

**VENTURA COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING OF
September 14, 2007**

A. CALL TO ORDER

1. Call To Order, Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, and Moment of Reflection
The Regular meeting of the Ventura County Board of Education, Agenda No. 07-17, was called to order by Mr. Marty Bates, President, at 8:04 a.m. on Friday, September 14, 2007, in the Board Room of the Conference & Educational Services Center, 5100 Adolfo Road, Camarillo. The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag was led by Mr. Bates and followed by a moment of reflection.

2. Roll Call
Trustees Present:
Mary Louise Peterson, Area 1
Marty Bates, Area 2
Chris Valenzano, Area 3
Dean Kunicki, Area 4 – *Arrived at 8:05 a.m.*
Ron Matthews, Area 5

VCOE Personnel Present:
Charles Weis, Ventura County Superintendent of Schools and Ex-Officio Secretary and Executive Officer of the Board
Nancy Manley, Executive Assistant to Dr. Weis
Dr. Cary Dritz, Associate Superintendent, Student Services

Anchor Consulting, LLC
Scott Wilk
Dr. Gregorian Hrach

Board Legal Counsel
Don Hurley, Assistant County Counsel

3. Approval of Agenda
Mr. Valenzano moved the agenda be approved. Mrs. Peterson seconded the motion, and it carried 4:0.

B. PUBLIC COMMENTS

1. *Mr. Sean Morris, Fillmore Resident*
Mr. Morris stated that his child attends Sespe School and that it is his belief that the lawsuit brought by the Fillmore Unified School District is a waste of money and resources. The issue is an interpretation of Education Code. He hopes that the interests of the child and parent will go forward; and he asked that the Board continue their fight.
2. *Laura Bartels, Fillmore Resident*
Mrs. Bartels encouraged the Board to continue to defend their decision.

C. CLOSED SESSION

1. Conference with Legal Counsel – Existing Litigation
Mr. Bates adjourned the Board into Closed Session at 8:08 a.m.

D. PRELIMINARY

1. Report of Action Taken in Closed Session.
Mr. Bates convened the Board into Open Session at 9:07 a.m.

Mr. Bates reported that, during Closed Session, the Board made the determination that the Board will respond to the allegations made by the Fillmore Unified School District.

E. DISCUSSION/INFORMATION/ACTION

1. Discussion of Possible Contract of Board Legal Counsel for General Education Issues
Mr. Kunicki distributed packets from Parker and Covert Law firm. Mr. Kunicki recommended that Mr. Hayashida be contracted to supplement the work of current Board Counsel on the existing litigation. He also noted that this firm could address other legal issues that come before the Board. Mr. Kunicki indicated that Mr. Hayashida is willing to attend the September 24, 2007 Board meeting.

Mrs. Peterson stated that, in the past, RFPs have been requested for Board Legal Counsel. Mrs. Peterson would like the Board to extend an RFP for Legal Counsel. She would like to have more than just one option available for discussion. Mr. Kunicki stated that with the time constraints of the existing legal situation, he would like to avoid the extensive time needed for an RFP.

Mrs. Peterson stated that staff could contact other districts that use law firms, and that RFPs could be sent to all law firms. She would like the Board to make very deliberative decisions, rather than reviewing only one law firm. She felt there should be interviews and presentations. The Board has a history with Mr. Hurley, and the Board of Supervisors, and the Board should find a law firm that has a history with this region and the issues of Ventura County.

Mr. Bates concurred that a RFP process should be utilized if the Board was going to hire a law firm for all educational issues. The proposed firm could work on the existing litigation in conjunction with County Counsel. If the Board were going to use this firm for all matters, then an RFP process should be utilized.

Mr. Bates asked that Mr. Hayashida be invited to attend the next Board meeting, and that any additional firms be invited to attend the next meeting as well.

Mr. Valenzano noted that, per the record provided by Dr. Weis, Mr. Hurley was not hired through a RFP process. He also noted that, in light of the current litigation, he would like the assistance of a firm that specializes in educational issues. He would agree that a RFP process needs to be utilized to hire an attorney that will represent the Board in all educational issues. Mr. Bates stated that the reason County Counsel was hired without a RFP, was because County Counsel had represented the Board for many years prior.

