

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

**March 27, 2013**

**A. CLOSED SESSION**

**A. OPENING PROCEDURES**

President Kronenberg called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M. The Board recessed into Closed Session.  
President Kronenberg called the Public Session to order at 6:35 P.M.

**A.1 Pledge of Allegiance and Welcome / Meeting Procedures**

President Kronenberg led those in attendance in the pledge of allegiance and offered welcome and instructions to the public regarding the meeting.

**A.2 Roll Call**

**Board Members Present:** Randy Enos, Todd Groves, Madeline Kronenberg, Charles Ramsey. Elaine Merriweather arrived at 6:51 PM.

**Staff Present:** Magdy Abdalla, Engineering Officer; Matthew Burnham, Portola Principal; Steve Collins, SELPA Director; Clifford Dorton, Electronics Technician; Sheri Gamba, Associate Superintendent, Wendell Greer, Associate Superintendent; Bruce Harter, Superintendent; Debbie Haynie, Executive Secretary; Antoinette Henry-Evans, K-12 Executive Director; Nancy Ivey, Portola Vice Principal; Lisa Levy, Washington Elementary Principal; David Luongo, El Cerrito Principal; Reyna Ortiz de Touciel, Translator; Wendy Pangelina, Human Resources Technician; Nia Rashidchi, Assistant Superintendent; Judith Sanders, Kensington Principal; Kenneth Whittemore, Assistant Superintendent Human Resources; Darrin Zaragoza, Coordinator

**A.3 Report/Ratification of Closed Session**

Superintendent Harter asked the Board to ratify action taken in Closed Session regarding the appointment of Michael Wasilchin, Director of Personnel.

**MOTION: Mr. Ramsey moved to ratify the action taken in Closed Session regarding the appointment of Michael Wasilchin as Director of Personnel. Mr. Groves seconded. Mr. Enos, Mr. Groves, Mr. Ramsey and President Kronenberg voted yes, with no abstentions and Ms. Merriweather absent. Motion carried 4-0-0-1.**

**B. BUSINESS ITEMS – Consent Items**

**B.1 Portola Middle School at Castro Elementary School Site Modernization and New Construction Award of Contract**

Mr. Abdalla read a revision to this item into the record.

*Hibser-Yamauchi Architects has prepared plans and specifications for the project. Scope of work includes selective demolition of the existing Castro Elementary School site, modernization of remaining buildings, construction of new buildings, including a new multi-purpose building, a new classroom building, and associated site improvements.*

*The District conducted a public bid process for the project. Bids were received on March 21, 2013. Six contractors submitted bids. They are as follows: Arntz Builders, Inc., \$42,942,000; Lathrop Construction Associates, Inc. \$43,793, 714; Alton Construction, Inc., \$44,123,022; Roebbelen Contracting, Inc., \$44,343,281; Wright Contracting, Inc., \$44,450,365; S.J. Amoroso Construction, Inc., \$44,977,000. The lowest apparent bidder is Arntz Builders, Inc.*

**Recommendation:** Award contract to the lowest responsive, responsible bidder at the conclusion of the bid protest process period.

**Fiscal Impact:** \$42,942,000 - \$44,977,000 Funded from the Measure D-2010 Bond.

Mr. Ramsey asked for an explanation of the bid protest period. Mr. Abdalla responded with information about the required three day waiting period for this size project. He remarked that one protest had been received and a letter

was sent to the contractor for opportunity to respond. Mr. Abdalla estimated that the protest would be resolved by early next week. This item will return for Board ratification at the April 10 meeting.

**MOTION: Mr. Ramsey moved approval of Consent Item B.1 Portola Middle School at Castro Elementary School Site Modernization and New Construction Award of Contract. Mr. Groves seconded. Mr. Enos, Mr. Groves, Mr. Ramsey and President Kronenberg voted yes, with no abstentions and Ms. Merriweather absent. Motion carried 4-0-0-1.**

**C. SPECIAL MEETING PURPOSE / PROCEDURES**

President Kronenberg explained the purpose of the meeting as opportunity for a public conversation around the future of Portola including the rebuilding of the structure and continuing to excel in academics and safety.

