

Unapproved Minutes of Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees
Sequoia Union High School District
Wednesday, August 26, 2009

Call to Order The regular meeting of the Sequoia Union High School District Board of Trustees was called to order by Vice President Lewin at 4:35 p.m., Wednesday, August 26, 2009, in the Sanford Building at the District Office in Redwood City.

Roll Call Trustees present:

Gordon Lewin
Olivia Martinez
Lorraine Rumley

Evan Weiner, Student Trustee (arrived at 5:30 p.m.)

Trustees Absent:

Don Gibson
Sally Stewart

Recess to Closed Session at 4:37 p.m. The Board of Trustees recessed to Closed Session to Conference with Legal Counsel—Existing Litigation (Subdivision A of Section 54956.9): Name of Case: The Summit Institute v. SUHSD; Conference with Real Property Negotiator—Agency Negotiator: Patrick Gemma, Property Address: 2555 Pulgas Avenue, East Palo Alto; terms and conditions, and to Conference with Labor Negotiators—Agency Designated Representative: Patrick Gemma; Employee Organizations: SDTA, AFSCME.

Return to Public Session at 5:51 The Board of Trustees returned to Public Session at 5:51 p.m.

Invitation to Audience Vice President Lewin welcomed the audience and explained that the Consent Calendar consisted of routine or previously discussed items to be considered as a unit and voted upon by roll call vote. He explained the Public Comment section of the agenda was for permitting members of the audience to make presentations about items not on the agenda.

Pledge of Allegiance Vice President Lewin led the Board of Trustees and audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Agenda On a motion by Trustee Rumley, seconded by Trustee Martinez, the Board of Trustees approved the agenda.

Report Out on Closed Session Vice President Lewin advised that no action had been taken in Closed Session.

Amendments to Consent Calendar None

Approval of Consent Calendar On a motion by Trustee Martinez, seconded by Trustee Rumley, the Board of Trustees approved the Consent Calendar. Voting “yes” – Trustees Lewin, Martinez, and Rumley voting “no” – none; absent: Trustees Gibson and Stewart; Student Trustee Weiner, “yes.”

Approval of Minutes for 8/5/09 & 8/12/09, Brd Mtgs. On a motion on the Consent Calendar, the Board of Trustees approved the minutes for August 5, 2009, and August 12, 2009, board meetings.

Approval of Personnel Recommendations On a motion on the Consent Calendar, the Board of Trustees approved the Personnel Recommendations as presented.

Approval of Readmissions On a motion on the Consent Calendar, the Board of Trustees approved the Readmission Committee’s recommendations and accepted 21 students (names to appear in official minutes) who were previously expelled, back into the Sequoia Union High School District.

Approval of Warrants Upon roll call vote on the Consent Calendar, the Board of Trustees approved warrants for the month of July 2009 totaling \$7,512,978.83.