Mr. Bates requested that this item be included on the September 24, 2007 agenda as an action item.

Mr. Kunicki noted that there is a precedent for the Board to hire an attorney for a specific issue, as the Board did with the attorney hired to address the County Committee on School District Organization issue.

Mr. Kunicki further stated that he has no concern with the continued representation by County Counsel for expulsions. He just feels that additional Counsel with expertise in educational issues is needed. No action was taken on this item.

2. Ventura County Board of Education Roundtable Discussion of Goals and Future Planning

Scott Wilk, and Dr. Hrach Gregorian, from Anchor Consultants, LLC (Washington DC Lobbyist firm); and John Boal, Development Director for Grace College; were in attendance.

Mr. Wilk provided an update on what is happening in Washington D.C. The Lobbyists have been told that the proposed project with Grace College will be included in the NCLB language which will move out of the House in the 3rd or 4th week in September. Mr. Wilk distributed a letter from Congressman Marc Sautter.

Mr. Wilk stated that spending bills have left the House and are now in the Senate. Congressman Gallegly did submit for funding for at-risk students, but this was not picked up. The Lobbyists will continue their efforts with the Senate.

Mr. John Boal addressed the proposed Grace / VCOE partnership. Grace College has been involved in prison education in Indiana for 20 years. The College is now seeing graduates being released from prison and there have been no incidents of recidivism. As a part of NCLB, the College is trying to determine how it can reach students, grades 6-12, before they are incarcerated.

Grace College is impressed with the character-based literacy program offered at the VCOE Court & Community Schools, as well as with the findings in the WASC report. Grace College has proposed developing a two-week summer camp program for VCOE students. Students would be brought to the Grace College campus where they would be exposed to graphic design or biotechnology or environmental science. The purpose of these two weeks would be to show the students that there are opportunities available to them. Students would receive college credit for this training. These credits would transfer to any IHE in California.

Grace College has found that this type of mentoring program works with at-risk students. The proposed program does not include incarcerated youth, but students from the Gateway program. It is anticipated that Gateway staff would travel with the students in order to continue the relationship with the students after they return. An employee of Grace College would be based in Ventura County to identify the students. It is also anticipated that some Grace College students would come here to work with VCOE staff. Also included in the draft plan would be an opportunity for parents to travel to Indiana to take part in graduation and a transition activity.

Mrs. Peterson clarified that at-risk students in VCOE programs would qualify to go to Indiana for two weeks; and that also in the bill is a provision for transportation for both the students and the VCOE teachers who accompany them.

Mr. Kunicki stated that this proposal takes the quality aspects of both programs and melds them together. Mrs. Peterson suggested having Grace College students interact with college students in our area. Mrs. Peterson noted that taking at-risk students out of their environment helps them develop more productive behaviors.

Mr. Bates stated that if this pilot program works, it could be shared with other County Offices of Education. Mr. Kunicki reported that the Lobbyists are setting up a meeting with Community College Board members as well. Networking and further development would be needed.

Mr. Boal stated that another component of the Grace College proposal is that alumni from their prison program would make presentations at local high schools on how to keep others from making the same bad choices. Grace College has had 24 graduates, 10 have re-enrolled in an additional advanced program, and are working on job placement. This is just beginning at Grace College.

Mr. Valenzano stated that the County Board is charged with the responsibility for educating at-risk students, and he is looking forward to this opportunity.

Round Table Discussion

Dr. Gregorian stated that the purpose of this visioning meeting is for the Lobbyists to gain some idea of what the Board sees as their challenges and opportunities, and to determine areas where the Lobbyists can assist the Board. If the Board has a compelling vision, especially for a three or more year program, the Lobbyists can often find more support money than first anticipated.

Mr. Kunicki urged the Lobbyists to discuss with Dr. Weis any pilot programs that the County Office has undertaken. The County Office is often asked to take on these programs due to the reputation of this Office.