Mr. Groves said this is an opportunity to think about what the community wants for the school and confidence building.

President Kronenberg called a brief recess of the meeting due to technical difficulties at 6:45 PM.

The meeting resumed at 6:49 PM.

**D. BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND DATA REVIEW**

Superintendent Harter provided background and focus regarding the eight schools of the El Cerrito Family. The presentation included information regarding API scores over the last three years, descriptions of schools students including English Language Learners, Free and Reduced Lunch, Special Education as well as enrollment stability.

Ms. Merriweather arrived at 6:51 PM.

**Board Comment:**

Mr. Groves said he found the data helpful.

President Kronenberg reflected that antidotal stories do not always fit with the actual data.

**E. PORTOLA MIDDLE SCHOOL PRESENTATION**

Portola Principal Matthew Burnham provided a report on the school. He began with the school's vision statement created by faculty and staff with a focus on student learning. He continued to elaborate on the school's diversity and unique challenges, including safety, communications, opportunities, resources, and goals for the 2013-14 year.

Mr. Burnham concluded by seeking support on two initiatives for the school: the Universal Design for Learning program and the development of a learning center for the school.

**Board Comment:**

Mr. Enos said he appreciated the presentation, as well as the commitment of faculty community.

Ms. Merriweather said that she had visited school several times but learned new things with this presentation. She agreed that the focus of Portola is about the children and academic success.

Mr. Ramsey spoke about building the new facility. He also asked Mr. Burnham for his thoughts about PE Waivers. Mr. Burnham answered with reasons for seeking a waiver as the opportunity for a student to take more than one elective and also because of large PE class sizes. Mr. Burnham said he felt that PE classes offered opportunity for students to mix well with their peers, but the large classes sizes hinders the ability of the teacher. If a large number of students received a PE waiver, Mr. Burnham said the school would have to offer more elective classes which would require more Full Time Equivalent teaching positions. Mr. Ramsey continued with questions about the gap in achievement for incoming students and the challenge that the wide range in skills presents to the faculty.

Mr. Groves responded that he thought the Universal Design for Learning Program and a learning center would be items that the Board can support to assist Portola students.

President Kronenberg said she agreed that the Universal Design program addressed the need for support in meeting children at their different learning levels and skills. President Kronenberg asked Mr. Burnham for his vision for a learning center. He elaborated with information about serving the lowest performing students and students with

special needs. He saw the model as one for students working in small groups to build skills to use successfully in the classroom. The program would work with graduate tutors and an RSP teacher.

Mr. Groves acknowledged the hard work of Mr. Burnham and his staff. He continued to talk about changing the culture among students. Mr. Groves suggested moving ahead with plans for the Universal Design program and learning center.

Ms. Merriweather said that she thought that the new building and programming would draw more students.

## **F. COMMUNITY SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENTS**

J.J. Thorp, Ellen Hartigan-O’Conner, Mary Schmida, Bryan Brandow, Sally Finchbaugh, Carolyn Day Flowers, Heidi Bartsch, Bobbie Dowling, Luisa Valiela, Leslie Reckler, Joanna Pace, Susan Riggle, Bob Adams, Julie Yamashita, Saidah Said

## **G. RELATED SUGGESTIONS**

### **G.1 Scholar in Residence**

Mr. Groves provided information about the need for external resources to support a proposal for an annual position for an education academic acting as a Scholar in Residence to impart their research knowledge, support best practices for student learning, and provide local context behind education issues unique to the District. This position would be charged with following projects and leading workshops to support interested educators to incorporate new classroom strategies. Each year would conclude with a detailed understanding from an academic researcher and professional conference about an area of interest.

