

**SAUSALITO MARIN CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD MEETING MINUTES
January 12, 2016**

ATTENDANCE

Board Members Present: Caroline Van Alst, William Ziegler, Thomas Newmeyer, Joshua Barrow,
Ida Times

Superintendent: Steve Van Zant

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m.

CLOSED SESSION

The Board and Superintendent convened closed session at 5:31 p.m.

RECONVENE TO OPEN SESSION

Open session reconvened at 6:24 p.m.

REPORT OUT OF CLOSED SESSION

Trustee Van Alst announced that effective immediately, Superintendent Van Zant has requested a leave of absence for personal reasons. The board voted unanimously to place Mr. Van Zant on paid leave until further notice or action by the board. Trustee Van Alst added that because this is a personnel matter, the board is unable to provide more substantive details at this time, but it is the board's understanding that the reason for Mr. Van Zant's leave of absence is unrelated to his performance as superintendent in our district.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Trustee Newmeyer led the Pledge of Allegiance.

AGENDA ORDER

Trustee Barrow asked that item 8.01, Personnel Action Report – Certificated be taken off the consent agenda.
Newmeyer/ Times/All to approve the removal of item 8.01 from the Consent Agenda.

CORRESPONDENCE

Trustee Van Alst said that the Board of Trustees has received an Open Letter from the community.

Trustee Barrow said that he read the letter carefully and felt that it contained very fair criticism of our process around the Local Control and Accountability Plan. Our superintendent evaluations have not been as engaging as they need to be; we need to look at that. Even beyond the requests outlined in the letter, we are not doing what we need to do for community education and engagement.

Trustee Times said: I also listened to the community as they composed the letter; they have great passion for our children, the school, the entire community. We have to work on the issue of trust and make sure that all stakeholders are involved in any big decisions we make.

Trustee Ziegler agreed with Trustee Barrow that there has not been community involvement in the superintendent's evaluation. We have been evaluating him for over a year, he said. It did not involve the community because it was a task assigned to the board. Going forward, there should be community input, he suggested. Speaking of the superintendent, he said that Mr. Van Zant dealt with many key issues, including Willow Creek Academy, which is under the board's supervision. We can improve our community response, he said.

Trustee Barrow said we need to put in place a structure to outline how we go about this task. Trustee Newmeyer said these issues are coming up because for years academic results were not discussed. Principal Newton has been forthcoming with data and what she has shown is ugly.

Trustee Van Alst said it is heartwarming to see so many parent signatures in this letter. She said that she read through the goals outlined in the letter and felt they had value and merit. She continued, the Brown Act enables us to place superintendent evaluations in closed session. That said, setting goals for the district is where the community can come in. Trustee Barrow said we can actively solicit feedback on how we are doing as a board and as superintendent. Trustee Ziegler said we just recently got an analysis of our students' data. We never had such data in the seven years I have been on the board. We have to do better. What we have to do to make it happen, I don't know. I would like to see data like this drive the discussion. That is what needs public attention, the scores of our students. Trustee Times said student scores are publicly available, so if Trustee Ziegler has not seen them in seven years, the question is why not. Trustee Barrow requested that at the next board meeting, we discuss our process for superintendent evaluation, LCAP and for setting goals. We should also lay out a structure for engaging the community.

Trustee Newmeyer asked to discuss the hiring of the new principal. Trustee Ziegler said we had a great list of very qualified people. Trustee Van Alst said this position of superintendent is a board hire. But the interview panel included members of the board as well non-board members in the process. The intention was to involve community members, and I apologize if this did not happen, she said. We had a classified employee and two teachers as well as all administrators on the selection committee. Trustee Barrow said his experience with the process was that there was a lot of confusion. I was surprised that the selection committee was made up of all district employees or board members, he said. I expected to see parent reach-out. Clearly, our process is broken for the tasks of superintendent evaluation, LCAP, and critical hire. I was impressed with the caliber of candidates; we would be lucky to have the person that the superintendent selected. My concern is the process. How can we set her up for success? Trustee Times said she also invited herself to the process. I was surprised not to see parents and stakeholders, she added. Trustee Ziegler said the fact that the last three candidates were interested in a district this small was shocking; they were all exceptional.

