

**AMARILLO COLLEGE BOARD OF REGENTS  
MINUTES OF SPECIAL BOARD MEETING  
January 14, 2026**

**REGENTS PRESENT:**

Mr. Jay Barrett, Chair  
Mrs. Anette Carlisle  
Ms. Michele Fortunato  
Ms. Irene Hughes  
Mr. Johnny Mize  
Dr. Paul Proffer  
Ms. Peggy Thomas  
Dr. David Woodburn

**REGENTS ABSENT:**

Mr. John Betancourt, Vice-Chair

**CAMPUS REPRESENTATIVES PRESENT:**

Ms. Sara Pesina, Representative for the Hereford Hinkson Memorial Campus  
Mr. Jeff Turner, Representative for the Moore County Campus

**CAMPUS REPRESENTATIVES ABSENT:**

**CABINET MEMBERS PRESENT**

Mr. Bob Austin, Vice President of Student Affairs  
Mr. Kevin Ball, Vice President of Communications and Marketing  
Dr. Mychal Coleman, Vice President of Human Resources  
Dr. Jamelle Conner, President  
Mr. Joe Bill Sherrod, Vice President of Institutional Advancement  
Ms. Denese Skinner, Vice President of Strategic Initiatives  
Dr. Frank Sobey, Vice President of Academic Affairs  
Mr. Mark White, Executive Vice President and General Counsel

**CABINET MEMBERS ABSENT:**

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

Ms. Ash Albright - KAMR  
Ms. Jessica Arce – Administrative Assistant  
Ms. Geni Arndt - Community Member  
Ms. Kim Bruce – Communication Content Producer  
Mr. Mike Fisher – Community Member  
Ms. Ally Greenwood – Executive Assistant & Asst. Secretary to the Board  
Mr. Craig Gualtiere – Community Member  
Dr. E. Christopher Hudson – English Professor and Faculty Senate President  
Mr. Christopher Key – Coordinator, Marketing Special Projects  
Ms. Brianna Maestas – Amarillo Tribune  
Ms. Aby Molina- ABC News  
Ms. Courtney Milleson – Department Chair Media, Arts and Communications, Professor  
Ms. Sadie Newsome – Director Marketing  
Dr. Lori Petty – Dean of Academic Services

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Mr. Jesse Pfrimmer – Community Member  
Ms. Martha Sell – Community Member  
Mr. Michael J. Stevens - KGNC  
Ms. Paige Stockton – NewsChannel 10  
Ms. Phoebe Terry – Amarillo Tribune  
Mr. Shon Wagner – Audio Visual Technical Leader - Information Technology  
Ms. Nell Williams – Amarillo Globe News

**SPECIAL BOARD MEETING****CALL TO ORDER**

**The Special Board Meeting was called to order at 6:01 pm by Mr. Jay Barrett, Chair of the Board of Regents. He welcomed those in attendance. A quorum was present.**

Mr. Mark White discussed the proposed procedural changes regarding public comment and explained the past comment card process and introduced an updated procedure and public comment request cards. This change will help with consistency for public comment at both regular meetings and special meetings. Regular meetings will be an open-mic concept that would allow for any topic of public interest. Public comment at special meetings will be limited to agenda items on the agenda. The Chair will continue to read instructions which have also been amended.

Mr. White also discussed that he has obtained an opinion letter from an independent lawyer that concludes this process is constitutional and proper. Mr. White proposed that this process be adopted.

Mr. Barrett added that he wants to make it clear that the Board is proposing these procedural changes to make it easier for people to make public comment and that Amarillo College invites public comment.

Mr. Barrett returned to item two, public comment.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

There were four public comments.

**BOARD OF REGENTS PROCEDURAL CHANGE REGARDING PUBLIC COMMENT AT BOARD MEETINGS.**

Mrs. Carlisle motioned to approve the process, as counsel has outlined, and moved that the comment cards require a speaker to identify their city and state. Dr. Woodburn seconded the motion. Ms. Fortunato requested that Mr. White post the legal opinion letter on the college's website. The motion passed unanimously. Mr. White requested the instructions for special and regular meetings and new cards to be attached to the minutes of the meeting. Mrs. Carlisle requested to add these changes to the internal operating procedures as well.

