

Transcript of the Orange County Board of Education Meeting held on February 1, 2023

SPARKS: Okay. For the benefit of the record, we are going to call the regular meeting of the Orange County Board of Education to order. Darou, roll call please.

SISAVATH: Trustee Valdes?

VALDES: Here.

SISAVATH: Trustee Shaw?

SHAW: Here.

SISAVATH: Trustee Sparks?

SPARKS: Here.

SISAVATH: Trustee Williams?

WILLIAMS: Here.

SISAVATH: Trustee Barke?

BARKE: Here.

SPARKS: Okay. Thank you. Do we have adoption of the regular meeting of February 1?

WILLIAMS: I will make the motion for adoption of Agenda.

BARKE: Second.

SPARKS: All in favor?

BARKE, WILLIAMS, SPARKS, SHAW, VALDES: Aye.

SPARKS: Okay. Adopted 5-1, and regular meeting minutes of January 4, 2023. Do we have approval for that?

BARKE: So moved.

WILLIAMS: Second.

SPARKS: All in favor?

BARKE, WILLIAMS, SPARKS, SHAW, VALDES: Aye.

BOYD: Who is the second?

SPARKS: Ken.

BOYD: Oh, okay.

SPARKS: Yep.

BOYD: Thank you.

SPARKS: All right. Nina, do we have any comment cards received for any of our closed session items?

BOYD: We do not.

SPARKS: Okay. So at this point we will take a recess, go into closed session, and be back at time certain at 5 o'clock. Thanks.

[Orange County Board of Education conducts closed session and returns to open session.]

SPARKS: If you all would take your seats? Hello. Hello. It is not on.

WILLIAMS: No light is on.

SPARKS: Hello. Hello.

BARKE: Is it working?

SPARKS: Is it working?

BOYD: Is your light on or off?

SPARKS: It is off.

BOYD: Okay. Try again.

SPARKS: Hello. Hello.

VALDES: Hello. Hello.

SPARKS: It is on? Okay. It is not very loud though.

SHAW: Testing 1, 2. Testing, testing 1, 2.

SPARKS: Testing, testing.

SISAVATH: I think it is supposed to be off.

BOYD: Yours was working. I heard yours, but I didn't hear hers.

SPARKS: It is barely on. Okay.

SHAW: Can you guys hear us up here?

SPARKS: Can you hear us? A little bit?

SHAW: Our microphones are kind of low.

SPARKS: Hello. Hello.

VALDES: Hello. Hello. .

SPARKS: Okay, we are going to call the meeting to order for the Orange County Board of Education. If you all could take your seats?

SISAVATH: People can't hear you.

SPARKS: I want to first call Lorrie Kaylor to do our invocation. If you all could take your seats please and be quiet? Thank you. We are starting our meeting. Starting the meeting. Ms. Kaylor, go ahead.

LORRIE: All right, am I on? I don't think I'm on. Hello? Mic is not on. Do you want me to just start?

BOYD: It's on.

SPARKS: It's on.

LORRIE: I'm on? Okay. I just found out that I'm doing the invocation, so I didn't have anything prepared. But this is always a great preparation here, so I will just read from God's word if you wouldn't mind. This is about us putting on the full armor of God.

Finally my brethren, be strong in the Lord, in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore, take unto you the full armor of God that you may be able to withstand in the evil day. And having done all to stand, stand therefore having your loins gird about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God.

Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit and watching therein too with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.

We thank you Lord for your word, and we thank you for your armor. And we just pray that the Board here tonight will keep the words behind them in mind, that it is in God we trust. We thank you for the people who came out today and we pray for peace in our conversations. In Jesus name, amen.

SPARKS: Amen. Thank you. And next we will have our Pledge of Allegiance. Mike from OCCA. Thank you.

MIKE: Please stand. Right hand over your heart. Ready? Begin. I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

SPARKS: Thank you, Mike. Nina, do we have any introductions at this meeting?

BOYD: We have no introductions at this meeting.

SPARKS: Okay, thank you. I will call our good counsel, Greg Rolen up to report out from our closed session.

ROLEN: Thank you, President Sparks, Vice President Shaw, members of the Board. The report out from the February 1 closed session: the initial item is the Board voted unanimously; President Sparks, Vice President Shaw, Trustees' Barke, Williams, and Valdes to approve the legal bills of Epstein Becker and Green. Jonathan Brenner sends his regards, but he was unavoidably unable to make it this evening. Invoice numbers are as follows: 1106446, 1106447, and 1106448. Did you get that Deputy Superintendent?

BOYD: I did.

ROLEN: Okay. Thank you. He will not forgive me if I get those wrong. With regard to closed session item number one, there was no information received by the Board and no discussion. With regard to closed session item number two, there was information provided by counsel, no action taken by the Board. With regard to closed session item number three, there was information provided to the Board. No action was taken by the Board. With regard to closed session item number four, information was provided to the Board. No action was taken by the Board. With regard to closed session item number five, conference with legal counsel, anticipated litigation, the Board provided direction to counsel. And with regard to closed session item number six, conference with legal counsel, anticipated litigation, again, the Board was provided information and provided direction to legal counsel. That is the report out for closed session of the February 1, 2023, Board meeting. Thank you.

SPARKS: Thank you, Mr. Rolen. My microphone works now. Okay. That brings us to public comments. How many public comments do we have?

SHAW: We have 11, Madam President.

SPARKS: Okay. So we will call out public comments and we will give each speaker up to three minutes.

SHAW: So what I will go ahead and do is read a name, followed by the second name who is on deck. What we would like to do to is try to move expeditiously and maybe the on-deck person can maybe come up to the front and be ready to go. We will start with Amy, followed by Nancy.

AMY: Hello. My name is Amy Luna Capelle and I serve as board president of a successful charter school in South Orange County. I'm here today though as a representative of WAVE, Women for American Values and Ethics. WAVE was founded less than a decade ago to hold our elected officials accountable for fulfilling the duties of their office with the American values and ethics that Orange County citizens deserve. When they don't, WAVE and its 2,000 plus volunteers mobilize to elect those that do.

In past board meetings, alumni from the Orange County School of Arts have called upon you to investigate past and current allegations of sexual misconduct and assault. WAVE is reminding this board of its legal authority and responsibility given when SB 75 was passed in 2019 to ensure that all of its authorized charter schools in Orange County have, not just a policy and procedure in place to investigate such allegations, but one that works adequately to protect the safety of children when one of its duly authorized charter schools fails to do so on its own.

Multitudes of former and current students are telling you that the environment at OCSA has harmed and continues to harm children. And it's clear that relying on mandatory reporting requirements and OCSA's process for handling complaints is not robust enough to protect students. The Board has professed interest in keeping children safe from a perceived threat of groomers. Yet, these former and current students are telling you that groomers are at OCSA now.

The Board claims it can do nothing, but SB 75 says that you can. A moral imperative compels that you must. By not investigating, who are you protecting, the students or the groomers? It is your patriotic and moral duty as the authorizing board to investigate these claims, as it's the only way to get to the bottom of it and remove any danger from pedophiles or allow the investigation to show innocence.

As a charter school leader, I often hear criticism that charters aren't held to the same standards as traditional public schools. This perception is damaging to all charters. I implore you to investigate and bring light to transparency at what is happening in OCSA. Demonstrate to the public that charter schools should and are held to the same high standards. Demonstrate that this Board's interest is in protecting children, instead of protecting pedophiles. Launch an independent investigation, turn this over to the district attorney, or at a minimum, to the attorney general. The community is watching, the children are watching, and WAVE is watching. Thank you.

SPARKS: Thank you

SHAW: Nancy, followed by Nomi.

NANCY: Good evening. I'm speaking tonight about the proposed, board policy revisions regarding parents' rights, which is an action item for the Board tonight. Parents are their children's first educators and they have rights to their children's educational journey. The proposed revisions to the parents' rights policy demonstrates that the Orange County Board of Education is aligned with California Ed. Code. As the proposed policy reiterates, the parents' rights protected by California law and outlined in California Ed. Code 51101. Most of the policy presented in the revision reflects Ed. Code and it's good to see that the Orange County Board of Education recognizes that it operates under the authority of the California Constitution, the State Legislature, the state Education Code, and the State Board of Education. However, there is one line in the proposed policy revision that is unallowable under state Ed. Code. The last bullet under one, curriculum, classwork displays, states, quote, "To be able to opt out of classroom assignments, core curricula and ancillary supporting materials that the parent deems inappropriate for their children before it's presented to children." This line needs to be stricken from the proposed revision since it violates state law.

Our public schools have the responsibility to provide an inclusive education that provides students with the knowledge and skills to be successful adults and meaningfully contribute to our society. As written, this policy would allow parents to opt out of lessons regarding topics like Black History Month, which today is the first day of, and the Holocaust. Parents do have expressed rights in Ed. Code to opt out of curriculum related to comprehensive sexual education, HIV and AIDS education, and any survey, test, research or evaluation. Other than those specific topics in the areas I have mentioned, parents do not have a general right to exempt their children from topics included in public school curricula based on the state standards.

The remedy for parent complaints in all matters related to public education is well outlined in the current uniform complaint policy in this board's adopted board policies. The plenary power to make state policy and law rests with the State Legislature; and, therefore, the Orange County Board of Ed. is only permitted to do that which is authorized by statute. That bullet point should be removed from the proposed policy. Thank you.

SPARKS: Thank you.

SHAW: Thank you. So Nomi will be followed by Tanya.

NOMI: Hello, my name is Nomi Abadi. It's nice to see you all again. For those of you who don't know me, I am the president of the Female Composer Safety League and an alumna of OCSA. Last week, my mother handed me a file of all my work from OCSA. I got to file through some essays that I wrote and see notes that my friends and I had passed back and forth to each other, and I came across a report card. Next to the A in my tap class, my mom had penciled the word pedophile next to my teacher's name. If you would like to see a photo of this, I can show it to you.

Since last month, the knowledge of Senate Bill 75 came to my attention, a bill that passed in 2019 and went into effect in 2020. I now know that you have a tremendous responsibility as an

elected body to oversee and comply with California Education Code Section codes 1241.5, 47604.3, 47604.4, 47605.6, and 47607. The language in these codes clearly illustrates your policy procedure to receive and investigate these claims at the Orange County School of the Arts, as well as to ensure the safety overall for all the students, and to ensure the success of these students in middle school and high school. That is required by you as OCSA's chartering organization under SB 75.

Since the lawsuit was filed against OCSA's founder in September of last year, we know that there is at least one complaint, perhaps there are two. We just don't know. There could be offenders walking around campus unchecked. Wouldn't it be awful if there are innocent folks from OCSA whose reputations are wrongfully suffering? We simply don't know the extent of these complaints, which is why we are once again requesting that you launch an independent investigation into the Orange County School of the Arts with survivor voices at the absolute forefront and center. It is not only your moral and ethical responsibility to launch this third party investigation into these claims, but it is your lawful obligation.

We have already named the layers of allegations across the faculty and the student body, and that OCSA has failed in the law to report what they saw. You, as board members have the ultimate authority and ultimate moral, ethical responsibility. Who is going to protect the children from abuse if not you? Thank you.

SPARKS: Thank you.

SHAW: Tanya will be followed by Diane. Tanya? Okay. How about Diane?

BARKE: I think Tanya might have stood up.

SHAW: Okay. Tanya Comerford. Sorry.

TANYA: Thank you, Orange County Board of Trustees, Superintendent Mijares, and Staff. My name is Tanya Comerford and I am a parent of a third grader at Sycamore Creek. I would like to say that I am in support of Sycamore's material revision to become a countywide benefit charter and to add grades nine through 12. I was raised here in Orange County, graduated from UCI, and currently live in Long Beach. Sycamore Creek has been a godsend to our family. I currently drive two hours every day of the week so that my daughter can receive a public Waldorf education. This school has provided my daughter with an extended family, emotional stability, love, care, access to the arts, language, handwork, and an excellent academic instruction.

Our goal for our daughter is to develop a lifelong love of learning, versus just passing a test. The idea that a teacher stays with you through the grades is invaluable. To have someone truly know your child, someone who recognizes their gifts and challenges and can see them through the different stages of development, is priceless. This piece became even more evident when my husband's health started to decline and could no longer provide financial support or participate regularly in our family or social life. My daughter's emotional needs have become paramount as we navigate a father who has become disabled. Currently, she has a teacher that she loves and respects, and a class family that will loop with her through the grades.

This sound support is helping our child and family thrive under unforeseen and very difficult circumstances. She has been happy to go to school every day since day one. This is huge. We feel held as a family through its traditions and community support and hope we can continue here throughout high school. I know I'm speaking for my family. I also know that I'm not alone. I do what I can to support this school, the people in it, the community at large, and of course, my family. A Waldorf education should be accessible to all. Thank you.

SPARKS: Thank you.

SHAW: Thank you. All right, Diane followed by Deborah.

DIANE: Hello. My name is Diane, Diane Dunn, and I am a longtime Santa Ana resident. As a concerned citizen, I'm here once again to support the request for an independent investigation into the reports and allegations at the Orange County School of the Arts. As a parent of an alumna, I'm outraged at the reports of sexual abuse of the students at OCSA that have been reported over nearly two decades. It's time to protect and support the students and alumni of OCSA from those responsible and those who condone or allow for a culture that condones these horrific acts. I support the request for an independent investigation and ask you to authorize it as soon as possible. Thank you.

SPARKS: Thank you.

SHAW: Thank you. Okay, Deborah, and forgive me if I don't get this name right, Audrey. Okay, go ahead Deborah.

DEBORAH: I'm here today as the mother of two OCSA alumni. Is that right, alumni? As a parent, it is unconscionable to me that as the chartering organization for OCSA, you have not addressed over two decades of sexual assault complaints, either by faculty or students. I hope you will take the reports of sexual abuse from alumni and current students seriously and launch an independent investigation. Thank you.

SHAW: Thank you.

SPARKS: Thank you.

SHAW: Ajay, followed by Libby.

AJAY: Thank you, President Sparks, Vice President Shaw. My name is Ajay Mohan. I'm a longtime Irvine resident. I will be honest, I don't see many folks my age tonight. I'm 25, but I also think it's egregious that this board hasn't called for an independent investigation into the sexual abuse and harassment that is going on at OCSA. This is the only public board with oversight over the issue. Frankly, I'm here just to voice support for them and I'm hoping that you will take this matter seriously. Thanks.

