted that the teacher was hesitant to speak up due to fear of retaliation, but shared their concerns with him after their convention last month. He discussed the closure of another school and tight finances, noting that while they worked to maximize classes, they are still short on teachers. He pointed out that elementary and middle school populations have increased, while high school numbers have dropped. Despite this, two elementary schools have been closed, and plans are in place to refurbish/rebuild a high school that has been condemned due to years of neglect. He emphasized the need for fiscal responsibility. He acknowledged he isn't a voting member, but he will still express his opinions and share what he thinks. He criticized the Board for wanting to remove Dr. Swanson after just two years, noting that in his 33 years as a teacher, he's seen 33 different superintendents.

Which he said is ineffective. He emphasized that current issues didn't happen overnight and were present under the previous superintendent, despite high ratings. He acknowledged Dr. Swanson isn't perfect but argued he should be allowed to finish his term to see what he can accomplish. He called for redistricting, noting that high schools are underused while plans are in place to build another high school. He argued that the money should be used to improve existing schools, like fixing the elevators. He stated that Simon Sanchez High School does not need to be built. He stated that the data shows every high school can be accommodated within the existing high school system. He suggested renaming Okkodo High School to Simon Sanchez High School to honor Simon Sanchez, and proposed closing Tiyan High School and relocating FBLGMS to that campus. This would end double sessions, fill empty schools, and save money. He criticized the idea of asking teachers to work on Saturdays and emphasized the need for fiscal responsibility. He warned that if the Board continues to rely on staff to solve budget issues, nothing will improve unless the Board takes action.

Mr. Sablan stated that Dr. Swanson and the deputies are expected to present a final report by the end of the month regarding the opening and closing of schools, specifically addressing the double sessions at OHS/FBLGMS and SSHS/JFKHS. He mentioned that they would consider and evaluate the pros and cons of Mr. Fedenko's suggestion.

Mrs. Gutierrez stated that after the Board received the maximization document and she made her motion, Dr. Swanson and his deputies should have started on reassignment and redistricting, but nothing happened. She pointed out that a survey being distributed was not from the Board and claimed the people of Yigo have been waiting for SSHS for a long time. She suggested that someone was preventing SSHS from sharing facilities with THS and noted that not everyone at THS is part of the CTE (Career and Technical Education) program. She shared that she had received calls from parents and teachers, including one asking if the Board was crazy, and she assured viewers that SSHS would be rebuilt. She emphasized that Yigo residents have been waiting for SSHS since the previous administration and that now was not the time to deny them. She criticized the department for not acting sooner on the decommissioning of CBMES and for going on a field trip instead of addressing the issue.

Mr. Sablan mentioned that the deputies are evaluating the pros and cons of suggestions to end double sessions. He requested that Mr. Fedenko's suggestion and Dr. Guthertz's motion be included in the report. He had committed to Senator Borja that a decision would be made by the end of this month. He said this is why he believes he scheduled a meeting with JFKHS so they can publicly announce the decision to stakeholders at the four schools. He told Dr. Swanson the Board expects the report, and the Board might need a work session for it.

Dr. Okada asked Dr. Swanson to ensure that the redistricting for CBMES and the schools they had decided to close be presented for the Board's approval. She emphasized that the redistricting needs Board approval so students know where to go, and expressed concern about the delay, as the Board was supposed to decide in March but is now expected to vote in May. She stressed the importance of quickly finalizing the decision to prepare for the schools for the next academic year.

3) Mayor's Council of Guam (MCOG) Report – No report.

Mr. Sablan discussed the merger of CBMES with JMGES, and some with LES, and LBJES with TAMES. He shared that while parents are not opposing the merger, they are seeking the Board's assistance. Due to economic concerns, he suggested granting a waiver allowing students from CBMES and LBJES to use their current uniforms for another year at their new schools to avoid financial strain on families. He felt this wouldn't significantly impact the schools but would ease the burden on parents who may have recently purchased uniforms. He asked Dr. Swanson if he saw any issue with this and if Dr. Adamos wanted to comment.

Dr. Adamos shared that they met with the CBMES faculty to ensure a smooth transfer process for students, both voluntary and involuntary, to address any concerns. She said they also met with the commander team to outline how they were going to transition the students. They have identified about 130 students transferring to Liguán Elementary School (LES) and 97 to Juan M. Guerrero Elementary School (JMGES). Meetings were also held with JMGES and LES faculties, and Mrs. Gutierrez was present in both. She added that the students have already visited their new schools, and Dr. Adamos praised the principals, faculty, and staff of JMGES and LES for organizing tours and introducing staff to aid the transition. She commended principals JMGES Rose Castro and LES Johansen Punongbayan because their faculty and staff set up a tour of the campus and had an introduction of the staff, teachers, and the administration to assist in the transition of the students going into a new facility next school year. She mentioned that Rose Castro, JMGES principal, and Johansen Punongbayan, LES principal, agreed to allow transferring students to wear their CBMES uniforms or follow a relaxed dress code (e.g., t-shirts, shorts, or jeans) for the first year, to avoid placing a financial burden on parents.

