

RIVER DELTA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

MINUTES

SPECIAL MEETING

March 23, 2021

- 1. Call Open Session to Order** – President Stone called the Open Session of the meeting of the Board of Trustees to order at 5:30 p.m. on March 9, 2021. As the result of the Coronavirus Pandemic (COVID-19), on March 12, 2020, Governor Gavin Newsom issued Executive Order N-25-20. This order includes directives canceling large gatherings. The Executive Order also allows local legislative bodies to hold meetings via conference calls while still satisfying state transparency requirements. The Governor has also issued Executive Order N-33-20, prohibiting people from leaving their homes or places of residence except to access necessary supplies and services or to engage in specified critical infrastructure employment. The health and well-being of our students, staff and community members are the top priority for the Board of Trustee of River Delta Unified School District. To facilitate this process the meeting was held remotely via Zoom Webinar. Access was available to the public to attend with audio and video.

We have modified the meeting procedures while the Shelter-in-Place for Coronavirus Pandemic (COVID-19) is active. President Stone gave instructions on how the public is to address the Board during public comment or on any agenda item.

- 2. Roll Call of Members:**

Jennifer Stone, President
Dan Mahoney, Vice President
Marilyn Riley, Clerk (lost internet connection 8:36pm)
Rafaela Casillas, Member (arrived 5:31pm)
Marcial Lamera, Member
Wanda Apel, Member
Randall Jelly, Member

Also, present: Katherine Wright, Superintendent and Jennifer Gaston, Recorder.

- 3. Review Closed Session Agenda (see attached agenda)**

- 3.1 Board Stone announced items on the Closed Session Agenda
- 3.2 Public Comment on Closed Session Agenda Items Only – None to report

- 4. Board President Stone asked for a motion to approve the Closed Session agenda and adjourn the meeting to Closed Session @ 5:32 pm**

Member Lamera moved to approve, *Member Casillas seconded. Motion carried by roll call Vote 7 (Ayes: Mahoney, Riley, Casillas, Lamera, Apel, Jelly, Stone): 0 (Nays)*

- 5. Open Session was reconvened at 6:30 pm**

- 5.1 Roll was retaken. All members were present.

Also, present: Katherine Wright, Superintendent and Jennifer Gaston, Recorder.

- 5.2 Pledge of Allegiance was led by Board President Stone

- 6. Report of Action taken, if any, during the Closed Session (Government Code Section 54957.1)**

Board President Stone reported that, during Closed Session, the Board did not take any actions.

- 7. Review and Approve the Open Session Agenda**

Board President Stone asked for a motion to approve the Open Session Agenda.

Member Lamera moved to approve, Member Riley seconded. Motion carried by roll call vote 7 (Ayes: Mahoney, Riley, Casillas, Lamera, Apel, Jelly, Stone): 0 (Nays)

- 8. Public Comment:** Ms. Latimer greeted the Board, Superintendent Wright and guests. Ms. Latimer stated that there were several public comments. Staff members, former staff members, community members and parents shared their concerns around school closures. They urged the Board to consider alternative scenarios to increase enrollment and make a sustainable educational atmosphere. A suggestion was made to consider scheduling an additional Town Hall meeting in the town of Clarksburg and to have these meetings held in person, not via Zoom. One comment stated that the Courtland community has passed a Bond measure to make upgrades at Bates Elementary School and questioned if the money will be spent there. An additional comment asked if the Board was aware of these deficits before the Bond was subject

to a vote. The question was asked, 'What strategic plan has been submitted by the Bates principal that outlines the fundamental objectives for leading a high functioning team; student and teacher retention; attracting student from the region, etc.?', and if this plan had been reviewed by the Superintendent. One parent stated that closing a school in the Delta is a big deal and the families of the Delta are suffering from uncertainty, anxiety, and fear; this is the last thing parents and children need to think about during COVID. A suggestion was made to form a High-Performance Team to proactively strategize for the future.

