

Fountain Valley School District
Superintendent's Office

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

10055 Slater Avenue
Fountain Valley, CA 92708

November 9, 2009

MINUTES

President Pro Tem Tony McCombs called the regular meeting of the Board of Trustees to order at 5:00pm. **CALL TO ORDER**

The following board members were present: **ROLL CALL**

Mr. Tony McCombs	President Pro Tem
Mrs. Judy Edwards	Clerk
Mrs. Christine Allcorn	Member
Mr. Ian Collins	Member

Mrs. Edwards led the Pledge of Allegiance. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Motion: Mrs. Allcorn moved to approve the board meeting agenda. **AGENDA APPROVAL**
Second: Mrs. Edwards
Vote: 4-0

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no requests to address the Board. **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

PROVISIONAL BOARD MEMBER CANDIDATES INTERVIEWS

At the beginning of each interview, Mr. McCombs explained that each of the candidates would have approximately 15 minutes for 8 questions to be asked by the board. All candidates were asked the same questions. He thanked each of them for their interest in provisional appointment to the Board of Trustees. **INTERVIEWS WITH PROVISIONAL BOARD MEMBER CANDIDATES**

Dr. Mai-Khanh Tran explained that this would be her first foray into public service in Fountain Valley. She explained the role of a trustee is to look at the mission statement of the district and to develop programs and policies that support this mission.

She explained the chief skill that she would bring to the board is her fresh perspective. She explained that as a pediatrician in the community, she is an advocate for children. She also has previous experience mentoring children through volunteer activities in various medical projects over the past 15 years.

She explained that the greatest contribution as a board member that she could make would be her knowledge of children and as a pediatrician, her expertise and experience with children.

If forced to reduce programs, Dr. Tran explained that she would focus on those non-student direct activities such as maintenance, grounds and facilities, those that are unrelated to the day-to-day activities of children.

She explained that the major area of concern with education today besides funding, is a diverse student population. She explained that Fountain Valley is a diverse district both in term of economic status and racial background.

She explained her previous experience in the district as a pediatrician in the district, she has indirect involvement with many of the FVSD students. Although she does not have any direct involvement to date, she explained that she could not think of another place that she would rather devote her time to than Fountain Valley.

If she were to receive a parent complaint regarding a teacher, Dr. Tran explained that she would talk to both the teacher and parent in order to hear both sides. She explained that she was not sure if there was another legal procedural process in place to go through but that should would make sure that both sides had a voice.

In closing, Dr. Tran said that as a pediatrician in Orange County, she believes in mentoring children. She explained that when she first came to the United States at age 9, she was thrown into the public school system and has benefited from it since being here. She explained that this started her belief in what education can do for individuals and her desire for serving the Fountain Valley School District. She reiterated that she can't think of a better way to give back.

Dr. Edward Sussman explained the role of the board as a governing body that sets policy for the district.

He explained his chief skill to bring to the board is his experience in the overall operation of districts and his general understanding of community relations and how it works with parents and teachers.

Dr. Sussman explained that the greatest contribution he could make as a board member would be to make sure to maintain the integrity of the instructional program, ensuring that the needs of students are meet as one fifth of an organization that has this as its responsibility.

When asked about reducing costs, Dr. Sussman explained that the State of California has to accept responsibility and that schools and education are important. He explained that they have to realize that children are important and therefore maintain an adequate funding

model and keep Proposition 98. He explained that cuts year after year affect kids. He has lived in Fountain Valley since 1969 and knows that the District has cut what it can already. He said that given the parameters and structure that the District has, it is time to turn to the community and for the State to take responsibility.

He explained that the biggest concern aside from financing in schools is articulation. He explained that Fountain Valley School District feeds the high school district. As interim superintendent at Ocean View High School District with students in 8th and 9th grade, he has a general understanding of what these kids need [when going on to high school]. He also explained that a large percentage of the population in Fountain Valley and Huntington Beach does not have school-age children. It is hard to get them to see the importance of maintaining a high quality of education.

He explained his participation in the FVSD through coaching every sport while his kids were in school in the district as well as working with the Huntington Beach YMCA, sponsoring the Taste of Fountain Valley, being a member of the Fountain Valley Rotary, and serving on the Community Services Commission for ten years.

If he were to receive a parent complaint about a teacher, he explained that the board is a governing body and so he would refer the complaint to the Superintendent's office. He explained that it was not for a board member to interfere and not the responsibility of a trustee but the responsibility of administration.

In closing, Dr. Sussman explained that he is not a candidate that would be running in the next election if given the opportunity. He expressed his keen interest in the school district and the education system.