Minutes for 8/26/09 Board Meeting

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Approval to File Notices of Completion	Upon roll call vote on the Consent Calendar, the Board of Trustees approved filing notices of completion for Asbestos Management Group, Braun Cabinets, Bay City Mechanical, Intermountain Electric, Bellanti Plumbing, Rodan Builders, BFP Fire Protection, Nexgen, Dryco Construction, and DRP Builders.
Authorized Declaring Property as Surplus	Upon roll call vote on the Consent Calendar, the Board of Trustees declared the listed items as surplus property, obsolete and unsuitable for use, and authorized the Superintendent to dispose of the surplus items in accordance with Education Code provisions.
Authorized Declaring Textbooks Obsolete/Non-Accountable	Upon roll call vote on the Consent Calendar, the Board of Trustees declared the listed items as obsolete/non-accountable, and unsuitable for use, and authorized the Superintendent to dispose of the listed items in accordance with Education Code provisions.
Approval of Field Trip	Upon roll call vote on the Consent Calendar, the Board of Trustees approved the field trip request for Carlmont High School AVID (Advance Placement Via Individual Determination) IV students to go to Half Moon Bay, September 24-25, 2009.
Special Recognitions	None
Site Reports on Start of School	<p>Raul Zamora, Principal of Carlmont High School, reported that the opening of school had been very smooth. Current enrollment is at 2127, and Carlmont is on track with its projections. Staff is calling individual students to make sure they get to school, and the students are showing up.</p> <p>Trustee Rumley asked if buses were arriving on time, and Mr. Zamora said that the District buses have all been on time, one SamTrans bus arrived late.</p> <p>Matthew Zito, Principal of Menlo-Atherton High School, announced that enrollment was at 2015, and the 9th grade class size is smaller than last year's class. There are 16 new staff members this year and the year began with a mini-retreat. This year the focus for teachers is structure, and the focus for students is taking good notes. The M-A Planner which is distributed to all students has been expanded to allow space for note-taking. Mr. Zito advised that the parking and landscape has been well-designed and is looking good.</p> <p>Trustee Martinez said she had visited M-A, and thought the exit and egress entrances to the campus were a great design.</p> <p>Trustee Lewin asked about traffic, and Mr. Zito said that the traffic issues have been resolved, and drop off lanes have been developed to accommodate 65 cars. There has been no traffic backup on campus. Parent volunteer Susan Ellis helped with the traffic flow design.</p> <p>Bonnie Hansen, Principal of Sequoia High School, reported that the start of school had gone well, and enrollment was at 1803. Arena check-in went well due to a record number of volunteers. There are some incredible new teachers at Sequoia, including a great football coach was hired. The Alumni Association sponsored a picnic last weekend; over 400 alums participated.</p> <p>David Reilly, Principal of Woodside High School, announced a smooth start to school. Freshman orientation was on a Saturday and included a barbeque. The bell schedule has been revised, and there is now an hour study time. Eighty percent of students begin school at 9:05 a.m., and 20 percent start at 8:00 a.m. Enrollment is at 1841. There have been many improvements at Woodside: new landscaping, the roads have been paved, and the restrooms renovated. Mr. Reilly said Woodside has pushed back the release times for athletes. Staff decided that academics come first, and students are encouraged to make the most of their time in school.</p>

Marshall Burgamy, Director of Alternative and Continuing Education, reported that Redwood students have transformed the garden, and the school has been awarded its second grant from Stanford.

Frank Wells, Vice Principal in Charge at Redwood High School, advised that Redwood is about ensuring its students have the opportunity for a quality life style. Staff is reinvigorated and committed to direct interactive instruction. The students are committed to coming to school on a regular basis, and a “night caller” system for absenteeism has been implemented.

Mr. Burgamy reported that 17 percent of the District’s 91 Middle College students made the honor roll at Cañada College. Adult School classes do not begin until the end of September. Marshall Burgamy reported that he had visited the new Green Street facility in East Palo Alto, and he was excited that Adult School classes will be offered there. Cañada is also interested in using this facility for some of its class offerings.

Gregory Gruszynski, President of Sequoia District Teachers Association, said he too shared in the excitement of the start of school. However, he stated, for the first year ever the schools are without department chairs for three of the large departments because a decision was made last spring to lay off department chairs for social studies, science and physical education. Mr. Gruszynski gave some examples of the problems SDTA members have reported as a result of the department chair layoffs: at Woodside we have 15 teachers that teach 62 sections of science: there is the Green Academy, a new Green Biology class and two classes of Small Learning Communities. Formerly, the department chair would distribute supplies and handle lots of different issues. It is having an impact and is causing frustration. There are six new social studies teachers at M-A, and there is no department chair to work with them. Mr. Gruszynski posed the question, “Is it worth the money that you saved to cut these department chairs’ release periods for the impact it is having at the sites?”

