

Middle College prom, financials measures mulled at Board of Education meeting

Written by By Cody Begaye Sun Correspondent
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The end of the school year also brings prom season, a special time for many students about to graduate. The festivities serve as a way to cap off years of learning with some fun, and the issue of student safety is pressed more than ever during this special time.

But while Gallup-McKinley County Schools have safety procedures to follow, those rules could leave some students out of the excitement.

At the GMCS Board Meeting on June 18, Kelly Mortensen, parent of a student at Middle College High School at UNM-Gallup, brought up an image that was passed around about the policies regarding prom and safety. Due to the procedures in place, students attending Middle College were not able to attend the GMCS prom.

Charles Long, president of the GMCS Board of Education, said this is ultimately a safety issue. The procedures are meant to keep out unknown people by stating that students have to be specifically from Gallup-McKinley County Schools to attend the prom.

“You can’t say where (one of these students are from or will go),” Long said after the meeting.

Mortensen said that his wife came to the board meeting on June 4 to address the matter to the

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school board. He said an initial suggestion was for Middle College to host their own prom, which may not be sensible for the 20-plus seniors in the class.

“(She) said this discriminates against Middle College students,” Mortensen said.

However, her comments were not taken in a positive light. Mortensen said his wife was cast as someone who was against school safety, which he says is not the case at all.

“People get names assigned to them,” Mortensen said about the labels given to his wife.

Mike Hyatt, superintendent of Gallup-McKinley County Schools, said that a proactive approach to student safety and success have led to positive developments.

“(There has been a) 61 percent decrease in expulsions and suspensions over two years,” Hyatt said during the meeting.

Yet, Mortensen feels that these issues could be amended so that the Middle College seniors could join the fun with the rest of the school district.

“How do we comfort our seniors?” he asked during the meeting.

Meanwhile, also during the meeting, the GMCS School Board of Education approved the sale of General Obligation Bonds totaling over \$6 million to the New Mexico Financial Authority. These specific bond funds will be used for projects at Thoreau Elementary, Ramah High, Gallup High, and Chee Dodge Elementary, in addition to the cost of insurance.

The board also approved the modification of the district emergency fund from \$2.5 million to \$3 million. Board procedures state that funds may only be drawn from this fund under select

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circumstances, including an unexpected loss of revenue, operational revenues from the New Mexico Legislature or the Public Education Department which were not included in the final approved budget, or approval from the Board of Education for a non-budgeted expenditure.

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