

Fountain Valley School District
Superintendent's Office

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

10055 Slater Avenue
Fountain Valley, CA 92708

November 8, 2011

MINUTES

President Judy Edwards called the special meeting of the Board of Trustees to order at 7:03pm. **CALL TO ORDER**

The following board members were present:

ROLL CALL

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| Mrs. Judy Edwards | President |
| Mr. Ian Collins | President Pro Tem |
| Christine Allcorn | Clerk |
| Sandra Crandall | Member |
| Jimmy Templin | Member |

Motion: Mr. Collins moved to approve the meeting agenda. **AGENDA APPROVAL**

Second: Mrs. Allcorn

Vote: 5-0

Mrs. Crandall led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**PLEDGE OF
ALLEGIANCE**

PUBLIC HEARING

The Board of Trustees conducted a public hearing for the purpose of receiving input on the recommendation of the School Boundaries and Closure Committee to close Moiola School. Public input was welcomed. 17 speakers addressed the Board of Trustees regarding the recommendation to close Moiola School.

**PUBLIC HEARING ON
RECOMMENDATION OF
THE SCHOOL
BOUNDARIES AND
CLOSURE COMMITTEE**

SUPERINTENDENT'S COMMENTS/NEW ITEMS OF BUSINESS

Mr. Templin noted his interest in sharing some thoughts with the Board regarding the possible closure of a school. He noted that despite the difficulty of discussing this topic in front of such a large audience he still feels it is an important conversation to have. He noted his respect for those members of the School Boundaries and Closure Committee and reminded the audience of

the importance of listening and not cheering or responding as the board conducts its discussion as it may prevent the continuation of the discussion. Mr. Templin noted his previous question to Mr. McMahon regarding whether or not the committee was tasked with coming up with alternatives to school closure. He explained that he does not hold it against the committee for not coming up with alternatives as this was not something that they were tasked with by the Board. He noted however that he did not know whether or not a committee was ever formed to complete the task of coming up with alternatives to school closure. His noted his interest in exploring alternatives.

Mrs. Allcorn noted that over the past five years the district has cut over 25% of its budget, with over 90% of the budget made up of staff and personnel that have endured cuts. She explained that this is not something arbitrary that was rushed into. She explained that as she listens to the speakers this evening explain how valuable this school is to them, she noted that if it was another school recommended we would hear from those parents and staff how important their school is. She noted that all of our schools are important and have value and that this is not about Moiola not being great. She noted that over the past five years the board has listened to numerous employees dealing with cuts and positions being eliminated. She noted that it is not just cutting to cut and eliminate a school; the board has been looking for alternatives. She noted the FV Music Live fundraiser that raised \$50,000 last year but explained that with \$400,000 required annually to run a school, she is not sure that the district can continually hold fundraisers in order to keep the school open. She addressed the questions raised by speakers regarding the district's property sales and noted that the district has followed the rules in each transaction and much like the rest of the population; the district has been affected by the downturn in the real estate market. She noted that we have ongoing expenses and if we have that great fundraiser, we may be able to pay the bills that year but what about the following years.

Mr. Templin noted his belief that it makes sense to think of alternatives. He noted that he does have some ideas but that they are not ones he is ready to share yet. He noted that he does not want to look at more cuts or that fundraisers are the answers but that it may be worthy of our time to put together a committee to come up with alternatives, noting one of the Board's goals to come up with more ways to draw in additional students. He noted his feelings that this is a big decision.

Mrs. Edwards noted that over the years the district has looked at several alternatives including bond issues, parcel taxes, unification twice and the selling of surplus properties, explaining

that the district has looked at several things. She explained that at the moment the Board is waiting for trigger to be pulled in Sacramento causing the Board to once again look at the budget. Dr. Ecker noted that in December the district should have a semblance as to whether or not the State has fallen shy of the \$4 billion shortfall in the budget that will trigger cuts to school districts.

Mrs. Crandall noted that in response to also being a new board member, as is Mr. Templin, she has watched the district for the past 41 years, 39 of them as an employee. And she noted that she had to watch the last board make some deep cuts and that she was the product of a major cut as a reading specialist. She noted that her position was completely eliminated as well as cuts to the librarian at her site, going from a full time employee to 10 hours per week. She also noted the five furlough days taken by all district employees in the previous year. She explained that she has been reading board packets for many years and has seen the hard decisions that have had to be made. She noted the numerous revenue enhancements, including grant writing pursued to the point that it could be pursued with the staff that the district has. She noted that the board voted on the expansion of grant writing to bring in additional funds. She noted the seeking of partnerships including the recent partnership with Hyundai for an ST Math lab at one of our schools. She noted that the district is constantly turning over the soil, seeking partnerships to increase our revenue stream. She explained that taxing people is not very popular at any time but when she is hearing from people that they cannot afford to send their students to fifth grade science camp, to make donations, etc. she understands this. She noted that parcel taxes and bond issues are as difficult decisions as this. She explained that, like Mr. Templin, she is a new board member, but has been watching the district for quite some time.