SPARKS: Thank you.

SHAW: Okay. Libby, followed by Sherine.

LIBBY: Hello, my name is Libby Frolichman. I'm a parent of a past OCSA student, and I am beyond grateful that my daughter didn't experience the abuse that seems to have been prevalent there. I want to agree with Mr. Valdes's comments from last month that the agenda should be changed to allow for board members' responses immediately after public comment if appropriate. The meeting last month was painfully long and most of us have other obligations that make it impossible to wait four hours for a response. However, the response that was given at the end of the meeting seemed beyond inadequate.

You are an oversight body. That means you are responsible for the actions of individuals at the schools you oversee. If there are accusations of wrongdoing at one of those schools, it is your responsibility to hire the appropriate people to investigate. It would be absurd to expect any of you to investigate. You are elected officials from varying backgrounds and it is unlikely that any of you have the proper training to conduct such an investigation. For that same reason, the comments at the end of last month's meeting suggesting that you would call someone from OCSA to come appear before this board only if someone had filed a current lawsuit, are also absurd.

What would you ask that person? How would you determine if they were being truthful? What actions would you take if they straight up told you that there was abuse at the school? What actions would you take if your supernatural lie detector skills suggested they were lying? See my point? You are a board. As a board, you are not qualified to make any determination, except to hire a trained investigator who can discover what is really going on at OCSA, or any other school you are responsible for overseeing. Thank you.

SPARKS: Thank you.

SHAW: Okay. Sherine followed by Alex.

SHERINE: Good evening, President Sparks, Trustees and Superintendent Mijares. I recently reviewed your proposal for board policy regarding parental rights. Speaking as a former teacher, middle school principal, and high school principal in Capistrano Unified, and superintendent in Laguna Beach, I'm grateful for the strong relationships Orange County educators and school leaders have built with parents over the decades. We are fortunate to have had the support of thousands of involved parents in our PTAs, school site councils, booster clubs, foundations, and many, many volunteer efforts. All of us want involved and supportive parents at our schools. It's good for kids, it's good for our schools, and it's good for our local communities.

I do have a few questions about your proposed policy. Are you aware that, per California Education code 51101, every school district in Orange County shares their parent involvement policy with parents upon their child's enrollment in school and annually thereafter? Are you familiar with the school district course catalogs shared annually with parents and students that contain extensive and comprehensive course information, including support and alternative programs? Do you intend this proposed policy to apply to schools only within the purview of the Orange County Department of Education, or to all schools in Orange County? If you intend this

policy to apply to all schools within Orange County, do you have the legal authority to impose a policy on local school districts that each have their own elected board? Do you expect schools to give parents access to advanced placement and international baccalaureate exams? And last, do you expect parents to be able to opt students out of courses and content required for students to graduate from high school such as American Government, Econ, US History, World History, Life Science, or Physical Science? Those all pertain to language that is in your proposed policy. I would like to receive a written response to these questions from the Board of Education. Thank you for your time.

SPARKS: Thank you.

SHAW: Alex, followed by, I think that is Camilla.

ALEX: Good evening. My name is Alex Mohajer and I'm an Irvine native who is a direct beneficiary of the education in the arts I received here in Orange County. I had many friends and teachers in the arts and that attended the OCSA school and know the invaluable impact that an education in the arts had on me and many of my friends. I was horrified to learn the news that sexual assault allegations were brought by a former student against the school at around the same time I was a student. And, that potentially vibrant experiences of these young people may have been forever tarnished by the lasting traumatic impacts that this kind of abuse can have on anyone, let alone a young person. It is well within the purview of this board to investigate these claims, and I am alarmed at your willingness to suspend the digital reading libraries under the pretext of protecting children, but to not investigate allegations of sexual abuse.

Cultural competency, and a rich understanding of history and literature does not harm young people. It prepares them for life beyond the walls of their schools and prepares them to engage with the world thoughtfully and as engaged citizens. What does harm them forever is the kind of sexual abuse that has been reported here. I rise today in solidarity with survivors of sexual assault at the OCSA school and to implore this board to exercise its authority and launch an independent investigation into these claims. If you can't be trusted to do the bare minimum to protect our children, I fear the very legitimacy of this board is called into question. And the only people that that harms is our young people. Thank you.

SHAW: Thank you. Camilla, followed by Cindy.

CAMILLA: Good evening, Board Members. Twenty years ago this year, I was a plaintiff to one of the largest sex abuse cases to rock Orange County. I was Jane OC Doe against the Diocese of Orange. I'm here tonight to urge this board to order an independent investigation into OCSA and all the allegations levied against them. To do otherwise is a disservice to the victims and their families. You will also fail to protect additional children. I know all too well the damage done in such a toxic environment as the one you are fostering at OCSA by failing to investigate. I vividly remember being ignored and having to navigate the atrocities committed on my own.

The community is not going to let this go by the wayside. We will stand with the victims and their families all the way. I promise you, if you don't order an in an independent investigation,

your forever legacies will be a board that allowed sexual abuse of children. And always remember, silence makes you complicit. Thank you.

SPARKS: Thank you.

SHAW: Cindy, followed by Helen.

CINDY: Hi, my name is Cindy Zager and I am the parent of two daughters that went to OCSA. I also have been a teacher in the Orange County schools for 40 years. I am recently retired. My daughter knew of the abuse that went on during that time, but both of them were fortunate not to have experienced it firsthand. However, I knew the students that were affected. To think that nothing has been done yet is shocking to me. It is absolutely shocking that this went on for decades and nothing has been done. And the fact that you now have the opportunity to launch an independent investigation is really beyond me.

I know that before you thought maybe there wasn't authority to do so. But now that you know that there is, I implore you to do the right thing because it will be on your conscience if this all comes forward and it blows up in your face. I strongly urge you to launch an independent investigation at this time. Thank you.

SPARKS: Thank you.

SHAW: And last but not least, Helen.

HELEN: Good evening. I have a video. [Plays a video on cell phone.]

VOICE ON VIDEO: Hello there, Orange County Board of Education. My name is Dom Jones and I am here as a resident right here in Orange County with you. I just want to continue to urge you, as many are here today, to be sure and seek an independent investigation into the allegations that students have made at OCSA. It is so important to remember that the honor that you have and the duty that you have, is not to any of our own opinions, it's not to any of our own allegiances, it's to the students. It's to those who have made these allegations. They deserve to be investigated. They deserve to be heard, and seen, and understood. We should always do that for our young ones, and they should always feel safe to come to us when these things occur. That is the problem.

When we don't stand up for them and give them a voice, these things proliferate and they cause more injustices to occur. So please, do the very thing you are there to do. Just like that flame that is behind you, you burn for Orange County as a school board and you burn to protect everyone. So again, please, allow and go ahead and push through an independent investigation. It is simply the right thing to do. Take care. Bye-bye.

SPARKS: Thank you. All right, thank you all for your public comments. Now, I will call Dr. Amy Kernan from OPA and Michael Davis with OCCA to the front. I would like to present these certificates of recognition for your charter schools, Oxford Prep Academy - Saddleback Valley, and Orange County Classical Academy. I will come around and give these to you guys.

[President Sparks presents framed certificates and takes a photo with Dr. Kernan and Mr. Davis.]

WILLIAMS: Lisa, you might want to give a little bit of background on why we presented the award. I don't think people knew why we were giving them awards. The California Distinguished School Award is a prestigious award.

SPARKS: Okay, yeah. Just to provide some context around that, you all got the California Distinguished Schools for the charter schools of Orange County, which is why we were giving this particular award today. There are also a lot of district schools, but we wanted to single you guys out in terms of the charter schools this time, so we will recognize the district schools at another time. So, congrats guys.

WILLIAMS: Good.

SPARKS: Okay. So that brings us to the consent calendar.

WILLIAMS: I will make a motion to approve, Madam President.

BARKE: I will second.

SPARKS: All in favor?

BARKE, WILLIAMS, SPARKS, SHAW, VALDES: Aye.

BOYD: We have a speaker for item number four?

SPARKS: We have speaker for item number four?

SHAW: Lynne, you are up for item number four.

SPARKS: Oh, okay.

SHAW: Sorry about that.

WILLIAMS: That is okay.

SPARKS: No worries. Yeah, I didn't know. Sorry.

LYNNE: (Inaudible).

SHAW: We went quick on that one. Forgive me, I should have said something. Sorry, Lynne.

LYNNE: Yes, good evening. I'm retired Federal Judge Lynne Riddle. My comment touches on two agenda items, both four and 11, relating to retaining and paying the Board's general counsel. As a taxpayer, I'm not only concerned, but I believe I have a duty along with the Board and the Superintendent, to assure that the funds allocated for use by this board are used in the best

interest of educating the children under your charge. Members of the Board are not only called trustees, you are in fact trustees. By law, you are designated trustees. You have a legal fiduciary duty over the funds that you hold in trust to educate the children under your authority.

Ms. Boyd has given you a chart, I hope you have it in front of you, that I made that shows the monthly amount the general counsel attorney's fees that you have incurred and approved to be paid in 2022. The chart's bottom line shows the total amount that you have agreed to pay to general counsel in 2022 is \$330,000. You will note that for February of 2022, the monthly statement approved was only fifteen dollars. It's my assumption that the entire February attorney's fees invoiced for general counsel was simply not agendized. And for the sake of discussion then, I calculated that over the 11 months of 2022, the average monthly billing for general counsel was about \$30,000 a month.

In any case, depending on the February total, the evidence shows that in 2022, the Board spent between \$330 and \$360,000 in general counsel's fees. The primary question to this board is, did you honor your fiduciary duty when spending these school taxpayer dollars? Have you performed your fiduciary duty to verify that all general counsel's expenditures that you have approved and paid have directly benefited the school children as the state intends? Of course you cannot, and I know you will not answer my questions this evening. Nonetheless, I'm confident that the taxpayers and residents of our county will be looking forward to hearing your explanations and your justifications over the months to come.

To the folks in the room, let me simply clarify that the attorney's fees in the chart that I have presented and just mentioned are only a small portion of the attorney's fees that this board has paid in the past and is expected to pay in 2023 for its litigation council. The current budget estimate for litigation by this board for 2023 exceeds \$2 million. There are many urgent pressing questions to raise with you, but my time is up I see. But as General Douglas MacArthur once said, I shall return.

SPARKS: Thank you. Okay, so back to the consent calendar. I think we had a motion and a second and we were—

BARKE: Yes.

SPARKS: —taking a vote for approval. All in favor?

BARKE, WILLIAMS, SPARKS, SHAW, VALDES: Aye.

SPARKS: All right. That brings us to item number five. Nina, do we have charter submissions?

BOYD: There are no submissions at this time.

SPARKS: Okay. Then item number six, I will call Aracely Chastain to the podium.

CHASTAIN: Good evening, President Sparks and Trustees. On December 16, 2022, Sycamore Creek Community Charter School submitted requests for material revisions to the charter. That

included adding high school grades nine through 12, adding an additional facility, changes to admission preferences, and to become a countywide charter school. As a note, a clarification meeting was held with the school representatives on January 31.

Today, the Board will hold a hearing to consider public input regarding the requested changes. Prior to public comments, representatives from Sycamore Creek Community Charter School are allotted 10 minutes to address the Board. I now call representatives from Sycamore Creek Community Charter School to the podium.

BACH: I have ten minutes? Yes. Okay. Good evening, Board of Trustees, Superintendent Mijares, Staff, Board President, and everyone here. Thank you all for being here. Education is very important and I appreciate the time that people spend to come to attend these meetings. I would like to spend just a quick moment and ask everyone here supporting Sycamore Creek's material revision to please stand just so that the Board can see who is here. Thank you.

My name is Sarah Bach and I am a founding parent and the current executive director of Sycamore Creek Community Charter. We are here tonight for our material revision request. Our material revision request is to become a countywide benefit charter school, as well as to add grades nine through 12. I would like to start by sharing a survey our school conducted this past fall of our current families. We had over 40% of our families respond. Of those 40%, almost 90% of them declared that they would like to send their child to a high school, should Sycamore Creek be eligible to add grades nine through 12.

So why is this? There could be many reasons and I expect some of those you will hear shortly during public comments. But primarily, it could be because we are a tuition-free, Waldorf public school currently. And, if we were to be granted the material revision to add high school, we would be one of only three tuition-free high schools in California, and one of six in the nation. As you heard earlier, one of our parents is currently driving two hours every day for this. That would be potentially one reason.

A couple comments in the same survey I just want to share quickly from our parents. Quote, "I want my children to continue to learn in the way that resonates with their whole being. The philosophy and approach to learning and teaching is learner centered, rather than content focused. So the experience is centered on the learners, which is essential to supporting the whole child throughout development."

[Slide show is displayed on the screens.] Next I want to share with you a slide that we created of our students and the spread of our families throughout Orange County and the contiguous county of Los Angeles. Every dot represents a student of our current 160 students. Our current 160 students are coming from 40 unique zip codes, 21 cities, 17 school districts (out of the 26 school districts in Orange County) and an additional three from outside of Orange County. You could say that unwittingly we have informally become a countywide benefit school.

Next I want to share with you our enduring and steady growth and that we would like to continue this growth by becoming a countywide benefit charter school and adding grades nine through 12. On the left, the turquoise low bar is our first year enrollment 2019 and 2020. We began with 63

students. The next year when we were all experiencing the worldwide pandemic, we doubled in fact to 129 students and we actually only received funding for 125 of those students. If you recall, there was a growth cap on the funding that year and nevertheless we wanted to accept all students who wanted to attend a public Waldorf charter school.

Finally, we continued to grow slowly. Now we are at 100. We went to 140 and now, our fourth year, 160. Well, that is because we are currently serving in a facility of seven classrooms, but 10 classes. So as you can imagine, we need to contract and grow as we are able to. Another reason for our rationale to become a countywide benefit charter school is we believe that we would be able to increase the structural integrity through the various partnerships that we currently have. For instance, our own school board would not need to become many school boards across many districts. That would allow for a streamlined experience, streamlined policies and procedures, and set of factions. Also, our back of house would remain the same. It would avoid non-essential overhead, such as separate budgets, accounting, and undue financial expenses.

