



# On The Board

## The Salinas Valley Federation of Teachers

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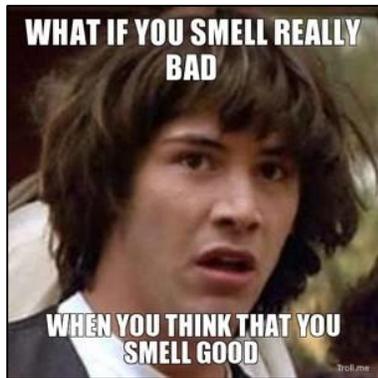
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### Board Highlights from May 2015

Reported By J.J. Campos

#### To P...or not to PLA?

Sweat poured down my face. Everything was hanging by a desperate, threadlike ...je ne sais quoui. And that was just on the way over to the meeting! My A/C died in the car so it didn't help that upon arriving to the May 12th Board meeting, I was greeted by hundreds...yes, hundreds of people pouring out of the lobby, the parking lot, my ears, and pouring out of a VERY HOT Board Room. There were electricians, plumbers, carpenters, and contractors everywhere! You name it. I just have one question...where was an A/C guy when we needed one? FYI...fellas, I need a tile guy.☺ You know the only thing I didn't see? A chair. It was hot and not only was there nowhere to sit, you couldn't even peer in. Luckily, I showered that day and managed to squeeze my way toward the doorway without disturbing anyone's sense of smell. I think. As you might expect, they were all there to discuss the possibility of our Board adopting a Project Labor Agreement (PLA). The PLA would all but ensure that the majority of the work done



under the recently adopted Measure B, would be done by local tradespeople. And therein lies the sticking point. What does local mean anyway? That's the question Trustee Kathryn Ramirez posed early on in the discussion. That right there was enough to get EVERY local trade union as well as some local contractors to speak up for, or against the idea of a PLA. If you might recall, a PLA is an agreement our Board had requested so that more of the work was given locally, and at a fair rate. It's a contentious issue. On the one side, contractors contended that a PLA would be restrictive and basically, price them out. Additionally, they made mention of a similar PLA put in place in Santa Cruz, which they claim, effectively put the project over budget due to onerous red tape and change orders. Trustee Ramirez was having none of it and alluded to the fact that during the last major construction in the SUHSD, many people were contracted from outside city limits and unfairly paid in many cases. "I don't see people from L.A. as local. I want to see my constituents working on these projects." Exactly how that happens is tricky, but as Andy Hartman of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers and member of the Building Trades Council limited those claims to scare tactics and that in fact, it was not the case. Trustee Phil Tabera cried foul about the fact that unscrupulous contractors manipulate the way their employees are paid and that with a PLA, a prevailing



wage for all involved was guaranteed. Superintendent Tim Vanoli and Staff recommendations from the District were clearly against a PLA, which incidentally, contradicted the direction of the Board. Contractors such as Don Chapin and Jeb Johnson, were vehemently against a PLA. Notables such as Nicole Gehring from the Builders and Contractors Association had this to say: "We want to encourage you to do the right thing. Think independently. None of the schools in this community have used a PLA. It includes everyone...this project is for entire community." In other words, what they were saying is that non-union contractors would not be willing to bid if a PLA was drawn...but why? The most obvious reason is money I suppose, as a PLA would potentially eat into profits and more than one naysayer stated that if the District chose to approve a PLA, it would ultimately divert funds away from students. Paul Farmer, CEO of the Chamber Of Commerce 'thanked the District for being a member of the Chamber of Commerce (nice way to drop that little tidbit in...no pressure now ☺ ) The Chamber does not support a PLA ...we feel merit-based companies makes it more fair. Extra cost comes from somewhere ...ultimately students." But as with anything, it's all speculation, and hey, who am I to speculate...I don't have that kind of money! Moving on, there was great concern among Board members if there were enough local workers in supply to accommodate the needs of the upcoming project. Trustee Patty Padilla-Salsberg said she "strongly believes we have enough workers locally to support this construction." She asked SUHSD Manager of Facilities and Planning Karen Luna just how many tradespeople would be needed. Luna replied by stating hundreds would be needed. Even more directly, Padilla-Salsberg asked Hartman if he believed there were enough tradespeople locally. Hartman answered confidently that there were more than enough. Kevin Dayton of Labor Issue Solutions opposed a PLA and stated "all you've heard is

rhetoric...you are adding a 30-40 page contract, which would be favoritism. To get the best quality and price...all those "unscrupulous contractors" have to fill out a pre-qualification form, which is a standard form and would take care of "bad contractors". I urge open and fair competition. Don't do a costly PLA." Trustee Lila Cann stated her concern was that if a bid process were started, jobs would not remain locally. Trustee Martinez echoed that sentiment and while she thanked SUHSD Staff for their recommendations, she looked forward to finding "common ground." Tabera and Padilla-Salsberg wanted further clarification on language in the proposed PLA and neither were convinced that costs would rise dramatically as a result of a PLA. Incidentally, Trustees Martinez, Padilla-Salsberg and Tabera stated they were not ready to make a decision because they had not received all materials. A clearly annoyed Cann asked "who did not get the email? I'm hearing Board members say they haven't had a chance to read it. I asked they be emailed to the Board and members are saying they didn't get the documents." Being that a motion to consider the approval of a PLA had to be made that evening, it appeared the Board was not clear on the urgency. Ok, so someone's not reading! There was some confusion and at one point it went like this:  
Tim Vanoli- Do you want a PLA or not?  
Cann- That's what I was going to ask!  
Padilla-I need more time... to make a motion before we move forward with a PLA.  
Cann- Did you not read the document?  
Tabera- I get a lot of documents, I represent District 3 and I have a choice whether reading it or not. I want to bring it back.



