

EDUCATION

D60's Sanchez given a festive farewell

Reception marks a decade of service on board of education

BY JON POMPIA

THE PUEBLO CHIEFTAIN

As her 10 years of service on the board of education of Pueblo City Schools (D60) draws to an end, President Phyllis Sanchez was lauded, congratulated and bestowed with thanks during a public reception Tuesday.

With members of her extended family, colleagues and friends in chambers, Sanchez was showered with warm words from board members, presented with a gift and certificate of appreciation from the district, and even serenaded by Central High School's talented mariachi group.

From Superintendent Charlotte Macaluso to R. Kenneth O'Neal, an outgoing board member who has served since May, Sanchez was passionately praised for her decade of service.

"I am so thankful and grateful that our paths have crossed in this journey," Macaluso told Sanchez. "I have worked with many, many leaders in my career, and you are among the best.

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"I have learned a tremendous amount from you and your leadership."

Board member Frank Latino thanked Sanchez "from the bottom of my heart for everything you meant to me as a person over the years.

"I will miss you immensely."

Citing Sanchez's strength and resilience in the face of criticism, board member Bobby Gonzales applauded the outgoing president for "taking the high road" and encouraging the board members to do the same.

"We kept our heads up, we stuck together," said Gonzales.

Pointing out that Sanchez has been honored for her work at the state and national level, Gonzales added, "It upsets me to see how she's treated here in this community. She works so hard and she's about kids."

In his brief time on the board, O'Neal said that while he and the

president "clashed and bumped heads, through it all I look at you and still see an amazing woman.

"You stand tall and provide leadership for this board, and they all respect you."

Barb Clementi, vice president of the board, saluted Sanchez for giving "tirelessly and lovingly to the district" while providing outstanding leadership and imparting to fellow board members a great deal of coveted wisdom.

"We owe you a great deal of gratitude," Clementi added. "We will miss you and we send you off with lots of love ... and I have you on speed dial."

Reflecting on a decade of volunteer labor as a board member — first appointed and then re-elected twice — Sanchez said, "This has been very passionate work for me."

Highlights of that work were presented in a 10-minute video clip in which Sanchez cited D60's annual graduation ceremonies as a heart-warming pinnacle, along with the establishment of STEM, magnet and innovation schools,



Phyllis Sanchez

and the district moving out of turnaround status in 2016.

"I consider these last 10 years a blessing," Sanchez said via the video. "To be able to do this and to be able to work with the high quality of board members I've worked with over the years, and learned from."

The farewell reception — during which O'Neal also was thanked for serving — was followed by a brief board meeting and preceded by a one-hour executive session to discuss legal and personnel matters, including the evaluation of Macaluso — a topic that was the subject of a multi-hour executive session retreat Monday.

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