

Eye On The Board

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Board Highlights January 10, 2006

Reported by Mariann Klinger

Students flock to summer school classes

Summer school isn't what it used to be and trustees want to know why.

As they approved the 2006 summer school session, trustees quizzed Director of Curriculum **John Favero** about the numbers of students, schools, teachers involved in summer classes.

"I want to know why students go to summer school," said Trustee **Phillip Tabera**, noting that he expected the numbers to go down.

Trustee **Kathryn Ramirez** called for more details on student attendance and the demographics for the summer session. "I want a report on the changes," she said, comparing recent years with her own school experience when summer classes were offered at only one site.

Favero submitted a recommendation calling for the 2006 summer session to operate a comprehensive program from June 28 to

August 1 at all school sites, including ROP and the Migrant Education Program.

Trustees seemed amazed at his request and asked for an accounting. Favero told the board that about one-third to one-half of the district's students attend summer classes. In 2005, he said, about 6,000 students participated in the summer program. By law only 5 percent of the summer school student body can choose to attend for enrichment purposes. Most, he added, are trying to make up failing or low grades, prepare for the state exit exam or take part in orientation for the middle school and high school experience.

Favero reminded trustees that today's students must earn 240 credits, rather than the previous 220 required. Students must have a 2.0 GPA and cannot fail a class. In addition, they must pass the CAHSEE.

Ramirez said she wanted the district to work toward lowering the number of summer school students.

Tabera added that he hoped CAHSEE remediation efforts would bring student numbers down.

Favero's report calls for 130 teachers and 55 classified employees for the 2006 session.

District poised to select new school sites

While four new schools remain a still distant dream, the district zeroed in on potential sites and indicated the purchase of land from bond funds nears.

Although not ready to make a final selection, trustees' talk hinted of a favored location.

Before names could be named, Attorney **Tom Manniello** reminded the board of steps to assure success. The district, he said, must negotiate price and boundaries with owners, and meet state regulatory responsibilities, including environmental studies. Then the district will be poised to buy, he added.

District plans call for the construction of two new high schools and two middle schools to accommodate a projected increase in enrollment of 4000 high school students and 2000 middle school students.

Projections anticipate the construction of more than 19,000 housing units over the next 25 years in the north and northeast of the city.

District administrators are to examine three sites: a 75-acre area near Creekbridge, Highway 68 at Spreckles and River Road, a property at Rogge Road and a 39-acre area.

The Creekbridge area, while large enough for a high school middle school complex lacks infrastructure and houses a protected species of salamander.

The Rogge Road area includes roads and utilities.

The 39-acre area would not support a complex, the high school would have to be built as a two-story and the middle school would have to be located elsewhere.

Since the initial survey, prices on the land have increased, according to Architect **Peter Kasavan**.

Theater costs up; work nears end

Cost overruns and suspicion of favored treatment prompted complaints about the SHS Performing Arts Center, as the theater project rounds the corner on \$5 million in costs.

Initially, the theater improvement financed by bond monies came in at a \$2.8 million cost estimate.

The district's chief business officer attributed much of the increased costs to complications of the project. "Each new board uncovered, discloses another need," said **James Earhart**. Contractors struggle with the layout of the building and with the architecture, he added.

In spite of the spiraling costs, "the project won't be the wonderful performing arts center initially hoped for," he said. "It will be nice."

The super deluxe parts of the project will remain undone, unless financed by separate fund-raising efforts. "We don't have the money to justify spending bond money," he said. The spending for Measure M, he added, is almost complete.

Tabera questioned the money for SHS's theater, while other schools are raising money on their own to improve theaters.

The SHS theater improvement project represents the schools primary use of bond funds. Most of the schools won an equal share of the funds with AHS at \$8.2 million and EAHS at \$9.7 million taking the lion's share of bond monies.