Mr. Sablan said students can buy the uniforms if they can afford them, but they won't be penalized for wearing a different uniform if they can't.

Dr. Adamos said that was correct and asked if he needed information to make that motion in terms of geographically where the students were going, as they already had that information.

Mr. Sablan said it was a decision they could make, but they didn't want parents coming to the Board asking why they were being penalized for it.

Dr. Adamos said they received input from Mayor Savares early on and presented the routing and residences to DPW, so they are aware of the new routes they need to prepare.

Mr. Sablan said as long as it doesn't cause difficulties or rivalries between students, and if it has been analyzed and deemed acceptable, there's no need for the Board to make a motion.

Mrs. Gutierrez stated that the Board Policy allows schools up to one year to implement uniforms and instructed Dr. Swanson to have his PIO issue a press release to parents at JMGES, LES, and TAMES, assuring them uniforms aren't required, as parents have been inquiring. She noted the uniform policy was suspended during COVID.

Mr. Sablan said that Dr. Swanson received the message, and Dr. Adamos will also follow up on it.

Mr. Fedenko asked if the uniform policy was Board policy, meaning the Board would take action on it.

Mr. Sablan replied that there was already a policy in place.

Mr. Fedenko suggested that if the concern is students being teased for coming from different schools, they should be allowed to wear their own clothes for the year without a uniform requirement. He believed this would reduce the stigma and be fair to all students. He also noted that uniforms can be a financial burden, especially for lower-income families, compared to simply wearing clothes purchased from yard sales.

Mr. Sablan said his suggestion has already been mentioned by Dr. Adamos and added that the schools will also allow them to wear their regular clothes.

VI. UNFINISHED BUSINESS/COMMITTEE REPORTS

- 1) Superintendent's Report – Dr. Swanson read highlights of his report on the topics below for the record.

- a. JFKHS/SSHS

- b. FEMA Projects Status Report – Mr. Sablan clarified that it was FEMA, not the Board, that made the decision on which schools were eligible for assistance.

Dr. Swanson explained that FEMA deemed some schools ineligible because the damages were assessed as resulting from deferred maintenance, rather than indirectly caused by Typhoon Mawar.

Mr. Sablan asked if there was an appeal to that decision.

Dr. Swanson replied no, explaining that they were still analyzing the funding sources for the repairs. He noted that if local funds were used, the department could claim them, but if ARP funds were used, they could not.

- c. FBLG Renovation Status Report – Mr. Sablan asked for the time frame.

Dr. Swanson stated that the contractors expected the project to be finished by December, assuming they could maintain their current pace. However, he noted that the work might need to stop if funding were pulled by US Ed, as it would result in larger compensation issues.

Mr. Sablan asked if that was one of the appeals sent to US Ed.

Dr. Swanson replied that it was.

Mr. Sablan expressed hope that their request would be honored.

- d. Mold Mitigation/Fencing – Dr. Swanson mentioned that he had inquired about reserving funds for the FBLG project, but BBMR indicated that's not what they wanted to do.

Mr. Sablan emphasized the importance of issuing the contracts, as they were part of the variances requested for Public Health inspections from the previous year.

Dr. Swanson confirmed that the fencing was an issue for some campuses and that they had been wanting to address it. However, due to changes in direction from US Ed regarding federal funds, they now need to find creative solutions to complete the school and reopen the FBLGMS campus.

Mrs. Gutierrez expressed concern over the lack of updates on the dashboard, which she had requested since the Board's August 22, 2023, meeting. She emphasized that the dashboard was essential not only for student achievement but also for Facilities and Maintenance (F&M), and it had been over a year and nearly five months without it. She asked who was responsible for the dashboard, noting that even the National State Board of Education uses such a dashboard to monitor student achievement. She also brought up the Curriculum Management Audit, which is mandated by law and included in the FY25 Budget. She noted that the audit is due by June 30, 2025. She told Dr. Swanson that he wasn't in favor of it being an audit, but it was passed by the legislature and was now required. She inquired about the status of the audit and pointed out that the dashboard and audit were both missing from his report.

Dr. Swanson said the audit contract and negotiations were complete, the vendor had been selected, and was expected to begin within a week or two, pending notice to proceed.

