

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

**February 23, 2011**

**A. Opening Procedures**

Clerk Madeline Kronenberg called the meeting to order at 6:37 PM

**A.1 Pledge of Allegiance**

Ms. Kronenberg led those in attendance in the pledge of allegiance.

**A.3 Roll Call**

**Board Members Present:** Madeline Kronenberg, Antonio Medrano, Elaine Merriweather, Charles Ramsey, Tony Thurmond

**Staff Present:** Steve Collins, SELPA Director; Martin Coyne, Director Internal Audits; Otilia Espinoza, Interpreter; Lisa Erwin, Executive Director Business Services; Sheri Gamba, Associate Superintendent for Business Services; Wendell Greer, Associate Superintendent for Secondary Schools; Bruce Harter, Superintendent; Debbie Haynie, Executive Secretary; Josh Herrera, Electronics Technician; Lyn Potter, Director Categorical and Instructional Support Services; Nia Rashidchi, Assistant Superintendent Educational Services; Ann Reinhausen, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources

**B. Action Item**

**B.1 Helms Middle School Fields Master Plan Approval and Architectural Services Contract**

Superintendent Harter introduced Mr. Jose Vilar, architect for the Helms Middle School project. Mr. Vilar provided a presentation regarding the master planning and architectural services for the completion of the fields and associated site work, utilities and landscaping at the campus.

**Public Comment:**

None

**Board Comment:**

President Ramsey asked about a timeline for the design process. Mr. Vilar responded that the project is expected to be ready for bid and with construction beginning in the spring 2012.

Mr. Medrano said he was pleased with the plans. He asked Mr. Vilar for clarification of the diagram of the gym and other areas noted. Mr. Vilar responded. Discussion continued about the construction of the proposed community center, restrooms and water fountains.

**MOTION: Mr. Medrano moved approval of the Helms Middle School Fields Master Plan Approval and Architectural Services Contract. Mr. Thurmond seconded. Ms. Kronenberg, Mr. Medrano, Ms. Merriweather, Mr. Thurmond and President Ramsey voted yes with no abstentions and no absences. Motion carried 5-0-0-0.**

**C. Discussion Item**

**C.1 Budget Discussion and Planning 2011-2012**

Ms. Gamba introduced John Gray of School Services of California for a presentation regarding the financial impact from a state perspective. Mr. Gray explained California's education spending compared to other states in the nation. He presented scenarios for the proposed tax extension by voters in June.

**Board Comment:**

President Ramsey asked questions about the March 16 date for the ballot deadline. Mr. Gray responded that the proposed election would be set for June 7. President Ramsey asked about the proposed multiple budget scenarios. Mr. Gray discussed the projected loss of revenue whether or not the ballot measure is passed by the electorate. Mr. Ramsey further talked about the District's position with the required layoff notices scheduled for March.

Ms. Kronenberg asked about the county office of education and the Governor's two proposals. Mr. Gray explained that the county office of education will ask the District to base budget decisions on the lower amount incorporating the expected loss of \$349 per ADA.

President Ramsey asked about legislation regarding adult education and its potential impact. Ms. Gamba responded that it is not yet clear how the bill will protect adult education funding. Further discussion was held regarding legislatively reduced penalties for class size reduction.

Ms. Merriweather asked about dipping into reserve funds. Mr. Gray responded with information about the minimum reserve requirements.

Mr. Medrano had questions about flexibility options. Ms. Gamba responded.

Mr. Thurmond spoke about the impact of shifting mental health service funds as the county prepares for the impact of the realignment. He said that he would like to discuss solutions to the budget crisis.

President Ramsey spoke of the federal stimulus funding and federal lobbying. Mr. Gray talked about the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and federal jobs funds. He explained that efforts at lobbying the federal government are not viewed optimistically.

Ms. Gamba provided a presentation regarding previous Board actions, financial data, overview of the state budget scenarios and District level budget planning. Ms. Reinhagen spoke about the potential certificated employee layoffs with the March 15 statutory deadline building on the financial worst case scenario. Ms. Gamba further provided information about funding models for K-3 class size reduction in best and worst case scenarios.

**Public Comment:**

Christina Tworek, Kristen Pursley, Gayle Louie, Janet Johnson, Toni Favila, Cindy Kihm, Ellen Hartigan-O'Connor, Tammy Campbell

**Board Comment:**

Mr. Medrano asked questions about the use of bond funds for pay off of long-term debt. Ms. Gamba responded with information about language in the 2010 Measure D allowing payoff of Certificates of Participation (COPs). She elaborated all the steps necessary before possible Board action, including approval of a waiver request pending before the State Board of Education. Mr. Medrano asked questions about the Voluntary Integration grant funding repayment and the definition of Certificates of Participation. Ms. Gamba provided clarification and President Ramsey elaborated on the details regarding COPs. Mr. Medrano asked for clarification of the legally required number of school days. Ms. Gamba said that the law requires 175 days of instruction while the District is currently teaching 180 days with furlough days outside of the school year.