Obviously, our authorizer would remain the same, which would allow our authorizer to keep close tabs on all of all of our sites and facilities and not again need to experience different situations, different regulations, policies and procedures across different boundaries. Of course legal would also be helpful in that the policies and procedures that would be created would be streamlined across those facilities and not different for every school. [Audio is heard in the audience.] Siri or Alexa, somebody. I imagine they agree.

Finally, just the staffing piece, we could be more effective and allow, especially for special education, we would be able to serve all of our students with full-time FTEs rather than piecemeal employees. That would be definitely a benefit as well.

Next, I just want to share another reason. It is that, as you heard earlier, we have what is called a looping model. And that means that children, especially from first grade, ideally through eighth grade, they remain with the same adult teacher. This allows them to develop a very strong attachment to another adult figure as well as the children in the class, the families in the class. It helps them work through difficulties. It's not to say there aren't challenges. We all experience challenges, and our students, and families, and classes do as well. However, with the looping model, it really asks everyone to learn how to play in the sandbox. Right? As adults be able to do that as well.

I just wanted to point out some recent research done by our lead teacher, Dr. Kimberly Telfer-Radzat, who just completed her Ph.D. in education at UCI. She actually researched Waldorf schools, the 19 public Waldorf charter schools in California. She compared them to all public schools including all charter schools as well. She found that through our slow growth developmental model, students actually end up performing better by the time they get to eighth grade. There is actually 19% more students in the treatment group, which is the Waldorf Group, that do meet or exceed state standards in language arts.

This chart on the left is showing, if you see the turquoise line going up. That is showing that over time, beginning from third grade, they are sort of at parity with other students and they go up a little bit, dip back down. Then by eighth grade, their full 19% more students are performing,

meeting or exceeding academic standards. For math, it's very similar. They actually start lower, because of our developmental model we believe, and go up and down and then actually surpass. That is a full 16% of students.

I just want to talk quickly, just a little bit about high school grades nine through 12. You will find in your petition, our material revision, the redlined petition you received, much more information about our classes, our block methods, calendars, a typical day in the life. But I just wanted to give you this quick little chart. Because as mentioned before, the developmental model is really important to us and it continues through high school. Is that me? I'm done. All right.

SPARKS: You can have a finishing comment.

BACH: Thank you. Oh, can I go back then? Let's see. Oh, yes. My finishing comment is just that, really, it's how do we meet the children where they are? We think that that is a developmental question. So in ninth grade, the question is what and what am I seeing? How observation is very important. And then in 10th grade, it's how do things happen? What are the processes, comparisons? And then there also is information about the curriculum. There is lots more in the petition too. In 11th grade, it is why. What is going on? Let's analyze this. What is the identity of myself and others and the phenomena that I'm looking at? And then finally, in 12th grade, the pinnacle of everything is who. Who am I? Who am I in the world? Integrating all of that knowledge and the disparate subjects into a final senior portfolio.

SPARKS: Thank you so much.

BACH: Thank you.

CHASTAIN: The hearing is now open for public comments. Deputy Superintendent Boyd, are there any public comments for this agenda item?

BOYD: There are.

SHAW: There is only 25 of them.

SPARKS: Since we have 25 comments, we want to hear from everybody. If we could keep them to two minutes? That would allow us to hear from everyone. Okay, up to two minutes. If you have one minute, that is even better. But we will give you up to two minutes.

SHAW: Dr. Sparks took the words right out of my mouth. Sometimes less is more. I will call up a name followed by who is on deck. Okay? So Stephen, followed by Ayzaad. Did I say that—? Okay.

BOYD: We need to adjust our timers.

SHAW: Oh.

BOYD: Just give us a moment.

SHAW: One second.

SPARKS: Got to put Darou to work.

SISAVATH: Okay. Got it.

SPARKS: All right. We are good.

STEPHEN: Thank you Board and Supervisor Mijares, and everyone here tonight. First I want to say that I'm a teacher at Sycamore Creek Charter School. I'm a credentialed teacher and have many years of Waldorf training. I also have two children that were raised in Waldorf schools, one in public, one in private. I saw them thrive. I also have the advantage of seeing my kids grow up at Ocean Charter School, which also was a school that came from the ground up and eventually built their own school and thrived, and grew, and grew, and grew as time went on. I have seen it firsthand and it's amazing. I will say this, that I have seen since I have been at Sycamore, the same kind of pattern. I have seen amazing teachers, administrators, a lot of heart go into making this school thrive. I have seen it succeed. I have all the confidence in the world that they will succeed again if they are allowed this opportunity.

One little thing, people sometimes don't understand Waldorf. We were concerned about our son at one point who had gone through eighth grade. He was going to go get into high school. We were going, well, we don't test a lot sometimes in Waldorf school. So how is he going to do? So I said, well, let's take him to a place where he can test, like take an SAT type test. He goes in, a gentleman says, "All right, I will be with him for a few minutes." I wait. He comes back out. He goes, "Is that a Waldorf child?" I go, yeah. How did you know that? Well, he shook my hand, looked at me straight in the eye and had no anxiety. He was very confident. I said, so he did fine? Yeah, he did fine. He needs a little time to take the test, but other than that, he is fine. He will be great, and he did. He graduated with a marketing degree, as well as my daughter who also graduated from a UC school. Thanks to Waldorf.

SPARKS: Thank you. Congrats.

SHAW: Ayzaad, followed by Dr. Thomas.

AYZAAD: Hi, everybody. My name is Ayzaad.

BOYD: Just a moment. We can lower that.

AYZAAD: Hi everybody. My name is Ayzaad. I just wanted to say that I really love my school and it could help me learn things. I really want to stay in Sycamore Creek Charter School until 12th grade. Before I go, I want to sing you all a song. This little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine. I'm nervous. Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine, let it shine. Thank you.

SHAW: Hey! All right.

SPARKS: Thank you, Ayzaad.

SHAW: All right, Thomas will be followed by Tarin, I think that is.

THOMAS: (Inaudible). My name is Thomas Klaehn and I want to speak on behalf of Sycamore. I'm a professor for theoretical physics. Usually I speak quite well in front of people, not today. I don't know what it is. You make me nervous. I am teaching at Cal State Long Beach, so I have a pretty good idea what kind of students you get out of the high school system here. What I noticed is, of course, you can be academically fine. Yeah, you can have all the perfect grades and so on. But there is one ingredient which really, really is important to me. That is passion so there is some excitement about learning, some curiosity about nature.

The reason that I'm driving every day for 40 minutes back and 40 minutes, no wait, first this way, then back. Anyways, I do that every day with my two kids who attend this school. Maria? Yeah, Leonard. My son fell asleep. It's a bit—oh no, you hear him. The reason that I do that is that Waldorf provides exactly that. It offers exactly this. It is a great opportunity, not just for academic merit, but really for the growth of a person. I would love for them that they could do this from grade one to 12 and just thrive, exactly as the teacher of my daughter just said. It's a great thing to grow up together, to see how kids develop, how they form a bond with their classmates. These are all so valuable things that I think—well, I can only support that. It's selfish, but that is why I'm here. Okay. Thank you.

SPARKS: Thank you.

SHAW: Alright, thank you. Tarin, followed by Aaron.

TARIN: Thank you, Orange County Board of Trustees and thank you for pronouncing my name right. I don't get that a lot. My name is Tarin Lance Silverthistle. I am the part of the first alumni class of Sycamore Creek Community Charter School, and I am a current student at Orange County School of the Arts. I would just like to say, before I started at Sycamore, I had difficulties in school. I actually did not really feel safe. Now, when I switched to Sycamore, I had difficulty adjusting to the environment, mostly because I was not used to having a loving and caring environment. My first day there, I didn't trust anybody. I was very nervous. I was very skittish. The students there helped me a lot in conversating and making lifelong friends, one of which is here.

My teacher, Ms. Kimberly, who just earned her Ph.D., was probably one of the most impactful people in my entire life. She encouraged me to learn and to actually be curious outside of the six hours I'm subjugated to learn. Now, I believe that if you guys do allow a high school with grades nine through 12, I believe that my fellow students will have an outstanding life outside of that school. Sycamore has been a huge impact on my life. And honestly, if I didn't go to Sycamore, I would not be here today. I would not—well, obviously I wouldn't be here today—I would not have my current ambitions of being a park ranger in the National Park Service.

With all this in mind, I would like to thank my fellow students for being so kind and generous. I would like to give a personal thank you to Ms. Kimberly for her impact and for everything that she did for me. I really do appreciate it.

SPARKS: Thank you.

TARIN: Thank you.

SPARKS: Thank you.

SHAW: Aaron, followed by Amy.

ERIC: Good evening, Board. My name is Eric Roden and my wife is right over there, Adriana. She is not able to join me up here right now because she was helping my son knit, which is one of the many benefits that Waldorf education provides our kids. I don't even know how to sew a button on my shirt, so there you go. I will make this short because we do have an hour drive back to our house, which is in Norwalk. Hopefully, another reason why you can see how important this is to us as a family to be part of the Waldorf education.

I'm also a realtor, which, Tim, I recognize you from there. I'm a full-time realtor. I would love to be able to offer my clients another great location for them to possibly send their children to a Waldorf education school that is a no tuition school, which is actually one of the only unheard of things that I have seen with this education. Sarah had already mentioned, there is very few schools that offer it, so we would love to be able to offer more families that valuable education. It's a magical experience, and that is all I could say to wrap up. Thank you. Thanks for your time.

SPARKS: Thank you.

SHAW: Amy. Followed by Kathryn.

AMY: Okay, good evening, Orange County Board of Trustees, Staff and Guests. I had it timed at a tight three, so I'm going to try to go quick. My name is Amy Green-Bosinoff. Years ago, my now sixth grade son's preschool director asked a group of us parents what we wanted for our children when they grew up. Many spoke of happiness. I realized though that concerned of the pitfalls of life, what I really wanted for my children was to be adaptable, to be able to survive in a rapidly changing and challenging world. When I found Waldorf education, I fell in love with the pedagogy and feel that it helps children, guided towards being resilient and open. In addition to being held by teachers who would know them so well through our looping model.

Our curriculum meets students developmentally as they progress. In addition to learning the foundational basics, students are exposed to a varied array of art and culture. And regardless of whether or not students will have art incorporated into their livelihoods, the experiences of being immersed in the appreciation of beauty and being aware of so many differences impacts them. I met our director, Sarah, when I was pregnant with my now seven-year-old first grader. My family has been dedicated to our school ever since. I have been a founder, a board member, interim director, and now I am our school's fourth grade class teacher.

We have been learning descriptive and figurative writing through the vehicle of Norse mythology in our current block of study. Norse Smiths are exciting and the students love them. These stories also meet them developmentally. After having just gone through their very

separating nine year change, with ideas of rugged individualism, balanced with concepts of fraternity and hospitality being an essential to survival. It honors their needs to be themselves, while also anchoring them with the reality of community.

We have just gotten through the Ragnarök story, not the Marvel version. In one summary, a student wrote, and I'm paraphrasing, "How the heralding of Ragnarök was inevitable after the Aesir pantheon of gods had once again broken their word and undermined their honor. Their world being built upon honor, it was inevitable then in the face of death that they would crumble." And the concept of this, they don't know yet—shhh, earmuffs to all my students who are in the audience—that it's going to link to the fall of Rome and all these things are going to come together since I will loop with them.

Really quickly, I'm so sorry. The founder of Waldorf School, Rudolf Steiner said, "Our highest endeavor must be to develop free humans who are able of themselves to impart purpose and direction to their lives." I believe our curriculum does that. It's not a one-size-fits-all world. Education can't be, so we wish through California charter law to give that to our students.

SHAW: Your time expired. Thank you.

SPARKS: Thank you. The fall of Rome.

SHAW: Kathryn, followed by Audrey.

KATHRYN: Good evening. My name is Katheryn Mattson, also Zama. I want to thank you guys for taking the time to listen to all of us this evening. We really appreciate it. I have been involved with Sycamore Community Charter School since the very beginning as a parent and employee. I believe that as a parent, I should have a choice for my child's education that is the best fit for my family. It is important to my family that our child is offered foreign language, arts, handwork, and many other opportunities that Waldorf has to offer. I find it so wonderful that my son's teacher loops with him. She is able to watch him grow, support him in his development, and meet his needs because she knows him so well. She helps him work through any social and emotional issues with heart, like a member of our own family.

I strongly believe that it is so important to offer a high school, along with our current and future students, to complete the Waldorf educational model to continue their education in hands-on and experiential learning and remain connected with their class and family. Thank you for your time. I appreciate it.

SPARKS: Thank you.

SHAW: Okay. Audrey, followed by Elvia.

AUDREY: Audrey?

SHAW: Yes. I'm sorry.

AUDREY: Oh, okay. Hi, I'm Audrey Kelly. I thank you very much for allowing me this opportunity to speak on behalf of Sycamore Creek Community and the material revisions that are put forth for the ninth through 12th grade. I have been in private education for 15 years and became disenchanted when I realized that educational decisions were made by shareholders and profiteers, and was very happy to find Sycamore Creek as an option for my own two children. They started there two years ago and it's a joy to hear them want to get to school in the morning. When my daughter had a cold the other day, she was very worried about missing her block test and needing to get in, and all of these responsibilities that they have aligned within themselves because they feel a part of this collective community that is supported by the Waldorf philosophy. But also by all of the people that are there that are so passionate.

It's a safe community that is expanding and growing out of our existing facilities. The opportunity to pave a path that would take them through 12th grade in facilities that are scalable to that development would be a dream of mine. To impart the passion of the education that they are receiving and continue through, I'm a big believer in Sycamore Creek, in Waldorf, and in people's right to choose for their children, and safe communities for them to grow. I thank you for your time and I hope it works.

SPARKS: Thank you.

SHAW: Elvia, followed by Chris.

ELVIA: Good evening. My name is Elvia Galicia, assistant Superintendent of Business Services for Los Alamitos Unified School District. Sycamore Creek currently runs an expensive Waldorf program that has limited local support from our community. These schools directly state on their websites that significant private donations are critical to support this type of program. The County Office of Education's analysis of Sycamore's petition in 2019 stated and alerted the County Board that the charter's budget "does not support the ongoing professional development needed to implement the proposed program." They also expressed concerns that, under the Waldorf program model, students would not demonstrate grade level competency each year. Four years later, Sycamore is performing below the state average, yet seeks to add a high school program.

