

SONOMA COUNTY COMMITTEE ON SCHOOL DISTRICT ORGANIZATION

Sonoma County Office of Education – SCOE Board Room

5340 Skylane Boulevard, Santa Rosa, CA 95403

AUGUST 8, 2011 REGULAR MEETING MINUTES - UNADOPTED

Jeanne Bassett Fernandes, Committee Chair, called the meeting of the Sonoma County Committee on School District Organization to order at 5:30 p.m. and led the Committee in the Pledge of Allegiance. The meeting was held at the Sonoma County Office of Education in the SCOE Board Room. MEETING

Jeanne Bassett Fernandes, Jeremy Brott, Vernon Calsy, James DeWilder, Ronald Kristof, Rick Massell, and Mary Schafer; Sandra Elliott arrived at 5:35 MEMBERS PRESENT

Larry Haenel, Kathy Hayes, and Robert Smith MEMBERS ABSENT

Denise Calvert, Patti Springer, and School and College Legal Services representatives, Marko Fong, and Frank Zotter STAFF PRESENT

Members of the Committee introduced themselves to members of the public, Karen Bosworth, Pat Hummel, Ray Peterson, and Kathleen Willbanks INTRODUCTIONS

1. ACTION ITEMS

On motion by Mr. DeWilder, seconded by Mr. Calsy, the motion carried to approve the August 8, 2011 agenda. *1.1 Approval of the August 8, 2011 Agenda*

On motion by Ms. Schafer, seconded by Mr. Brott, the motion carried to approve the June 13, 2011 minutes. *1.2 Approval of the June 13, 2011 Minutes*

Ms. Calvert stated that the correction was made to clarify Mr. Fong's comments regarding trustee areas under Item 3.4 Voter Rights Act Update. On motion by Mr. Brott, seconded by Mr. DeWilder, the motion carried to approve the amended minutes. *1.3 Approval of the Approved/Amended January 10, 2011 Minutes*

The Committee reviewed the draft responses to the Grand Jury that were prepared by Ms. Calvert and the School and College Legal Services staff. On motion by Mr. Brott, seconded by Ms. Schafer, the motion carried to approve the responses as written. *1.4 Discuss and Approve Response to Sonoma County Grand Jury*

None. 2. PUBLIC COMMENT

3. INFORMATION & DISCUSSION ITEMS

Ms. Calvert presented and reviewed an overlay map outlining the five Supervisorial districts and the seven Board of Trustee districts. She explained that if we went to five Board of Trustee areas, they would not exactly align with the Supervisorial areas as our school districts reach into two different counties. Ms. Calvert also reviewed the County Board expenses and the Standing Committee information. Ms. Elliot commented that she understood the main factor in reviewing five versus seven members was a matter of costs and wanted to clarify that this is what the Committee is required to look at. *3.1 Grand Jury Recommendation: County Board-Number of Members five versus seven*

Discussion with the members of the public ensued with Kathleen Willbanks stating that the County Board of Education (Board) met on August 4 and agreed that there would be two representatives present at this meeting; she was happy to see that there were four. She commented that five Board members felt strongly about keeping the membership at seven because of the four standing committees with three members each. Ms. Willbanks said that the current structure of the standing committees allows for in-depth studies of issues; having only five members may compromise the ability to study concerns in-depth.

Pat Hummel gave a brief history of her experience with schools and the Board of Supervisors, and the difference between the county school board and the local school boards. She reviewed a list of responsibilities of the Board, and explained the working relationship with the elected Superintendent of Schools. Ms. Hummel said they also act as the Board of Education for ROP and Court and Community School, and they sit as an administrative court of law for expulsions, and support for the elected County Superintendent. The Board sets the Superintendent's salary, but they cannot hire, terminate, or evaluate him.