Martinez- I don't have clarity. I can't vote today. It's unfair.

Either the Board didn't do their homework or the Administration had not given the Board the information necessary prior to the meeting? No matter, a motion was made...eventually. Finally, on May 26th, our Board voted in favor of a PLA by a 5-1 vote and now it has entered what is literally, uncharted territory. We hope that students stand to be the greatest beneficiaries of these efforts. As my former Pre-Engineering instructor would say, "hold on to your hard hats, let's hope this works."

## Performance Based Budget Report

If you've ever wondered what a fried Board member looks like, stop by a Board meeting after 3 hours of awards and discussion. Clearly, the Board was exhausted and while Manager of Business Services was still in a chipper mood, they were not. No, they probably weren't in the mood to hear that 26 budget packets were approved. No, they probably were too tired to explore the General Budget. But, they did it anyway. Kudos indeed. Overall, Board members were shown how many additional funds they would be receiving for each site and at one point, Trustee Rubio humorously inquired if some of that money could be used to say, buy donuts. At one point, I thought, nah, can't be true but hey, the jokes on me! Indeed, the money can be used for donuts or for any ancillary use each site might require. Whew. Had me worried there. Again, Aguillon delivered another sunny outlook and yes, the dollars are starting to roll in. Can you smell it? Excuse me.

## Regular Profits or Decaf?

Steve McDougall approached the podium one last time as outgoing SVFT President and had a few words for our Board concerning negotiations. He stated negotiations were not finalized and recommended the Board get together with the Administration because, he implied, they seem to be confused. He added "we're confused (also)...consider having one



of you (Board members) be an observer ...see points of view from both lenses." He also alluded to the allegation by some local contractors that a Santa Cruz Project had gone over budget due to a PLA, were untrue. "A PLA is the ONLY way locals, minorities, vets are part of the project. There's money to be made for contractors...PLA or not. If there is a cost overrun..., it's 'gonna get done. How much profits contractors are gonna get...that's what it's about. Extreme profits versus regular profits."

## Just When I Was Gettin' Comfortable

What happened to the other guy? Just when we were getting comfortable with our last Director of Technology, we lose him. Sheesh. A gentleman by the name of Steven Peters has assumed the new post, and we wish him all the best. It should be pointed out that it would be nice to see some in a position that up until recently, has not exactly been the most transparent. Under Ryan Altemeyer, the SUHSD seemed to be making strides towards better communication in that arena, and we



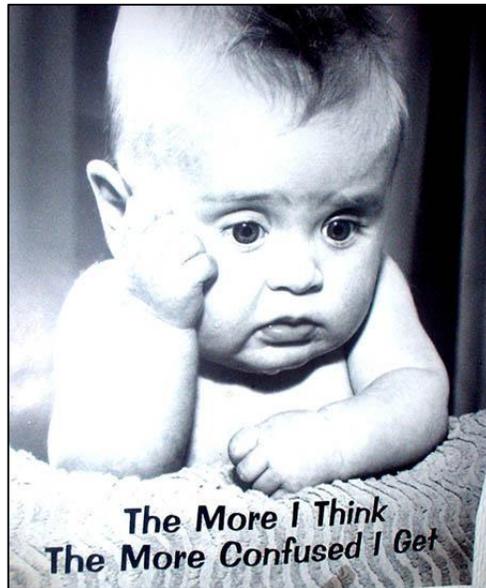
trust Mr. Peters will continue in those efforts. Also, Dr. Bob Martinez recently retired and when he left, calculators all around the world began to weep. Man, could that guy crunch numbers or what? Not to worry, we found a new number and stats cruncher. He goes by the name of Robert Cannon and he thanked the



“Board for placing trust in me and hope to look forward to working in the SUHSD.”

## What Do You Do When They Don't...Get It?

Newly elected SVFT President Kati Bassler spoke to the Board and thanked the Board and those who were there in support of the PLA. She alluded to 2014-15 being a year of successes and disappointments. “We survived the first administration of Smarter



Balance...it has been a good year but unfortunately, disappointing with the manner in which negotiations ended last Thursday. Collaboration at high schools are not solved...Administration proposed to add minimum days and fewer collaborations. Both improve profession...Collaboration focuses on student learning, applying essentials of a PLC...how do u know when they get it? ...what do u do when they don't? I'm not sure, that you (the Board) get it. Still much to do.

What a shame. I hope the District can figure out the difference between Professional Development and Collaboration.” I plead the fifth on that one.