The County is empowered to deny Sycamore's request for material revision if it is unlikely to serve the interest of the entire community where it will be located. The charter states that the support for the high school program came from parents whose students already attend the school, but it is silent on whether the interest came from parents within our district. For a material revision request, the petitioners are required to submit various financial documents. These budget documents must establish a clear understanding of the complexities of public school finance.

Sycamore projects to pay teachers only \$60,000 to \$68,000 a year. Whereas, Los Alamitos ranges from \$70,000 to \$140,000 a year. Sycamore's proposal proposes overall compensation substantially lower than all districts in the area, which is likely to present a serious challenge to Sycamore's efforts to attract and retain high quality and experienced employees.

The County Board may consider the fiscal impact that Sycamore's expansion would have on our district. Sycamore is projected to enroll 500 students, which will cost \$5 million to our district. I implore the County Board to deny this petition. Thank you.

SPARKS: Thank you.

SHAW: Thank you. Chris, followed by Tricia.

CHRIS: Thank you. My name is Chris Forehan and I'm a very proud president of the Los Alamitos School Board. Our board takes very seriously its duty to manage education within our borders, as we are locally elected to do. Sycamore Creek is requesting to expand its Waldorf educational model to high school students for the first time. Yet, this school has only been in operation for four years and has low academic performance ratings for the elementary grades it currently serves.

In their charter, the petitioners concede that providing public Waldorf charter high schools is a new movement. This school started in 2019 with 63 students, currently serving about 160 students. And now with its request for expansion to add a high school program, the charter proposes for expansion to serve 300 students this next year, and then 500 in the year after that. Our district is not aware of any local interests in the expansion of this charter. But even if its enrollment projections are accurate, we lack confidence in Sycamore's bold proposal to expand before addressing the cause of its low academic performance.

According to petitioners, only two other tuition-free public Waldorf charter high schools are operating in the state. From the state's data, these schools also appear to have low academic performance or to not serve all student subgroups. We urge the County Board to deny Sycamore's request to expand and instead wait and see if Sycamore can establish academic progress for the grades they already serve. Thank you.

SHAW: Thank you.

SPARKS: Thank you.

SHAW: Tricia will be followed by Darryl.

TRICIA: Thank you all for having us here today. My name is Tricia Pyle and I'm here with my family tonight in support of Sycamore Creek becoming a countywide charter school and adding grades nine through 12. My husband, Jason and I currently have four children attending Sycamore Creek. Our family is proof that Sycamore's tuition free public Waldorf option is working. After raising our own children, in 2019, we became guardians to our nieces and nephews here with us today. As you can imagine, the transition to our new normal, the new home, hasn't been the easiest. But with the support of this tight-knit community and looping with teachers, we have been able to provide our children with a broader sense of family, promoting their social and emotional wellbeing, along with their academics.

In addition to daily lessons, our children can sew, knit, build, and are educated in botany and in the arts including painting, theater, violin. Even our little ones in TK and kinder, their natural talents are being nurtured and their leadership skills emerging. Parent, family choice has been instrumental in our situation, and we know more families can benefit from the same. Becoming a countywide school can help provide that to many more many others. With that said, our eighth grader, Jasmine would like to say a few words.

JASMINE: Hi, my name is Jasmine and I'm in eighth grade. I have been going to Sycamore Creek since fifth grade when I came to live in California. Sycamore is the best school I have been to yet. The thing I love most about it are the people here, my friends, my classmates, and all the teachers. The thing I love to do most at Sycamore is to walk on my stilts that I made the first year there. If I went to a different school, I would not do that stuff like I do now like garden walk and stilts, draw and play, the games we do at Sycamore. Before going to Sycamore, I used to not like reading and now I read too much sometimes. All I'm trying—

SHAW: Your time expired.

JASMINE: Okay.

SHAW: I'm sorry.

TRICIA: Thank you for having us.

SHAW: Thank you.

SPARKS: Thank you so much.

SHAW: Darryl, followed by Shyllah.

SPARKS: And you can never read too much, so don't worry.

SHAW: Darryl, yes.

DARRYL: Hi, I'm Darryl Reddick. I'm currently the director of teaching and learning at Little Op Preschool or Little Op School. We are a radio inspired school, focusing on early child education. My primary responsibility is to look for evidence and learning, to see how teachers are facilitating and stimulating learning. My wife and I who has also been in education, we have both been in education for about 20 years, and I have a daughter who is in fourth grade. I have a son who is in kindergarten. The reason we made the choice for Sycamore charter was our daughter. I didn't see the evidence of learning in my daughter at her school. She loved her teachers. I would come home and ask her, what did you do today? What is your favorite part of school? She would say, "recess." What did you learn, couldn't tell me. I just saw stress. I saw her being stressed out.

I would come home, I hear my wife helping her with homework. They are both stressed out. I'm wondering if I want to go into the house because I hear them arguing over the homework. Right?

Now, when we made the choice to go to Sycamore, I step in the door, Alana right away is telling me everything that she learned, everything that she enjoyed about school. One of my goals as an educator is to have the children come through my school or come through my classroom and want to learn, love to learn. Right? Apply the things that they learned in their personal life.

All the skills that she is learning at Sycamore, I see her trying to apply it on her day-to-day life, trying to solve math problems, give her math problems. I was picking her up from ballet and she is working on those paragraphs that Ms. Amy talked about. She said, “Dad, I need to figure out how to write with less details.” I said, is that a critique from Ms. Amy? She said, “No.” She said, “You know, like when you working with fractions, instead of saying two fourths, you can just say one half.” I obviously need to take that lesson because I need to figure out how to—I had so much I wanted to say. But I'm just happy that she has a choice to go there and I hope she continues to have a choice.

SHAW: Thank you, Darryl.

SPARKS: Thank you so much.

SHAW: Hi. Shyllah, followed by Seneca.

SHYLLAH: Hi, my name is Shyllah and I am currently one of the eighth grade classes at Sycamore Creek. Sycamore Creek is a wonderful school and I am so grateful to be part of it. One of the things that I love is that there is no heavy weight or pressure to be perfect like at other schools that I have been to. Mistakes are supported and figured out, and taught, not bashed and shamed. I'm always comfortable asking or answering questions because even though I may be wrong, I'm still supported and taught.

I have always loved learning at Sycamore Creek. If I were to be at another school, I would definitely be a different person. I wouldn't be as confident or as good at test taking. I would also be very scared to ask questions. I hope that Sycamore Creek can open a high school so that I can continue this great learning path. I have made so many friends and I have been taught wonderfully by my handwork, games, and regular teachers that I wouldn't be taught like that at any other places. I'm supported and I feel that way, unlike I would have at other schools. I encourage you to say yes to us opening a high school so that I can continue feeling supported. Thank you.

SPARKS: Thank you.

SHAW: Seneca, followed by Molly.

SENECA: Hi. I don't really have much to say, except I really, really enjoy school because the teachers make learning enjoyable and interesting. I would like to continue that in high school. Thank you.

SPARKS: Thank you.

SHAW: Okay. Molly, followed by Liane.

MOLLY: Good evening. Thank you, Orange County Board of Trustees and Staff. My name is Molly and I'm here to tell you about my first grader named Jonas who attends Sycamore Creek Community Charter School. When my son was born, I began to think about his education immediately. Of course, he seemed like the most special person to me. It was obvious that he was boisterous, energetic, and curious. His love of stories, art, movement, and music began to grow. I read more about Waldorf schools. It sounded like the perfect place for him to be. However, the only nearby school at the time was private and not an option financially for my family. Luckily, just before he reached a school age, a tuition-free Waldorf school opened near us and so began our path to being here today.

The best thing I could say about it is that he doesn't want to leave school. I often pick him up, often to either stick around and play with his friends, or he asks to go back. His current favorite subject—well, sorry, I got ahead of myself there. It's the only school he has ever known. He is able to practice his love for creating, for music, arts and movement. He moves a lot every day. He is learning to become a member of a community and has built a special group of friends. He is fostering a love for the earth, animals, different cultures, and is already reading Spanish. Well, he is not reading Spanish, he is speaking it. But he is reading and he is doing math. I take extreme comfort in how well his teacher knows him and will get to know him as he goes through the grades. His current favorite subject is handwork, which encompasses his love of creating things, his curiosity of how things are made. He feels seen and heard, and I hope that Waldorf can be an option through 12th grade.

SHAW: Thank you, Molly.

SPARKS: Thank you.

SHAW: Liane, followed by Christina.

LIANE: Hello, I'm Liane Brouillette and I'm a professor at the University of California at Irvine in the School of Education. However, I started as a teacher in Germany. I'm just going to say a few words because I'm familiar with both systems. Some of the things I have heard I think are a misunderstanding of the German system, which is the tradition that the Waldorf schools follow. What I would like to do is say how it could be advantageous for the Orange County schools as a whole to have schools available that don't teach reading until the age of six. And there is no—you know, I'm sure that you all have done a lot of statistics. I have too. But there is no time for that.

But you are probably aware that in recent years, young men have gone to college in lesser and lesser numbers. If you look at the timing when the United States started teaching reading in kindergarten, the kids that were the first to have to struggle with that because you probably know in your own family, that little girls are more articulate. They are more language oriented than little boys who are often very active and perhaps not focusing on what is happening in their elementary school classroom. Well, that, many people believe has caused the little boys to fall behind. They are not developmentally ready to learn to read in kindergarten and that is actually a

problem in the United States. If you look at the International PISA scores, you will notice that Finland and Estonia, which do not teach reading until the age of seven, have much higher reading scores from the latest PISA exams than the United States does.

SHAW: Your time has expired. This is very fascinating. Why don't you send that information to us?

LIANE: I could go on for 45 minutes.

SPARKS: Thank you.

SHAW: Christina, followed by Dinah. Do we have Christina? Christina? I think that is Christina. You are Christina?

CHRISTINA: I am, yes.

SHAW: Okay.

CHRISTINA: Sorry, I heard Dinah.

SHAW: No worries.

CHRISTINA: Thank you so much, Board for the opportunity to present today. I'm here to support the Sycamore Creek Community Charter School material revision to extend through 12th grade. I'm a mother of a fourth grader at Sycamore Creek, with Ms. Amy who we love so much. I grew up in the public school system. I thrived in it, did exceptionally well, played all the varsity sports. My spouse went to Corona Del Mar. She graduated with a full-ride scholarship. We loved the public school system. We believed that our child would go there so much that when we bought our first home after starting a family, we based our location on the academic successes in the public school systems near where we were interested in buying.

A friend of ours suggested that we consider a Waldorf school for preschool. We thought, sure. We are willing to check out anything for preschool. We were interested in play-based learning and that seemed to fit the needs at the time. So we tried a private Waldorf school in Long Beach and we loved it. Our son was thriving. We extended our time. We thought it would just be preschool and then we would go to this wonderful public school that we moved to. But we extended it through kindergarten. He continued to thrive. He is very right-brained. So the arts, all the creative spirits that they welcome at the Waldorf schools really worked for him. We noticed that he was really loving to learn in that setting.

So we decided to extend that through the private school system that we were in at the time, and he did really well. When we learned about Sycamore Creek, we transferred over and it was just this eye-opening experience to be part of this wonderful community that Sarah has helped nourish through the years. With Ms. Amy, and her teaching, and her love, and her passion for educating has just been so wonderful. Our son is so happy going to Sycamore Creek. We ask that

you please extend it through and give us an opportunity to go into 12th grade and to have our forever home. Thank you.

SHAW: Thank you.

SPARKS: Thank you.

SHAW: Dinah will be followed by Candine.

DINAH: Good evening. My comment really should have come in under the general comments. I have been told I could speak at this time, so thank you for allowing me, Trustees. I'm Dinah Frieden and I live in Irvine. I had the supreme pleasure of serving as a commissioner to the Irvine Unified School District for seven years. I know and understand the magnitude of the job that you people have in protecting our children. You are the trustees.

Earlier I was concerned because I heard a young man say that when he was at OCSA, he did not feel safe. Your job is to be sure that children are safe. Sexual misconduct and assault is not anything to brush aside. We tell our children always to trust adults, to trust teachers. When they cannot trust the teachers, who are they to trust? We have nothing to fear by an investigation. You want what is best for our children. We want what is best for our children. Let us get to the truth. Let us not be afraid of the truth. We want to trust you. You are the trustees of our children. Please be the trustees. Do what you are elected to do. Thank you.

SPARKS: Thank you.

SHAW: Candine, followed by Jason. I'm sorry, Colesworthy. I'm struggling on that name. I think it's Candine. Oh, I'm sorry. I see, Caroline. That is an R? Okay, sorry. Cole is at the restroom. Okay, why don't we go to Jason for now.

JASON: Good evening, Board Members. Thank you so much for your time. We appreciate it. My name is Jason and I am here on behalf of my family who is sitting right back here. I am a high school English teacher. I teach at Newport Harbor High School. My wife is a school nurse in the Anaheim Elementary District. I want to tell you just a short story which will be in support of Sycamore Creek receiving the material revision to become the countywide benefit charter and add grades nine through 12.

Three and a half years ago, we had a predicament. We didn't know what to do with our youngest daughter as far as school. School was supposed to start in a week. We had tried—she was going into third grade. We had tried the public school in our neighborhood and it was not a good fit for a variety of reasons. We had tried homeschooling. It wasn't a good fit. Then we heard about a new Waldorf-based charter school that was opening in six or seven days. My wife and I had been super excited about the Waldorf education. However, even with potential scholarships, there was no way we could afford it. So we thought it was out of the question.

When we heard about this new school, we were so excited. It was like 11 o'clock at night. We went right on the website. We signed up our daughter. She was accepted. Three and a half years

later, she is now halfway through her sixth grade year and is doing extremely well at this unique, special, amazing, creative, academically-rigorous, caring institution. She was so excited about it. She would come home talking about the handy work, the gardening, her teacher, her teacher's stories and everything. Her older sister, Shelby, was so compelled by this that she actually left homeschooling and went to Sycamore Creek for seventh grade and eighth grade and is now in ninth grade at Early College High School because we don't have a high school at Sycamore Creek yet. But she is doing really well because she was prepared well.

