

**SAUSALITO MARIN CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD MEETING MINUTES
February 10, 2016**

ATTENDANCE

Board Members Present: Caroline Van Alst, William Ziegler, Thomas Newmeyer, Ida Times
Absent Joshua Barrow

The meeting was called to order at 4:30 p.m.

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS PRIOR TO CLOSED SESSION

Marilyn Mackel thanked the board for changing the meeting venue to the library, so that a larger number of community members could attend. She continued: a full-time principal at Bayside/ MLK Jr. Academy, who has all the necessary resources, is vital to the success of the school. A small school requires the same amount of work, including paperwork, as a larger school. This is especially true in this school, where the social and emotional needs of the students and their parents are great; where academic performance is particularly low, and where the demands and involvement of the community are high. For all of these reasons, this school needs a full-time principal, assistant principal and licensed clinical social worker. If the board decides not to fund these positions, as well as those of math coach, a science coach, an arts teacher etc, it will face the same problems that it has been experiencing in the last few months. Lastly, a potential buyout for some of the certificated staff may mean that the school loses the teachers who make the school work, know its children and hold its history. Please do not take that gamble.

Laura Cox, executive director of Bridge the Gap, echoed Ms. Mackel's opinions. She said that currently at Bayside/ MLK Jr. Academy, scores are bad and the students' social and emotional problems are great. We need a principal who can lead academically and provide social and emotional support to the students; I don't think combining the responsibilities of principal and superintendent will work, she said. Kids are struggling because of a lack of resources. You need a principal, a vice principal and a counselor. You need a credentialed math teacher who can teach the middle grades. I implore you to be more active, she concluded.

Pam Dake reminded the board that Wednesday night is church night in Marin City and board meetings should not be scheduled on those nights.

Michael Tabb said: Our community is going through a whole lot; what was the thinking behind the decision to schedule the meeting in the small offices at Bridgeway? I am really concerned that we are not connecting, he told the board. He then asked if the board is accepting recommendations for the principal position.

Superintendent Ferguson said we are always open to suggestions. Trustee Van Alst apologized for the oversight that resulted in scheduling the board meeting at the district office.

We are at a place where we are identifying the needs of the community and I ask you to be supportive of those needs, Mr. Tabb concluded.

Judi Shils, director of Conscious Kitchen, said it's sad to hear so much dissension. This is an opportunity for people to come together. We have to put down our swords and respect each other. Everybody here is human; let's stop having so much tension.

Oshalla-Dee Marcus said: I am a community art activist; we are at a time of transition and challenges. As you consider people for the position of principal, it's important that the person reflect the make up of the community and its cultural diversity. It's important for children to see people who look like them.

CLOSED SESSION

The Board convened closed session at 5:55 p.m.

RECONVENE TO OPEN SESSION

Open session reconvened at 6:34 p.m.

Trustee Times joined the meeting at 6:34 p.m.

REPORT OUT OF CLOSED SESSION

Trustee Van Alst said that due to the community reaction to the flawed hiring process, we halted the hiring of an associate superintendent/principal. We thank everyone for their input. We have now decided to look for a principal; someone to lead the community, lead the school and be the heart and soul of Bayside/ MLK Jr. Academy. This hire will be based on a superintendent recommendation to the board.

Superintendent Ferguson said the he would try to get as many first-rate applicants as possible. He continued: I will reach out to the community to see what you want in a principal. We will have interview teams of 10-12 people, made up of representatives of community groups that you yourselves will choose and send me. We hope to have 5-6 good candidates. My job will be to take the top candidates to the board for the final selection process. One of the problems here has been the frequent transition of administrators, so I will look at the salary structure and try to build some longevity into the contract to encourage people to stay a long time. My hope is that the person we hire bonds with the community and stays here. In about two weeks, we will have the first meetings with representatives of the community.

Trustee Ziegler agreed that this would be the right path to take going forward and said he was looking forward to the process.

Trustee Times also said that this is the right direction for the district.

Trustee Newmeyer said that he attended the Saving a Generation meeting in Marin City. It was a very well-run meeting, where people spoke about the qualities they want in a leader. The majority felt that being a principal should not be just a job, but a calling. The person chosen should be deeply aware of the community, experienced, and able to continue the work that Ms. Newton and Dr. Thornton have begun. Above all, the principal should be willing to demand resources from the board, so that the school can succeed.

Trustee Van Alst said that we are at a turning point for the district and expressed the hope that we move forward in a positive way.

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

Trustee Van Alst introduced Terena Mares, Deputy Superintendent of Business Services at MCOE and thanked her for coming to the meeting to give an overview of the LCAP process.

Ms. Mares said: I was here three or four years ago talking to the board about finance and oversight. We do not tell a district how to spend its money, but we can tell them when they are heading into trouble and set up an intervention. When Local Control Funding Formula came on the scene in 2013, the State expanded the county's role to include Local Control & Accountability Plan oversight. While LCFF determines how much the district gets, LCAP is the plan for spending that money. Every district must have a plan that includes stakeholder engagement and concerns itself specifically with low income students, foster youth and English language learners. Part of the engagement process is having a parent advisory committee on LCAP. Your district's LCAP was reviewed exhaustively and returned with our input regarding missing matrices. From our perspective, the stakeholder engagement piece looked great on paper. At the end of the day, it's the community that is going to give it a thumbs up or down. Supposing that you have all the requirements spelled out, how do you know that your plan is working? To address this issue, the State will adopt a new evaluation tool in September.