Mr. Templin noted his interest in processing this information and continuing the discussion at the next board meeting.

Mrs. Crandall requested that Dr. Ecker put together the list of cuts that previous boards have had to do and distribute this to the board.

Dr. Ecker agreed to put together the list of cuts and means for making up for the shortfall in revenue over the past five years.

Mr. Collins noted that he believes in the integrity of the committee and their work and how it was processed, knowing that it was good representation from all schools. He noted that although he has only been on the board for three years, he, too, watched the past boards and saw them making those initial painful cuts. He noted that upon joining the board and having to make the down and dirty cuts that affected all children in the

district and their learning. He noted his interest in hearing Mr. Templin's ideas, noting that this process has been going on since February and he has not yet heard these ideas. He noted that all staff took furlough days, and these individuals are members of this community and adjacent communities. He noted that these cuts have been painful for them. He noted that the district has great, caring teachers at all of our schools. He noted the difference from his own early education experience and that great teachers are pervasive across the district. He noted his understanding of the pain that those speakers tonight are feeling and his understanding of their passion. He noted that this speaks well for all employees in the district, noting that every time there has been a cut, employees have had to take on two jobs. He noted his work as an advocate in Sacramento for public education and his belief that the district has some of the finest schools in the County and State and no matter what the outcome of the vote, this will still remain true.

Dr. Ecker noted that he too enjoyed this opportunity for the Board to share their thoughts and he will provide to the Board the list of cuts made over the past five years. He noted that the decision to close a school is not something that is impulsive and that this board and previous boards struggled to add to their goals the examining of the efficient running of our school sites. He noted that Mr. McMahon is not the first CBO that has recommended closing a site. He noted that running too many sites may be something that the district can get away with in good times, although it is never a good idea, but it is not one that we can continue in bad times. He noted his serving on the Financial Crisis and Management Team (FCMAT) and those districts that we read about that become trustees of the state. He noted that often those mistakes that these districts make are not made in one year but over several years and include operating facilities that are above what their revenue means allow. He noted that deciding to close a school is over and above the most difficult decision that any board has to make but that the board is charged with the responsibility to serve the best interest of all sites and all students in the district and operating the district inefficiently effects the board's ability to do this. He noted that this is something that has been going on since February or March and is a lengthy process that will continue as the committee looks at boundaries as well. He noted that it has been a long time coming to this and is not a decision that this board has taken lightly and in taking this on shows a tremendous amount of courage as it is never a popular thing to do.

Mrs. Crandall noted that she found it interesting that as the committee looked at all of the criteria through the guidelines that

what bubbled to the top is our one K-8 school. And she noted that she has taken very seriously, as the other board members have, the emails sent by parents. She noted that one email sent recommended several articles regarding studies on K-8 schools, all focusing on districts in England, San Francisco, Chicago, New York and Philadelphia and all large districts in these cities. She noted that after reading these articles she looked all 28 districts in the County and found that there are only 6 other districts out of 28 with a K-8 school, with 1 district operating 2 K-8 schools with the chance of one possible addition in the future based on enrollment, for a total of only 8 K-8 schools. Based on this, she asked Mr. McMahon if the Fountain Valley School District has always been a K-8 district. He noted yes, the district has always been a K-8 district since its inception. Mrs. Crandall noted that out of the other 6 districts with K-8 schools, only 1 is also a K-8 district, all the others being unified school districts. She asked Mr. McMahon if in the history of the district its enrollment has ever reached 50,000, 30,000, or even 13,500 students. Mr. McMahon noted that the closest the district got at its peak was about 12,000 students in the 70's. He noted that the current enrollment is at 6,250. Mrs. Crandall noted that of the other districts with K-8 schools, their enrollments are 51,466, 36,000, 30,000, 26,134, 22,590 and 13,630 respectively; noting that even the lowest enrollment to support a K-8 school is twice the size of our district. She asked Mr. McMahon if the district has ever operated 54 schools, or 29 schools, both answers being no. The total school count is at 11. Mrs. Crandall noted that of the other districts with K-8 schools, the total school count ranges from 20-54 schools, at least 9 more than our district to have one K-8 school in the district. She asked Mr. McMahon if any of our sites have populations for 6-8 grade totaling 1480, or even 980, at one site to which both answers were no. She explained that of those districts operating a K-8 site, the range of 6-8 students in one program ranges from 785 to 309. She asked Mr. McMahon what the current count of 6-8 graders at Moiola is to which he answered 115. She explained that as she analyzed this, she saw that what it takes to truly support and sustain a K-8 school in a district is a larger school district with larger school wide populations, operating more schools and housing more students at a school site in order to get just one K-8 school in the district. With this, she asked Mr. McMahon if the district has the characteristics that it takes to sustain a K-8 school based on this research. Mr. McMahon noted that we do not have the same characteristics based on this research.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion: Mrs. Allcorn moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:47pm.

Second: Mr. Collins

Vote: Unanimously approved

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