There are other families like us that our kids don't work in some of the traditional public settings, or homeschool, or some of the options. We really need more options. Our family needs options. The county needs options. You guys have the authority to give an option to these amazing students in our county.

SHAW: Your time has expired.

JASON: Appreciate it.

SHAW: Thank you very much.

JASON: Thank you so much.

SPARKS: Thank you.

SHAW: All right. Forgive me, I didn't read your name right, Caroline.

CAROLINE: Thank you.

SHAW: Followed by Erich.

CAROLINE: Thank you. My name is Caroline Colesworthy. Thank you for your time. I'm a parent at Sycamore Creek, one daughter in eighth grade and one daughter in first. When we looked at the map of the 40 different zip codes, that little dot down there in Laguna Niguel is my eighth grader. During the pandemic, she refused to go back to school. She said, "I will not set foot in a classroom again and you can't make me." I actually co-parent that child and I took her dad to court to make her go to school. She started with Ms. Kimberly. He has driven her every morning from 6 to 7:00 a.m. to Costa Mesa, where I then drive her and our carpool up to Huntington Beach. She loves school now. I can't tell you how priceless that is for me.

Waldorf education is a pedagogy of peace, but it is also a pedagogy of rigor. I have a master's degree. My husband has a master's degree. He is a scientist working to preserve local plants in Laguna Beach. My older daughter's father is the long-term drinking water planner for the city of San Diego. The environment and the whole person is so important to our family's culture. We believe in high achieving, but we also believe in our children's ability to self-regulate and to be community members in an uncertain world. And we trust that the fullness of this education is what is going to get them ready for that.

I say this coming, you know, straight from the Ivy League. I was also born in Newport Beach. I went to Newport-Mesa Schools. I also went to Harbor Day School. I went to most of the schools in the area trying to find my place. The fact that my children feel comfortable in their educational institute is priceless to me. Thank you so much.

SPARKS: Thank you.

SHAW: Erich, followed by Britt.

AARON: Hi. Thank you for being here this evening and giving us the opportunity to speak for Sycamore Creek. My name is Aaron Whitt. I'm a high school math teacher in Downey. I teach honors freshman math. I'm also the parent of two daughters who go to Sycamore Creek. I have been so grateful for this opportunity to have this school for them. They love school. They love what is going on there. They come home every day and lecture both my wife and I on what they have been learning with Ragnarok, teaching us how to knit and do all the different crafts. My daughter comes home and teaches me how to play the violin.

We heard from some people from Los Alamitos who were not happy about the idea of Sycamore Creek and that there isn't community support for this. There is a lot of community support out here. We have families that drive from all over the county to come to Sycamore Creek because it is where their kids are happy, and where they learn and feel comfortable. They drive from all over to the dump that is across the street. Nobody likes the smell. Nobody likes the fact that it is a split campus, that there is no room. The kids don't have consistent access to the playground or sports facilities, the tiny little field. They don't like the fact that there is not enough classrooms for the grades and the kids that are there. But we are still happy to do that because of the education that these kids are getting.

They also brought up that academic rigor was an issue. That is not an issue with these classes. The kids that I get in my honors math class, they come in, even as honors students, they don't have confidence in their abilities. They don't have the ability to ask a question. They come in and they hate math and they don't love learning. They are scared of fractions because stuff was pushed on them too early. Because of that, they come in with these hang ups that, had they been given extra time, they would be comfortable. I could teach them if they had never had the bad experiences. But they come in with those experiences and it's very sad.

SHAW: Thank you. Your time is up.

SPARKS: Thank you.

SHAW: Now, I'm not sure. I had a card for Erich and Adriana. That wasn't you?

AUDIENCE: I think Erich got my spot.

SHAW: Okay. So are you Britt, then?

BRITT: I am Britt.

SHAW: You are Britt. Okay. Britt, go for it.

BRITT: Thank you for having me. I'm here because I enthusiastically support Sycamore Creek's material revision to become a countywide benefit charter and to add grades nine through 12th. I have two kids that go to Sycamore. I have an eighth grader and a fourth grader. I cut so many of my notes so I could go faster. I'm a public school, high school teacher for 24 years in Long Beach Unified. I have a master's degree in educational administration and I'm the product of a California public school education. I had every intention of my kids following in my steps, but they are different. They are different. They had different needs. They weren't fitting in where they were going. I researched and found Waldorf and the whole child and the hands, heart, and head. I knew there were other options. I tried the private one in Long Beach, \$15,000 a year for each child. I couldn't do that. I tried for a while. COVID changed everything.

We found Sycamore Creek. It is a miracle. A tuition-free Waldorf school. It was the answer to my prayers. The school has changed our lives. We started, like I said, during the pandemic. My kids, they were struggling like a lot of the kids. They have since flourished and they continue to do so. How could they not flourish? They get to regularly play musical instruments, paint, draw, knit, and handwork. One is creating a marionette and handwork. They play in the dirt, and garden, and they touch worms, but they love it. They love it. They love to learn. That is the one thing that is super special. They are eager to learn. Okay, cut that.

The Sycamore Creek teachers, they don't just care what goes on in the classroom. If our kids had a rough night, they want to text in the morning so they can support the kid, so they can support our kids. They want to be part—they are part of the whole family. Oh, no. Okay. Okay. My ending, okay.

Sending my kids to Sycamore Creek was the best thing I have ever done for them. To think that there could be a high school, I could never afford the \$30,000 a year at the Waldorf down here. But to continue building their confidence and graduating from a school with our community, that is a life-changing gift. I'm so lucky for this, and I believe every child should have a Waldorf education. I think the world would be a better place.

SHAW: All right. Thank you.

SPARKS: Thank you.

SHAW: So let's go to Maria, followed by Kara. Maria, followed by Kara. Sorry I didn't get you on deck before. You are on.

MARIA: I also had a three-minute thing ready and I have been frantically trying to figure out what to cut. My name is Maria Urdinarrian or Maria Urdinarrian, up to you. Good evening to the Board of Trustees and to all of you in attendance. I'm speaking in support for Sycamore Creek Community Charter School's material revision to become a countywide benefit charter and to add grades nine through 12. I am a credentialed single subject visual arts teacher. I am the visual arts or handwork teacher that you keep hearing about. I am teaching them the marionette and we

are doing awesome. I am also the parent of a recently graduated eighth grader and two current students. I was not going to add that. But because of some earlier comments, I thought I would.

My daughter has moved on to high school and is excelling out of the gate. Let me say that my daughter was middle to lower in our own eighth grade. I was a little worried. But even in that space, even in middle to lower, she was doing well. She got to this high school and she is flying. It makes me just tear up thinking about it. She is thriving in the Honors Program, looking at the AP and has been tapped as a growing leader by her classmates, her teachers, and the administration.

As a teacher and a single parent of three, I am proud to call myself a Sycamore teacher. While my family would most definitely benefit from the higher salary that was mentioned earlier by a representative of another school, I am more sold by the conspicuous benefits that I see on a daily basis in my students and my children. That, coupled with no cost tuition, that is the math.

Sycamore Creek is a place where students are asked to care about how their mind works, to wonder together. Where students are excited to learn, feel safe as you have heard, and belong to a caring community. We diligently work to encourage students to reflect on how they learn and view perseverance through struggle as an opportunity of growth. This focus transformed the typical teacher-student interaction, student-student interaction, and even teacher-teacher interaction. I invite you to take the time today to get to know some of our families that are here in this beautiful sea of green. I'm confident you will agree. Thank you.

SHAW: Thank you, Maria.

SPARKS: Thank you.

SHAW: Kara, followed by Juliet.

KARA: Hi, my name is Kara. I'm not a fan of speaking in public, so I'm going to keep this very brief. Good evening, Board of Trustees. I'm a current parent and I'm here in support of Sycamore Creek's material revision and the addition of the high school grades. My children have thrived in the loving, non-competitive and collaborative environment. I want to reiterate the collaborative part because that is really the most beautiful part of this education to me. I urge you to support Sycamore and the children that benefit from this beautiful education. Thank you for your time.

SPARKS: Thank you.

SHAW: Okay. Juliet, followed by Gennica.

JULIET: Thank you, Orange County Board of Trustees, Superintendent Mijares, and Staff. I am speaking in support of Sycamore's material revision to become a countywide benefit charter and to add grades nine through 12. I am on the board of Sycamore as secretary. My name is Juliet Santa Cruz. I'm a 17-year public high school teacher at Downey High School. I teach health, AVID, and biomedical CTE courses. I support public schools and I support Sycamore completely. Sycamore represents, for myself, happy families, strong connections, where there is

a will, there is a way. I would love to see opportunity for growth to expand beyond eighth grade for all the reasons previously stated. Thank you for your time.

SPARKS: Thank you.

SHAW: I think closing us out here is Gennica.

GENNICA: None. All right. Good evening. Thank you, Orange County Board of Trustee Superintendent Mijares, and Staff. My name is Gennica Santa Cruz and I am the games teacher. I bring the fun to school. Many students, from what I have gathered from their parents, have come up to me and told me how much they have enjoyed their games class. I am here in support of Sycamore's material revision to become a countywide benefit charter and to add grades nine through 12. Last year, when I heard that Sycamore was in search of a games/PE teacher, I was excited at the opportunity to return to teaching after a 13-year absence. I look forward to learning and growing along with my students, and with the community, and teaching my current students as high schoolers as well.

I believe in Sycamore's community, that they can continue to thrive and grow the school, and to provide more opportunities to more students. Thank you.

SPARKS: Thank you.

SHAW: Hopefully, I didn't miss anyone. I think we got them all though, Madam President.

SPARKS: Great. Thank you, Aracely.

CHASTAIN: This concludes the public hearing for Sycamore Creek Community Charter School. The Orange County Department of Education Staff Report will be published on February 14. At the March 1 Board meeting, we will present Orange County Department of Education findings and recommendations, and the Board will take action to grant or deny the revisions to the charter petition. President Sparks, I now close the public hearing and turn the meeting back over to you.

SPARKS: Thank you. Do we do need Board questions?

BOYD: You can if you choose to.

SPARKS: Okay.

VALDES: I do.

SPARKS: Do you all have some questions?

VALDES: I do.

SPARKS: Okay. Trustee Valdes.

VALDES: Could the executive director take the podium again?

BACH: Can we turn this?

VALDES: What was your name again?

BACH: It's Sarah Bach.

VALDES: Sarah.

BACH: B A C H.

VALDES: It's nice to see you.

BACH: Thank you.

VALDES: I have some questions and some, let's say, significant concerns. To be clear, I'm in favor of charter schools and you clearly have a lot of parent support here. I'm really in favor of putting the power of education in parents. If you look at agenda item 13, that is my agenda item, which is the Parents' Rights agenda item for this evening. But I have some really, really significant concerns regarding the test scores at Sycamore. I'm not even sure that the parents are aware of this, who are in this room, but I'm going to read this out to everyone here. According to EdSource.org, Sycamore's 2022, English scores on state testing was 23.86% pass rate. L.A. Unified, as an example, was 41.7%. The Sycamore math scores for the year 2022 are 19.32% pass rate. L.A. Unified is 28.49. Those pass scores are beyond failing to me. You are asking me as a trustee, sitting here on behalf of the kids that go to your school to grant you the authority to extend scores through high school that are terrible. Can you explain to me why the test scores are that low?

TELFER-RADZAT: Yes. Yes, I can. First of all, we opened the year of the pandemic. In March when we closed, we had been with our students for however long that is. I'm not counting after a full day of teaching. A couple months, right? We didn't test them that first year. We didn't test them the second year because of the pandemic. The third year, I don't know what we did the third year.

BACH: That is when we tested.

TELFER-RADZAT: That is when we tested, okay.

BACH: The initial benchmark test.

TELFER-RADZAT: Oh, because this is year four. Anyway, last year was our first year that we did any testing with our students. If you look at the attendance for all schools, that was very difficult for us. We are not denying that this was an issue. We were very seriously impacted by the pandemic. Our curriculum is not a virtual curriculum. It really requires the students to be in class. However, the other thing I think that is problematic is to look at those scores as a whole.

Because as you saw on the charts, our students start either at equal or below, and above. When you average those, it looks like we haven't made any growth. You really need to look specifically at the grades to see those differences. And our classes have been small, so those don't show up on the Dashboard. And our students with disabilities actually tested higher than the state. Right?

BACH: Mm-hmm.

VALDES: Do you have a higher percentage of students with disabilities than the average school?

BACH: No.

TELFER-RADZAT: We don't have? I just know from my class personally, I probably am at 50% or higher.

VALDES: Are you suggesting that if I went through the scores grade by grade, for example, the lower grades would be much lower and they would get higher as the grades get higher?

TELFER-RADZAT: Correct. That is what my study was over the past five years of all Waldorf schools. Right, these are all 19 Waldorf schools—well, not all. There are more, but the 19 Waldorf schools that had been in operation through 2014.

VALDES: Can you share with me what, perhaps after tonight, what the other Waldorf schools are doing with respect to state testing? I know there was someone here who mentioned there are two other Waldorf schools in California.

TELFER-RADZAT: The high schools.

VALDES: I would like to know how they are doing.

TELFER-RADZAT: Okay. I don't have that off the top of my head.

VALDES: This is a very significant issue for me. I mean, this is beyond low to me.

TELFER-RADZAT: It is. But I think those reasons, they are very valid. So you have to take those into to account.

BACH: Yeah. Additionally, not as an excuse, but as an explanation. Last year, for about two months when our school started to really hit its stride we thought, being back in person, we essentially for about two months from December 15th to about this February 15th, we were hit really hard by Omicron. Our students, our staff were hit so hard. We filed a J13. I remember at one point, it was myself and our Spanish teacher who is here tonight, with three of our grades, out for about a week. In fact, I know administrators here at OCDE were also subbing during that time. But for our school, that was so significant because it was two months mid-year that we completely lost, really, it's about 20% of the school year that we lost.

Additionally, I just want to make everyone aware that this is why the state and the governor has added two years extension to every charter school for its renewal. We are not here tonight as a renewal. We are not asking for a renewal to our charter. That comes in 2026 for us. That is when those scores are really going—you are going to really want to look at those. We agree with you that that is important.