Mr. William Crane explained the role of a board member to serve students while working in cooperation with the school board, superintendent, teachers and administration to help out in any way that they can.

He explained that the chief skill he would bring to the board is experience. He previously served as a board member in the Fountain Valley School District for nine years in addition to teaching and spending a lot of time in the industry. He explained that he would do whatever it takes to keep the good reputation of the FVSD. He further explained that individualized instruction was introduced in the 1960's and Fountain Valley School District has been commended for its instruction. He explained that students are graded on subjects, not the time spent on subjects and although all students are different, there is a need to make accommodations in the education system for them all.

Mr. Crane explained the greatest contribution he could make as a board member would be his cooperation with the other board members, the superintendent and the administrators in their work. If asked to reduce costs, Mr. Crane explained that this would be for

the superintendent, administration and teachers to determine. He noted the deep crisis nationwide and although he is not sure how to reduce costs further, he is sure that Dr. Ecker would have some good ideas.

He explained that the individualization of instruction is the greatest concern in education aside from financing today.

Mr. Crane explained that if he were to receive a parent complaint about a teacher, he would report the complaint to Dr. Ecker or to administration.

In closing, he wished all the luck and success to the board in their finding of a replacement for Mrs. Harney. He noted that he knew her as a board member and teacher and that it would be a great honor to replace her.

Mrs. Sandra Crandall explained the role of a board member is to uphold the Constitution, act as part of a governance team to collectively share responsibility and to operate openly, to set the tone for the district, to support the superintendent, to adopt a budget and to establish a framework for the district, to be an advocate for students and to commit one's time and energy to making informed decision. She explained that the skill she would bring to the board would be the ability to be brought up to speed quickly. She noted her 39 years as an employee of the district, 15 years as a Fountain Valley resident and that she has been reading board packets for decades. She explained her passion for education and her understanding of the particulars of the Fountain Valley School District. She has served in leadership roles and understands the difference between the board and administration.

She explained that the greatest contribution she could make as a board member would be to be a part of a governance team effort. She would stay true to the mission and goals of the district and the Board's interest.

If asked to reduce costs, she explained that with the \$5 million hit to the district over the last 30 months, the district is already pretty bare-boned and that additional cuts would be a difficult decision. She would encourage taking advantage of the American Recovery General Provisions Act that allows 50% to the general fund and 50% to other programs and would encourage certificated personnel to take a hard look at doing their fair share, possibly at days outside of the school year and instead looking at staff development days. She noted that this is a tough call.

She explained that continuing to maintain programs and to retain people in a tight budget time is the highest concern aside from financing today. She explained the need to be creative in looking at grant applications. She noted that the Special Education and Autism population having grown 600% and this is difficult because of the effects on the general fund. She noted the importance of equal opportunities for all students and that community volunteering is a

good way to fill the holes.

Mrs. Crandall explained her participation in the FVSD through her 39 years experience as a teacher, including leadership roles within her job as school site council, PTA liaison, and member of the Parent Volunteer Steering Committee. Once retired, she explained that she has still been drawn to schools to volunteer her time whether it be assessing clerical work or Kindergarten reassessing. She also sponsors FVEF and has participated on textbook committees, assisting any way that she could.

If she were to receive a parent complaint, Mrs. Crandall explained that she would suggest that the parent take their complaint to the teacher, so that the teacher would not be blindsided. She would also direct them to the school principals and the district office staff as well, but working through the proper channels first. She would keep things in confidence and encourage parents to utilize board policy to give advance notice to staff to arrange a visit to the classroom to see firsthand. She would let them know how to work within the system. In closing, Mrs. Crandall expressed her deep passion for children and education. She explained that teachers are teachers by calling but professionals by choice. She expressed her belief that with students, one should set the bar and like water, children will rise to their own level. She explained that once retired and looking at how to spend her time, she has always come back to education and explained that she has the time, knowledge-base, especially of the District, and understanding of its workings and goals. She expressed her love for the community, continued learning, principled thinking, character and giving of one's time and talent.

Mrs. Regina Blankenhorn explained the role of a board member is to guide and build policies with the district, especially given the State and all that they have thrown at the district. She explained that a board member needs to have a broad picture and take into account students' needs.

She explained the chief skill she would bring to the board would be that as a parent of children still in the system and an educator, her background and knowledge is helpful. She explained that she believes in being involved and getting to know the district and likes visits and being in contact with teachers and students, getting to know their needs.

She explained that as a teacher, she has many skills, the best being her organization and ability to prioritize and be informed by all sides before going on.