Update on District Website

Bettylu Smith, Public Information Officer, presented the new District website as a work in progress. Ms. Smith reported that the new website is scheduled to be introduced in September. She stated that a planning group assembled in late spring to plan the new site. The group included staff, parents and Trustee Rumley as the Board representative. The District has engaged Schoolwires to produce the website. Schoolwires has created websites for 1,000 schools and school districts across the country. Internally, the News & Communications Department has teamed up with Administrative Services Division to develop the content for the District website, and Kirsten Owens of the Division demonstrated the new site for the Board and public.

Ms. Smith reported several goals of the new site: 1) embrace a design and content that reflects the District and its schools as they are: excellent, innovative and dynamic, 2) create the most authoritative, timely and comprehensive resource for information about the District, 3) fulfill the leadership commitment to transparency in communication with parents and the community, and 4) make the site user-friendly and easy to navigate.

In response to a question posed by Trustee Rumley, Ms. Smith stated that a simplified executive summary of the District budget would be posted on the new website. Trustee Rumley also asked about interest of the schools in using the new template being developed by the District. Ms. Smith stated that the District could upgrade its existing agreement with Schoolwires for an economical fee, which would allow all of the schools to use the template, if desired. The cost to upgrade the design contract would be \$4,000, which the District would absorb, and then the cost to the individual schools for training, hosting and access to Schoolwires upgrades would be \$3,000 in the first year and approximately \$2,000 annually in subsequent years.

Student Trustee Weiner said the new District website is much improved over the existing site, and he stated that plans described by Ms. Smith to use Facebook and Twitter were also a good idea.

Public Comment

None

Correspondence

None

Review of Built to Last
Americorps Grant

Gail Ortega, Executive Director of Built to Last, reported that the program's primary focus group was students living in East Palo Alto. The data shows that with the intervention of Built to Last, these students have done well. People are volunteering to work as coaches at the school campuses.

Last year the program started out with high funding goals, the recession hit, and the District was going to have to cover the deficit. As the Board knows, Built to Last was able to attain funding, and the program was able to meet its financial obligations for 2008-09.

This year we have pushed back the program's start date until the end of September in order to obtain Built to Last's funding match requirement. Built to Last is requesting the District for a funding match of \$50,000. The 2009-10 program has been cut in half and will only be held on two campuses. In view of the economy, a very stable program will be maintained. The total cost of the Built to Last Program this year is approximately \$350,000 of which the District is asked to cover \$50,000.

Larry Moody, President, Board of Trustees, Ravenswood City Elementary District and a member of the Advisory Board for Built to Last, advised that when the Board looks at the work that is being accomplished here in the Sequoia district, it will realize that the Built to Last program is a necessary component. Mr. Moody said he applauds the Board for taking on Built to Last and encourages the District continuing the relationship. Larry Moody said he also served on the Board of the 49er Foundation and is confident that Built to Last will receive funding from that organization.

Trustee Lewin said he understood that this program would be limited to Carlmont and Menlo-Atherton high schools this year.

Matthew Zito, Principal of Menlo-Atherton High School said we will be starting our third year with the Built to Last program, which works with the most challenging students to make sure they stay in school and graduate on time. We have been fortunate to have their coaches accompany our students to class; if the District were to hire these coaches it would be required to pay them three times the hourly rate that they are paid. We want to keep these services in place.

Trustee Martinez asked if she was correct in stating that these students had a 1.9 grade point average and were in Far Below Basic and/or Below Basic level classes? Mr. Zito advised that at least 50 percent of the students were in intervention programs. He said students earned 8 units more in the second semester as opposed to the first semester, and they are attending school regularly.

Trustee Martinez thanked Mr. Ortega for his written report concerning program; she noted the importance of Built to Last having the support and services of the San Mateo County Human Services Agency.

Gail Ortega said that they had entered into agreements allowing the Department of Human Services and John Gardner Center to assist with data collection and program analysis.

Trustee Rumley asked if the program had any foster youth.

