

Eye On The Board

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Board Highlights January 25, 2005

By Mariann Klinger

AHS hit by mid-year changes

The new board leaders took what looks like the first move in making their mark on the district by announcing administrative changes in mid-year.

Although administrative changes are generally announced toward the end of a school year, trustees broke tradition and announced some reassignments to take effect July 1.

Much of Alisal High School's team was slated for a move. Principal **Candy McCarthy** and Vice Principal **Judith Roney** were named to Washington Middle School, where they will be principal and vice principal respectively.

Vice Principal **Bernie Nuno**, only one year at AHS, is to be reassigned as vice principal at North Salinas High.

El Sausal Principal **John Ramirez** was named to replace Ms. McCarthy at AHS and **Dan Burns**, vice principal at NSH, is to serve in that capacity at the Alisal school.

No comments were made concerning the reassignment decisions.

Money talk tops district concerns

Although finances headed the list of meeting topics, no real problems loomed for district funding.

From reports and presentations trustees heard commendations for district staff from auditors, were shown a high rate of student attendance reflecting strong ADA figures, and agreed that state monies owed to schools should be listed in the governor's budget.

Trustees accepted the audit report and joined an agreement regarding the state budget by a vote of 6-0 (Trustee **Rich Foster** was absent).

Auditors told trustees that they could be confident in using district information to make decisions. "The financial information to the board is good, reliable information," said **Matt Nethaway** of Perry-Smith LLP auditing firm.

Nethaway commended the district for its record keeping and handling of financial affairs. He said the district is financially in compliance with state and federal funding programs. Auditors did not find any weaknesses in the management of financial reporting that could lead to problems, the report said.

The district reporting includes seeing that programs, contracts, regulations and grants are in compliance with the appropriate federal and state laws.

Although no problems were identified, auditors did make a number of suggestions to make minor improvements in record keeping processes.

Auditors recommended a limit on the number of vacation days an employee can carry forward and the establishment of accounting practices for Associated Student Body monies.

The consultant said student body money lacks appropriate control. The management of student funds is decentralized, difficult to monitor and has no internal controls, he added.

Nethaway told the board he had a plan to offer training on dealing with student monies.

Trustees joined school districts throughout the state to call on the governor for full funding of Proposition 98.

Early proposals for the state budget include a plan to reduce Prop. 98 funding by \$2 billion. This amounts to a loss of about \$328 per student. In addition, the budget plan would transfer \$469 million of STRS (State Teacher Retirement System) payments from the state to the district. This amounts to a loss of \$77 per student.

Instead the governor plans to offer a COLA (Cost of Living Allowance) of 3.93 percent, which translates to \$226 per student. In addition, schools will get approximately \$56 per student as a result of the governor's plan to reduce the deficit.

Although the district's chief business officer encouraged trustees to expect changes, the board went on to call for a return to full funding. "This is a proposal and will change between now and July 1," said Associate Superintendent **James Earhart**.

Last year, educators agreed to take the \$2 billion cut in Prop. 98 funds, allowing the state to ease the deficit. This year, federal laws, including mandates for student proficiency and teacher credentialing require a return to Prop. 98 funding, according to the resolution.

California currently ranks 43 out of 50 states in per student funding.

While the state budget proposals threaten per student funding, the ADA (Average Daily Attendance), a vehicle for qualifying for state monies, remains high in the district.

A report indicated that attendance at the district middle schools, although slightly down, came in at about 95 percent for 2004. Middle school attendance registered 98 percent in 2003. At the high school level attendance registered 98 percent in both years.

Overall the district had an increase of 74 units of ADA.

The district plans discussed possible participation in the state's LEA Program Improvement Prevention Program. The funds, \$50,000 a year for up to three years, would pay for an outside evaluation of teaching and learning needs in the district's schools.

The district qualifies for the program because of its low API index and high rate of socio-economically disadvantaged students.

In fact the district participated in a similar plan, but did not make the hoped for increase in student academic achievement. Any new evaluation would attempt to identify reasons for the failure to make the expected progress.

Consent Agenda

Trustees voted 6-0 to approve agreements with Tombleson, Inc., Kleinfelder, Inc., David Eddings Associates for work on the Everett Alvarez High School Aquatic Center. The contracted companies are to perform a variety of services in preparation for the project, including inspection, construction observation and materials testing.