Mr. Kunicki raised the idea of expansion of the technology program – including technology training for teachers. He explained that teachers participate in continuing education, and much of this coursework is offered on-line. The Office has discussed creating an on-line, on-demand training program, that could be statewide. If Ventura County were to be the County that develops that program, this could grow into a revenue stream. There is a significant cost factor in developing this type of program. It would be offered on a fee for services basis. Dr. Gregorian noted that the Lobbyists would then be pursuing start up funds. He suggested framing this idea as, “The County Office is saving schools money by providing a service that is ‘at least as good.’ ”

Dr. Weis requested clarification on the current Grace College proposal. Dr. Weis stated that the proposed budget indicates that the portion of NCLB that this will be ceded in is Title 1, Part D. Dr. Weis asked if there are other post-secondary institutions funded under Title 1, Part D? There are not. Dr. Weis asked if post-secondary institutions are eligible to receive NCLB funds? Mr. Boal responded yes. Dr. Weis stated his concerns that the proposed budget includes a request for \$8.5 million to build residence halls for this two week camp. Is this an appropriate expenditure under NCLB? Mr. Boal responded that it is. Mr. Boal stated that when they looked into the details, and discussed the realities of security and safety issues of bringing in students under this program, it was determined that the facilities had to be adequate and appropriate to handle those students, under safety and development for them. Their discussions with Congressmen and other folks have given them the green light on this use of funding. Mr. Boal clarified that Grace College envisions offering four two week programs, serving 80 students, over the summer.

Dr. Gregorian concurred that the facilities will become multi-use, but the lobbyists do not believe in overfunding projects. The reason for the buildings is initially this program, but the lobbyists believe that Grace College will continue to use the facilities. Dr. Weis stated that it was his assumption was that this program would make use of the existing residence halls at Grace College which would be available in the summer. Mr. Boal responded that there are already summer programs in existence that use the residence halls.

Mrs. Peterson asked that staff be questioned regarding their visions. The Board's vision is education for all, not just at-risk youth and special education students. One of the main problems that she hears about is that the students at the high end don't get the excellence and growth they need; and the students at the low end don't have the support system they need. There is a great need at both ends of the spectrum. Parents who are English Learners themselves don't have access to the materials that their children are learning. She suggested a program whereby parents have an opportunity to learn the curriculum along with their children, and that a corresponding funding mechanism be developed. A program for community education for all. She also stated that there is a need for better communication between parents and teachers.

Mrs. Peterson noted that there isn't enough differentiation for the high end students. She suggested that afterschool institutes be created that address the needs of advanced students. This Office coordinates the Mock Trial, Science Fair, and Academic Decathlon.

Mr. Valenzano asked if the lobbyists received a copy of the ideas that were brought up during last year's brainstorming session. He asked that the lobbyists review these items, and see if any of those goals could be explored. Dr. Gregorian suggested the Board look at that the minutes and develop one or two items that could be addressed.

Mr. Kunicki noted that the Teacher Housing was one of the large issues brought up last year. Teachers cannot afford to live in the area. The Board had hoped to develop cost effective housing that could be located mid-County. Dr. Gregorian noted that the military runs some of the largest medical and housing facilities in the world. The Lobbyists' job is to find ways to tap into money for these goals. He suggested that the lobbyists look into ways to tap into the Department of Defense budget for funding for teacher housing for those teachers who teach students of military personnel.

The Department of Defense is currently tearing down and reconstructing the naval housing in Camarillo. Dr. Gregorian noted that as a port, there is also Homeland Security funds available.

Mr. Valenzano noted that, through his time working for the California State Assembly, he found the biggest concern of military personnel to be that their families are taken care of when they deploy. He asked that the Board consider providing quality preschool for military dependents, thereby relieving military spouses of this time commitment. Dr. Gregorian suggested that if the Board were to provide teacher housing; quality preschool for military dependents could also be provided within that facility; thereby melding the local educational communities and the defense industry. Mr. Valenzano also asked that the Board look at after-school programs.

Mrs. Peterson noted that where the military bases are located, many of the high schools are in program improvement. If we can provide support in Oxnard and Hueneme, this would help revitalize the area.

Mr. Kunicki stated that the ROP is one of the most successful programs operated by the Office. The Office has statistical data that shows a 94% success rate for employment or college for ROP graduates. ROP enrollment is currently capped. Anything that can be done to provide the other requested programs would be appreciated. He requested that staff share with the Lobbyists the list of requested programs.