Mr. Sablan asked if they'll meet the deadline.

Dr. Swanson stated that the vendor said they could.

Mr. Sablan noted that Mrs. Gutierrez would likely bring up the dashboard again at the next meeting, so he requested a status report and expressed hope that the vendor had already been given the MTP.

Dr. Okada requested the total amount that the department cannot be reimbursed by FEMA due to using ARP grant funds. She noted this issue was raised months ago, emphasizing that ARP funding is separate and FEMA could have covered 90%, but the department opted to use ARP instead.

Mr. Sablan asked Deputy Paul to provide that information to the Board.

- 2) FFY'25 Consolidated Grant Application I Board Policy 120.5 Federally Funded Programs
Dr. Swanson reported that the grant application was submitted last Friday.

Mr. Sablan asked what the grant application entails.

Dr. Swanson replied that it includes all the Consolidated Grants for FY 2026.

Mr. Sablan asked how much it totaled.

Dr. Swanson said they were given a projection that it would be the same as this year, just under \$35 million.

Mr. Sablan asked if that goes to US Ed.

Dr. Swanson said it goes to US Ed. He added that this is the final part of the 3-year cycle. He said it will be the same structure. The next thing on the docket for discussion and formulation is how block grants will be done. He said they had asked this to US Ed when they were on the phone with US Secretary of Education Linda McMahon, who informed them that the formulation for block grants has not been determined yet. He said they have one more fiscal year on the current system.

- 3) AG Resolution for Board Consideration Re: GEB Compliance with E.O. 14201 & 14168
Mr. Sablan stated that Legal provided verbiage changes to the draft, which are included in the packet. He suggested adopting a resolution to align with other entities in the states and mentioned that it's in the packet. He said they took out several things which was vetted by Legal and Dr. Swanson. He asked if anyone had any objections to the resolution.

Mrs. Gutierrez motioned, seconded by Dr. Okada, to approve Resolution 2025-02 Relative to Adopting Compliance with Executive Orders 14201 and 14168 Regarding Gender-based Participation and Biological Truth in Interscholastic Sports in All Guam Schools. The Board voted by voice and approved the motion with a vote of 7-0. The motion passed.

Mr. Sablan said it would be incorporated into the ISA Constitution and requested Dr. Swanson to send the approved resolution to the Attorney General.

VII. COMMITTEE REPORTS

1) Executive Committee

- a. National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) – Mrs. Gutierrez said she understands that today's meeting was an informational, so she asked Mr. Sablan to add the action item to the May 6th agenda. She mentioned that nominations for chair elect and secretary-treasurer were due and noted that her colleagues in NASBE recommended one of the Board members for secretary-treasurer. She asked that they vote on this at the May 6th meeting.

Mr. Sablan inquired if the nominations would be made at the meeting, followed by a vote from NASBE.

Mrs. Gutierrez confirmed that the nomination is due in June and nominated Dr. Okada, citing her role on the finance and budget committee.

Dr. Okada accepted the nomination.

Mrs. Gutierrez explained that they will vote in May, and the submission will be in June.

Mr. Sablan asked if Dr. Okada would be competing against other nominated candidates.

Mrs. Gutierrez said she hasn't heard of any other nominations but was encouraged to ask Dr. Okada to consider it.

Mr. Sablan asked if that was the only position for which they needed to get nominees.

Mrs. Gutierrez said there were different categories, noting that the "Policy Leader of the Year" and "Friend of Education" awards were no longer available. However, the "Distinguished Service Award" and three other awards still exist. She reiterated her request to add this to the May agenda.

Mr. Sablan shared that Dr. Okada will attend the New Member Institute and asked if Dr. Guthertz had attended the event.

Dr. Guthertz said she would like to defer because she thinks Dr. Okada could represent them well in NASBE.

Mr. Sablan told her that this was for all new Board members, and not limited to one.

Dr. Guthertz replied that she's been at previous NASBE events for new board members and would prefer to avoid any expenditures.

Mr. Sablan asked Dr. McNinch if he had been to the event.

Dr. McNinch said he has attended the event and has been on the Board for 5 years.

Mr. Sablan asked if Mrs. Angel attended the event.

Mrs. Gutierrez said they attended through Zoom.

Mr. Sablan said that the deadline was approaching, so they needed to submit the names of the attendees.

Dr. Guthertz expressed support for Dr. Okada's consideration for the role, but emphasized the need to minimize Board spending, stating it was not the right time for additional expenditures.

Mr. Sablan explained that it's coming out of NASBE.

Dr. Guthertz acknowledged that Dr. Okada is paying her way for the event.