VALDES: I just want you to know.

BACH: I appreciate it.

VALDES: I'm on your side, generally speaking on the charter portion of this. But I have another charter school here tonight, which is pushing test scores almost 80%. I do my homework before I sit here. I mean, your 60 percentage points lower. That is a significant problem to me. I'm going to look forward to Aracely's Staff Report. I know this is not an action item to for tonight, but I just want to tell you, this is a big issue for me.

TELFER-RADZAT: And yeah, like Dr. Bach said, it's not an excuse. We are aware. It's something we have been working on all year. We have our MAP scores, which are the other scores we use in addition to the CAASPP that you get that inform us of what we need to do. So it has been very much on our minds just so you know.

SHAW: If I might, Madam President.

SPARKS: Yes.

SHAW: We had a couple speakers—I wanted to give you a chance to maybe address what they had said. I made notes about teacher pay. I guess being competitive in regards to that and just the budget questions about your assumptions going forward with your budget.

BACH: Sure. Absolutely. Actually, looking at the budget, it was mentioned \$68,000 versus \$72,000 at the low range for Los Alamitos, and going up to \$140,000. I think that it's important to recognize that this is a social entrepreneur path for us, for me, for our school. We have had to make lots of sacrifices in order to be here even. We think that over time that will grow. That doesn't also account for STRS, which we offer. Not all charter schools offer, which means the school meets 20% of the salary plus full medical benefits. When you add it up, it's significantly more than that. I think that needs to be considered.

SHAW: Well, thank you. My final comment, I thought many of the speakers this evening were very compelling. One that I'm going to remember is the drive. Was it Laguna Niguel that you are coming up from? Is that right? Did I hear—?

VALDES: I think she said Laguna Beach.

SHAW: Laguna Beach?

AUDIENCE: Laguna Niguel.

SHAW: Laguna Niguel, okay. Up to Huntington Beach? Now that I think says a lot.

BACH: Definitely.

SPARKS: I just have one quick question on the study. It went through eighth grade. Do we have similar patterns for nine to 12 in terms of improvements?

BACH: Well, we don't, I think, have a big enough sample size to really know. But just anecdotally, looking at some recent scores, you mentioned the other two schools. One school is doing very, very well. I don't have the numbers in front of me, but I'm happy to share them. A school of about 450 students, they are above in every single category, subcategory. The other school is more of a mixed bag.

SPARKS: Yeah. I would be curious.

BACH: Yeah.

SPARKS: Of those numbers.

BACH: Of course.

SPARKS: Thank you.

BACH: Yes.

SPARKS: Trustee Williams or Barke?

WILLIAMS: Yes. Sarah, we have been through a lot.

BACH: Yes.

WILLIAMS: Starting in 2019 when you came before us.

BACH: I know.

WILLIAMS: There was a lot of doubters and a lot of naysayers. The Los Alamitos crew came out against you.

BACH: It was OVSD then.

SPARKS: Yeah.

BACH: But they are not here tonight and I think that says something. I think it does. I think it's a positive.

SPARKS: Yeah, Ocean View.

WILLIAMS: Yeah. The Ocean View, that was a particularly malicious attack on you personally, the school.

BACH: Well, we are good friends now.

WILLIAMS: The Waldorf philosophy I think is very unique. I think it's wonderful that it's a public school that you don't charge a private tuition rate where many of your parents would be unable to pay for, so I think this is wonderful. You have been through a lot. As Trustee Valdes says and noted the test scores are on the lower side, but that is something that is an evolution and that is changing. If we look at the overall history of the Waldorf, it's rather remarkable: 98% attend college after graduating a Waldorf high school, 95% feel prepared for college university and postgraduate education, 92% complete initial college degrees, which is impressive. And 90% of your students will get into the top universities that they so choose.

The other remarkable number is 87% of those parents recommend strongly the Waldorf. That is exemplary by the parents who are here tonight. I can go down, I took notes from everybody. We have Daniel, who is an education specialist, and what you said was very moving. We look at the kids who are here, Sheila, who is in eighth grade. Seneca, you said some very compelling and wonderful, wonderful things. Then we look at the young man who sang. Where is he if he is still here?

BACH: Ayzaad.

WILLIAMS: That was very touching. That was a song I still sing to myself because it's so—

BARKE: He was singing up here.

WILLIAMS: Yeah, I was singing up here.

BARKE: Yeah, he was.

SPARKS: Not in tune, but he was singing.

WILLIAMS: No, I'm Welsh. We are known as singers.

SPARKS: Right.

WILLIAMS: Okay. Professor Liane Brouillette, I have a question for you. Where are you? There you are. I respect you tremendously being at the UCI School of Education. You bring a lot to this and you wrote us a letter. I was just captivated by your comments. I could have probably listened to you for the next 30 to 40 minutes. I would love to come to one of your lectures. But could you comment on what you have seen, the test scores, and where you foresee this going in the future with your knowledge of the Waldorf system? Come up here, please. This is not a 30-minute lecture question. I want to give you 30 seconds.

BROUILLETTE: (Inaudible) nine to 12 this morning. I think the practical things that you have talked about have a lot to do with it. There is not enough room. Some of the teachers have two grades that they are teaching at the same time. I think that it's unfair for a school to have really—you are talking about comparison. It is a nice big school where they are. But they have so little of it. So little control over what is going on, and how planning is done, and things that I think that has a lot to do with it. It handicaps this tiny school as they are trying to grow. That is what I think.

WILLIAMS: Yeah. And jumping on that same thought, during the Covid.

BROUILLETTE: Exactly.

WILLIAMS: You honorably and faithfully served the community by taking students that you were not paid for. I think we need to remind everybody of what you did for those families who you didn't have the funds for. But you, by your faith, and your dedication to the kids, took that task on. And that hurts you too, I think at the very beginning. It really kind of puts you off to the side. We are known as a board that takes risks with those people who are broken, who are underprivileged because we believe in you. Sarah, I believe in you. You have done a wonderful job.

BACH: Thank you.

WILLIAMS: I'm done.

SPARKS: Trustee Barke?

BACH: I do want to just—there are a couple highlights going back to 2022 test scores, I did mention our students with disabilities. They did outperform the state, and I have those numbers here: by 17 points in language arts and by 10.5 in math. Also, I don't have the numbers here for the science scores. But our fifth graders and our seventh graders also did outperform the state as well in those numbers, taking those things into consideration. Also, please take into consideration that, as Dr. Telfer-Radzat mentioned, it was our first year testing. There are going to be issues even if there is not Covid. There is proctoring issues. There is test anxiety. There is all kinds of things when a school for the very first time is testing, especially after coming out of the haze of Covid and after two months of Omicron.

I really think that is why our charter has been—and all charter schools have been given an additional two years to come back to you and show you. I think even this year, we are going to show so much growth in our MAPs testing and our CAASPP testing. You may know too, that the state is even considering adding another two years to that and indeed making it four years. To really judge us on this one time point, I think is just incredibly unfair. Most of these scores are not even on the Dashboard because our student groups are so small. You have to remember that when you are looking at 10 children if one of them tests very low, that is 10%. Versus a state of thousands and thousands of children, where if you understand the normal curve, and of course you do. I know you do. Please. But it's just not apples to apples. It's really not. Every school is so

unique and different, so just there is nuance. That is all. I'm happy to look into that further. I just did not want to leave that as is. Thank you.

BARKE: Well, I'm so happy that everybody honored you by standing up for you because you deserve that.

SPARKS: Yes.

BARKE: You guys, thank you.

SPARKS: Yes, yes, yes.

BACH: Oh my God.

BARKE: There is nothing that I enjoy more than seeing all the happy faces of the parents and the children. It's just incredible to see that. I know you guys are having a huge impact. Ms. Kimberly, congratulations. I know that you have been working on this a long time so that is awesome. I just love what you do because I think choice is so important. You are really bringing something unique to the community that otherwise many community members could not afford, and you make that affordable, and you make it available. It's obvious that it is having a huge impact, so I thank you for doing that.

What else did I make notes about? Yeah, I'm just thrilled that you are there. The district talked about the impact on the district, how it was going to cost them. I forget the number. It was outrageous. But I know studies have been done. You look at that map and these kids are coming from all over Orange County and beyond, so it is not going to affect that one little district. It is really not. The impact of the district is minimal. I know you have a lot of kids who come out of private school, as we heard tonight, come out of homeschooling. I'm thrilled with what you are doing and look forward to seeing you guys grow.

BACH: Thank you. Can I just also share? If you didn't notice, it was so amazing that so many of our speakers tonight are teachers themselves in public schools. Yay for public schools. And they are choosing our school. A physicist, a math teacher, science teachers, I think that really says something. Right? Thank you.

SPARKS: I will just finish up. I was going to echo what you just said. As an educator myself—

BACH: Yes.

SPARKS: You notice when educators are stepping up to the plate. That says something because we care. We understand learning. We understand learning outcomes. We understand what it takes to reach a student where they are and lift them up. And that is what you have done. We have been here for you since—

BACH: You have.

SPARKS: When we came on the Board in 2018. I also want to say that we do understand as a board, we do understand that it is not apples to oranges.

BACH: Thank you.

BARKE: It is apples to oranges.

BACH: Yeah.

SPARKS: We understand that it is apples—

BACH: It's a lot of fruit.

SPARKS: That it is apples to oranges, and that it's not apples to apples. That the function that you all serve is unique and that is the whole point. That you are serving students in a very unique, comprehensive way. That it's not putting a round hole in a square peg or vice versa, and we really appreciate the effort that you have all have done. Again, if we look at the data that we do see, parents are driving for hours to get to your school. The reports that you guys gave today— and thank you so much for coming out. We know it's late. We know because we are here every month very late. But we really appreciate you all coming out and sharing your stories and sharing your passion. That really says something that you are making that effort to drive to the school because you see something special going on. That does not go unnoticed, so thank you for all your efforts. We really appreciate it. Thank you.

BACH: Thank you, President Sparks.

SPARKS: Yes. Yes. Okay. At this point, why don't we take a seven-minute break and we will come back at 7:20 for Oxford Prep Academy. Okay. Thank you. So we will see you in seven minutes. Thank you.

[The Orange County Board of Education exercise's a recess.]

SPARKS: Okay. We are back in session after a short break. Thank you all for rounding yourselves back. Now we will turn it to Oxford Prep. Okay. Aracely?

CHASTAIN: The Board will now hold a hearing to grant or deny the requested material revisions to the Oxford Preparatory Academy - Saddleback Valley amended charter petition and requested material revisions. On November 4, 2022, Oxford Preparatory Academy - Saddleback Valley submitted material revisions seeking to remove grades six through eight from the charter petition, and change enrollment preferences to include siblings of students admitted or attending the school's virtual learning program, and Oxford Preparatory Academy Middle School slated to open in the 23-24 school year.

The Orange County Board of Education held a public hearing on December 14 to consider the level of support for the material revisions. As legally required, the revised petition has been reviewed according to California Education Code, and you have been provided the Orange

County Department of Education Staff Report that offers recommendations for consideration by the Board. Prior to public comments, representatives from Oxford Preparatory Academy - Saddleback Valley should have equal time or 10 minutes, whichever is greater, to present evidence and testimony responsive to the Orange County Department of Education staff recommendations and findings published on January 17. I now invite representatives from Oxford Preparatory Academy to the podium.

KERNAN: Good evening, President Sparks, members of the Board. We don't really have a presentation tonight. We did it last time. But I did again want to thank you for the recognition for Saddleback Valley here tonight, for our Distinguished School Award. Our sister school, SOC also received the Distinguished School Award. We are very excited to have both of our schools represented that way. If you have any additional questions—? We are just excited to be able to kind of move on with our new middle school, so thank you very much.

SPARKS: Thank you. Do we have any comments or questions from—?

BOYD: You will take them later.

SPARKS: You will take them later? Oh, okay.

CHASTAIN: Thank you.

SPARKS: Thank you. All right.

CHASTAIN: The hearing is now open for public comments. Deputy Superintendent Boyd, are there any public comments for this agenda item?

BOYD: There are none.

CHASTAIN: This concludes the public hearing. As a reminder, the school is requesting to remove grade six through eight from the charter petition and change enrollment preferences. The Board has three options for action for each of the material revisions requested: approve the material revisions, approve the material revisions with conditions, or deny the material revisions. President Sparks, I now close the public hearing and turn the meeting back over to you.

SPARKS: Thank you. Okay. Now we will have Board questions. I will turn to my left, Trustee Barke?

BARKE: I have none.

SPARKS: Trustee Williams?

WILLIAMS: Yeah. Just a basic question. Why do you want to remove—Hello again. Just reviewing for the record, why would you like to remove grade six through eight?

KERNAN: Because this board so generously granted us a petition for OPA Middle School. We don't need those grades six through eight on our Saddleback Valley campus because those students will be attending our middle school.

WILLIAMS: Okay. And your nine through 12 grades, when is that going to come?

KERNAN: I get asked that every week. We are going to get through the middle school first.

WILLIAMS: Okay. We look forward to seeing you.

KERNAN: Yep.

WILLIAMS: That is my comments.

SPARKS: I will echo that comment. Yes. All right, Trustee Shaw?

SHAW: No questions.

SPARKS: Trustee Valdes?

VALDES: Ms. Kernan, I am a numbers person and I want to congratulate you. The Oxford Prep Academy - South Orange County campus in 2019 had state test scores of 79.81%. In 2022, you actually got better at 81.17%.

KERNAN: We rocked Covid.

VALDES: Your math scores were 83.14% in 2019. It went down a little bit to 74.69, but those are just exceptional numbers. I have no problem with your revision because I like to reward success like that. My only question to you is, when we spoke last, you told me you were going to make your parent complaint procedure more public. Can you just share with me what you have done since our first meeting, which I think was back in October?

KERNAN: Yeah. So we have created more public awareness around our parent complaint procedures. We have posted them on our website. We do have a forum that is available on our website as well as our campuses that parents can use for general complaints, not just for uniform complaints. We have different contact information. We let our parents know that if they have any questions or any issues that they can contact our school site chancellors or myself. We have had several town halls, parent information meetings to make sure that we are really getting our parents involved. We have also kicked off our LCAP, our strategic planning committees, as well as have had several school site council meetings where we are working on actually increasing our parent education and parent involvement. So making sure that parents have a lot of different avenues, not only to get involved in school but also to help to make those decisions for what is going on in our schools and know exactly who they can reach out to anytime they need to.

