

Eye On The Board

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Board Highlights from September 22, 2009 and October 13, 2009

Reported by Mary Ellingwood

Co-Presidents Win Right to Negotiate Board Policy Changes for Staff

SVFT co-president Peggy Carroll successfully navigated potential changes to a board policy that would have put teachers at risk due to its vague language. The board policy in question wanted to prevent staff from “inappropriate fraternization with students”. Ms. Carroll pointed out that the language was vague and unclear. She addressed the board at both the September 22nd and October 13th board meetings asking them to “not vote on the policy because we think it should come to the union to be negotiated.”

The school board pulled the item from the agenda at the October 13th board meeting.

Community Members Rally Against Possible ROP Closure

The last two school board meetings were packed with community members who desired to address the board about the possible closure of Mission Hills Regional Occupation Program.

About 15 people spoke for over an hour at each meeting about how much ROP has meant to them and the community over the last 43 years.

At the Sept. 22nd meeting, three dentists from The Central Coast Pediatric Dental Program said that the ROP provides invaluable training for dental assistants, who in turn, become employed locally. They cited that Mission Hills ROP houses the single program for dental and x-ray training in the area and its closure would be a huge loss to the

community, and in particular, the dental community. They also stated that the dental community depends heavily on the ROP program placing 30 students every year in dental jobs.

Gordon Ray, former director of ROP, stated the valuable role ROP has played over the years. He said, “ROP continues to teach all students how to apply for and get a job.” He went on to describe how since the 1970’s ROP has helped Special Education students get hands-on training whereas they used to be sent home after high school without jobs.

There were several other speakers, but the message was clear that many people in the community believe that the loss of the ROP Center would be a tremendous setback for education in Monterey County.

The October 13th board meeting highlighted several more members of the Salinas community who spoke out against closing ROP.

Cheryl Ward Kaiser, first to the podium, began by saying, “I’m here to talk about gangs...my home was robbed 10 years ago, my husband was killed, and my daughter was raped at gunpoint.” She continue by pointing out that if you take ROP away then you take away “the extra help that some students need to stay off the streets.”

Frank Savino of Aquablue day spa spoke at length about how he hires ROP students every year and has several long term employees who he hired from ROP many years ago. He said that he loves to hire ROP students over other applicants and feels so passionate about keeping ROP open that he offered to go out on the streets to talk with community members about the importance of ROP.

Johnny Gray, a NSHS graduate and business representative for the Monterey County Children's Council, said he understands that the school board has a lot to consider during these tough economic times, but he pointed out, "Salinas already has an estimated 3000 gang members and if you don't keep ROP open, they'll have a ready group of kids for recruitment."

Superintendent Earhart Presents Parcel Tax Plan to Keep ROP Open

Mr. Earhart presented a parcel tax plan as a way to generate funds for schools. The parcel tax is a special tax that can be used to fund virtually any district cost.

He stated that, "It takes money to run these programs and if we can't get it from the state, then maybe we need people to step up and help."

Mr. Earhart went on to explain "the parcel tax could help the district cover costs to summer school, help students to catch up on missing credits, and allow us to offer enrichment classes especially in the form of music classes that we're lacking." He added that, "the main thing is the parcel tax would put ROP back as we've known it for many years."

The major hurdle to a parcel tax is that it needs two-thirds of the voters to approve such a tax.

But, as Trustee Tabera stated in closing remarks, "It will cost a lot more if we don't get this parcel tax passed because we will lose students who won't be able to graduate or get summer school or alternative education when they need it."

SVFT Speaks Out About Tier III Funds Becoming Discretionary Funds at the Sites

SVFT Co-President Peggy Carroll opened and closed the public hearing on Tier III Program Funds. Carroll said that, "The union has real problem with these funds going to the sites as discretionary spending." She said, "I'd really like to see more of a breakdown about how these funds will be used. There is a \$380,000 block grant listed to be used as discretionary funds by the sites." Ms. Carroll had begun the board meeting with an opening statement that also related to this spending by the district. She stated, "We, SVFT, need to see a change in spending. We understand that there are things that need to be done, but it's pretty galling to see people going off to conferences, or discretionary funds being pulled out of the classroom for people to do quasi-administrative work."

In response to Carroll's statement Superintendent Earhart said, "Discretionary funds need to go through the site councils before funds can be spent."

With that, Trustee Tabera made a motion to adopt the Tier III funds and the board adopted with a 5-0 vote (Trustee Saenz and Trustee Larison were absent.)