9. Presentation and discussion on data analysis collected regarding school closures – Katherine Wright, Superintendent provided an overview of the data presented to the Ad-Hoc Committee. The data consisted of the projected enrollment for 2021-2022, the academic achievement provided by the CASSPP, the cost summary of facilities conditions provided by RGM Kramer, the Site Electric Energy Report and the cost associated in running each site and lastly the School District Financial Projection Dartboard for 2021-22 Governor's Budget provided by Schools Services of California. Superintendent Wright announced that these items can be found on the District's website. These data points were presented to allow for questions and discussion among the Board members. The principals were in attendance to answer any questions.

Superintendent Wright displayed the projected enrollment figures for the 2021-2022, explaining that included in these numbers are intra and inter district transfers students. The Board asked for follow-up numbers, regarding transfers for Bates, Walnut Grove and Riverview. Superintendent Wright informed the Board that transfer forms for 2021-2022 are now being received and these numbers will not be available until later in the year. However, data for the current school year could be provided.

Member Stone asked Member Mahoney for the information he provided to the Ad-Hoc Committee regarding the number of students needed to have a school be sustainable. Member Mahoney responded that a school must have at least 200 students enrolled to be financially stable. Superintendent Wright informed the Board that included in the presentation material is a report from Schools Services of California which includes the factors per ADA by grade span and will be discussed later in the agenda.

Ms. Latimer explained to the Board that due to COVID-19 and school closures the requirement for taking the assessments were suspended for the 2019-2020 school year. Ms. Latimer presented the Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments Results and Comparisons from the 2018-2019 school year, including the percentages from Delta Elementary Charter School (DESC) and other local districts as comparisons. Member Mahoney was expressed extreme concern of the low academic performance of Riverview Middle School.

Member Jelly asked if DECS has been open for full in-person learning this year. Superintendent Wright clarified that the charter school is operating under two different programs. She noted that they are operating a Distance Learning program as well as providing an In-Person program. Some of the students are participating in the in-person model and other students remain in Distance Learning. Because they have a lower percentage rate of students participating in the In-Person program, following the guidelines of social distancing and wearing masks, it allows them to serve these students full time. The charter school is also looking into other modes of offering instruction. These offerings will be presented in their Material Revision to their charter and be brought to the Board, at a later date for approval.

Mr. Gaston explained that the attached Facilities Assessment Conceptual Cost Estimate Sheet was included in the Facility Condition Assessment Report provided by RGM Kramer, Inc. in preparation of the Bond. Mr. Gaston noted that the items listed in Condition 1 are deemed to be inadequate to where repairs or replacement are essential. Condition 2 items will need to be scheduled for repairs or replacement within three to seven years and Condition 3 is identified as adequate and deemed to meet minimum building and educational standards with minor repairs or improvements with 7-10 years. This in-depth study will help the District to identify and prioritize projects moving forward with the Bond funds.

Mr. Gaston briefly summarized the Site Electric Energy Table from the District's energy audit report provided by sitelogiQ. This report included the Total Electric by kWh, Utility Purchased Cost (\$), Total Electricity per SF (kWh/SF) Utility Rate (\$/kWh) by site.

Superintendent Wright mentioned that the cost analysis was requested by the Ad-Hoc Committee. The analysis provided a list of expenditures by school site for Bates, Walnut Grove and Riverview. The data included salary and benefits, utilities and program costs as well as Maintenance and Operations costs (10% of the total District cost).

Member Lamera made a rough calculation with the data provided. His estimate was based on the projected

enrollment for 2021-2022. He stated that these schools have a higher operating cost than the revenue created by enrollment.

Member Lamera expressed that it is of his opinion that the Board/District should focus their efforts in increasing the enrollment and table the talks on closures until October following the Closing a School Best Practices Guide provided by the California Department of Education and follow the suggested school closure timeline guide sheet. At that time, enrollment might look different. He mentioned that each school site should be given a chance to boost their enrollment and move toward creating programming to attract students back to their school site. This also allows District staff time to properly reopen schools in the hybrid model and if allowed to reopen in full in-person, they will be inundated with more work to accomplish this task successfully.