VALDES: Sounds good to me.

SPARKS: Okay. Well, thank you all so much for your hard work. That brings us to our board action item number eight. Do I have any motions?

WILLIAMS: I make a motion for option number one?

SPARKS: Do I have a second?

BARKE: I will second option number one.

SPARKS: All right. All in favor?

BARKE, WILLIAMS, SPARKS, SHAW, VALDES: Aye.

SPARKS: Okay. Congratulations. Passes 5-0.

KERNAN: Thank you.

SPARKS: All right, I will call Aracely back to the podium.

CHASTAIN: The Board will now hold a hearing to grant or deny the CRLA Southern California petition proposing to establish California Republic Leadership Academy after no action was taken on the petition by the governing board of the Capistrano Unified School District. The charter school proposes to operate a classroom-based program serving students in TK-8 grade for an initial charter term from 2023-2028, within the boundaries of Capistrano Unified School District.

The Board held a public hearing on January 4 to consider the level of support for the charter school. As legally required, the petition has been reviewed according to California Education Code and you have been provided the Orange County Department of Education Staff Report that summarizes findings from that review and offers recommendations for consideration by the Board. Based on information gathered throughout the entire review process, which included a clarification meeting held with petitioners on December 20, OCDE staff is recommending approval with conditions of the California Republic Leadership Academy Capistrano charter petition. We put forward to the Board that the deficiency in the chartered petition as written can be adequately addressed via the execution of an agreement to remedy the findings in the Staff Report, any issues raised by the Board, and establish appropriate timelines for the petitioners to meet the conditions as specified.

We offer this recommendation based on the following, there are elements of the petition that require further information in order to be considered reasonably comprehensive or to comply with current law. The petition submitted only samples of curriculum and scope and sequence, and the petitioner has stated that curriculum would not be developed prior to approval. The petition does not contain an adequate description of the services to be provided to students who are English language learners, specifically daily designated English language development instruction, procedures for reclassification of English language learners, and support for newcomer students. The petition requires further information regarding the annual goals for the

following state priorities - parental involvement, chronic absenteeism, school climate, and course access. Additionally, the petition contains language that does not comply with current Education Code, with regards to teacher credentialing and next generation science standards. Finally, the petition states the students will have the opportunity to participate in internships, community service, vocational programs, employment, travel, and become mentors for others. However, there is no explanation and the petitioners were unable to articulate during the clarification meeting what this would look like in a TK-8th grade setting.

Prior to Board discussion, representatives for CRLA will have equal time and opportunity or 10 minutes, whichever is longer, to present evidence and testimony responsive to the staff recommendations and findings published on January 17. I now call representatives from California Republic Leadership Academy to the podium.

DAVIS: Good evening, Madam President, members of the Board, Deputy Superintendent. It's a pleasure to be back here with you tonight. I wanted to reintroduce Kevin Pratt, our board president. We also have tonight, Roy Kim with ICON. They are our back office provider and Janelle Ruley our counsel with Young, Minney & Corr. That is part of our team and one of our board members was planning to be here. He is online participating virtually. He couldn't make it. But nonetheless, it is a pleasure to be here.

We are very excited to have staff's recommendation for approval. We thank staff for that. We certainly hope you will agree with that. The staff did point out a handful of things, which were just shared now. I think in some cases there was some confusion. I think in other cases we could certainly provide clarification. What I want to just say right up front is that to the extent that there is any areas where there is clarification that is needed, we are happy to provide that. We did submit a letter that kind of went item by item and offered some solutions for how we can go about that.

We are totally open and look forward to however the Board chooses to hold us to addressing those concerns. We do hope that you will approve the petition without conditions. If you do, we will still address all those concerns with staff. That is our commitment to you. We have got our team here for questions. We would love to answer any questions that you have. We appreciate your consideration and we hope to make you proud.

SPARKS: Okay, thank you. Do we move on then to public comments?

BOYD: Aracely?

SPARKS: Aracely again. Oh, there you are. I didn't see you.

CHASTAIN: I apologize. I was taking some notes.

SPARKS: Okay.

CHASTAIN: So the hearing is now open for public comments. Deputy Superintendent Boyd, are there any public comments for this agenda item?

BOYD: There is one.

SHAW: Yes, we will have Christa. Oh my.

CHRISTA: I know. We know each other.

SHAW: That Christa.

CHRISTA: Yeah. Hi.

SHAW: Wait a minute, I know this name. Good to see you.

CHRISTA: Good to see you. I first want to say I'm really sad everyone left because I wanted to tell the Sycamore crew how impressed I was. They were so passionate and I honestly got emotional with some of their speakers. It just makes me happy to see that charters, there are so many different options for different kids and families. Anyways, I'm just grateful for the last hour, however long that was. I got to listen to them. It was a little bit better than wrangling my six kids at home during dinnertime, so it has been actually a great, great meeting. Much different than Capo, I'm sorry, our district board meeting. I'm very impressed with all of you. Oh, shoot, I'm going to waste all my time right here. But I'm really impressed with how encouraging, supporting, and how involved you all seem to be. It is just night and day difference. But I will get to my little talk here.

My name is Christa Chamberlain and I live in Las Flores. I have six kids, ages two to 11. Our kids attended Las Forest Elementary until Covid when I decided to pull them and try homeschooling. Never in my wildest dreams did I think I would do that. After some time, we realized homeschool worked well for our family, so we have continued. We are currently on our third year in homeschool. I have naturally gravitated toward an education where I focus on teaching my kids how to be independent learners and leaders. Rather than lecture, I facilitate, which allows my kids to think, discover, and learn on their own. We bought a book about virtues and read stories together that demonstrate acts of integrity, diligence, honesty, patience, courage, and gratitude. I have gained my own deep love for American history and the founding fathers of our nation. We, as a family, have learned from their examples.

Because we have had such a successful experience homeschooling, I have planned to continue until my kids went to high school. But then I heard about this new charter hoping to come to our district. I went to the meeting and was absolutely blown away. In fact, my sister and I were just talking about how we practically skipped to the car and we were giddy, like, this is too good to be true. She homeschools, too. Everything they stood for was what I stood for. Their focus was my focus. Their goals for their students were my goals for my kids. I quickly knew that this charter was meant for our family and I was willing to sacrifice some of my favorite benefits of homeschool so that they could be a part of this incredible opportunity in our area.

This charter won't be for everyone. Just like homeschool isn't for everyone. Just like public school isn't for everyone. Private school and even other charter schools, they are all unique and not one is better than the other. It comes down to what is best for each individual child and

family, or each individual family and child. I know this charter is for us and I have seen other families realize that this charter is for them too. Please give us the opportunity to make that choice by making this charter an option. When families have options and get to decide what they feel is best for their children, it gives each child the opportunity to grow in an educational environment that suits them, and in turn, allows our community to thrive as a whole.

SHAW: Your time is up.

CHRISTA: Thank you.

SPARKS: Thank you.

CHASTAIN: This concludes the public hearing. The Board has three options for action regarding a charter petition submitted on appeal. Option one, approve the charter petition as written. Option two, approve the charter petition with conditions. This action would result in approval of the charter and require the execution of an agreement to address the issues outlined in the Staff Report and any concerns raised by the Board. And option three, deny the charter school petition.

President Sparks, I now close the public hearing and turn the meeting back over to you to facilitate deliberations and take action on the appeal.

SPARKS: Thank you, Aracely. All right, do we have any Board questions before we move to board action?

BARKE: No. I would just make a comment or two.

SPARKS: Sure.

BARKE: If that is okay. Again, I'm excited because you are, again, providing a unique opportunity in the community, which I think is really important. I saw your presentation here. I saw it in San Juan Capistrano. I'm very impressed. I know some of your board members. Any charter that has Janelle and Roy, to me, is a winner. I know they don't work with charters unless they are winners. So really excited to see your team, see your board, and just I love the curriculum. I love the opportunity for something different in the community.

Thank you for doing that. I know Gary has a wealth of experience bringing a charter to life because I have seen him do it before, so I'm excited.

SPARKS: Trustee Williams?

WILLIAMS: Yes, real quick. Christa, thank you again for coming here. All parents really make a difference in their children's education. The fact that you are here means a lot. You said everything they focus on is our focus. I agree. Good stuff that they are going to be presenting and giving to you. I'm going to be making a motion for option number one just to kind of give you a heads up.

SPARKS: Little teaser. Okay, cool.

BARKE: I will second it.

SPARKS: Trustee Shaw?

SHAW: Well, I was going to say, basically what Mari said. It looks like we have really got the A-Team assembled here together here in the front. It gives me a lot of confidence in seeing the direction you are going. Six kids at home, the Shaw's have six kids at home. We do know each other from church if you haven't figured that out.

BARKE: I figured. I figured.

SPARKS: Trustee Valdes?

VALDES: I just have a question for Aracely. Aracely, I read the Staff Report closely. I'm focusing mostly on B and the statement by the staff that the charter petition does not comply with Education Code 47605. Being a lawyer, that is a significant statement to me, so I'm just kind of wondering.

CHASTAIN: Are you talking about A or B?

VALDES: Summary of findings, section B in bold.

SHAW: I think you are on page 35, right?

VALDES: Yeah, page 35.

CHASTAIN: Page 35. Okay.

VALDES: Okay. When I read 47605.4, it says that the charter schools have until July 1, 2025, to obtain the certificate required for the teacher's certificated assignment. The statute looks to me like they have until 2025. But you seem to think that they are not complying now, so can you explain why you wrote that?

CHASTAIN: Yeah, this is a confusing part for quite a few of our charter schools and they have been getting some inaccurate information on how to apply this; 47065.4 (a), which is specifically what you are talking about, it's for teachers that have been employed by the charter schools during the 2019-20 school year. That is when that flexibility was taken away from charter schools regarding credentialing. For those teachers, they are sort of grandfathered in and they have until July 1, 2025, to obtain their appropriate credentials. This school was not in operation during that time, so this statute would not apply to any of the teachers that they hire. All of the teachers that they hire are going to have to be credentialed, fully credentialed. Does that make sense?

VALDES: Yeah.

CHASTAIN: That is all that is. That is in the petition as if it applies to the school and it wouldn't apply to the school.

VALDES: I understand. Okay. In your conversations with Gary, has he made clear to you that he understands that?

CHASTAIN: No. This was just during the clarification meeting and some of this stuff, you know, Ed. Code is kind of put in there. So I understand when they maybe don't know the nuances of Ed. Code. But he did say that his attorneys vetted this and that they felt that it was accurate for their school. But like I said, we do have a couple of schools that have run into some issues with this now and have some teachers that they thought had until 2025 and they don't.

VALDES: If we approve the charter without conditions and you see that there is an improperly credentialed teacher, then your response to that would be to issue a notice of concern?

CHASTAIN: We issue notices. Correct. We work with the school to try to figure out where they are in the credentialing process. They work with our credentialing team on campus as well because sometimes they can continue working as long as their applications are in, documents in. It's different for different types of credentials and everyone's situation seems to be really unique. We are lucky to have that group work with us. It's a little bit complicated for me on a case-by-case basis to know, but we do ask for that information.

We usually request it around September to see what teachers they have so that we can do a credentials check. We run into issues of course when we have non-credentialed teachers already hired, which does tend to happen. Which is why we sort of want to catch it at the beginning level and make sure that they understand that their teachers do have to be fully credentialed. But this is something that will be caught if it does occur.

VALDES: When you reviewed the petition as to their finances, I noticed that that was not a concern in the Staff Report.

CHASTAIN: We do not have concerns regarding their finances. I do have a writeup from our administrator of fiscal oversight. Obviously, when a charter school is starting, everything is based on whether they meet their enrollment projections, right? We are looking at their budget, assuming they are going to meet the enrollment projections that they have given us. Everything appears to be pretty conservative. Everything reflects market costs. The revenue from grants and other local revenues such as donations and fundraising, those aren't critical to this school's fiscal solvency. We feel that they will do okay even if they don't get that. They project that they will be operating in a surplus after the first year and in subsequent years, so we are glad to see that. They will have the reserves—actually, they are projecting their reserves to exceed what would be recommended for a school of a similar size.

We did get also a letter of intent from their potential lender and that was dated January 20. They indicated that they were willing to give the school a startup loan of \$600,000 so that would cover any cash that they may need. With all of that, we still see that the projected cashflow balances are going to be positive, so we don't have concerns financially at this time.

VALDES: Last concern for me is, do they have an appropriate procedure planned for parent complaints, parent involvement? Did you see any questions with respect to that?

CHASTAIN: We collect all of that once they have been approved. That all has to be board approved. While we may get samples or something like that in a petition, we really do wait for that final copy of that to make sure that it is compliant. But that is something that is required of all of our schools to have and that they have to post so that is something that we monitor through oversight.

VALDES: Okay. All right. That is all. Thank you so much.

CHASTAIN: No problem.

SPARKS: Okay. Trustee Williams has an additional question.

WILLIAMS: I have a follow up question to Trustee Valdes. Janelle, thank you for being here. The question was brought up by the good Trustee Valdes regarding this Education Code. I know that when we go back and forth, when we have staff findings, then you rebut. We always get these very, very complex situations. You know, here is in Education Code section 47605(c)(5)(A-O). I mean, that is really detailed. Could you help explain succinctly in plain English, why you don't think that this applies here?

RULEY: I can. Thank you. Good evening, Janelle Ruley with the Law Offices of Young, Minney and Corr. Very, very brief history, at the beginning of time for charter schools, there were no credential requirements. Teachers did not have to be credentialed. Fast forward 10 or so years, core or college prep teachers have to be credentialed, flexibility for everybody else. Now, 2019, all the flexibility is taken away. Meaning, anybody who is a teacher in a charter school has to be credentialed. There was a recognition that there are some teachers who are not credentialed, so there was a grandfathering period up to 2025.

