

BUSD December 6, 2016 Board Meeting Minutes – Workshop Meeting:

4.1. High School Planning

4.1.1. Measure DD Results

Minutes:

Major Points of Discussion:

Dr. Cunningham began the discussion by advising the Board that results of the election had not yet been declared official through the San Diego County Registrar of Voters, but that certification was anticipated by December 8, 2016. While Measure DD did obtain the majority vote, it had not received the necessary 55%.

Superintendent Cunningham indicated said this was a time for reflection. With hindsight 20/20, what would the District do differently? First, he would suggest the District have more input into the phone survey questions. He believed the favorable results of the phone survey conducted by Competitive Edge were falsely inflated due to inapplicable, impersonalized questions related to the District. Member Coen summed up this point by offering “The survey was a winning formula that didn’t necessarily apply to us.”

The perception of uncertainty in bond structure was also a likely contributing factor to voter confusion. Initially, it has been recommended the District go forward with Flex Bonds due to the reduced interest factor; however, in June, it was determined not enough assessed value existed to support a \$75 million dollar bond. Therefore, the structure was changed to a conventional GO Bond prior to placing the measure on the ballot. This shift could have created confusion. There was also significant chatter in public forums, albeit incorrect, that the District was putting forth a Capital Appreciation Bond (“CAB”) similar to Poway Unified’s 2011 infamous bond measure which was widely criticized as usurious.

Other factors to consider were precinct demographics and the fact that BUSD hosts approximately 200 students from outside district boundaries whose parents were unable to vote on the Measure. Dr. Cunningham pointed this out as a critical factor when realizing the difference between the current results and bond passage stands at approximately 200 votes. Member Tucker asked if there was communication with every home in the District. Dr. Cunningham explained that while the phone banks made calls district-wide, in-person visits were restricted to residences with a registered voter. Multiple mailers were also sent to each District household.

Inasmuch as Proposition BB, which represented unification and the formation of a high school in Bonsall, was approved by the voters in 2012, Member Coen wondered if it was unclear what Measure DD entailed. Did voters understand this was to construct the high school they had approved? He acknowledged that the tremendous amount of misinformation sent out by the group opposing DD must also have had a negative impact.

Board President Lou Riddle affirmed that he received the mailers and saw the information sent to voters. “We have to assume they read it, although that very well might not be the case.” He felt the delivery of information to the community could have been better. “Every single board member needs to take responsibility for a poor ground game.”

Member English interjected she believed she was aware and involved in the online forum discussions, but as a relatively new board member, she anticipated she would receive a call to action, an invitation she never received from the election consultant.

Member Tucker thought perhaps the campaign did not start early enough for the voters to be adequately informed.

Dr. Cunningham pointed out that high schools are expensive by their very nature and that Measure DD asked tax payers for nearly double the amount (\$60 per \$100,000) other districts were seeking. He included that the survey did, in fact, indicate low approval for such an amount compared to more conservative amounts.

President Riddle reminded the Board that there will always be a portion of people who are going to vote no for any tax increase, no matter the cause.

Member English asked about the performance of our election consultant with respect to other school bonds on the ballot. It was stated that a 92% statewide bond approval did not suggest issues in that arena. Member Coen thought that the statewide approval percentage only cemented his belief that “we did not convince our population that it was worthwhile”.

Member Tucker made reference to an article in the Village News wherein Superintendent Cunningham was quoted as declaring “We are building a high school”, and that funding would determine what kind. She thought this may have been perceived by readers as a bit arrogant. Dr. Cunningham disagreed, countering that trying to maximize available construction capital by seizing the opportunity to acquire matching funds from the State in the ballpark of \$13-15 million dollars was hardly arrogant; rather, it would have been neglectful to have let the timing of this opportunity pass.

With respect to the passage of the State’s bond measure, Member English questioned if the District would be able to receive any benefit. Superintendent Cunningham answered in the affirmative that BUSD would immediately seek funds in the neighborhood of \$1.5 – 1.8 million for qualifying construction, namely, the 2 story building on the Sullivan campus as well as a percentage of the soft costs for the Gird Road site.

Member Tucker wondered about the status of incoming and future development fees.

President Riddle responded that developer fees, while helpful, do not constitute nearly enough to fund new high school construction.

What are the next steps? Superintendent Cunningham counseled that it is historically best to present bond measures in General/Presidential Election cycles, but reminded the Board that the District is in a time crunch, implying that presenting another measure in 2 years should be considered. Regardless of when the measure is brought back, Dr. Cunningham was emphatic that “the campaign starts now”.