



On The Board

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Board Highlights from November 2016

Reported By Juan Jose Campos

Enjoy It, Sigh. While It Lasts.

SVFT President Kati Bassler addressed the Board and wished them a well-deserved, restful Thanksgiving Break. “Enjoy your time off, as this is the most stressful time for all of us.” She expanded on the Passage of Prop 55, that would secure funding of public schools for an additional twelve years in California and that the Federation was grateful for everyone’s work. She then alerted the Board to the upcoming Sunshine negotiation letters they would be presented with soon. Bassler stated that the progress of SPED, external audit of programs, consortium block grant, facilities, would be discussed and she has some

comments. She also thanked Associate Superintendent Blanca Baltazar-Sabah, who shared that



in 2012-13, SVFT had previously worked with our District to strategically address and remedy some of Special Education’s problems. “The Board received recommendations and SVFT appreciates the District starting to work on stuff from four years ago.” However, she stated her concern was if the Board truly understood when it needed to address concerns? “Please start to trust that when the Federation brings issues to

you, we're concerned for students and community. We'll wait for the audit, but the District is using numbers from 2015-16 to Budget for the 16-17 year. And those numbers are

higher, its 125 students over last year.” For the uninitiated, this is actually a BAD thing. Why? You’ll see when you read the SPED Update



that happened later in the evening. Bassler was confident that the audit would “flag and ask the Board to review its budgeting practices. You’re budgeting for wrong enrollment of students.” Most importantly, the audit requires a timeline and that if not met, the changes necessary would not be completed in time for the 2017-18 school year. On a different topic, despite some progress, the outlook on Food Services improvements continues to look bleak. “I wish I could be more positive with respect to Food Services. I don’t even know where to start. We will continue working with Food Services Manager Christina Varela.” She emphasized our Title 1 processes did not offer a

comprehensive plan our parents and students. “The Title 1 process is how



our District receives funding.....I'm surprised at the immense responsibility we place on Community Liaisons and Cafeteria staff. Additionally, our food choices need to be analyzed. Lots of work to be done." Then, she asked us to laugh a little bit at the fact that some Alisal portables that have been around since Bassler was four years old, are finally being demolished. Ok, I'm not settin' myself up for this one, but folks, that's a long time! I mean, relative to portables that is. Wait a minute,



isn't she my age? Damn! 😊 She proposed the District have a cycle that "documents when buildings come in, and when they need to be removed. How we had classes held there so long is atrocious." Lastly, Bassler supported that our District increase support for Human Resources, with the on-going growth in the District, as opposed to instating a Public Information Officer, which many on the Board feel unnecessary and a low priority. "Board, I ask you to look at that. We don't need an audit to recognize that the HR office is understaffed. Our teachers and students are struggling partly because that office doesn't have what it needs."

Board Comments

Trustee Kathryn Ramirez addressed the most recent election. Yeah, that one. "There are many students who are silently afraid. We will be providing a resolution to reassure students that we will protect them. This is where the racism will happen. I was booed for speaking Spanish and I don't even know Spanish." She continued, "I would hope that there is no hate. We are diverse and we support each other. I will use every single ounce of my power to keep students safe." Trustee Phil Tabera said, "We do need a resolution....a policy statement that says we are in agreement that ICE officials can't enter our campuses."

Briefly

Instructor Perry Rios Dominguez from North Salinas High School took a minute to honor a beloved Campus Supervisor, Steve Narciso, who recently passed away. According to Rios Dominguez, he embodied all of the traits that anybody could ever want in a Campus Supervisor. "I thought it was important to speak about him... He was a kind and caring presence. We could call on him and he could take a student and counsel them...he created a smile zone, his work touched so many lives." A tearful, and clearly emotional Rios Dominguez said he would be missed. Once again, we see what an impact our Campus Supervisors and Classified Staff have on our students. Rest in peace, Steve Narciso.