Policies

(First reading)

BP 1230.1 – School Community Associations
BP 1240 – Volunteer Assistance
BP 1250 – School Visitors
BP 1260 – Educational Foundations
BP 1312 – Complaints Concerning the Schools
BP 1312.1 – Complaints Concerning School Employees
BP 1312.2 – Complaints Concerning Instructional Materials
BP 1312.3 -- Uniform Complaint Procedures
BB 9322 – Agenda/Meeting Materials
BP 5145.8 – Students’ Rights to Refrain from Harmful/Destructive Use of Animals
BP 5145.9 – Hate Motivated Behavior
BP 5147 – Dropout Prevention
BP 5149 – At Risk Students
BP 6146.5 – Middle School Promotion
BP 6152 – Class Assignment
BP 6164.5 – Student Study Teams

Trustees set special meeting

Racial taunting and name calling that escalated into threats of harm prompted the district in conjunction with the Monterey Peninsula Unified District to cancel a basketball game between Alisal and Monterey high schools.

Trustees set a hearing for February 5 to allow parents and educators to comment on the decision and seek solutions to the problem.

Teacher’s trip ends in waves of a disaster

Thai honeymoon washed out by Tsunami over holidays

Newlyweds consider a honeymoon a memorable occasion, but AHS English Teacher Amy Burge and her husband, Jason, have more than the usual reasons for remembering theirs.

Just a few days into the couple’s delayed honeymoon, the earth beneath them shook. The air filled with thunderous noise announcing wave by wave of water.

“We could see the waves coming a half mile out,” said Burge.

She and her husband took their first trip to Thailand over the holiday break. Married in July with school nearly ready to begin, the trip became the first real opportunity to go on a honeymoon. They visited in Bangkok, capital city of Thailand, and went on to the Golden Buddha beach resort on Koprathong Island three days before Christmas.

On December 26, the couple’s plans to take a hike were washed away in huge waves of Indian Ocean. An early morning earthquake was easily dismissed. Although it was a 9.0 earthquake, the epicenter was far out to sea. “We thought it was someone playing a joke. It felt like someone was shaking the house,” said Burge.

Two hours later came the thunderous roar. Burge could see a series of waves each one bigger than the last. “It was like being in a

surf zone,” she said. When the waves receded water, at least 10 feet in depth, remained behind “in places where there wasn’t usually any water.”

Although many Thai resort workers stood around in bewilderment, the tourists quickly ran to a nearby hill for safety, according to Burge.

On top of Monkey Mountain, a small hill, some 80 tourist and resort workers watched as the angry ocean tossed around debris.

Toilets, bits of buildings and the furnishings, a tin roof even an entire bungalow churned in rising waters.

The little band of survivors remained on the hill for the night. Burge said she was too scared to do otherwise, “even though her cabin was okay.”

After the day’s disaster, the island’s three villages and resort lay in ruins. Homes and fishing boats, the main source of food and income on the island, were completely destroyed. The resort itself won’t be ready to reopen until Dec. 1, 2005.

After the tsunami subsided, survivors, including Burge and her husband, were taken to a Buddhist Temple, where they were fed. Many of the villagers and resort workers remained in the temple, but the Burges left Thailand three days after the tsunami, returning home to Pacific Grove. Burge, whose easygoing demeanor belies the underlying fear in the face of the disaster, said big waves along the Monterey Bay coast gave her a troubled night’s sleep on the first night back.

Nevertheless, the experience won’t dampen the couple’s wanderlust. “I’m logical about this kind of thing,” she said. “Just because I was in one tsunami, doesn’t mean I’ll be in another one.”

Burge said the experience left her with a feeling of gratitude. “We were so lucky,” she said. Luck was with the couple in their choice of resort. Thailand was least hit by the disaster and the tiny Koprathong

Island had a small population and few buildings, cars, etc., to crash about in the waves. In addition, The couple’s luggage, airplane tickets and passport were intact making it easy for the return to the states.

On the flight back, Burge learned how lucky she and her husband really were.

Passengers traded stories of experiences in the disaster that left 286,000 dead.

Most recent news notes that along with the many dead, tens of thousands more are considered missing and hundreds of thousands are left homeless and jobless.

Debris litters the streets of every town, city and village along the coastline of eight countries in Southeast Asia.

Although Thai government officials called the tsunami the worst natural disaster to hit its multi-billion-dollar tourist industry, no figures of loss estimates were available by the end of January.

The World Bank, however, estimated Indonesia suffered losses of approximately \$4.4 billion dollars. In that country 80,000 small businesses were destroyed.