Larry Moody advised that there were foster youth in Built to Last, and East Palo Alto had the greatest number of foster youth in the County.

Trustee Rumley said that it is critical that this program moves forward, and your efforts are most appreciated.

Trustee Lewin said he was really impressed that Mr. Ortega had brought an independent third party into the program. In one year the program has shown that it can make a difference. Mr. Lewin noted that Built to Last has statistically shown results, and is prepared to move forward at one-half of the cost of the previous year.

Dr. Gemma said staff is considering using the ARRA (American Recovery and Reinvestment Act) funding rather than General Fund money. We are asking the Board to direct staff to proceed with the Built to Last program and will bring this item back to the Board for action on September 16.

Discussion of Tentative
Budget Reductions for
2009-10 & 2010-11

Superintendent Gemma advised that at the August 12, 2009, meeting, the Board directed staff to bring back a list of tentative budget reductions amounting to between \$1 and \$1.5 million in 2009-10 with an additional \$1 million in 2010-11. He reported that the Superintendent's Staff developed a list, which was then discussed with the principals. Dr. Gemma said there were some personnel cuts on the list however it was his desire to be able to come up with necessary budget reductions to keep the District's reserve in better standing without more people losing their jobs. The list should be seen as tentative.

Dr. Gemma said he hoped that through negotiation and consensus we would find ways that many of the cuts listed would not happen; perhaps all employees in the District would take a small reduction in compensation so there would be no further job loss in the District. The Superintendent also suggested that the Board may want to give direction to staff to look at other places to cut in lieu of the listed items.

Student Trustee Weiner asked about downsizing summer school.

Dr. Gemma advised that he did not see any cost savings for 2009-10, if summer school was downsized in 2010, if there were cost savings those would be realized in 2010-11. Superintendent Gemma announced that staff would like to hire a Summer School Coordinator and Supervisor who would work with administrators and guidance advisors to develop new criteria for the students enrolled in summer school in 2010. The program would focus on seniors and also freshmen with less than 50 credits.

Trustee Rumley suggested pursuing negotiations with classified staff concerning furlough days, and then some personnel cuts could be removed from the list.

Trustee Martinez said the list will only be implemented if successful agreement with bargaining units for furlough days cannot be made. Dr. Gemma said the list of reductions could be implemented as an alternative to a negotiated agreement. Trustee Martinez replied that on the Tentative Budget Reductions List, Item A, "2 certificated staff development or furlough days," would represent significant savings. Dr. Gemma advised that we have to proceed with a sizable plan.

Gregory Gruszynski, President of Sequoia District Teachers Association (SDTA), said he is ready to come to the bargaining table and is willing to work with management and come up with a fair and just contract. We would like to reach a settlement. Mr. Griszumski said he wanted to respond to Item A, the majority of that \$400,000 would be coming out of the pockets of the teachers who are providing the educational services. Despite the decline in housing prices and property tax revenue, our teachers are working in a District where the teachers frequently cannot afford to live. The money has to come from somewhere, but this is a hard one. We will talk more about this at the bargaining table.

Trustee Lewin advised that there are no great options for making budget reductions. However, we are seeing small signs of improvement in the economy, which is a topic needing more research and reporting back to the Board. We also should look at unsecured property tax. Since we are linked to the "fair share" cuts, I think we should fine tune this list as more data is received, and the Board needs to look at how far it needs to go.

Superintendent Gemma said that the ending balance for 2008-09 is likely to be higher. However, the multi-year budget projections will still show that we will deficit spend unless there is some level of cuts. With additional cuts this year we will be able to use our reserve to cover the anticipated revenue lost at midyear.

James Lianides, Assistant Superintendent, Administrative Services, advised that a worst scenario is going to come in 2010-11, the ARRA money is going to back fill the budget in 2009-10, the key indicator is the property tax where the revenue can go down.

