

Observer Corps Report, October 13, 2023
APS Board of Education meetings, 20 September and 4 October 2023
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I “attend” the YouTube live stream of the meetings, and I report on topics most relevant to LWVCNM policy positions.

Public Forum. The public forum has continued to be dominated by speakers concerned with books and classes that potentially discuss gender-identity and the availability of gender-affirming counselling in APS schools. While the past several meetings had been dominated by members of groups critical of APS policies, at the 4 October meeting a large number of speakers – parents, teachers, students, alumni – came to support APS and New Mexico State policies guaranteeing rights of minorities, including LGBTQ+ students. In addition, one speaker expressed concerns about threats of banning books in the schools simply because they discuss diversity of some kind. (4 October fell during Banned Book Week.) On a different topic, a science teacher drew attention to lack of equitable distribution of resources among APS schools.

The Board meetings proper continue to be dominated by detailed discussions implementing the strategic five-year plan for APS in order to satisfy the settlement requirements of the Yazzie-Martinez lawsuit. On 20 September, the discussion focused on goals related to student retention, noting that students in the Yazzie-Martinez group are most likely to drop out of school. Numerous strategies for identifying at risk students in time for intervention and motivating students to attend school regularly and complete their diplomas were discussed. Special training events for APS staff were announced, including nonviolence training, as part of the new restorative justice approach to incidents of, especially, gun-related violence in some APS schools.