Mr. Sablan encouraged his colleagues to express their interest if they wanted to attend, so the process could begin.

Mrs. Gutierrez clarified that NASBE only covers the hotel expenses and reiterated that Dr. Okada would be paying her way.

- i) Government Affairs Committee – Mrs. Gutierrez said to let go of this committee and the Public Education Position Committee.

Mr. Sablan acknowledged.

- ii) Public Education Position
 - 2) Instructional & Academic Support Committee – No report
 - 3) Safe & Healthy Schools Committee – No report

- 4) Policy Review & Strategic Planning Committee – Mrs. Gutierrez said they are meeting on April 17, 2025, to review the Travel Policy.
- 5) Fiscal Management Committee – Dr. Okada stated that the only item in the board packet is the EFSC and noted that no action was needed on it.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

Travel Policy – Mr. Sablan explained that while the Board previously voted to freeze all travel and new hires unless approved by the Board, he believes the policy may be too restrictive in some cases. He proposed a more flexible approach, where travel requests submitted at least 15 days in advance with justification can be approved by Dr. Swanson and acknowledged by the Board chair without waiting for a full Board meeting. He noted that he had approved some travel last week, which was approved before the freeze, had non-refundable fees, and it would be unfair to penalize employees. Regarding hiring, he suggested that critical and CBA-approved positions, if aligned with spending priorities, justified by Dr. Swanson and submitted to him, should also be allowed to proceed without a delay. He emphasized that this approach would prevent missed opportunities, loss of employees, and bureaucratic delays, and he would keep the Board informed at meetings.

Dr. Guthertz expressed her support for his approach but emphasized the need to fill critical positions, particularly certified teachers and 1:1 Special Ed aides. She noted that, based on her recent observations, recruitment efforts do not appear focused enough on meeting those needs. She also raised concerns about the lack of public visibility for job openings, urging that vacancies be advertised more broadly through newspapers and online platforms, not just internal GDOE channels. Additionally, she cautioned that departmental travel should be limited and only prioritized if it directly supports federally funded programs or enhances classroom instruction.

Dr. Okada echoed Mr. Fedenko's comments, pointing out that the job announcement packet dated April 11th did not include any CBA positions, suggesting the department wasn't recruiting for them. She explained that the Board had raised concerns about individuals being hired for positions that weren't funded, and they've been trying to resolve the issue. She agreed with Mr. Sablan's approach but recommended handling it through the Fiscal Committee, which knows the budgeted positions. She reiterated the previous recommendation to simplify the process for retirees by having principals identify them and renew contracts directly, rather than requiring them to go through the full application process. She emphasized that the main issue is positions being filled that are not funded, which they had asked to be halted. She concluded by reiterating that the current list of job announcements does not include CBA positions, as Mr. Fedenko had noted.

Mr. Sablan asked if the positions were publicized.

Deputy Paul mentioned a second document that was announced, highlighting 38 active CBA vacancies.

Dr. Okada said it wasn't announced.

HR Administrator Katherine Ada said that if it wasn't announced, it means they have an established list and are in the process of recruiting.

Mr. Sablan asked if they were CBA positions.

Ms. Ada said there was a separate document with the status of each of the CBA positions.

Dr. Okada inquired if there were enough positions for the 76 CBA positions and suggested that no announcement likely indicated there were 76 applications.

Ms. Ada asked which particular position she was referring to.

Dr. Okada said it was for the school aide position.

Ms. Ada said there were notes and mentioned that for SpEd school aides, there were 101 eligible candidates currently being recruited, provided they had a certified RTF.

Mr. Sablan asked if they had interviewed for the positions last week.

Ms. Ada said yes.

Mr. Sablan asked if interviews for the 46 eligible school aides were scheduled for next week.

Ms. Ada said that was correct, and it's scheduled for the 24th and 25th.

Mr. Sablan asked Ms. Ada to inform Mr. Fedenko when new hires are made and to include this information in next month's report.

Ms. Ada explained that she had prepared notes on the progress of filling the CBA positions, having completed several interviews. However, the process is delayed due to required administrative clearances, failed drug tests, and other issues. She noted that efforts are being made to streamline the process, but it is still ongoing.

Mr. Sablan asked if a private company controlled the drug tests.

Ms. Ada confirmed that the candidates have three options available for the candidates, though the department doesn't cover the cost. She mentioned that sometimes they lack the funds to pay for the drug tests and face various situations that impact this process.

Mr. Sablan asked if these were publicized in the paper.

Ms. Ada said what she printed was what was currently on the website at the moment.

Mr. Sablan asked if it was published.

Ms. Ada said it was not published.

Mr. Sablan asked if someone didn't have access to a computer, they would never see the list.