A video of the selected candidate for principal, Melinda Wallace, was shown to the board. She is slated to begin work on April 18 but will come up to our district starting next week. Trustee Barrow said that some candidates had questions around the assistant superintendent role. The definition of this role is a board responsibility, he explained.

Betty Hodges, a community member and director of the Hannah Project, said we came together because we are concerned about the performance of students at Bayside MLK Jr. Academy. Things will not change until the board realizes that input and collaboration from both community and students are vital to the process. The hiring of the school principal without input from the community is another instance of a horizontal performance. It is imperative that the board work with the community to develop a vision for our school. As impressive as Ms. Wallace is, no school turns around because of one person. We need a community input framework - we want to work with a sub-committee of the board to have a process in place for community recommendations. We believe it is important to have the engagement process formalized before March when you begin the budget process.

Gail Henrickson, a community member, said the new principal sounds very promising, despite the flawed hiring process. What are the superintendent performance criteria regarding student achievement? She said that she met with Mr. Van Zant and found him open and forthcoming, willing to engage with the community. It is

disturbing to know that he is now on leave. I have never seen such passion as I have seen in this community; there are people who care deeply and they are ready to volunteer with their time and expertise, she concluded.

Librarian Fran Nelson said community input is essential. Perception is reality; if people perceive that they are being ignored, they will oppose you. I can't imagine Willow Creek Academy hiring a principal without parental input. I hope the new principal continues with the work that Principal Newton and Dr. Thornton have begun. Another suggestion is for the board to be more visible in the community, at school assemblies and in classrooms. She thanked the board for their response to the community letter.

Laura Cox of Bridge the Gap asked that the board look at academic results and set performance goals. All of the student performance data is public information, she said. She asked the board to evaluate itself, be data- driven and hands on.

Michael Tabb, a community member, asked how can the community build trust when the hiring process has already been completed? The community was not involved; this concerns me as a Marin City resident, he said. I hear the people of Marin City say they don't care about us, they only care about Willow Creek Academy. You want us to trust in a principal that we had no input in hiring. How could you not have known until now that we as a community wanted to have input?

Trustee Barrow said this was a superintendent hire and he architected the process. This was not a board driven process. But we do have a general trust issue. My view on addressing these issues is that we should look at things ahead of us, like LCAP, future superintendent evaluations, goal setting. You do hear fears and concerns in the community about board trustees; to my mind, many of these fears are unfounded.

Trustee Ziegler said trust is a two- way street. I have been here at many meetings when very few were here. If we can't hear you, you won't hear us. Now we have 500 students vs 170 when I first came. The budget was out of control. The community was against Bayside moving from Sausalito, but I think that now they realize that Marin City needed a community school.

Trustee Times said a year goes by quickly. My aim in becoming a trustee was to give back. How will the community begin to trust this board? I bring a connection to the people in this community and I can share their concerns with the board. It will take us being active listeners and being transparent. Moving forward, we will need the cooperation of one another, as well as parents and educators.

Hersh Markusfeld said I live in the community and have an interest in poverty and racial disparities. This is a very old story. The positive news is that the new principal sounds terrific. Some of the comments about being surprised by the test results are astonishing. As a board, you should hold yourselves accountable and either stop doing this job or change how you do it.

Betty Hodges asked if there will an agenda item next month on formalizing community engagement.

SMCSTA

Teacher Susan Cassidy said she was excited to see the big turnout. I have worked with these children for 17 years, she said. We have missed an opportunity. Our students are creative and dynamic. We should bring their strengths out, give them confidence. I know you are well intentioned and I feel a glimmer of hope for the first time in a long time, she told the board.

MAINTENANCE REPORT

Alan Rothkop, the director of maintenance and operations, said the leak in a Willow Creek Academy bathroom has been fixed. We have refurbished and painted some restrooms.

The fence at Bayside MLK is not deterring trespassing 100% but it is helping a lot. If people do not prop open the gate, the deterrence will improve.