Trustee Newmeyer asked: who is in charge of the process in a district this size? Ms. Mares replied that the superintendent must lead, but the site administrators are responsible for LCAP implementation. Until we are connected to the students and the engagement process is in place, LCAP does not succeed. We have not all changed our habit of non-engagement, but this process allows us to get there. We have to be better at listening, she concluded.

Marilyn Mackel said: I want to speak to a bit of history. To understand the present situation in our schools, we should go back to the 19th century Opium Wars, when the West tried to bring China to its knees with drugs and gunboats. In our own time, cocaine and its derivative crack were dumped among the black community in Los Angeles, then across the country. Gary Webb wrote a series of articles in the San Jose Mercury that showed a link between the CIA and its support of the Iran Contra wars and the crack epidemic of the 1980s. This epidemic decimated the black community. As a judge in Los Angeles, I attended briefings on the effect of crack on the human brain. We were told that this drug disables the part of the brain that experiences joy. There was not one African American family that was not affected by this tragedy, and we still don't know the full effect of the damage done to our children's brains. Many of the folks here in Marin City are the third and fourth generation to have been impacted by these events. It is not the case that the people in this community brought these problems on themselves. This is an awful episode in our history, and our community is still suffering from its aftershocks.

COMMUNITY INPUT

Kindergarten teacher Jennifer Banks, speaking on behalf of the teachers' union, said that the teachers are happy to hear that the emphasis is once again on the kids. We want to be a part of it; we love the kids, and we are here to stay, she told the board. Special Education teacher Emily Derecat and reading intervention teacher Ellen Franz echoed her words.

Ricardo Moncrief, director of the community group ISOJI (Nigerian for revitalization) said that his organization calls itself a multidisciplinary, neutral, intermediary catalyst. We want to connect all the dots and create equity for this community, he said. The group was instrumental in the creation of the Health and Wellness Center and started a conversation about nutrition and feeding our children organic food. The Local Control & Accountability Plan will be a valuable tool. We want to be part of the process and will call a meeting to discuss LCAP as well as the hiring of the new principal, he concluded.

Oshalla Dee Marcus said that she would like to discuss art as a tool to teach reading, history and wellness and to help children experience joy. So often education is dry and boring, but if we learn through the arts, if we learn math through music and history through theater, then school is no longer boring. I want to make sure that art is back on the table for the kids, she said.

Gayle Henrickson thanked the board on behalf of the Saving a Generation Committee. She handed out a summary of the Committee's ideas to the board. She said: It is heartening to see how deeply people here care about the children and how thoughtful the community is. I want to acknowledge Bettie Hodges, who works so hard on a shoestring budget and makes stuff happen. It's an honor to work with her. She then enumerated the qualities that her group would like to see in a principal:

- Relevant experience and a record of success in turning around a similar school in a similar situation
- Awareness of culturally relevant curricula and LCAP experience to help guide our process
- A desire to stay with the district
- Compassion for the children
- Cultural sensitivity to understand why the kids are acting out
- Someone who does not look at shaming and expulsion as the way to go
- Someone who can open her heart to the kids and get to know them as individuals

Leadership qualities to manage resources and demand what is needed to be an effective site administrator
Someone who takes the time to see what is working and builds on it and tries for continuity of programs and activities
Someone who can design an inclusive approach rather than build walls between the two schools

Let's share resources and work for all the kids, she said. She reiterated that the position should be that of principal only. The district's top down system needs to be examined. The principal needs to have authority over curriculum and budget. Ms. Henrickson then listed the resources that have been eliminated at Bayside/ MLK Jr. Academy:

- Cuts to counseling, physical education, visual and performing arts
- The elimination of Spanish and the math coach position
- Layoff of three single-subject teachers, leaving two multiple-subject teachers to teach three grade levels
- These kids are not failing because they are stupid – we are the ones failing them, she concluded.

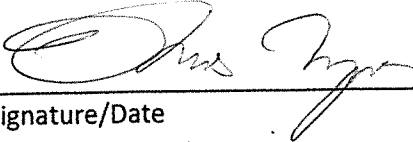
Trustee Newmeyer said: Three years ago, the district was facing a financial quagmire. It is difficult to reconcile what the public wants and our responsibility to balance the budget.

Trustee Van Alst said that she has seen lots of new faces at recent board meetings. These are your meetings and I appreciate that you are here, she said.

Trustee Times said that this afternoon, the community bid farewell to Dr. James Noel. Dr. Noel served as pastor of St. Andrew Presbyterian Church in Marin City from 1976 to 1987. He and other community leaders formed the Marin City Community Economic Development Corporation to purchase land in Marin City on which to build affordable housing, provide essential services, and support the local economy. He was a wonderful artist. He loved to teach, read and study and he loved Marin City.

ADJOURNMENT

Newmeyer/Ziegler/All to adjourn the meeting at 7:46 p.m.

 3/8/2015

Signature/Date

Trustee

Title