Mr. Ramsey asked Mr. Gray for his opinion about the worst case scenario of an expected budget loss. Mr. Gray responded.

Mr. Thurmond asked questions about middle college high school, and any discussion about the closure of the campus. Ms. Gamba responded that there is no plan to close Middle College High School. He continued with questions about a local fund balance sweep of reserve funds. Ms. Gamba referred to the 2010-2011 First Interim Report statements for clarification and net change in fund balance as contingency funds to aid in offsetting expenses next year. Mr. Ramsey suggested using those funds over a three year period for contingencies. Mr. Thurmond further asked about deferred furlough days for employees. Mr. Ramsey mentioned required contract negotiations. Ms. Gamba said this could be a difficult item to build into a budget, as the negotiation process is required. Mr. Thurmond continued with discussion about deferring payments to other entities in order to free funds for more necessary expenses. Ms. Kronenberg spoke about the restricted timeline and opening the District to possible litigation or challenge for failure to pay financial obligations. She said that she did not think that the bargaining units would agree to reopen contract negotiations. She said she is in favor of going forward with the information currently before the Board.

Superintendent Harter spoke about negotiations with IBM regarding scheduled payments.

Ms. Merriweather asked about the amount currently held in reserve accounts. Ms. Gamba responded with information about the 3% reserve and ending fund balance of \$18.1 million. She further spoke about only 30% of that ending fund

balance in cash. Ms. Merriweather further asked about savings of \$4.4 million through employee sacrifices reflected in proposed budgets. Ms. Gamba responded that this amount was reflected in this year's budget.

Mr. Medrano asked about tapping into reserve funds. Ms. Gamba responded for clarification. President Ramsey spoke about his reluctance of spending reserves on ongoing capital projects. He then made a recommendation that the 2012 payment for the Voluntary Integration audit finding be justified by using reserves to pay off as a one-time payment. This would free funds to be used to support class size reduction.

Mr. Medrano asked about the IBM debt balance. Ms. Gamba responded that the principal balance is \$3.7 million.

Mr. Thurmond spoke about bond funds to pay off COPs, preserving class size and School Resource Officer (SRO) contracts.

Ms. Gamba said that K-3 class size reduction was financed with grant funds this year. She suggested using any available funds for adult education and SRO contracts, and supporting class size reduction at Title I schools to leverage state funding.

Ms. Kronenberg said she would support class size reduction in Title I schools. Ms. Gamba spoke about the K-3 staffing ratio of 28-1 at non-Title I schools. Ms. Kronenberg spoke about also finding funding to support middle schools. She continued to speak about state funding for adult education.

Ms. Merriweather talked about \$2 million to support SRO contracts and adult education. She said she supports finding funds to keep these programs going. She was in favor of using reserves over the required 3%. Discussion continued about taking reserves down below the required limit. Ms. Gamba pointed out that several one-time options are proposed for next year with Ed Jobs funds and the local fund balance sweep. She reiterated that it is important to keep reserve funds in place because the District is in a financial crisis.

Ms. Gamba restated that she heard direction from the Board to maintain K-3 class size reduction at Title I schools, that the Board is comfortable with the local fund balance sweep concept, and support for debt service relief of COPs and voluntary integration program. She also stated that she understood the Board's direction for SRO contracts and the adult education program can be more fine-tuned with further budget development with the second interim report.

Mr. Thurmond asked for clarity about the proposed staff reductions and preserving class size reductions. Ms. Gamba responded with financial figures. Mr. Thurmond said he would support preservation of the K-3 class size reduction program and teaching staff.

Mr. Medrano, Ms. Merriweather, and Ms. Kronenberg each had further comment regarding teaching and making jobs a priority through class size reduction. Discussion continued.

Superintendent Harter spoke about layoff notices as giving the Board maximum flexibility for budget decisions. Ms. Gamba said she will rework the numbers regarding 26 rather than 85 layoffs.

Ms. Merriweather said she liked the idea of partnering with the cities, but still believes that the District can find the necessary \$2 million to maintain programs.

Ms. Kronenberg had an additional question about the reserve balance. Ms. Gamba said the required legal statute of 3% is about \$9 million. Ms. Kronenberg said she was comfortable using funds for class size reduction costs. Mr. Ramsey spoke further about using one time funds for ongoing expenses. He was opposed to spending reserves, preferring to save for use over the next few years. Discussion took place about spending practices in preparation for the future.

Superintendent Harter gave final comments about the many uncertainties and the steps by the Board to set priorities. He said he had concerns about the debt service, the legal opinion, the approval of the waiver application and the ability to sell bonds to pay off the debt.

President Ramsey thanked staff and adjourned the meeting.

**D. Next Scheduled Board Of Education Meeting**  
Lovonya DeJean Middle School – March 2, 2011

**E. Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned the meeting at 9:34 p.m.

BH:dh  
Min sp 2-23-11

**MK**  
*Approved 3/16/11*