



On The Board

The Salinas Valley Federation of Teachers

21 West Laurel Drive Suite #61 Salinas, CA 93906-3434 Telephone: 831.442.8234

E-mail: president@svft.net

Board Highlights from MARCH 2015

Reported By J.J. Campos

Say It Ain't So!

Spoiler Alert! If you don't want to know how this story ends...stop right here! On March 10, 2015, SVFT President Steve McDougall gave his usual "comments with well, the usual..." "we're doing well, negotiations are comin' along, we all love each other" yada yada yada. Then, right at the cusp where the plot thickens to a custard (no, I don't know what that means either, but it sounds delicious), a bombshell! Steve McDougall, longtime SVFT President, announced to the SUHSD Board that his time as President was at an end, as he would not be running for the SVFT President

position again. If you know Steve, he is one that likes to steer clear of anything in the sentimental vein, and his message was short and sweet. And just like any good story, we can conclude that Steve's tenure as President was analogous and worthy of a Hollywood script...There was drama, anticipation...maybe even a fight! (No Union member was harmed during the filming of this story). Yes siree Bob, it had all the makings of a classic and it goes without saying Steve was your classic, stalwart Union Man. He capped his comments off by stating he looked forward to being back in the classroom with no more than 145 students.



On a personal note, I'd like to thank Steve for his guidance, his keen attention to detail and of course, his 'say what you gotta say' attitude. Steve, we, er, I, at Eye On The Board will keep a seat warm for you as we know that you will continue to support the good work the SVFT has done over the years. Steve, thanks.

Aaaaaand...That's a Wrap.



Fifty Shades Of...Really?



I'm sorry, but I just can't help it. To say that the proposed color changes at Everett Alvarez High School brought on a

'colorful debate' was like saying gray is a primary color. It isn't, right? ☺ It was unbelievable! You should have seen the Board room FILLED with faculty and students alike, each patiently taking their turn to speak to Board members to let them know that the colors stunk. You would think they were protesting a salary decrease! And while the debate focused on fuchsias (how many fuchsias are there anyway?) and browns vs. dollars and cents, it was absolutely wonderful to see just how passionate and vocal Alvarez students and faculty continue to be. Teacher Alan Rosenberg subtly stated "there's no need to paint the school another color...it's a dumb idea." But how do you really feel about it Alan? :) He went on to ask the Board that



decisions like that be made more democratically instead of being decided “ad hoc”(am I the only one that doesn’t know what ad hoc means?). Students such as Brigette Higgins and Angelica Godoy made their opinions heard. Higgins said “ Colors matter, the color scheme presented is horrendous. I don’t want the pride to diminish because it (the school) looks tacky and no, we don’t need to look like Safeway. Our saying is we bleed blue and gold.” Godoy said the school already had colors and they looked good already. Amen sister! But I kid. But what do they know. Perhaps we should ask someone with a deep knowledge of color schemes, blends and harmonious combinations. Someone...like say, an art teacher! What a concept! Alvarez ART INSTRUCTOR

Carol Lefever catalogued the proposed green as “garish..where are these colors coming from? We were told they would fit in with Safeway.”



Trustee Kathryn Ramirez said, “I’ve learned from parents of EAHS....I know what they want. I don’t understand why we wouldn’t paint school colors?” Trustee Evamarie Martinez added she’d “never had more calls regarding color.” Finally, Board President Lila Cann said simply, “I didn’t like ANY of the color schemes I saw.” The Great Alvarez Color Debate went on for well over 30 minutes. Later in the evening, SUHSD Facilities Director Karen Luna stated she would go back to the drawing board and would hopefully return with something more favorable and would go in whatever direction the Board wanted. If it ain’t broke tho’....