Let's Have A Cow. Several, In Fact

Everett Alvarez Ag Teacher Janice Souza addressed our Board and urged them to support the proposed ROP Farm. Among the many shortcomings the current program has, she mentioned that while they had a portable, they had been forced to move the farm three times." A passionate advocate for Agriculture Education, Souza said that, "If kids don't have positive things to do, they will find negative things. I believe the livestock program is positive, and in the hard work in caring for animals, students who wouldn't necessarily receive ribbons and

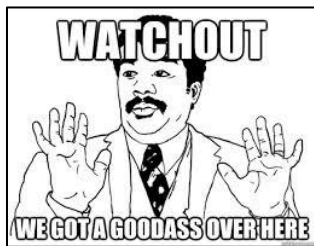


recognition, feel valued." She added that the current conditions were without electricity and concrete, making animal conditions unsanitary. I know what you're thinkin', they're just animals. But trust me, you want your pigs to be squeaky clean. And get this, the current farm sits below a county jail where Souza said "kids are yelled at by inmates." She further described in detail how difficult it was to care for animals and the program. She finalized her comments by



stating the “ROP center is an ideal location due to its short distance, it’s safe, and meets the 1/4 mile food separation guidelines. It makes sense and I’m asking for your support.” About ten Future Farmers Of America students spoke up to relate their plight and the special bond they have with their peers, and with the program. They even got former Salinas Mayor Dennis Donahue to speak on their behalf. Donohue shared he’d be heading up a center for innovation for Western Growers right here in our backyard. “We are on the cusp as being recognized as the Ag Tech capital of the planet. Education is critical. I think it’s a marvelous opportunity. From a strategic standpoint, those relationships are important, and they (students) articulate it so well.” He couldn’t have said it better. FFA students who addressed the Board were eloquent, and well spoken. Here’s to cows, Ag, and pigpens.

Please Hammer, Don’ Kill ‘Em
 SVFT and our District both presented sunshine items for the upcoming negotiations, (man I’m tired of hearing that). Anyhow, SVFT plans on negotiating Articles VI, VII and health and welfare benefits. Chief Negotiator, ex-SVFT President and all around badass, Steve McDougall chewed someone up in the office for not crossing their T’s and dotting their handkerchiefs. “Regarding the District Sunshine Letter, it’s



unclear to me what YEAR the District is negotiating. Recently figuring out what year it was, was an issue. We’re negotiating 16-17 and it’s come up before.” You’re probably wondering, does it matter? When it comes to negotiating, yes, it does. A LOT. He went on to say, “I see what the District is prioritizing and what is absent is health and welfare benefits. It’s NOT a priority for you.” Then! Just then, Trustee Ramirez rudely interjected

by stating Bangs was trying to address his point and McDougall gave her a taste of her own medicine by unceremoniously cutting her off and continuing on with his comments. Yes, it was uncomfortable. Hmmm.. He added, “Health and welfare is on the cusp of disaster and is broken.....A couple cancers, a premie and our reserves are gone. Looking forward to working with the Board and the District.” You are?!



Board Comments...

Trustee Ramirez took a moment to reiterate her support of a Public Information Officer. “I was under the impression the Board was tabling it, not getting rid of it.” The rest of the Board agreed that it would be reviewed at a later time. When exactly that would be. Who knows? No hurry, take your time. In an unsurprising move, our good Board voted to have even year elections in-line with Governor’s support. The vote carried unanimously and all members have just extended their stay. As long as they do a good job, izzz all good baby! Or....is it?

SPED UPDATE

You know how they say they kick the can down the road in politics? Gasp! It happens with Admins too. As I mentioned earlier, Associate Superintendent Blanca Baltazar gave a much needed, and highly requested, SPED update, er, state of the union. Believe me, the State Of The Union proved we’re about to have a coup, or at least a couple of quick vacancies. Actually, they call them lateral transfers now. Anyhoooooo, Baltazar helped, as she put it, give the Board context with regards to the situation....”on past recommendations and areas of things that we’ve accomplished.” And there’s the catch. We’re not really sure what WAS accomplished. Illustrating the point, Trustee Lila Cann was critical of the report and stated, “First of all, there were 1,340 students from



the previous year, don't we know that number by the end of the school year ... how many we should have? We have 1,465 enrolled and there is less budgeted and yet we have MORE students. Why that discrepancy?" Business Services Manager Ana Aguillon said she could provide information on that later but specified that actuals for 2015-16 didn't have updated salaries. Cann was unconvinced. "It should be more for the students. How many students? How many are mild- moderate? How many are moderate- severe....Etc...." Baltazar said she would get that to the Board on Friday. Furthermore, Cann wanted to know why our costs for SPED were different than what MCOE received? "Why are we paying so much less?" It didn't end there. Staffing, or lack of it is the real kicker here. Cann added that she was "really concerned about how many have teaching staff we have on hand." Welcome to the club. "There aren't enough for co-teaching at all of our sites. The classes I attended were so understaffed and they didn't have para- educators." Baltazar offered to provide a chart comparing the three categories of SPED students. STILL, Cann kept at it and while she thanked the District for adding SOME staff, they were being staffed for only 5.5 hours! Let me educate you on why this matters. Ehem, you see, students are in session for 6.5 hours a day. HIGH-NEED students, which means, that for an hour, you've got students with SEVERE



