

**West Contra Costa Unified School District
Minutes of the Board of Education
Special Workshop Meeting
Lovonya DeJean Middle School
3400 McDonald Avenue
Richmond, CA 94805**

February 2, 2009

President Audrey Miles called the meeting to order at 6:32 PM and led those in attendance in the pledge of allegiance. President Miles welcomed everyone and briefly discussed the purpose of the meeting and meeting procedures.

Board Members Present: Madeline Kronenberg, Antonio Medrano, Audrey Miles, Charles Ramsey, Tony Thurmond (arrived 6:45 PM).

Staff Present: Steve Collins, SELPA Director; Bill Fay, Associate Superintendent for Operations; Wendell Greer, Associate Superintendent K-Adult; Bruce Harter, Superintendent; Phyllis Rosen, Legal Assistant; Ken McDaniel, Electronics Supervisor; Elmer Meredith, Electronics Technician; Nia Rashidchi, Assistant Superintendent Educational Services; Jessica Romeo, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources; Bill Savidge, District Engineering Officer.

I. Discussion of School Closure Recommendations

Superintendent Harter provided history and background information regarding the district's school consolidation process including a brief update of events and changes since the process began.

Board Discussion:

President Miles invited Board members to discuss their recommendations and the reasoning behind them.

Mr. Ramsey discussed his opposition to including Nystrom among the list of closures.

Ms. Miles provided direction to board members regarding the discussion.

Ms. Kronenberg inquired about cost savings regarding closing Gompers, Serra/Alvarado, Seaview and the Furniture Warehouse. Superintendent Harter responded.

Mr. Medrano raised the issue of school size minimums and discussed the merits of building the Portola middle school campus for only 600 students.

Mr. Ramsey responded that the issue was one of isolation and he spoke about geographical equity and the need for a middle school in El Cerrito.

Ms. Miles asked Mr. Ramsey to comment on the Nystrom issue. Mr. Ramsey spoke about bond funding.

Mr. Thurmond spoke against closing any schools and the need for data on the sale of non-school campuses. Superintendent Harter responded.

Mr. Thurmond referred to a request for real estate assessments at the December 10, 2008 Board meeting. Mr. Fay provided a timeline for when the information would be available.

Mr. Thurmond requested that preliminary reports be made available to the public.

Mr. Medrano spoke about the difficulty of closing schools with high API scores.

Mr. Ramsey spoke of the need for a decision in less than 10 days and the reality of the financial crisis.

President Miles asked Superintendent Harter for information on the funding that Richmond and San Pablo have committed. Superintendent Harter responded.

Mr. Medrano raised the possibility of keeping JFK High School open with a smaller number of students.

Superintendent Harter responded describing the possibilities and providing historical perspective.

Mr. Medrano asked for data regarding sending JFK High School students to Richmond High School and Superintendent Harter responded.

Ms. Kronenberg inquired whether the district has spoken to the City of Pinole regarding Shannon Elementary.

Superintendent Harter responded and distinguished the situation in Pinole from that of Richmond and San Pablo.

Ms. Kronenberg raised questions regarding the appraisals and sale of non-school properties. Superintendent Harter responded and provided clarification on the use of funds received from the sale of property.

President Miles raised the subject of reduced bus fare for relocated students. Dr. Harter provided information on expanding the agreement with the West Contra Costa Transportation Advisory Committee (WCCTAC) regarding bus fare for middle school students.

Mr. Ramsey inquired about circumstances should Portola be closed and Superintendent Harter responded, discussing the effect of the 2008 Dasse study on the decision to close Adams Middle School.

Mr. Ramsey raised the issue of minimums and maximums and spoke of minimizing harm to the students.

President Miles asked for clarification of "minimums" and "maximums."

Superintendent Harter provided clarification and discussed the deepened fiscal crisis since the budget was approved in June 2008. He also discussed the timeline for consulting with the cities to find a way not to close schools.

Mr. Medrano raised the issue of closing Crespi and spoke about the school's history.
President Miles directed the conversation to the discussion of minimums and maximums.
Mr. Medrano said he sees the staff recommendations on page 7 (El Sobrante, Castro, Lake, Shannon, Adams, Seaview and the Furniture Warehouse) as a possibility.
Ms. Kronenberg said she would argue for the minimum.
Mr. Ramsey said he was somewhere in the middle, although closer to the maximum. He said he is closer to Mr. Medrano, but would not support the Nystrom/Grant scenario. He spoke about fairness, due process and the decision to remove Coronado from the list and added he was troubled by Shannon.
Mr. Thurmond said he would express his opinion on the minimum or the maximum when they voted on February 11th and said that we should continue to look at every option. He spoke about the sale of non-school properties, minimizing the impact on the students and approaching Sacramento to get the debt reduced. He spoke about cuts to benefits and operating expenses.
President Miles expressed concern for the welfare of the students and hope for obtaining support from the cities of Richmond and San Pablo. She commented that the Nystrom/Grant closure was not on the original list and discussed the potential support of city and other programs. She said she was not clear on the minimum/maximum issue at this point.
Mr. Thurmond inquired about the state funding for JFK High School and any other school receiving QEIA (Quality Education Investment Act) funds. Superintendent Harter and Assistant Superintendent Rashidchi responded.
Ms. Kronenberg inquired about the availability of QEIA funds should JFK become an educational center.
Ms. Rashidchi responded.
Mr. Ramsey commented on how the maximum would hurt where programs were doing well, and said this needed further discussion.
Mr. Medrano inquired about the Nystrom/Grant closure and proposed having district offices or other services at Nystrom. Superintendent Harter responded.
Ms. Kronenberg asked questions about QEIA and time limits. Superintendent Harter responded.
Mr. Thurmond spoke about the February 4th Board meeting and the opportunity to give direction as to the recommendations. Superintendent Harter provided clarification and discussed procedures for the February 4th and 11th board meetings.
Mr. Ramsey inquired about the role of the State Trustee and what would happen should the board fail to come to a decision on February 11th. Superintendent Harter responded. Mr. Ramsey asked to have additional information prior to the February 11 Board meeting.
President Miles spoke about the need for the Board to make a decision on February 11.
Mr. Thurmond raised questions regarding closing Crespi Middle School and attempting to keep high performing schools open.
Mr. Ramsey discussed the possibility of having an additional Special Board meeting by the weekend.
Mr. Kronenberg spoke about the benefits of having an additional special meeting and the need for a vetting of the whole K-8 scenario to understand the compromises made with a K-8 cost neutral scenario.
Mr. Medrano commented on the possibility of closing Crespi.
President Miles directed Superintendent Harter to examine the possibility of a special board meeting by the weekend. Superintendent Harter clarified why Crespi had not been included on the closure list.
Mr. Thurmond said he would like to continue to hear every option and that he is opposed to closing high performing schools.

II. Public Comment:

Oji S. Blacksten, Bob Kastner, Nancie Rouse, Miné Ternar Kal, Gig Jenkins, Gabriella Welton, Dr. Mary Schmida, Ian Bader, Valerie Snider, Sims Thompson, Jr., Ann Palmer, Charles Rachlis, Jill Wolkenfeld, Nicholas Zoffel.

III. Adjournment

President Miles adjourned the meeting at 8:41 PM.

BH:pr

<i>AAM</i>
Approved 3-4-09