Skilled Labor ‘Ain’t Cheap...Unless You Outsource
\$13. That’s the per hour rate those who will be scoring Smarter Balanced tests will be paid. Let’s just hope they don’t outsource grading or we’re in trouble. ☺ Well, if you

agree that paying teachers to score Smarter Balanced exam \$13/hour is appropriate, then this article isn’t for you. Dan Burns gave an update on a variety of Smarter Balanced items such as the types of questions students would get and how many teachers would be scoring the exams (6000 to be exact). After being probed by Trustee



Ramirez, he casually noted that exam scorers would be paid a meager \$13/hour, which begs the question: Who will be grading these tests and are they qualified to do so? Are they qualified to score an exam that surely will carry an incredible amount of weight (as all state-mandated exams usually do) in the near future? Trustee Ramirez wanted to know if all questions would be multiple choice and Burns responded that many questions will be selective response which have “more critical thinking components.” Ramirez asked if the test would be able to measure if a student was able to hit part of a standard being tested. Burns answered in the affirmative and overall, he gave an overview of what is to come. Let’s hope the test holds up to all the hype. Let’s hope it will validate the incredible efforts of teachers and administrators everywhere, who continue to believe our students are up for this, and any other challenge. Good luck!

If You Price It, Who Will Come?

The future construction plans of High School #5 in Salinas are well under way and Kirk Mckim, Emma Smith and Paul Walter from Mckim Design Group gave an overview of the future site’s potential environmental impact and presented various site plans for the Board to consider. Of critical debate was building orientation, drainage and you guessed it, traffic control. After being

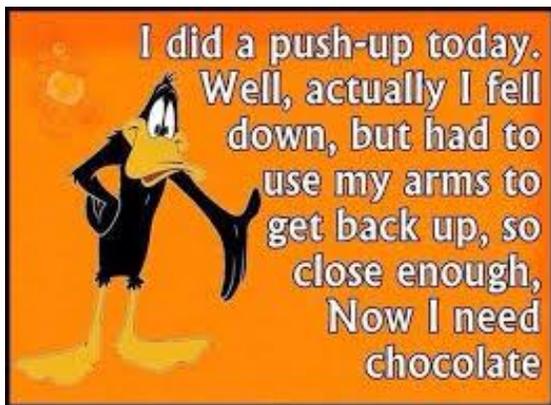


presented with a potential layout that would include the construction of 3 new streets, and having the school's main gate closed during the day, Trustee Ramirez quickly wanted to know if that layout had been attempted before elsewhere?

"I still want to know how we stop crazy people who are in a hurry."



Yeah, there are a lot of those! Tabera also didn't like the plan and had concerns about the liability. The plan presented was assuming a more pedestrians but, as Trustee Padilla-Salsberg pointed out "walking is great but we've gotta be real and our kids want their cars. We have to look at all the pieces. I don't see this generation walking. It's reality." Personally, I am completely offended by that comment! I walk every day.... to the mailbox and back. ☺ Kirk mentioned



all points were valid and that the fact was students mostly drive instead of walk. Smith stated the vision of developer is to make it (the site) more pedestrian. "Our challenge is how do we accommodate an initial population that has to be bussed in vs. those who will be there 10 years from now?" Yes, in a Utopian vision where cars were a rarity, walking would be the panacea for our community's addiction to its vehicles. Buuuut..., the opposite is true. Our overall unwillingness to

walk heeds to our many ailments, and traffic control is a BIG ISSUE. Just ask the folks at La Paz. Overall, Mckim Design Group's biggest obstacle is the community's unwillingness to see a future where fewer cars are necessary. It is faced with the "don't you dare take our cars away from us!" attitude, but surely the answer is not so simple. Especially here. Good luck! ☺

'Ya Passed!