Member Stone questioned if the current student population in the area is enough to boost the enrollment. She also asked Member Lamera if he has spoken to the principals of plans they may have to boost the enrollment at their site. Member Lamera stated that he had met with Principal Becerra at Bates Elementary School and she proposed the idea of operating a Dual Immersion Program. He feels that implementing a Dual Immersion Program would be amazing and a great move in the right direction. Member Lamera stated that many parents are looking for opportunities for their children to be well rounded citizens; this program will teach the students to be biliterate or bilingual in both English and Spanish. Ms. Latimer explained the different scenarios of how this program could be rolled out.

Member Stone asked if there would be a cost to rolling out a Dual Immersion Program. Superintendent Wright explained that staffing would be hired according, funds would need to be allocated for training and curriculum if the current curriculum is not available in both languages. She stated that it depends how the site plan allocates the funds in their budget and if it is approved by their site council.

Member Mahoney reminded the Board that the reason for this discussion of school closures is due to the budget deficit forecasted and to spend the taxpayer's money wisely regarding the Bond funds. He stated that we need to keep the District solvent. Member Mahoney feels that the decision needs to be made in a timely manner and that Town Hall meetings need to be scheduled.

Member Riley agrees that, at some point, a school will need to be closed. She also stated that she was newly appointed to the Board when Clarksburg Elementary School was closed; it was the toughest decision to make. She also stated that it was the toughest year she has had as a Board member. Her concern currently that our communities need time to recover from COVID and return the students to school full time.

Member Apel thanked Superintendent Wright, Ms. Latimer and Mr. Gaston for providing the data. Member Apel feels that all aspects need to be weighed and the communities need to provide their input at the Town Hall meetings. She noted that the job of the Board of Trustees is to maintain a solvent District. However, at this time, she hopes not to put any undue pressure on the Superintendent as she and her staff are dealing with so many things to reopen schools safely. She wants to hold off making any decision on school closures.

Member Casillas agreed with Member Riley in that she would prefer that students have time to recover from COVID and focus on returning to school full time. She feels it will traumatize the students if they must attend a different school with different staff members. She would rather not close any schools and hopes that they would have one more year before making any decision on closures to see if any changes in enrollment occur.

Member Jelly stated that the thought of a school closure makes her stomach turn. However, the facts have been presented and a decision needs to be made. She feels that the Town Hall meetings need to be scheduled as soon as possible. She is ready to move forward with a decision.

Member Lamera stated that the Town Hall meetings need to be scheduled as soon as possible. He does not want to make any decisions until after the Board has had the opportunities to engage with the communities. If a school closure transpires, he would like it to be done correctly and effectively.

Member Jelly mentioned that, due to COVID alone, the students may need to have emotional support. If an added trauma is introduced to the student with a school closure, she wonders if additional support can be added at the school site.

Member Stone noted that, if two schools were to be combined, there would be a full-time counselor on site.

Currently, both Bates and Walnut Grove Elementary share a counselor.

Superintendent Wright shared that when the Budget was calculated in the out three years it was done so conservatively using the lower enrollment numbers. If the 100 students return full time instruction, it will have a positive impact on the budget. Full-time, in-person learning could resolve some of the financial issues.

Superintendent Wright clarified that the Board makes the timeline on the issuance of the Bond series. The series usually are on a three-year cycle, however, they can be changed pending projects. There is no urgency to begin the projects.

Superintendent Wright stated that transportation is very challenging, especially if we start the year with CDC capacity restrictions on the busses.

Superintendent Wright mentioned that, as she appreciates comments made by the public, she noted that, each week she meets with many of the superintendents in the Sacramento Area and has discussed how each district is spending the COVID funds. River Delta USD faces challenges that the others do not. The biggest difference is that they do not have the same connectivity issues as we do in the Delta as well as having devices for the students. A significant amount of COVID funds has been spent on internet connectivity, hotspots, connectivity to the hotspots, Chromebooks and laptops for the students to receive their instruction. The issues we have in our district are not comparable to the other districts that were mentioned.