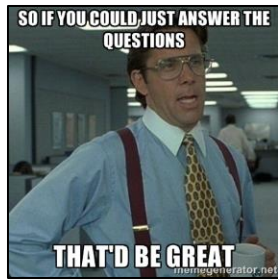
disabilities with ONE person on staff. Dangerous? Maybe. Folks, here's the issue though. While it may seem Cann was going after Baltazar, believe me, she wasn't. The fact is, the VERY people who should have been there answering for these deficiencies were nowhere to be found. Trustee Tabera wanted that fact known publicly. "I believe that the Directors of SPED should have been here to give this presentation regarding the issues with Special Ed. We're having a special audit for that reason!" Hate to say this, but the

man's right. Either way, the fact that the Directors WEREN'T in attendance is pure genius. The best offense is not having a defense! I guess if you can't see it, it ain't there, right? Like I said, GENIUS! Tabera further put the ladies at ease by stating, "It's not up to you or Aguillon". And with that, Tabera gave Baltazar a



well-deserved pass. Trustee Ramirez wanted to know how many English Language Learners with IEP's came from each feeder district. "I'm going somewhere with this. I have a hard time believing teachers would throw a kid into Special Ed. I find it more believable that an assistant principal and a group of elementary teachers get together and misdiagnose our students. I've seen it happen. It would be harder to do that in a high school district. I want to know if EL students are misdiagnosed." Ramirez also wanted a breakdown and categorization of SPED students differentiating Behavior, Mild to Moderate, Moderate to Severe etc...She added that she believed there was sufficient LCAP money to have all SPED students, yes ALL of them, retested. Interesting. "We ruin lives of students when we tell students who are simply two or three years behind in their English that they have a learning disability. I guarantee you there will be a pattern of this behavior." You mean to tell me, SPED departments across California are padding their programs with students who simply can't speak the language. Gasp! No?! ☺ Again, Tabera chimed in, "That's what I'm saying. That's the responsibility of those in charge of the SPED program." Trustee Carlos Rubio asked who was on the current SPED Task Force. Let me help you with that one Mr. Rubio. There IS no task force. Baltazar said one was not in place but that after the audit, "we could put forth a task force with actions and timelines." And that's how the cookie crumbles, reactivity, not proactivity. Again, this not a

criticism on Baltazar and Rubio thanked her for the information she provided. He also wanted to see a side-by-side comparison of MCOE and District costs and services in SPED. Trustee Ocampo chided the District and asked why “these recommendations from 2013 haven’t been followed? We need to take control of this. These students need our help. We’ll give you the freedom, but we want all of our questions answered.” Finally, Lila Cann said our District needed to work fast due to the audit’s deadline if changes were to be in place for the 2017-18 school year. “It needs to happen prior to Nov. 30th for next year implementation and changes. Baltazar agreed, but



cautioned that the Board would need to vote on the audit fast. No pressure.

Squeaky Wheel. Squeaky Wheel.

Facilities Manager Karen Luna gave a Rancho San Juan High School overview and was happy to see Prop 51 passed. She also gave a facilities priority update District-wide. Luna said that while it was difficult to give recommendations, she prioritized needs based on which schools didn’t get the grease on Measure F. “Mt. Toro was not included, and it is the first project we should do. WASC was asking where its kitchen and multipurpose room was.” She then recommended North High and Alisal High be priorities and start moving BEFORE Measure B money fell into place. “We have to lose kids at Alisal and backfill at Alvarez because we’ll lose about 800 students.”



Yes, she said, ‘backfill’ students? Ok Karen you’ve seen one too

many projects and need a vacation, especially when ya’ start ‘backfillin’ students haha! Just givin’ you a hard time. ☺ Trustee Tabera disagreed with Luna about losing students and mentioned that with some boundary shifts on the horizon due to upcoming developments such as Lowe’s and housing developments that will surround it, “they will have a positive impact.” Luna said that in that case, “maybe we should just start planning out High School #6.” Really? Come on, it was hard enough to name the last one! Well, that’s it for us, er me, at the Eye folks. We hope you had a wonderful, and well deserved Thanksgiving Break.