On March 24th, our Board was put, shall we say, to the 'test' and we're happy to inform they passed it with flying colors! The meeting got off to a bit of a rough start when a few local, and non-local developers attended the meeting to oppose the Board's proposal that the building of the future middle school and high schools contain what is known as a project labor agreement. And if you ever wondered what it takes to rile up non-union contractors and potentially scare them away, well, a project labor agreement is just the thing. Local contractor Dick Johnson wanted to make his voice heard juuust a little before the starting pistol went off. Kevin Hoover of Labor Solutions, a coalition of fair employment in construction, stood up and stated "people want to make a comment based on the presentation." The only problem was, NO ONE HAD PRESENTED THE PLA PROPOSAL YET! That led to some debate among Board members on whether to change the practice. Leave it to Trustee Lila Cann to squash the issue quickly by rightly stating, "this was an information item that may or may not come up for action. If it is, then you are welcome to bring your comments then." You could feel the frustration in the contractors' tone and I'm tellin' ya, people were salivating to put their two cents in on just how bad an idea they felt a project labor agreement was. Well, later in the evening, after hearing a presentation from Debbie Lincoln of the Lozano Smith Law Firm, they got their chance. In a nutshell, Lincoln presented the Board with three different bidding scenarios and it quickly became

apparent that most Districts locally have opted for what is known as Lease- Back bidding process. We won't get into the details here but according to Lincoln, it basically allows for a more open bidding process. It also provides for fewer costly change orders in the construction process. After her presentation, esteemed members of the construction community finally had their say. We'll start with Dick Johnson, who pointed out that project labor agreements...oh, wait a minute, I need to explain what a project labor agreement is!



In essence, a couple of Board members suggested they would like to see a project labor agreement, if possible, when the new middle school and high schools were built. A Project Labor Agreement (PLA) is an agreement between a client and contractors where both parties agree that a certain percentage of the contractor's workforce will be union labor. There, now where was I? Oh, right, so Mr. Johnson pointed out that project labor agreements were a bad way to go and gave an example that in Santa Cruz, where a project labor agreement was in place, it had cost Santa Cruz an additional \$3 million dollars, not to mention delays. He also mentioned that 87% of the contract labor workforce is not unionized. I'm not sure if that's accurate, but if that's true, it's certainly a problem, and the Board was all ears. He also added that the difference between Union and Non-Union employees' salary is a meager 6%. Again, not sure if that's the case, but that was HIS case. Next up, Nichole Goehring,

Government Affairs Director of The Associated Builders and Contractors of Northern California had this to say. "Hartnell College rescinded their decisions to enter into a Project Labor Agreement and...70% of contracts were done locally. I have 3 concerns, first of which is the worker. The worker that doesn't belong to a Union loses 17% per hour. Second, your District will incur added legal fees. It takes up to two years to get project labor agreements approved. Finally, tax payers will see an increase in potential costs. Less than 5% of school districts take this approach. Not a good decision for the community." There were several others who addressed the Board with similar comments pounding on the idea of a PLA and if what they say is true, it's certainly something to think about. So what came of all this? Overall, some Board members, such as Trustee Tabera, wanted to ensure that most of the jobs stayed locally when it came to Measure B dollars. He added that "the (builders') profession has taken a hit...a lot of people have had to leave the area to find work. I would think their daughters or sons might have an interest. That kind of work can pay as much as a college education. We're talking 10-15 years of building and jobs," Trustee Padilla-Salsberg wondered if a more hybrid solution was possible, where builders would agree to hire a certain percentage of local workers. Lincoln mentioned it was in fact, a possibility. Finally, Superintendent Tim Vanoli had this to say about a PLA: "I was here in 2002 when the Board decided not to enter into a PLA. If we stay away from PLA, we can have more buildings for kids. Workforce (availability) is also a concern. Most in our area are non-union." Ramirez mentioned she didn't want to see what happened 11 years ago, where it was difficult to reach a contractor who was not from the area. "It was a real headache." SVFT President Steve McDougall weighed in by stating, "My two cents on a PLA is that it is worthy of exploration. All facts should be examined. Consider bringing in folks to share

more information on this issue. You (the Board) were tested tonight, you were pressured to change your norms and you stood your ground. You passed!” Overall, we commend the Board for looking out for the



community’s best interests and for supporting local jobs. We hope our Board is able to reach a solution that continues to demonstrate their excellent ability to be good stewards of taxpayer dollars and that above all, benefits the students of our great community.