#### **Board discussion:**

Ms. Merriweather said that she would like to see more information before voting. Mr. Enos agreed with Ms. Merriweather.

**Motion: Mr. Ramsey moved for consensus that the item Scholar in Residence be brought to the April 10 meeting for ratification by the Board. Mr. Groves seconded. A roll call vote was taken with Mr. Groves, Mr. Ramsey and President Kronenberg voting yes, Mr. Enos and Ms. Merriweather voting no with no abstentions and no absences. Motion carried 3-2-0-0.**

### **G.2 School of the Arts Focus**

Superintendent Harter spoke about a focus for the arts and strengthening the programs currently in the academies of fine arts. With the elimination of the elementary music programs due to fiscal constraints, there are a few areas where families have gotten together to support instrumental music, leaving lower income areas with no instrumental music program. Superintendent Harter would like to begin to restore the arts in the District with a goal of developing a fine arts academy at El Cerrito High. This is an opportunity for the Board and staff to discuss developing a plan.

Mr. Ramsey agreed that the District has missed the enriched diversity of arts. He is willing to support bringing this item back to the Board for ratification at the April 10 meeting.

Mr. Groves asked David Luongo, Keith Johnson, Tiffany Carrico, and Matthew Burnham to address the Board. They spoke about the robust performing arts program at El Cerrito High School. Mr. Luongo recommended a conversation about the existing three academies and logistical components of adding a performing arts academy. Mr. Johnson thanked the Board for the conversation about an elementary and middle school music program. Ms. Carrico spoke about the opportunity for two middle school beginning band classes for woodwinds and brass instruments.

Ms. Merriweather spoke about the voter approved parcel tax funding this type of programs. She was supportive of the return of elementary music.

President Kronenberg said she also supported this idea as a way to serve students.

**Motion: Mr. Ramsey motioned for this item to be brought to the April 10 meeting for ratification by the Board. Mr. Enos seconded. A roll call vote was taken with Mr. Enos, Mr. Groves, Ms. Merriweather, Mr. Ramsey and President Kronenberg voting yes, with no abstentions and no absences. Motion carried 5-0-0-0.**

**G.3 P.E. Waiver**

Darrin Zaragoza, Coordinator for Physical Education Programs, presented a recommendation for the exemption waiver policy for middle school physical education programs. He gave information about the criteria for student consent to the exemption and meeting five of the six standards of the Physical Fitness Performance Test administered in Grade 7. Other factors may include required academic enrollment, engagement in an interscholastic athletic program, or possession of exceptional talent or ability.

Mr. Enos moved that the Board accept and implement this recommendation.

Mr. Ramsey said he thought this was a fair proposal to demonstrate the ability to meet the requirements.

Ms. Merriweather said it is a good idea because a parent knows what is best for their child and may want an extra academic challenge for them.

Mr. Groves asked for clarification about whether this applied to all schools. Mr. Zaragoza said this policy would apply to middle schools only.

President Kronenberg agreed that this was an excellent idea and related that her children took advantage of the procedure years ago finding it to be helpful to many students.

**Motion: Mr. Enos motioned for this item to be brought to the April 10 meeting for ratification by the Board. Mr. Ramsey seconded. A roll call vote was taken with Mr. Enos, Mr. Groves, Ms. Merriweather, Mr. Ramsey and President Kronenberg voting yes, with no abstentions and no absences. Motion carried 5-0-0-0.**

**H. THE NEXT SCHEDULED BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING**

Lovonya DeJean Middle School – April 10, 2013

**I. BOARD DISCUSSION**

Mr. Ramsey wished the audience a good Passover, a happy Easter, and a restful spring break.

**J. ADJOURNMENT**

President Kronenberg adjourned the meeting at 8:40 P.M.

*Motion vote count order: Yes-No-Abstain-Absent*

BH:dh

Min 3-27-13 sp

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>CTR</b> Approved 4/10/13</p>
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