Superintendent Wright responded to a Public Comment. The comment stated that work had not been done on the school sites. Superintendent Wright stated that, Mr. Gaston and his crew do an amazing job and have accomplished so much during this time, and for a comment that to be made, is inaccurate.

Member Mahoney stated that 405 Chromebooks have been delivered to the District Office for students. The amount of funds that has been spent during this time has been spent wisely. Member Mahoney thanked Superintendent Wright for all that she has done keeping in mind the needs of the students.

Member Mahoney stated that the Board needs to take a very serious look at Riverview Middle School. This school site is underperforming academically. Superintendent Wright mentioned that closing Riverview Middle School creates a completely different situation than closing an elementary school. Member Mahoney stated that all these scenarios need to be discussed at the Town Hall meetings.

Member Stone asked Principal Norris if Walnut Grove would need modifications if there was an influx of students. Mrs. Norris said, with modifications, there is classroom space for more students. Superintendent Wright noted that both Bates Elementary and Walnut Grove Elementary are approximately the same size and could accommodate the same influx of students.

10. Request the Board to schedule the dates and times for Town Hall Meetings in Courtland, Walnut Grove, and Rio Vista to receive feedback from said communities regarding possible school closures – Katherine Wright, Superintendent

Member Mahoney moved to approve scheduling Town Hall meetings in Clarksburg, Courtland, Walnut Grove and Rio Vista, Member Lamera seconded. Motion carried by roll call vote 6 (Ayes: Mahoney, Casillas, Lamera, Apel, Jelly, Stone): 0 (Nays) 1 (absent: Riley)

11. Re-Adjourn to continue Closed Session, if needed – Board President Stone reported that re-adjourning to Closed Session was not necessary.
12. Report of Action taken, if any, during continued Closed Session (Government Code Section 54957.1) - Board President Stone reported Closed Session was not necessary – no actions to report.
13. Adjournment: With no further business before the Board, Board President Stone asked for a motion to adjourn.

Member Casillas moved to approve, Member Lamera seconded and asked to adjourn and dedicate this meeting to Ofelia Fernandez, who passed away last night in the comfort of her own home surrounded by her children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren. She came to Courtland from Mexico with her husband in search of a better life for her and her family and they went on to have 8 children. She emphasized the importance of education to them. They all took that to heart. They then moved to Clarksburg, where each of her children attended and graduated from Delta High School and went on to

attend college. In addition to them, she also has 14 grandchildren, 5 of which also attended Delta High School, graduated at the top of their classes, and went on to pursue college degrees. The impact that she and her husband had in the Clarksburg and Courtland communities is immense, especially for many migrant farm workers and their families. She helped them navigate the difficult transition of moving to a foreign and unfamiliar place in pursuit of more opportunities. Her story of love and sacrifice for the betterment of her family is one that many of our community members can relate to. She is the true embodiment of the American Dream. Her values of love, compassion, hard work, and joy will live on in her descendants. I was one of her grandchildren, and I am so humbled and honored to have had the time and memories that I did with her. She was an amazing woman who loved to sing, laugh, and spend time with her family. Her story is a source of inspiration for myself and my family. We will carry on her legacy by being voices for the voiceless and advocating for those who are often ignored and unheard. Te quiero mucho Abuelita, y duermas con los Angelitos.' Motion carried by roll call vote 6 (Ayes: Mahoney, Casillas, Lamera, Apel, Jelly, Stone): 0 (Nays) 1 (absent: Riley)

The meeting was adjourned at 9:13 pm

Submitted:



Katherine Wright, Superintendent and Secretary to the Board of Trustees

By: Jennifer Gaston, Recorder
End

Approved:



Marilyn Riley, Clerk, Board of Trustees