

School Board News! Highlights from the June 22, 2011 Board Meeting

by June Monach, Board of Education Trustee

Summary:

- Farewell to Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services Dr. David Roth
- The Board Voted:
 - 5-0 to Adopt 2011-12 Budget and Authorize Year-End Budget Transfer of Funds
 - 5-0 to Approve the 2011-12 District Commitments, Vision, & Goals
 - 5-0 to Adopt Resolution (with Amendment) to Transfer Categorical Funds to Other District-Eligible State Programs
- Board Review & Discussion:
 - Budget Priorities for 2011-12 and Proposed K-12 Program Reductions Including: 5-12 Library Support Services; K-12 Counseling; K-12 Administration; and K-5 Music, Reading Resource, Math/Science Enrichment, and Librarians
 - Proposed Gifted & Talented Education (GATE) Plan Scheduled for Adoption on 7-13-11
 - Expectations for Board Committee & Liaison Assignments for Next Year
 - District Technology Plan
 - February 2012 Election – Board Member Monach Termed Out; Board Member Jones Unlikely to Run for Re-Election; For Those Interested in Running for Office - Forms Available Oct 17, 2011 from City Clerk
- Other Business
 - Openings for Seismic Safety Bond Program Citizens' Oversight Committee – Application Deadline is July 14, 2011 4:30 pm

Assistant Superintendent Roth Recognized for 9 Years of Stellar Service – We extended huge thanks and appreciation to Dr. Roth for his collaborative leadership style; continuous improvement efforts in Special Education, GATE, K-12 Curriculum review and evaluation, and the Diversity and Respect Task Force; and skills in facilitating courageous conversations with parents, staff, students, and community members in advancing meaningful improvements to support students district-wide. Dr. Roth thanked teachers, administrators, parents, community and board members – whose support made it possible to take this next step in becoming a Superintendent. He expressed gratitude to Superintendent Constance Hubbard and Assistant Superintendent Michael Brady for supporting his professional growth and development, and wished that more people knew how committed and tireless they work in their respective jobs. Parents Catherine Ogle, Shirley Rexrode, and Jon Elliott, extended their appreciation and thanks to Dr. Roth in their many years of working with him. Ms. Ogle noted, "He taught parents. I found my thinking has changed quite a bit." Ms. Rexrode said, "He was always calm, cool, and collected. I felt he was there for my child and for our family." And Mr. Elliott explained, "I appreciated his spirit of inquiry and willingness to stay with the questions and inquiry."

Board Adopts 2011-12 Budget & Authorizes Necessary Transfers – Assistant Superintendent Brady provided a comprehensive review of the details and assumptions behind next year's budget which was adopted by the Board, as well as the multi-year projections for 2012-13 and 2013-14. The Board's goal is to bring spending in line with revenues over the 3-year budget development cycle. The multi-year budget outlook was reviewed in the context that today we receive 20% less in unrestricted State revenues when compared to two years ago. Mr. Brady noted that the projections for State revenues will be re-visited once the State adopts its budget. Here are the highlights:

- The District manages a \$29 million budget, which is balanced for next year thanks to all stakeholders helping to address the projected budget shortfall.

- We receive funding based on the attendance of students enrolled in our schools. Overall enrollment over the next three years is expected to be stable with a slight dip projected in 2011-12.
- The statutory minimum reserve level is 3%. District reserve levels will be 11% in 2011-12, 5% in 2012-13, and .15% in 2013-14 where \$878,295 will be needed in 2013-14 to meet the statutory requirement.
- Multi-year (3-Year) Outlook:
 - ✓ Higher reserve levels will be used to satisfy the statutory requirement and for contingency planning purposes;
 - ✓ Total revenues are expected to decrease by 3.3%, due to the expiration of the emergency parcel tax measure E, and assuming State revenues remain flat;
 - ✓ Total expenditures are expected to increase by 3%, with salary increases limited to the normal 1.5%/year increase for 'step and column' growth; *no* increases to health and benefit costs as a result of employee negotiations; continued furloughs for all employees (5 days for certificated and 3 days for classified staff members) which reduces salary costs by \$450,000/year; and \$350,000 in ongoing program reductions;
 - ✓ To curb continued dependence on one-time funds for ongoing expenditures, we assume no increased revenues from local sources including local parcel taxes and grants from Parents' Clubs/PEF/other local support groups. Together, local support constitutes 38% of the District budget.