At 7:50 the board took a 5 minute break. The meeting resumed at 7:58 pm

PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

Principal Jonnette Newton handed out reports of students' academic performance to board members. At the last meeting, we discussed data for some combined classes, she said. This new set of numbers separates data by grade level to make it easier to get a sense of where we are. We have adopted SIPPS (Systematic Instruction in Phonological Awareness, Phonics, and Sight Words) as an assessment for the primary grades and REWARDS, a Multisyllabic Word Reading Program, for vocabulary and fluency. Now we need to create an environment for comprehension where the students use the vocabulary on a regular basis. Our Middle School students are just beginning to act like students; we have to teach them to think critically, she said.

The social- emotional screening of our classrooms shows that we have some big issues. The board has to make sure that there are programs in place to address these issues. Aggressive and oppositional behaviors are occurring frequently in the TK class; this impacts the education experience of all students. We need counseling for our students, she told the board.

Principal Newton said students are able to participate in sports when their GPA is at least 2.0. Our understanding is that Willow Creek Academy does not have the same policy. I would like to request a district-wide sport participation requirement and will talk to Head of School Royce Conner about aligning our policies, she concluded.

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

Community member Peter Van Meter said this has been a momentous meeting. There are a great number of things that need to change. He passed out a flyer showing how children hold their pens incorrectly when writing, blocking their words. He told the board that this affects their learning. It would be good to start training children in Pre-K. Please put it in the curriculum if you can, he told the board.

CONSENT AGENDA

Roll Call/Newmeyer/Ziegler/5 Ayes, 0 Nos, to approve the following consent agenda items:

Minutes of the November 10 and December 8, 2015 Board Meetings

Quarterly Report on Williams Uniform Complaints

Payment of Warrants – Batches 25-27

Committee Appointments

Ziegler/Newmeyer /All to table item 6.04, Committee Appointments

PERSONNEL ACTION

Community member Marilyn Mack asked who will be acting superintendent. Trustee Barrow said we have to agendaize a discussion around this question. He said that there are good questions about the definition of the

role of a Principal/Associate Superintendent. I am uncomfortable with these unanswered questions, he said. Trustee Ziegler said we need legal advice and more facts.

Willow Creek Academy 2014-2015 Audit Report

Clark warden said that the audit came in with the same numbers as the first report. The opinion of the auditors was unqualified; there were no deficiencies.

Barrow/Ziegler /All to accept the 2014-2015 Willow Creek Academy Audit Report

MIDDLE SCHOOL CURRICULUM

Teacher Susan Cassidy said we have been doing a lot of work on the culture of the Middle School. We are working with Tam high School and Bridge the Gap, upping the ante for our students. The GPA you see is very valid and objective, she told the board. We do not accept late work. We are developing them into good students. Unfortunately, Tam no longer has a math class for those of our students who are not ready for algebra.

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

The following policies were brought to the board for approval:

Board Policy 200 - Philosophy, Goals, Objectives and Comprehensive Plans – Goals for the School District

Board Policy and Administrative Regulation 3260 – Fees and Charges

Board Policy 3280 – Sale or Lease of District–Owned Real Property

Administrative Regulation 3460 - Business and Noninstructional Operations - Financial Reports and Accountability

Board Policy 3513.3 – Tobacco Free Schools

Administrative Regulation 4117.14– Post-Retirement Employment

Barrow/ Ziegler/All to table items 11.01, 11.02, 11.04, Board Policies 200, 3260 and Administrative Regulation 3460

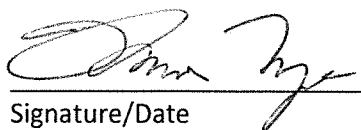
Newmeyer/Times/All to approve Board Policies 3280, 3513.3 and Administrative Regulation 4117.14

Trustee Barrow asked that the next board meeting be rescheduled to February 2, 2016.

Newmeyer/Barrow/All to move the next board meeting to February 2, 2016

ADJOURNMENT

Barrow/Times/All to adjourn the meeting at 9:12 p.m.

 2/2/16

Signature/Date

Clerk

Title