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Board Highlights

March 9, 2004

Trustees see signs of interest in e-mail, choice

Parents, teachers and students filled the boardroom, hallways and foyer waiting a chance to press their issue with trustees. Some stood out on the lawn and listened through open windows. Many carried signs or wore buttons to indicate an issue or a preference. News media representatives squeezed in to get a sound bite.

Trustees obliged the crowd, listening to two hours of comment on a variety of issues from the district's e-mail policy to school choice and personnel decisions. For some, the effort was worth it when the board responded by asking to review the e-mail policy at a later date and opening SHS closed doors to Laurelwood students.

Loss of e-mail hurts students

AHS and EAHS students boosted impassioned pleas for an open e-mail policy with a power point presentation, and a research packet that included

Reported by Mariann Klinger

letters of support from state Senator **Jeff Denham, Jeff Patterson**, president of Gaggle.Net and University of California at Santa Cruz official **Pablo Reguerin**. Students and teachers lost the use of web-based e-mail in January. **Robert Shemwell**, director of instructional technology, cited concerns for a virus invading the district's computers as the reason for eliminating e-mail access. He offered to leave one or two computers at each school site available for student e-mail use.

"Two computers just don't get it," said Trustee **Phil Tabera**, who asked the board to get involved in the issue.

At the meeting, many speakers acknowledged the policy generated difficulty and inconvenience for the majority, but AHS student **Afredo Cervantes**, who showed the power point, told trustees that the policy closed avenues of success for a significant number of students. Many students are unable to complete college applications and financial aid requests, he said. "At AHS only 30 percent of juniors and seniors have home access."

The importance of the message was driven home when AHS student **Mayra Gomez** showed a response from California State at Fresno dropping her

from its admission list. The university noted that responses must be by e-mail. Cervantes' power point presentation featured the policies of Yahoo and Hotmail, two popular e-mail services. Both organizations use virus scan and spam guard to eliminate problems with e-mail for their clients.

"There are safeguards in place already to address the issue of concern to the district," said Cervantes.

"Students should be given tools and the access needed to achieve success," AHS teacher **Ruben Pizarro** said. Pizarro pursued the issue over past weeks with letters to teachers and the board.

Parents pry open SHS doors

Trustees voted 6-1 to grant the school choice option to 50 Laurelwood area students. Parents requested the students be admitted to SHS, despite the school's closed door to choice.

The issue of school choice has been ongoing with Laurelwood parents since district boundaries were realigned. In 1995, students in the area were assigned to NSHS, until that time Laurelwood students attended SHS.

Dawn Yonemitsu said that parents had been told they would always be able to get an inter-district transfer to attend SHS.

SHS had been closed to school choice at an earlier meeting. The downtown school is expected to be at 99.4 percent capacity in the fall, according to Facilities Manager **Karen Luna**. "Every class is full at SHS," she said.

The school has been operating over capacity for the past few years, according to Associated Superintendent **Roger Anton**. He reminded trustees that first choice for admission to SHS must go to students in the attendance area. In addition, the choice option was open for

students with siblings at the school and employees' children, he said.

Laurelwood parents argued that students developed a sense of community with classmates at WMS, an SHS feeder school. The students wanted to go to high school with middle school friends, they said.

While saying he supported the idea of keeping students together for the school experience, board president **Rich Foster** expressed concern about adding students to an already impacted campus. SHS high enrollment and subsequent closure over the past years makes the situation difficult, he added.

Foster, however, joined all but Tabera granting admission to the Laurelwood students. Tabera opposed the motion, saying he was concerned about the possibility of displacing low-income students at SHS.

Proposition 55 holds promise for building projects

The district stands to get about 50 percent of its costs for land, tests, plans and specifications as a result of the school bond measure passed earlier this month.

Luna broke down the specifics for trustees, saying plans for a new middle and high school would get about a \$32 million boost from bond funds.

The district, however, can't make any claims until it actually buys the land and has plans and specifications in hand, she said.

At a February meeting, trustees had listened to ideas for magnet schools and a school complex for students in grades 7 to 12.

Trustees short-circuit plans to change meeting policy

Trustees sent a plan to extend talk time while limiting topics at meetings back to the drawing board with instructions to redo parameters.

The planned revision called for speakers to be allowed five minutes to address the board, an extension on the current three-minute period. At the same time, the revision called for a limit of ten minutes for each topic. The revision would mean only two speakers could address the board on a given topic.

While trustees did not say they were influenced by the two-hour parade of speakers at the meeting, they asked administrators to redo the bylaw to reflect a three-minute speaking period with a 21-minute topic limit.