**REGENT JOHN BETANCOURT**

Mr. Barrett discussed that this item was placed on the agenda for the regents to consider the recent charges filed against Mr. Betancourt, the impact on the college, and the Board's response. Mr. White reminded the Board that Mr. Betancourt has been charged but not convicted and to be respectful of that. The Board deliberated.

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Ms. Fortunato moved that the Board of Regents suspend, on a temporary basis, effective immediately, Mr. John Betancourt's service on Board committees, outside boards that he serves on as an AC representative, including TIRZ 2 and college-related travel, pending the resolution of the criminal charges that have been made recently. Mrs. Carlisle seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Ms. Hughes moved to adjourn. Dr. Woodburn seconded. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 6:47 pm.**

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**Sara Pesina, Secretary**

**CHAIR'S PUBLIC COMMENTS INSTRUCTIONS  
FOR SPECIAL MEETING**

Now is the time for public comment.

As this is a special meeting, anyone may address the board on posted agenda items only. If you wish to address the Board, please fill out a comment request card and hand it to \_\_\_\_\_.

**READ THE FOLLOWING ONLY IF ONE OR MORE  
CITIZENS HAVE FILLED OUT A COMMENT REQUEST CARD**

Remarks are limited to 3 minutes. Groups of more than 5 persons referencing the same topic may be asked to appoint one person to present their views before the Board.

Because of Open Meetings Laws, the Board may not discuss any topic not on the agenda and, therefore, will not respond to any remarks related to non-agenda items.

The Board may, but is not required to respond to agenda-related items.

If your comment addresses a concern or complaint about a specific college employee or student, such complaints must be timely filed through the formal grievance processes under college policy.

If you have not attempted to solve a matter through the grievance process, you will be directed to the appropriate policy to seek resolution, and may bring the matter to the Board at a later meeting.

Revised 01/13/26

**CHAIR'S PUBLIC COMMENTS INSTRUCTIONS  
FOR REGULAR MEETING**

Now is the time for public comment.

Anyone may address the board on any topic, whether it is on the agenda or not. If you wish to address the Board, please fill out a comment request card and hand it to \_\_\_\_\_.

**READ THE FOLLOWING ONLY IF ONE OR MORE  
CITIZENS HAVE FILLED OUT A COMMENT REQUEST CARD**

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**REGULAR MEETING » PUBLIC COMMENT REQUEST CARD**

If you wish to speak to the Amarillo College Board of Regents, please fill out this card and hand it to the Communications & Marketing representative before the meeting begins.

PLEASE PRINT LEGIBLY

First Name \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number (Optional) \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address (Optional) \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Subject \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_

**DUE TO TIME CONSTRAINTS:**

**Please limit remarks to three (3) minutes.**

Thank you for your interest in Amarillo College.



**Amarillo College**  
An Equal Opportunity Community College

Revised 12/2025

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Phone Number (Optional) \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address (Optional) \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Agenda Item Number \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_

**DUE TO TIME CONSTRAINTS:**

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SPROUSE SHRADER SMITH PLLC

ATTORNEYS AT LAW

TIMOTHY C. WILLIAMS

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Tim.Williams@SprouseLaw.com

January 13, 2026

Amarillo College  
Attn: Mark D. White  
Executive Vice President & General Counsel  
2201 S. Washington St.,  
College Union Building 204C,  
Amarillo, TX 79109

Dear Mr. White:

You have requested my legal opinion addressing proposed revisions to the comment cards and comment instructions for both regular and special meetings. Specifically, you have requested that I review the proposed public comment cards—requiring speakers to provide basic identifying information and limiting comments to a designated timeframe and agenda item, as applicable—and the proposed comment instructions, which explain the respective card and meeting protocol. In short, both proposed cards and both sets of instructions comport with both Texas law and the Constitution.

Under both Texas law<sup>1</sup> and the United States Constitution, public governing bodies may impose reasonable, content-neutral restrictions on public participation during board meetings to ensure order, efficiency, and the effective conduct of public business.<sup>2</sup>

Public board meetings are considered “limited public forums.”<sup>3</sup> While members of the public have a right to observe meetings and may be permitted to speak, there is no absolute constitutional right to speak at a public meeting on any topic, at any time, or in any manner of the speaker’s choosing.<sup>4</sup> Courts consistently recognize that governing bodies may regulate public comment so long as the restrictions are reasonable, viewpoint-neutral, and related to legitimate governmental interests. Case law is clear that a school board or similar public entity “has a strong interest in the

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<sup>1</sup> TEX. GOV’T CODE § 551 et seq. (the public comment law at section 551.007 applies to all Texas governmental bodies that are subject to the Open Meetings Act).