If asked to reduce costs, Mrs. Blankenhorn wouldn't reduce any. She explained that she would go across equally as best as she could. She sees the need to prioritize items and reduce each section the way it should be, taking each into consideration.

She explained that the biggest concern in schools, aside from financing, today is the well rounded education of students. She

explained that a little bit of everything makes a student a better student and that she would not want to eliminate or take away from the well being of students.

She explained her participation in the district as an involved parent in the classroom, participating on a weekly basis until [her children were in] 6th grade. She explained that she believes in parent involvement in any capacity needed. She is a member of the PTO as well.

She explained that if she received a parent complaint regarding a teacher, she would listen to all and take everything into consideration, making sure that the parent had talked to the principal and teacher and would want to talk to the principal herself to make sure that they were aware before taking it from there. She would let the principal handle talking to the teacher and would talk to the superintendent as well, depending on the subject matter.

In closing, Mrs. Blankenhorn explained that she has been thinking of running for the board for a few years now and that she has experience dealing with school budgets due to her 15 years as an ROP teacher and previous experience in San Juan Capistrano working with the budget. As a part of a Tier III program, she is familiar with the State's role and ROP's place in the budget. She explained that she likes to be proactive and was recently able to have Assemblyman Jim Silva come to speak to ROP and visit the campus as well as two different high school campuses. She explained that she has good leadership skills as well as being a good team member, having worked with teams and supervisors. She has experience in the district with Oka and Talbert and experience as a teacher and on the board, she feels her knowledge of the State budget would be helpful.

Mr. Billy Morris explained that the role of a board member is to keep up with the already impressive status that the district holds and to keep pushing the envelope. He explained that there is always room for improvement in education. He also explained that board members are to go out to schools to better grasp how board decisions are implemented in schools.

Mr. Morris explained the chief skill he would bring to the board is his youthful connection with students. He explained that he has been surrounded by students over the last six years through volunteering, student teaching and finding ways to connect with kids. He directed a student tutoring program and was constantly thinking of ways to keep kids motivated and focused. Currently, he is working with children with Autism, finding solutions to problems that these children have.

Mr. Morris explained that his greatest contribution would be to positively affect the lives of hundreds of children in the district. He explained that his primary goal is to have a positive effect.

When asked about cutting costs, Mr. Morris explained that in academics there is no room for cuts. Programs that do not encompass

a large portion of students would be those that he would consider. He explained his feeling that money should be spent on things that as a whole are a benefit to the largest number of kids.

Mr. Morris explained that the greatest concern in education today is teaching and finding ways to use teachers in the best way possible. He explained that it is tricky to tip toe around the teachers' union and legislation.

Mr. Morris explained his participation in the district as a student of both Courreges and Fulton. He explained that while he does not have a lot of experience in the district outside of this, he does have a passion to start.

Mr. Morris explained that if he were to receive a parent complaint about a teacher, he would follow the chain of command in place. He noted that he currently receives complaints from parents and does his best to explain those things that he does not have any control over. He explained that if he had jurisdiction in a matter, he would do the best to rule on the complaint.

In closing, Mr. Morris explained that although he does not have a much experience in education as the other candidates, he is passionate about doing what is best for children. He has mentored underprivileged kids and is very good at coming up with creative ways of engaging children. He noted that he would bring a good balance with his youthful exuberance to the experience of the current board members.

Mr. Alan Gandall explained the role of the board as the overseer of all operations of the district, as well as community services and public relations, in addition to involvement with school functions to ensure that board members are visible.

Mr. Gandall explained the chief skill that he would bring to the board as his listening abilities and ability to understand how problems happen. He explained his ability to analyze and bring solutions in a business manner, as well as being able to join a group with all on the same page. He explained his skill at rendering thoughts creatively and coming to solutions that are right and just.

Mr. Gandall explained his main contribution as a board member would be his time and knowledge and observation of the systems in place. He explained that he is objective from a state view down to a local view. He explained his opinion that the district is like an island in that it is made of elite schools, similar to going to a private school. He explained his ability to see from the outside. He noted that Dr. Ecker has oiled the machine for us and it is up to the board to keep it going.

When asked about reducing costs, Mr. Gandall explained that CSR has always been an issue but that we are currently in perilous times and it is better to increase size and reach out with volunteerism. He explained that he is confident the district can pull this off. He also explained that he would look at off site maximization and anything

not having to do with the classroom to ensure that efficiencies were maximized, emphasizing the need to be fiscally responsible.

