

Eye On The Board

The Salinas Valley Federation of Teachers
21 West Laurel Drive, Suite 61, Salinas, CA 93926-3434
(Telephone) 831-442-8234 * (Fax) 831-442-8563
(E-mail) presidents@svft.net

Board Highlights March 25, 2008

Reported by Mariann Klinger

Report says growth likely, when is issue

If the district used a crystal ball, it might see a future with 29 percent more students, a few new schools and \$193 million price tag to meet the needs.

At least that's the picture drawn by consultants in a long range facilities master plan. The report views the growth possibilities over a 22-year period. The major part of the growth in student numbers is expected to come from 11,500 new homes primarily in the North Salinas and West Boronda area.

Enrollment could increase by 4000 students, according to consultants from Lapkoff and Global Demographic Research. Researchers charted possible significant growth between 2015 and 2021.

Those students may prompt the need for one new middle school and two new high schools, said **Matthew Pettler**, who presented the report to trustees.

SVFT Co-presidents **Peggy Carroll** and **Kyle Samuels** told trustees that they doubted the growth projections. Both were viewing current trends and financial problems.

Carroll suggested trustees look at the possibility of handling some increase in enrollment with existing facilities. "We're

likely to see student population moving to different areas," she said, noting a trend toward population loss along the coast in past years.

Samuels spoke of falling housing prices and changes in lending standards that could affect families with children. In addition, he said growth could be inhibited by lack of water. "Water is a big issue for the area."

Samuels said he believes the district has more lead time than suggested by researchers.

To begin preparing for the expected future growth consultants translated goals developed by district administrators into recommendations. These goals identified the elimination of portable classrooms and reduction of student numbers at school sites. They called for freeing up classroom space that could be used by special programs and finally taking maximum advantage of state school facility funds.

From there, consultants said the district should plan to build at least one new middle school and two new high schools.

Pettler said that currently all of the district's school sites are below the size recommended by the state, and student enrollment higher than recommended.

The district needs to plan for growth, he said, "it's just a question of when."

Trustees say report blames district for gang troubles

Trustees winced at the response to the Monterey County Grand Jury report and what they called a tendency to blame the district for gang problems.

“We’re in the business of education,” said Trustee **Margaret Serna-Bonetti**. “It sounds like the Grand Jury is blaming us for the whole gang problem.”

Trustee **Kathryn Ramirez** complained that agencies often failed to include board members in talks about gang problems. She called for a meeting with school districts, county supervisors and city council members on the issue.

Trustee **Phillip Tabera** went so far as to suggest withholding the response, risking possible penal code consequences.

Despite the complaints, trustees unanimously approved the responses along with a letter voicing trustee concerns and complaints.

The Grand Jury aimed comments about the Regional Occupation Program and gang problems at the district in its annual report.

In its report, the Grand Jury highlighted positive details about the ROP, but the focus on gang activity emphasized a need for suppression, intervention and prevention. The district was called on to respond to its statements.

In its response, the district noted that the schools make efforts to prevent gang activity on campuses, direct resources to overall school safety, work with local agencies to offer resources to neighborhoods in the community.

In addition, district response emphasized the available after school activities for youth and its willingness to work with law enforcement and other agencies in dealing with gang problems.

Information system set to replace Digi

Trustees gave the word to begin the process of replacing the district’s current student information system – Digitronics.

They approved, by a vote of 7-0, the district’s plan to sign with Sungard Pentamation’s eSchool Plus system at a cost of \$475,123.

In an earlier report, district officials told trustees the replacement could take about 18 months to accomplish. Hardware and software installations are set for the summer, when some users will be trained. Teacher training for use of the system is not likely to begin until the end of the first semester. Sometime during the early part of 2009 the new system is expected to be online to all.

The new system is to be compatible with windows and the Web. Annual operating expenses are expected to cost about \$62,000.

Consent Agenda

Trustees unanimously approved the use of four local architect firms for construction projects at EAHS and SHS, including an Agri-Science building and orchestra lift.

Also, the firm of Kleinfelder, Inc. is to do an environmental assessment for a potential new middle school site.