Vice President Rick Raushenbush noted that projected expenditures may be adjusted after a legal opinion is provided on what projected increase to reflect for 'Other Post Employment Benefits' (OPEB) costs. The number as currently reflected is conservative and on the high side. As noted in past discussions, the Board has an interest in curbing OPEB costs.

For details, go to: http://www.piedmont.k12.ca.us/aboutpusd/agenda.minutes/2011-12_Budget_Adoption.pdf

Budget Priorities for 2011-12 & Beyond – Although PUSD has adopted a balanced budget for next year, the State has yet to adopt its budget. All employee groups negotiated significant reductions to employee compensation by agreeing to furlough days and a cap on the District's health benefit costs. As part of the local adopted budget, the Board approved \$350,000 in program reductions, in the areas of: music, reading resource, library services, science/math resource, counseling services, English, and administration. Parents' Club fundraising successfully exceeded the \$1.3 million target. Some parents and community members are lobbying to reinstate certain program reductions such as music and library services given this successful outcome. Other parents are suggesting that additional funds raised should be directed to the District for general purpose, unrestricted use. Given the uncertainty of State funding, and a willingness on the part of Parents' Clubs to release some undesignated funds raised to the District beginning next year, Superintendent Hubbard asked the Board for direction in determining what its budget priorities are for next year, and whether to earmark private fundraising amounts for more specific or general purposes.

The Board was unanimous in its recommendation to wait until the State adopted its budget before considering the reinstatement of recently made program cuts. Because we receive 20% less in unrestricted State funds today when compared to two years ago, the Board was in agreement that we preferred receiving additional funds from private sources as unrestricted, which would give the District the greatest flexibility to address future budget uncertainties. Some on the Board would recommend buying back furlough days, reducing class sizes, or investing in the work of the Evaluation Committee with additional funds. Others thought as long as a significant portion were directed to the District for general unrestricted use, that any remaining portion could be allocated to address site needs working in collaboration with site principals and the District administration. Superintendent Hubbard explained that although reinstatement of a position would not be authorized, use of funds to restore services on a one-time basis would be considered. The administration is exploring ways to staff the library so it could be kept open at lunch hour and after school. The Board expressed its support for this.

The Board dedicated a portion of its priority setting discussion to the proposed changes to the elementary instrumental music program. Elementary Principals Ms. Julie Valdez and Ms. Tery Susman extended their appreciation to the music staff for working collaboratively to develop the current recommendation in order to enhance service to all students. Music teachers, Ms. Catherine DeVos and Ms. Andria Mullen, reviewed the proposed enhancements with the Board. Superintendent Hubbard noted that in the current budget climate all programs are being evaluated with an eye towards maintaining a balance of offerings, K-12, and identifying potential ways to improve service delivery – especially those that improve student engagement and outcomes over time. The changes will be evaluated by the staff and administration, and updates will be provided to the school community at Site Council meetings and with the CHIME Board next year. Several members of the CHIME Board and community members provided input to the Board regarding the proposed changes to the music program. Some expressed appreciation for taking their input into consideration in developing the current recommendation, and looked forward to being a part of the evaluation process. Others expressed concern over the process used to gather public input, as well as whether the staffing changes would ultimately improve student engagement in larger class sizes. Given the strength of the current program, others questioned why any change was necessary.

