

Eye On The Board

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Board Highlights December 11, 2007 by Mariann Klinger

Trustees mark end of service, new beginning

Board members marked the end of the year by honoring outgoing trustees and baptizing incoming ones.

Both **Anne Brown** and **Art Gilbert** stepped down after serving eight years on the board amidst a plethora of plaques, gifts and words of tribute.

"I learned a lot as a trustee," said Brown. "You have to listen to all sides and then draw your conclusions."

In his turn, Gilbert praised staff and superintendent for "making great strides in student learning" during his tenure on the board. "Things are only going to get better," he added.

Taking Brown's seat **Cheryl Larison** and **Patty Saenz**, elected to Gilbert's seat, took the oath of office, along with Trustee **Kathryn Ramirez**, who begins a second term.

Once the formalities ended, the new board got down to the business of electing officers and committee assignments.

Trustee **Lila Cann** was named president, Trustee **Phillip Tabera** vice president and Larison clerk to the board.

All went smoothly until committee assignments. Newly-elected President Cann noted that there were seven committees and seven trustees – one for each. But all

committees aren't equal; some are advisory, while the more coveted ones are district representation on Joint Powers Agencies. JPA assignments offer greater political exposure.

The process got bogged down over assignments to SELPA Joint Powers Board and Sunrise House Board of Directors.

Trustees **James Reaves**, **Margaret Serna-Bonetti**, Larison and Ramirez vied for the assignments. After some discussion, Ramirez took her name off the list to make way for others and Larison took another assignment. This left Serna-Bonetti to serve on SELPA and Reaves on the Sunrise board.

"We did not have a chance to talk about this," said Ramirez in an effort to explain the lengthy discussion.

District to operate with 'tight' cash flow

Trustees approved an interim report of the 2007-2008 budget in which all major expenses are expected to exceed the approved operating budget.

"It means the district is running tight," said Chief Business Officer **James Earhart**.

Earhart said flat enrollment and payroll would keep the financial situation tight. He did not give a doom and gloom assessment, but only said the district would face cash flow issues.

“It’s the first time the district began the year with union agreements in place,” he said. The SVFT and CSEA contracts, settled early in the school year, cost the district an estimated \$200,000 in interest, he added.

In addition, the district expects a 211 student decline at the high school level and special education costs keep escalating, according to Earhart.

The district’s contract with SVFT was settled last May and the CSEA contract won approval this month.

At the meeting, trustees gave the nod to a 4 percent increase in salary, a one-time bonus of about \$150 and 1 percent increase in health benefits for classified employees.

Summer session for ’08 to be at all school sites

Trustees approved a plan that would see every district school with its own summer school in 2008.

The summer session will follow past practice with a five hour schedule for 24 days running from June 23 to July 25.

Courses will be based on the needs of students and will vary by site, according to Director of Curriculum **John Favero**.

Favero said the district expects to begin hiring teachers and staff for the intersession beginning March 17. Staff preparation days are to be held June 12 and 13.

The focus of the summer program is remediation for students who failed a course or the CAHSEE. In addition orientation courses are offered for incoming seventh and ninth graders.

The district, which instituted core tests in English, math, science and social studies, expects to again offer pre-tests and post-tests in the summer session to determine student progress, said Favero.

A Migrant Education program will again be offered, according to Favero, but a site has not been assigned. He said the department is expecting to restructure the migrant program this year.

ROP and the Adult School will also offer summer session programs with CO-OP classes beginning June 16 others will start June 23.

Board brief

Overcrowding still an issue

SVFT Co-Presidents **Peggy Carroll** and **Kyle Samuels** called on the board to deal with overcrowded classrooms.

“You’ve got to find a better way to staff the schools,” said O’Carroll.

She offered a stack of messages from teachers who work with more than 32 students in a class. And, she said, “teachers are still getting new students.”

Historically the district counted on student attrition to lighten the teacher workload, but Samuels said the schools no longer experience the 10 percent drop off. The district needs to look at the formula, he added.

“This is a problem. . . We can’t do anything but bring it to you,” he said.

Consent Agenda

Trustees approved a two-cent increase in mileage reimbursement to \$.505 cents per mile for 2008.

Trustees approved a Single Plan for Student Achievement for the coming school year for all district schools.

The state-requires an SPSA for all schools that participate in state and federal categorical programs.