*3.1 Grand Jury
Recommendation
(Continued)*

Mr. Dewilder asked the history of why the Board areas are not aligned with the Supervisorial districts. Ms. Hummel stated that her understanding is that they took into account topography, high school districts, interests, people represented in the areas, etc. Mr. Peterson provided additional information on when the County Board of Education became fiscally independent of the Board of Supervisors.

Discussions included the Standing Committees with Instructional Services requiring the most time; hearings where the Board acts like a local board and the possible quorum problems that may arise if membership is reduced to five; responsibilities as an ad-hoc committee for charter schools; and their responsibilities concerning Special Education. The structure of the Board was reviewed, and what the Standing Committees would look like if membership were reduced. Ms. Willbanks commented that the Standing Committee structure helps the Board meetings flow more smoothly, and with a reduction in membership, it may require that the Board meet more frequently, such as two meetings per month.

Discussed local school district board meetings and the similarities between them and the County Board. Sometimes there are only a few members of the public there and sometimes there is a full house. Ms. Willbanks added that the County has no PTA groups and families are less involved than in local districts. Discussed what the Board does in addition to what was already discussed. Ms. Willbanks stated that their goals align with the Superintendent of Schools, which are noted on the SCOE website, and she has personally been trying to increase communications with local colleges, bridging gaps for the betterment of education. Ms. Hummel added that she spends about two hours per day keeping informed of school board issues by reviewing fiscal reports, other district policies, etc. She added that she feels the SCOE Board is exceptional in terms of the State - it understands its jurisdiction, responsibilities, and works well as a group.

Discussed two of the Board's accomplishments – facilities for Clean & Sober, and Alternative Education; and the Business Education partnership in Petaluma. Discussed their passions – Parent Teen and Clean & Sober programs, small schools, Career Development/ROP, and going to Sacramento to see their efforts taking affect.

Discussed the \$300 monthly stipend each Board member receives and the overall \$14,000 cost of benefits for all the members in comparison with local boards. Ms. Hummel provided a history of the policy regarding the Board members' benefits and that in the 1980s members could receive benefits for life after 12 years of service, in 1992 new members could receive benefits for life after 20 years of service, and in 1995 new members were no longer entitled to benefits for life.

At 6:50 p.m. concluded the discussion with the members of the public with Ms. Hummel sharing Jill Kaufman's information regarding the monthly stipend the Board receives and how it provides an opportunity for diverse economic representation – leveling the playing field, and it's impact on lost hourly wages for time to attend meetings.

*3.1 Grand Jury
Recommendation
(Continued)*

Committee members further discussed the County Board of Education's budget as it relates to the SCOE budget, the quality of governance provided versus the costs, the costs to run the County Committee, etc. Members suggested looking at other ways to reduce costs of the Board rather than reducing the membership, such as studying their benefits. One member commented that hearing the discussions reinforces the great work that County Board does.

Ms. Calvert and Mr. Fong reviewed the timeline and deadlines to redistrict the trustee areas. The County Registrar of Voters will present three options for redistricting - taking into account concerns with the California Voting Rights Act and balancing the populations in each area - and ask for a decision from this Committee by December 2011 if the Board of Trustee remains at seven members.

As a result of a straw poll, the Committee will further study the issue of reducing the number of Board members from seven to five as a discussion/action item on the next County Committee agenda. The members requested a calendar history of the Board meetings, including Standing Committee meetings, hearings, study sessions, etc. Ms. Calvert will email this information to the members prior to the next meeting. Members would also like information on timelines, costs, documentation for savings, detail on election costs, etc., and would like to see how the boundaries would look for five trustee areas.

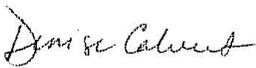
Meetings are scheduled for 5:30 p.m. on Monday, September 12, 2011, and Monday, November 7, 2011.

4. NEXT MEETING DATE
AND TIME

Ms. Bassett Fernandes adjourned the meeting at 7:45 p.m.

5. ADJOURNMENT

Respectfully submitted,



Denise Calvert, Secretary
S.C.C.S.D.O.