Board Member Jones, as the school board liaison to CHIME, a past member of the CHIME Board, and having attended Site Council meetings where budget issues and potential program changes were discussed, provided a detailed review of why she supported the recommended change. She firmly believes that the program change must be viewed in the context of the budget development process and explained that the change is targeted to support those students who need more support in learning the fundamentals of music. She also supported the administration's desire to look at the articulation of the program beyond elementary school, as she hopes more students will stick with studying music as she did in middle school and high school. As in other subjects, Vice President Raushenbush explained that he supported the use of multiple strategies to teach a subject in order to reach more students, explaining that the Orff Method did just that. Although Board Members understood that members of the public would have preferred earlier communication of possible changes, they explained that information was conveyed to the public as soon as realistically possible. The Board also expressed clear disappointment with a local newspaper for publishing inflammatory and inaccurate information about changes to the music program as a recommendation was being developed. At a time when significant compensation cuts have been negotiated with all employee groups; local fundraising and parcel tax revenues are being deployed to preserve as much of the educational program as possible; and class sizes have been increased to maintain a breadth of offerings for as many students as possible; the Board believes a .1 FTE (Full-Time-Equivalent) reduction to the elementary music program is very small and reasonable – especially if education professionals believe that service delivery to more students will be improved. The Board commended the administration for fostering a culture of continuous improvement and extended its unanimous support for “trying something different” to see if it would help and captivate the interests of more children.

For additional information go to pp 6-11: <http://www.piedmont.k12.ca.us/aboutpusd/agenda.minutes/062211packet.pdf>

Gifted & Talented Education (GATE) Plan – Assistant Superintendent Roth reviewed the major areas of the plan that were revised. Ongoing discussions at GATE Advisory Council meetings have occurred regarding what grade level to identify students. The new plan calls for identification in the Spring each year in the 3rd grade, instead of in 4th grade. A standardized assessment will be used for all 3rd graders, as this approach was viewed to be a more equitable referral system. The plan calls for continued efforts to cluster GATE identified students in classes. Dr. Roth also shared with the Board that the District is considering developing its own GATE certification program for teachers. The Board will be asked to adopt the new plan at its meeting on July 13, 2011.

For details, go to: <http://www.piedmont.k12.ca.us/aboutpusd/agenda.minutes/062211packet.pdf>

Election Timeline and Expectations for Board Committee/Liaison Work – Superintendent Hubbard announced that Monday, October 17, 2011 is the date when forms from the City Clerk's Office will be available for those interested in running for school board. In February 2012, three seats will be open. Board Member June Monach will complete her second and

final term; Vice President Raushenbush and Board Member Jones will complete their first terms and may run for re-election. Board Member Jones announced that, "It is unlikely that I will be running again." She explained that her husband is a Mathematics professor at UC Berkeley, and has taken a leave and will be teaching at Vanderbilt University. She will therefore not be able to dedicate the time necessary to school board work as she will be traveling more next year. Board Member Jones explained that she was announcing her news early in an effort to interest good candidates in our community to think about running for office. In an effort to lighten the meeting work load, the Board agreed to identify committees where regular meeting attendance would be expected and other groups where meeting attendance would be on an "as needed" basis. A list of Board assignments will be finalized and approved at the next Board meeting.

PUSD Commitments, Vision, and Goals – The Board reviewed and adopted its commitments, vision, and 2011-12 goals. The District Administration will develop an action plan using this information as a framework for its work next year. In a previous draft, Board Member Monach noted that the entire Diversity Mission Statement was included under 'Commitments.' To create more balance in the document, key components from the statement were synthesized in this section in the final version. She recommended that the Board adopt the tenets of the full mission statement in the District's Board Policies sometime next year.

See pp 36-37 for details: <http://www.piedmont.k12.ca.us/aboutpusd/agenda.minutes/062211packet.pdf>

District Technology Plan – Assistant Superintendent Roth gave the Board an update on the work of the District Technology Committee. He expressed excitement that a talented and representative group of teachers, students, parents, and support staff met to brainstorm ways in which to enhance learning through the use of technology in our school district. A copy of the school site technology reports is available on pp 41-45 at:

<http://www.piedmont.k12.ca.us/aboutpusd/agenda.minutes/062211packet.pdf>