Dr. Gemma said there is a Superintendent's Roundtable scheduled tomorrow to review the list of budget reductions and restate the commitment of the goal to reduce costs without the need for other people to lose their jobs. Superintendent Gemma stated he is sensitive to the point that Greg Gruszyski makes that furlough days are not an easy thing for employees to deal with. However, \$2.5 million was cut last year, and \$1.8 million came out of the District Office. Much of this \$2.5 million in cuts was due to reduction in force.

Approval of Job Description
for Director of Summer School
Planning and Supervision

Debra Moore Washington, Assistant Superintendent, Human Resources, said there has been some discussion about revamping summer school, and this new position will be responsible for the planning and supervision of summer school. With this new position the District is cutting overhead and saving some money.

Superintendent Gemma advised that this new position was in keeping with the plan to restructure the District Office in light of the budget reductions. Summer school was led by the position of Director of Student Services, which was cut in 2008-09. We want to continue with the Compass, EII (English Immersion Institute) and regular summer school programs. Regular summer school may be restructured; and we need a person in this position now in order to plan the summer school program for July 2010.

In response to a question posed by Trustee Rumley, Dr. Gemma advised that there would be one, Director of Summer School and one Compass Coordinator; thus the two Summer School Principal and three Compass Coordinator positions would be eliminated for 2010.

Trustee Martinez said she was puzzled about the turn-around in philosophy, because the Board had received a request earlier in the year to eliminate summer school.

Dr. Gemma advised that at that time we thought we would have to cut another \$5.5 million out of the 2009-10 budget—the budget context has changed.

Trustee Martinez asked for the data for the Compass program, and asked if it was an effective program.

A complete Summer School Report to include Compass results will be presented at the October 14th board meeting.

Dr. Gemma said we hope to continue our relationship with the Thrive Foundation. Thus far we have seen early data concerning outcomes for students in the Compass program.

Vice President Lewin said he thought it was great to hire a director for planning and supervising summer school.

Student Trustee Weiner suggested that if indeed it was decided to make summer school available only to 9th and 12th grade students it should be conveyed soon to the general public.

On a motion by Trustee Martinez, seconded by Trustee Rumley, the Board of Trustees approved the job description for Director of Summer School Planning and Supervision.

Board of Trustees/Supt's.
Comments & Committee
Reports

Superintendent Gemma said he attended the Redwood City 2020 Cabinet Meeting, and 1) a presentation was made by the Sequoia Health Care District talking about current and future focus of wellness support, through cities and school districts, for a healthy life style such as walking to school/work and implementing ideas learned from other countries, and 2) Josephine Yu, San Mateo County Human Health Services Work Force Development Education Liaison, reported on a "green" internship program where Redwood High School students participated this summer in the Redwood Academy of Education Leadership (REAL) job program, and Marshall Burgamy, Director of Alternative and Continuing Education, was recognized for reconnecting with the youth of our future.

Trustee Martinez said it was great to hear the site reports this evening. Dr. Martinez said the Board wants to know what won't be done this fiscal year.

Dr. Gemma advised that we have scheduled five "Tentative" board meetings in 2009-10. If these meetings are not needed they will be cancelled.

Trustee Rumley said she had attended the Redwood City 2020 Coordinating Council meeting, and the upcoming census was discussed. A major part of an accurate census is educating the community about its importance, and Trustee Rumley stressed the importance of posting a reminder about the upcoming census on the District's website.

Student Trustee Weiner reported that the Menlo-Atherton Leadership Program Environmental Committee will be placing recycling bins across the entire campus and Earth Week will be an even larger event focusing on environmental issues to help with the upcoming "green" movement.

Adjournment at 8:53 p.m.

On a motion by Trustee Rumley, seconded by Trustee Martinez, the Board of Trustees adjourned its meeting at 8:53 p.m.

Respectfully submitted.

Gordon Lewin, Vice President

Lorraine Rumley, Clerk