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* at § 551.007(d); 2020 Tex. Op. Atty Gen. No. KP-0300.

<sup>3</sup> *Christian Legal Soc’y Chapter of the Univ. of Cal., Hastings Coll. of the L. v. Martinez*, 561 U.S. 661, 690, 130 S. Ct. 2971 (2010).

<sup>4</sup> *See Freedom From Religion Found. v. Abbott*, 955 F.3d 417, 426 (5th Cir. 2020) (citing *Int’l Soc’y for Krishna Consciousness Inc. v. Lee*, 505 U.S. 672, 678, 112 S. Ct. 2701, 120 L. Ed. 2d 541 (1992)).

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productivity of public meetings” and “may restrict speakers to the subject at hand, impose time limits on speakers, and prevent disruptions of the meeting.”<sup>5</sup>

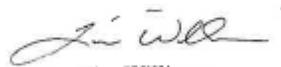
The proposed public comment cards fall squarely within these permissible Constitutional parameters. Requiring speakers to complete a card in advance is a neutral administrative mechanism that allows the board to manage time, organize speakers, and maintain orderly proceedings. Similarly, limiting comments to agenda items, imposing time limits, and enforcing rules of decorum are well-established methods for preventing disruption and ensuring that meetings remain focused on official business.<sup>6</sup>

Importantly, your proposed system does not restrict speech based on viewpoint or content. It does not bar criticism of the board or its policies, nor does it condition participation on agreement with any particular position. Instead, it applies uniformly to all speakers and is designed solely to facilitate orderly and efficient meetings. Courts, as cited above, have upheld similar requirements as reasonable time, place, and manner restrictions consistent with the First Amendment.<sup>7</sup>

Moreover, Texas law is aligned with this framework.<sup>8</sup> While, as referenced above, the Texas Open Meetings Act requires meetings to be open to the public, it does not mandate unlimited public participation.<sup>9</sup> Governing bodies, like the Amarillo College Board of Regents, retain discretion to establish reasonable procedures governing public comment, including advance sign-in requirements and enforcement of decorum rules.

For these reasons, the proposed public comment cards for both regular and special meetings and the proposed instruction revisions for both regular and special meetings are all legally defensible and consistent with both Constitutional principles and Texas law, provided that they are applied consistently and without discrimination based on viewpoint.

Sincerely,



Tim Williams

<sup>5</sup> *Story v. Azalea*, No. 1:22-CV-448-DAE, 2023 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 243894, \*14 (W.D. Tex. 2023) (quoting *Wenthold v. City of Farmers Branch*, No. 3:11-CV-0748-B, 2012 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 18452, 2012 WL 467325, at \*8-9 (N.D. Tex. Feb. 14, 2012), aff'd sub nom. *Wenthold v. City of Farmers Branch*, 532 F. App'x 474 (5th Cir. 2013)); *Stein v. Dall. Cnty.*, No. 3:22-CV-1255-D, 2024 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 103437, \*5 (N.D. Tex. 2024).

<sup>6</sup> *Id.* at \*20; *Good News Club v. Milford Cent. Sch.*, 533 U.S. 98, 106, 121 S. Ct. 2093, 2100 (2001); *Steinburg v. Chesterfield Cty. Planning Comm'n*, 527 F.3d 377, 385 (4th Cir. 2008).

<sup>7</sup> See *Madison Joint School Dist. v. Wisconsin Employment Relations Comm'n*, 429 U.S. 167, 175 n.8, 97 S. Ct. 421, 426 (1976) (“Plainly, public bodies may confine their meetings to specified subject matter. . . .”); *Wright v. Anthony*, 733 F.2d 575, 577 (8th Cir. 1984) (five-minute limitation on presentation to congressman was a reasonable restriction and served significant governmental interest in conserving time and ensuring that all had an opportunity to speak); *Ison v. Madison Local Sch. Dist. Bd. of Educ.*, 3 F.4th 887 (6th Cir. 2021) (finding that requiring participants who wish to speak during a school board meeting to preregister two days before the meeting does not violate First Amendment rights).

<sup>8</sup> *Spingola v. State*, 135 S.W.3d 330, 334 (Tex. App. 2004).

<sup>9</sup> TEX. GOV'T CODE § 551 et seq.