Ms. Ada said it's also posted in the HR Office.

Mr. Sablan said the applicants would have to come here.

Ms. Ada said it's also posted on the Government portal.

Mr. Sablan asked Deputy Paul to find funding to publicize the announcements in the paper so there's greater coverage.

Ms. Ada said they also looked into Facebook.

Dr. Guthertz expressed concern over the lack of preparation for the upcoming school year, emphasizing the urgency of recruiting staff. She called for widespread promotion of job openings through multiple platforms, including military and local newspapers, online channels, and in Saipan. She argued that publicity should be a regular budget item and suggested targeting military personnel relocating to Guam, highlighting their potential qualifications. She stressed the need for an aggressive recruitment strategy.

Mr. Sablan instructed Ms. Ada not to provide the list, but instead to provide evidence, such as the newspaper issue or details of the platform used, to show that the announcements are being widely distributed. This would help the Board verify the distribution.

Ms. Ada said they will also be participating in the UOG job fair next week because the fee was waived.

Mrs. Gutierrez said she looks at the website since she doesn't work. She expressed frustration with the job posting process, noting that she often sees the same positions listed on the website. She mentioned hearing that announcements need to be posted for 10 days and that Dr. Swanson had the authority to post positions continuously. She also shared an issue where someone was told they couldn't apply for a position unless it was open for application. She agreed with Dr. Guthertz that job announcements should be distributed to all government agencies, UOG, and GCC, and positions should be filled within 10 days of being announced. She cited an example where an applicant was told their Personnel Action hadn't been signed yet by Dr. Swanson, leading to delays as school was about to start. She also mentioned that people were blaming the Board for freezing positions, including CBA positions, and said Dr. Swanson should have submitted a request to the Board for the positions needed. She shared that the cashiers at Payless in the mall are all 1:1 aides and had asked her if they would have to apply again for the 1:1 aide. She expressed concerns about retirees having to reapply at job fairs, even though they had worked with the same principal the previous year. She suggested they should just declare their intention to return and have the principal recommend them to HR. She was frustrated by what she perceived as unnecessary bureaucracy and told Deputy Paul to find money for advertising the announcements, suggesting savings could be found by cutting travel expenses.

Ms. Ada emphasized that while they value retirees, the law requires them to ensure no certified teachers are available before recruiting retirees for a position. She explained that retirees can't be promised a position but will be rehired if needed after processing out their entitlements at the end of the school year. She acknowledged the need to refine the process to make it smoother and confirmed their support for retirees as long as there are not enough certified teachers. She also explained that the established candidates is valid for one year, and each time they recruit, they will check with those on the list to see if they are still interested, calling back those who didn't show up unless they decline. Once the list is exhausted, a new job announcement will be made to establish another list.

Mr. Sablan said he understood.

Dr. Okada explained that they were not asking that retirees be given priority for positions, but rather seeking to streamline the process. She suggested that if a retiree's principal

recommends them and the position is still available by a certain date, it should be easier to hire them without requiring them to reapply at a job fair, as they are already in the system.

Mr. Sablan reiterated his request for Dr. Swanson to provide him with the justification for travel requests and hiring decisions so that these matters can be addressed without waiting for a Board meeting. He stated that if the requests are for future needs, that's acceptable, but if immediate action is required and the applicant is available, he would be willing to pass the justification to the vice chair, who is a member of the finance committee, for review. He suggested that this process should be followed if the Board agrees.

None of the Board members objected.

Dr. McNinch said that before the meeting, Mr. Stake briefly spoke to him. He asked Mr. Sablan to confer with him offline because he had some input for him as the Board chair. He also suggested posting the agenda on Facebook during the live-stream to help the public follow along.

Mr. Sablan asked the Administrative Officer to do so. He said the agenda should be posted on the website.

Ms. Lamorena confirmed that it had already been posted on the website.

Mr. Sablan acknowledged that and reiterated the additional request to post it on Facebook.

IX. EXECUTIVE SESSION

X. ANNOUNCEMENTS AND ADJOURNMENT

Dr. Guthertz motioned, seconded by Mrs. Gutierrez, to adjourn the meeting. The Board voted by voice and approved the motion with a vote of 7-0. The motion passed.

The Board recessed at 7:00 p.m.

MINUTES SUBMITTED BY:



KATHLEEN LAMORENA
Administrative Officer

Date: April 30, 2025

MINUTES OF APRIL 15, 2025 REGULAR MEETING:

() Approved as submitted


☒ Approved subject to corrections

() Other: _____



ANGEL R. SABLAN
GEB Chair

Date: 5-6-25



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

Date: 5/6/25