Campus round up

SHS protests choice to move Principal Pawlick

Supporters of **Dr. Joseph Pawlick** wore yellow buttons and called for his retention as principal of SHS.

SHS senior Evan Smith credited Pawlick with guiding student success, as did many students and parents.

Some parents reminded the board that they had spoken on his behalf at earlier meetings and believed trustees were not listening, since no change was made in the principal's status. Some even threatened the recall of trustees over the issue.

Although no official word has been given to the public, Pawlick was apparently notified that his contract as principal of SHS would not be renewed.

Lou Milts expressed support for Pawlick and concern that the school could suffer from the change. The parent reminded trustees of SHS long term uncertainty prior to Pawlick's arrival, when principals stayed only a short time and students and teachers worked out of portables. Pawlick provided a much needed consistency, Milts said.

The division over the issue played out before the board as teacher **Linda Perkins** told of flyers and buttons being distributed in school mailboxes. "I fear the issue can tear the school apart," she said. "We need to do this in a proper manner."

The numbers stood in Pawlick's favor with most of the speakers praising the principal. But SHS teacher **Kyle Samuels** said he didn't believe that most teachers, parents and students supported the principal. Samuels said a student rally was scheduled the day before the meeting and no one came. Samuels also said teachers had voted "no confidence" in Pawlick's leadership two years ago. He added that many of the parents speaking for the principal were concerned about specific issues and feared they would lose out on those issues.

Art classes not part of WMS design

In anticipation of the loss of arts classes, teachers at WMS signed a petition attesting to their educational value at the middle school level.

Offered as electives, fine arts and industrial arts classes are being edged out by demands for higher level academic courses, according to teacher **Tom Lamar**.

Lamar said the state push to have students take algebra and pre-algebra

was gaining precedence over the arts electives. Lamar told the board that middle school students were unprepared for the algebra classes, but, he added, the lack of preparation wasn't preventing WMS from assigning students to the courses.

Lamar called on the board to take the issue to the state. Ask them to stop the practice, he said.

All of the school's teachers signed the petition, calling for continued teaching of the arts as a way to "allow for the development of the human spirit . . . the part of the person that needs to recognize, appreciate and create."

Teachers also protested the site policy to pass seventh graders who have failed classes. "We feel strongly that a policy of no retention in the seventh grade will result in a school without standards," said teacher **Willa Powelson** in a letter to the board.

According to Powelson, students can only be considered for retention after eighth grade. She argued that without consequences at the seventh grade level, students would not be inclined to do any better in the eighth grade. "We are very concerned as to the atmosphere that will prevail at Washington Middle School if there are no consequences for non-performance," she said.

Say "Thanks" with gold

Trustees were urged to consider the state's offer of a Golden Handshake for 2004 retirees.

The Golden Handshake would give a retiree an additional two years of service credit for pension purposes.

Long time **Mt. Toro** teacher, **Tanya Hannah** said, "It's a way of saying 'Thank You'."

Hannah, a 37-year veteran, said the district "seems to be fussing around

about it" in contract negotiations. If administrators cost it out, it will save money for the district.

Hannah, who serves as director of the district's teen parent program, said when long-time teachers retire the district can replace them with newer (less expensive) teachers.

Consent Agenda

- Trustees voted to approve 7-0:
- A federal grant award of \$492,075 for the 2003-2004 school year used for Adult Basic Education, English as a Second Language, Vocational Literacy and Adult Secondary Education/GED.
- An agreement with Thomas K. DeLapp of Communication Resources to provide public relations consulting and assisting as needed by the superintendent.
- An agreement with Shade Structures to build an outdoor eating area at Harden Middle School.

Policy Revisions

(Adopted)

BP 4056.3 – Employee Property Reimbursement

BP 4059 – Employee Assistance Programs

BP 4117.12 – Retirement Consultancy Contracts

BP 4117.4 – Dismissal/Suspension/

Disciplinary Action

BP 4140/4240 – Bargaining units

BP 4141/4241 – Collective Bargaining

Agreement

BP 4153 – Extra Pay for Extra Work/

Overtime/Compensatory Time Off

(Rescinded)

BP 3533 – Boiler insurance

BP 3535 – Employee Bonds

BP 3541.111 – Special Transportation for School Related Trips

BP 3541.36 – Payment in Lieu of Transportation

BP 3542 – Transportation Employees'

Responsibilities and Duties

BP 3543 – Non-Instructional Operations – Safety

Procedures for Emergencies

BP 3544.2 – Privately Owned Vehicles