He explained the biggest concern in education today, aside from financing, as the health and welfare of students. He explained the importance of health, a good environment, good meals and a good sense of wellbeing for children. He noted that most schools in the district do not have air conditioning and that this could be a questionable learning environment and expressed his concern for teacher motivation. He noted that when teachers are motivated, students are motivated.

Mr. Gandall explained his involvement in the district through his six years on the ACE Committee and that although he went it not knowing of the workings, he was curious and enjoys speaking with the legislators in Sacramento.

Mr. Gandall explained that if he were to receive a parent complaint about a teacher, he would get the facts from each party, explaining that there are two sides to every story. He would come to a conclusion of the facts and render a decision that pertained to those facts. He would then relay to the district to make sure that all is whole.

In closing, Mr. Gandall explained that it would be an honor to take the place of Mrs. Patricia Harney, and that it would be an unique opportunity and leadership experience. He explained that he would offer an addition to a well rounded board and with two boys in the district, he wants to make a difference here. He explained that he is of a family of volunteers and that he teaches his own children that volunteerism gives a joy of accomplishment, and it is offering help from the heart instead of a paycheck.

Mrs. Ellyce Rothrock explained the role of the board to fulfill the mission to the best extent that they can. She also explained that the board is to promote a foundation of excellence and set an example of citizenship and encourage students to achieve their best through partnerships between school, home and the community.

Mrs. Rothrock explained that the chief skill she would bring to the board would be her strong belief in the community and education. She explained that she came to Fountain Valley in 1997. On the board, she would draw on her past professional experience in managing large publishing teams, mentoring young people to achieve their best. She has seen others in junior or other positions seeking to learning. She explained her belief in the power of education, even prior to becoming a parent. She explained that now as a parent, she has become involved in organizations, serving as the past president of Hill Top and becoming involved in the Orange County Parent Participatory Nursing School Association, on their board. She explained her willingness to help others in a position to achieve learning and explained that she does not shrink from a challenging situation.

Mrs. Rothrock explained her greatest contribution as a board member would be as a parent dedicated and committed to keeping Fountain Valley School District schools in top performing status to the advantage of children and others.

When asked about cost reductions, Mrs. Rothrock explained that she would hate to see the literacy program cut because it helps so many children, especially those in larger classrooms now. She explained that visual and performing arts, P.E. and science have all faced cuts in the past and she would hate to see further reductions. She noted examples [to cut] like grounds and maintenance, staff cut backs and salary freezes.

Mrs. Rothrock explained the greatest challenge to education today aside from financing is philosophical issues, such as No Child Left Behind. She explained that teaching has fallen aside, and instead, teachers are teaching to the test, causing a tendency towards gaps in education. She explained her opinion that teachers bear the brunt of parent complaints and cited a lack of communication as a reason. She explained her interest in seeing parents take a more active role in the education of their children. She was a participant in the Gisler PTO, has past board experience and is a participant in the training for the parent volunteer academy.

She explained that if she were to receive a complaint from a parent regarding a teacher, she would listen carefully to the complaint to make sure that the parent felt validated. She would communicate her plan of action and make sure to get back to the parent with continued follow through. She would be sure that her actions were under the guidelines of what is appropriate and would provide honest and accurate communication and follow through.

In closing, Mrs. Rothrock explained that her daughter has been in the district for three years and what she has witnessed during this time of the professionalism [of the district] has been highly impressive and inspired her to want to volunteer more, in addition to reinspiring her to become multi-subject certified. She commented that the whole district has been very inspiring.

Mrs. Nicola Weiss explained the role of the board is to education the community and parents to see the big picture. She explained that parents learn from the school site, but that they need to broaden their horizons on what it takes. She explained that the board is to educate and guide them to unity.

Mrs. Weiss explained that the chief skill she would bring to the board is her background as a psychology and business major [in college]. She explained that her psychology education would allow her to understand the human aspect of being a board member. She feels that people are comfortable speaking to her and communicating their concerns. She explained her experience with a senior housing development company and her ability to see the business side of things, including understanding budget and what it takes.

When asked what her greatest contribution as a board member would be, she explained that she has volunteered in any committee or responsibility that she can, including PTA president, executive VP, VP of Ways and Means, SLIP Council, HUC Board, and FVEF Marketing and PR. She explained that these all have taught her to see the many sides that build the district and that it is so many tiny pieces that connect. She explained that it can't work unless they all work together. She expressed her belief that a lot of positive energy gets you a lot further than criticism and explained her enthusiasm to get people follow. She explained that with all of her responsibilities, others value her opinion and support her.