Mr. Valenzano noted that there may be a need for the ROP to offer an EMT program, and Ventura County high tech employers need highly trained individuals. There could be some investment in the schools from these employers. The most recent Focus on Education provided a list of the large corporate sponsors.

Dr. Gregorian noted that a positive way to pursue investment dollars is to note that you will not be going back for additional funds. The lobbyists can note that the program should sustain itself. The way to approach Congress is, "With these funds, I can create this program, which once started will be sustainable in the future because of this revenue stream that was created."

Mr. Valenzano noted that the Board has identified its top three issues: Teacher Housing, Afterschool / Preschool for Military families, and an increase in the ROP program.

Mr. Bates asked for the Lobbyists' feedback on these areas. The Board would like to know if these are impossible areas to pursue. Mr. Wilk noted that the reality is that their efforts will be able to succeed on one, max two issues. One problem they face is that there are only two Senators for a huge geographical area. If the Lobbyist can find another State to partner with, and to get the attention of, this helps. It is very hard to get the attention of Senators Boxer or Feinstein.

Mrs. Peterson stated that the integration of housing, education and the community is a worthy model. Integrating education with the Military and Homeland Security is important. The military is often in low-income areas. This effort could make our community more attractive to private industry.

Mr. Valenzano pointed out that there are colleges that receive Homeland Security funds to provide first responder training courses; possibly the Office could partner with other colleges or secure this type of funding as well.

Dr. Weis noted that the Office needs to stay focused on those areas that we are best suited to do. The Board needs to be realistic about programs that can be offered out of this Office.

Dr. Gregorian summarized that the lobbyists will focus on teacher housing, preschool and afterschool childcare. Specialized training in homeland security is best suited to the Community College Districts. Mr. Bates asked that the lobbyists also address the expansion of the ROP program.

Mr. Valenzano stated that he would be happy to bring money into Ventura County, even if it isn't for a program offered by the Ventura County Office of Education.

Mr. Kunicki stated that his focus is on how education can generate its own income. How does the Office take what it does best and sustain and expand it? The lobbyists noted that education will get most of its funding from the State, but the lobbyists' job is to find federal funds to assist in this effort.

Dr. Gregorian noted that the lobbyists will continue to communicate with the Board and will indicate which of the proposed programs are getting interest. Regarding the Grace proposal, Mr. Wilk stated that the lobbyists are still focusing their efforts on the Senate. They have received verbal assurances from the House.

Mr. Bates thanked the representatives for their attendance.

F. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

1. EMT Program Offered through ROP (Requested by Mr. Valenzano, September 24, 2007).
2. Presentation on ROP Marketing Program (Requested by Mr. Bates, September 24, 2007).
3. Formal Relationship between NAI Capital, Commercial Real Estate Services, and the County Board of Education (Requested by Mr. Valenzano, TBD).

4. Report from Board Subcommittee on Teacher Housing (Requested by Mr. Kunicki / TBD).
5. Board Policy on Actions of Subcommittee Members (Requested by Mr. Kunicki / TBD).
6. Report from Capitol Venture, LLC (requested by Mrs. Peterson / TBD).
7. Ratification of 2007-08 Organizational Goals & Objectives (TBD).

G. FUTURE MEETINGS

Date: Monday, September 24, 2007
Time: 6:00 p.m.
Location: 5100 Adolfo Road, Board Room, Camarillo
Purpose: Regular Meeting of the Board

Date: Friday, October 12, 2007
Time: 8:00 a.m.
Location: 5100 Adolfo Road, Board Room, Camarillo
Purpose: Regular Meeting of the Board

Date: **Tuesday, October 23, 2007**
Time: 6:00 p.m.
Location: 5100 Adolfo Road, Board Room, Camarillo
Purpose: Regular Meeting of the Board

BOLD denotes modified schedule

H. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 10:42 a.m.

Approved as Amended by Board Action on 11/26/07.

*Board meetings are recorded by audio tape pursuant to Government Code Section 54953.5(b).
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