She explained that regarding cutting costs, a large percentage of the budget goes to salary. She noted that a lot of programs have been cut at the schools and we need to start thinking smarter for the future. She expressed the need to begin the negotiation process and not attack more educational programs. The district has already taken a lot of hits. She explained the need to avoid using the investment portfolio because this should be saved for the unknown, as more cuts are to come and it is important to have this for the future.

Mrs. Weiss explained that the greatest concern for education aside from financing is to gain positive support from the community and public. She explained that she does not want the board to have to fight on little bits and have the community think that it does not have the best interest of the children at heart, which is not true. She explained the need to bring positives back for the children and for community support; for example, bringing the reading clinicians back to keep Fountain Valley School District at its number one status. She explained her belief that the future is in science and technology and the importance of ensuring that we not fall behind in this, but instead stay up to date.

She explained her participation in the district as president of the PTA at Courreges School for two years, previous executive vice president and Ways and Means vice president, three years participation in SPC and auditor, SLIP council coordinator, ACE member and participant in the Sacramento Safari, steering committee member for the parent volunteer academy, as well as developing the community forums regarding the impacts of the budget cuts and current FVEF PR and marketing.

If she were to receive a parent complaint about a teacher, Mrs. Weiss explained that she would listen and get as many details as possible and then hand off this information to the appropriate district contact. She would make sure that they had as much information as possible so as not to be blindsided.

In closing, Mrs. Weiss explained that she is a mother of five children and that their education is most important to her. She explained that she speaks not just for her kids but all of the children in the district and she takes her commitment to volunteerism to heart. She described herself as young, enthusiastic with lots of energy and easy

to talk to and feel like connected to.

Dr. Kazuto Augustus explained the role of the board as the fiduciary responsibility for the finances of the district. He explained that the board is to see the big picture of the district and ensure that they are following the plan overall.

Dr. Augustus explained the chief skill that he would bring to the board is his financial background for reasonable decision making. He explained that he is not too cavalier in his judgments so that he can make reasonable decisions. He is a business man in the area and has experience with financial decisions. He has served on several boards and seen the results of hasty decisions. Unlike others, he explained that he does not have educational experience but does have children in the district that put him on the forefront to see how decisions affect students.

He explained that it is incumbent upon the board to continue the legacy of the district and to attempt different avenues to elevate those schools with different student mixes. As a whole, if his contribution allowed the district to remain on top, he would be happy.

Dr. Augustus explained regarding additional costing cutting he would look at administration and teachers. He explained that there were less of both when he was in school and he seemed to do well. He explained that he loves arts, but that if the goal is to teach reading, writing and arithmetic, then this area needs to be touched. If there were extra funds, then he would reconsider but he would look at administration first and teachers last.

Dr. Augustus explained the greatest concern with education today as an abundance of information. He explained the social experiments currently being done on students and the implementing of programs through teachers. He explained that teachers are instructed certain ways to teach and they cannot go outside of these ways. He noted that English language learners have a lot to deal with and with high test scores, teachers run the risk of just teaching to the test.

He explained his current participation in the district as little to none. If he were to receive a parent complaint about a teacher, Dr. Augustus explained that complaints to one board member should be brought to the whole board, so that the board can make a decision as a whole. He expressed the importance of one voice not speaking for all and the importance of not getting into the details of the teacher not doing their job, as this is not the role of the board.

In closing, Dr. Augustus explained that he is a believer in process and avoiding a de facto nomination. He explained that looking at the list of qualified individuals, it is incumbent upon the board to find someone with experience in the field, so that it is not just a learning experience.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no requests to address the board.

NEW ITEMS OF BUSINESS

Mrs. Allcorn Thanked Mr. McCombs for doing a great job this evening. She explained that it was not been easy with Mrs. Harney’s illness and parting and she commended Mr. McCombs on the job that he has done in leading the board. NEW ITEMS OF BUSINESS

Dr. Ecker Also thanked Mr. McCombs for leading the board. He noted that the district has been through a difficult experience and Mr. McCombs has done an admirable job leading the board during this difficult time.

Mr. McCombs Noted that it has been easy to do with a great governance team. He explained that the board is a collective team with the same mission at hand, the education of students.

Dr. Ecker Commended the ten candidates for board appointment and noted that it is generally not easy to sit in an interview, especially one done in public but those that came forward showed an interest and concern in the Fountain Valley School District and pride in the district as well. He noted that it is nice to see that ten submitted their interest and came forward and this is a wonderful statement of the district and the leadership that the board shows.

Mr. McCombs Agreed and noted the rarity of this occasion, the last time being when he participated in 1997.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion: Mrs. Edwards moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:44pm.

Second: Mrs. Allcorn

Vote: Unanimously approved

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