However, the way the law was written, it just says, teachers in charter schools during 2019-20. It doesn't say teacher in a particular charter school. It doesn't say a teacher who teaches PE. There is no restrictions on it, so it is just any teacher in any charter school in 2019-20. I'm telling you what the statute says. I understand that there are entities and state agencies that have read other requirements on top of that. The real bottom line for all of you is that they are going to hire credentialed teachers. That is what you could rest on, and that staff is going to let you know if they do not.

SPARKS: Yeah.

RULEY: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: Thank you for making that clarification.

SPARKS: Thank you.

VALDES: Thank you.

SPARKS: I will just finish up with some comments. You can sit down. Yes. Just kind of echoing what many of the trustees have said. The A-Team is here. I have 100% confidence that you all are going to be wildly successful. I'm so proud of you for what you put together. Gary, I know you have lots of experience and I know your word is good. You say you are going to address any concerns. I have 100% confidence that you will do what needs to be done to make this school wildly successful. You have got the A-Team around you and that is impressive in and of itself. I'm hoping someone is going to make a motion.

BARKE: I will make a motion to approve them without conditions.

SPARKS: I will second it.

WILLIAMS: You are evil. You are evil. Okay. Did somebody already second it?

SPARKS: I seconded.

WILLIAMS: So you stole everything.

SPARKS: Oh, you can second it if you want. You can second it.

WILLIAMS: No. We have fun.

SPARKS: All right. All in favor?

BARKE, WILLIAMS, SPARKS, SHAW, VALDES: Aye.

BOYD: Which option?

SHAW: They are fighting over it.

SPARKS: One. Uno.

WILLIAMS: Option one.

BARKE: Option one.

BOYD: I'm just checking.

SPARKS: Uno.

SISAVATH: So, Mari and then Ken?

SPARKS: Mari, and actually, I second it.

SISAVATH: Hmmm?

SPARKS: Mari made the motion and I second it.

VALDES: No conditions.

SPARKS: I overrode Ken.

SHAW: Congratulations you guys.

VALDES: Congratulations you guys.

SPARKS: Congratulations. Okay, we will move on. Trustee Williams needed to leave for something that has suddenly come up. So we will move to board recommendations, item number 11, board action on the board-attorney contract.

VALDES: Congratulations, you guys.

BARKE: Congratulations guys. Yeah. Thank you all for coming.

SPARKS: Mr. Rolen.

ROLEN: I have that effect on a lot of people.

BARKE: Yeah. Everybody left.

SPARKS: I know.

BARKE: Almost.

ROLEN: Ladies and gentlemen of the Board. This item if you watch the news, you hear about the war in Ukraine, certain documents ending up at the wrong place, and inflation. This item was requested by my managing partner who asked all the partners to have our rates adjusted in conjunction with inflation. They simply put our current billable hour rates into the United States Bureau of Labor and Statistic's inflation calculator. The CPI inflation calculator uses the Consumer Price Index for all urban consumers, United States cities average series for all items, not seasonally adjusted. This data represents changes in the price of all goods and services purchased for consumption by urban households. They simply put the billable hour rate into this calculator. The numbers before you came out.

I wasn't picked on. You are not being picked on. This is simply a policy decision, and I am asking the Board to make a determination as to our value to the Board.

BARKE: I will make a motion to approve.

SPARKS: And I will second that. All in favor?

BARKE, SPARKS, SHAW, VALDES: Aye.

SPARKS: All right, passes 4-0. Thank you for all the amazing work you are doing for us, Mr. Rolén.

BARKE: Yes.

ROLEN: You are very welcome.

SPARKS: Well deserved. Game changing. Okay. We will move on then to—

VALDES: President Sparks?

SPARKS: Yes.

VALDES: I think everyone should know that Dr. Williams had an emergency and had to leave.

SPARKS: Yeah, I said that.

VALDES: And that is the reason—Oh, okay. Sorry.

SPARKS: Yeah. I said he had something suddenly come up. So moving on to number 12, board action on Board Policy 400-12. I will bring Mr. Rolén up to the podium again.

ROLEN: Thank you, President Sparks, members of the Board. This is a simple policy cleanup. We got some questions from staff concerning another charter school. We started to take a look at 404 and realized that perhaps there were some changes that AB 1505 implemented that may not be included in our policy. Accordingly, we tried to add some amendments that we believe are consistent with California law, are consistent with the intent of AB 1505, and consistent with the local flavor and spirit of this board of education while keeping charter schools accountable and petitioners accountable.

Let me point out some of the changes in that morass of red lines that you have before you. The primary changes are (a) documentation provided by authorizers. There is certain documentation in the code that is required by authorizers and that wasn't made clear in the policy. We thought that was important for a number of different reasons to be transparent about what this board is expecting to be brought before it in renewal and appeal packets. To, again, make it consistent with the purpose intent AB 1505. From the lawyer perspective, it creates a more complete record. If there is a more complete record from both petitioners and authorizers, the Board's decisions are more insulated. If there is a good record, there is always a better reason for whatever decision you may make so that is why we included that. Again, that is in the code.

Also, we added some important definitions that were not included in the code. These definitions were considered by the State Board of Education. They were debated, and they decided to not put the definitions in code or regulation and allow local authorizers to make these decisions for themselves. The primary changes we made were with regard to the term community and the term

fiscal impact. Community has often been defined in charter appeals, charter petitions, litigation as a geographic radius. Because a charter school can draw from a number of different geographic locations, they target a number of different communities, English language, you know, language immersion, or classical, whatever the case may be. We believe that a geographic radius doesn't necessarily, in all cases, fit the term community. So we are making it incumbent upon the petitioner to define community in the petition. That is a primary change.

The other change is fiscal impact. We have heard a lot of discussion about that here tonight. Fiscal impact was one of the primary changes in AB 1505. Authorizers can now take into account fiscal impact when deciding whether to grant or deny a petition or a renewal. That has always been traditionally looked at as a lack of ADA. The ADA that goes from the public school district to the charter. However, upon review of a lot of reports, hearing a lot of discussions here at the Board, there are a number of different ways to determine fiscal impact. There is formulas, there is calculations. I didn't go to the trouble of putting in a full formula for this calculation, but I can provide you with the report if necessary.

The 2021 Fordham Study Report found that charter school enrollment is either cost neutral or financially beneficial to local school districts. Oakland Unified School District's staff report, from my neck of the woods, found that there is a positive fiscal impact for Prop 39 fees collected by the district. There is also CDE documents that go into great detail about these formulas and that this could be a way to determine financial fiscal impact that isn't necessarily only loss of ADA.

In the policy, we summarized these components as positive components, such as strengthening communities' ability to provide a good education to all students, improving educational outcomes and how that relates to community improvement, revitalization, and economic impact. Compensatory, this is essentially the money that the local school district does not have to spend when the students go elsewhere. This is consideration of money that the school district would not have spent to educate students. You probably heard that somewhere before. These things just make sense. This has been discussed at this board and many others, but we just memorialize them in policy so everybody will know what our expectations may be and how we can calculate these things.

We defined some other terms. Substantially undermine, we defined as the district would be unable to operate. And duplicative, the charter school is the same as the public school. We know that there is sometimes an argument that the charter school is providing the same program. This breaks it down to determine what criterion are applied when making that determination. Now we think this is important to, again, let our authorizers know what we will be expecting. But there is also, I think, a byproduct, a sub benefit. There is a lot of districts in Orange County that do not have the horsepower that our staff has. They have to hire, god forbid, lawyers to figure this stuff out. This gives them a roadmap of what we are looking for.

To sum up, we just put this on the agenda because we think it should be passed as soon as possible because there is a lot of clients, districts throughout the state that are looking at their renewal policies right now. Because renewals will be coming due and we have more petitions coming before this board. For example, the 2024 renewals will come due as early as July. So we

may be seeing renewals in July, August, and September. This will give our authorizers, petitioners a chance to see what we are looking for during that period and it will give our staff a chance to implement this. With that, I will answer any questions that the Board may have.

SPARKS: Well, I just want to make a comment thanking you for your clear explanation of this and why it is valid and important. I think it is a game-changing, sound policy revision. I think it shows petitioners and authorizers alike what this board expects in our appeal and renewal packet. It goes really without saying, but I will say it anyway. The more information we have, the more insulated the Board will be for whatever decision that we may make. I will certainly be supporting this item. I think it is very important, so thank you for your work on that.

ROLEN: You are welcome.

BARKE: Yeah. I must admit, I looked at it a few days ago and I was quite overwhelmed. This morning with fresh eyes at 6:00 AM, I read through it and I think it's comprehensive. I think it clarifies a lot and I think it's awesome. I would like to make a motion to approve.

SPARKS: And I will second that.

SHAW: We do have a public speaker, right?

BARKE: Oh, do we?

SHAW: Madam President, if you would like, maybe we can call up Javier now?

SPARKS: Oh, okay. Yeah. I didn't realize we had a public speaker.

BARKE: Yeah.

SHAW: It is for this item.

SPARKS: I was just ready to go with the—yeah, seconding.

JAVIER: Good evening, everyone. It is on behalf our Orange County Board of Education, charter schools, 18 charter schools. I'm going to read on their behalf. Dear President Sparks, Vice President Shaw, Superintendent Mijares, and Board of Trustees, my name is Javier Ortuño. I'm the Orange County local representative for the California Charter School Association. On behalf of the undersigned, Orange County Board of Education authorized charter schools, CCSA supports proposed Orange County Board of Education Policy 400-12.

The California Charter School Association is a membership and professional organization serving the vast majority of the over 1,300 public charter schools in the state of California. I would like to thank this board for considering this policy change. Some of the important revisions include policy updates to come into alignment with recent changes to state law, free guidance to Orange County School districts and charter schools on what is needed in the event a charter school appeals a local school district's denial decision, definitions of fiscal impact and

community impact to clarify state law, clarity on how middle track renewals for charter schools will be considered. And on behalf of the 8,439, K-12 students and families that are being served at the 18 diverse charter school options that are authorized by Orange County Board Education and our members of our association, we urge you to support and pass this policy. Thank you.

SPARKS: Thank you.

SHAW: Thank you, Javier.

SPARKS: Thank you so much. All right.

SHAW: If I could just make a comment?

SPARKS: Yeah.

SHAW: I think you were spot on about taking away any ambiguity. We want to have the process as transparent and straightforward as possible. Thank you, Greg for all your hard work and I think really making a good example for, like you said, statewide, a good process here. Those are my comments.

SPARKS: Excellent. Any other comments? No?

VALDES: No comments.

SPARKS: Okay. I think we have a motion and a second, so we will move it forward. All in favor?

BARKE, SPARKS, SHAW, VALDES: Aye.

SPARKS: Passes 4-0. Thank you. All right. This brings us to item 13, proposed board policy revisions regarding parental rights. Trustee Valdes, do you want to take the lead on this?

VALDES: Thank you, Board members. Last month, I outlined what I believed to be my proposed board policy regarding parents' rights. I provided the Board a series of evidential examples as to why I think this policy is necessary, so I won't go through that here. There were some minor changes in paragraph one to the proposed policy. Simply taking out a reference to the local school districts and making the reference change to the Orange County Superintendent and the Orange County Board of Education. There have been no other changes to the proposal.

The blue markings may just be because that is how I sent it to Ms. Boyd when I made the changes, but those are not actual changes. They were all there last month, so I am asking the Board to pass this policy. I think it is good policy for Orange County. I think it is necessary. I think it is supported by the overwhelming amount of parents based on the polling I have seen, in excess of 70%. I think we should approve it without any further changes. Thank you.

SPARKS: Any other comments?

SHAW: Perhaps I could ask Mr. Rolen a question. I'm looking under number one, the last bullet. It was mentioned during public comments, questioning the legality of allowing—

ROLEN: The opt-out provision.

SHAW: The opt-out provision. Can you speak to that at all?

ROLEN: Yes, I can speak to that. I read the opt out provision to include sex education, as per the code. I did not read it to be so comprehensive as to allow children to opt out of history and English. That is the way I read the intent of the policy. The speaker was not incorrect about anything she cited, but that is just the way I read the policy to reference the opt-out provisions of the sexual education curriculum, not the entire curriculum.

SHAW: Perhaps I could make a friendly suggestion amendment? Trustee Valdes, would you be agreeable to any amendment yet there to make it clear it is sex ed that we are referring to? Was that your intent? I don't want to put words in your mouth, but if—?

ROLEN: Or you could add the term, as set forth in California law. It would just make it—

SHAW: As set forth in California law.

SPARKS: Yeah. That would be better.

BARKE: Okay. Yeah.

VALDES: I'm not opposed.

BARKE: Okay. Yeah.

SHAW: So I will make a friendly amendment to add the words—

SPARKS: As set forth in California law.

SHAW: Yeah. As set forth in California law.

VALDES: Where are we going to put that?

SHAW: Well, would it read best at the end of that sentence? Before it is presented to children—

SPARKS: Yeah.

ROLEN: As set forth in California law.

SHAW: As set forth in California law.

SPARKS: Yeah.

VALDES: It is fine with me.

SHAW: Okay.

SPARKS: Okay. Perfect.

ROLEN: Thank you.

SHAW: Thank you.

ROLEN: You are quite welcome.

SPARKS: Thank you.

VALDES: And that was my intention, by the way.

SPARKS: Yeah.

VALDES: I really didn't think someone would opt out of science.

SPARKS: Yeah. No, I appreciate it. I was going to bring up a similar thing. Trustee Barke, do you have any?

BARKE: I had the same exact question as Mr. Shaw.

SPARKS: Okay.

SHAW: Great minds think alike. Is that what you said?

BARKE: Indeed. Yes. Yes.

SPARKS: All right, then do we have a motion?

BARKE: I will make the motion to go ahead and approve it with the friendly amendment.

VALDES: Shouldn't I make that motion?

BARKE: Oh, go ahead. Go ahead.

SHAW: Yeah.

VALDES: I make the motion to approve with the friendly amendment.

SPARKS: Do we have a second?

BARKE: Does somebody else want a second? I don't want to steal anyone's thunder here. No? Alright, I will second that motion.

SPARKS: All in favor?

BARKE, SPARKS, SHAW, VALDES: Aye.

SPARKS: Okay. Passes 4-0 with the amendment. Okay. This brings us to item 14, board action to approve annual dues of \$6,600 to join CCBE, the County Board's Association. Trustee Barke, do you want to discuss this?

BARKE: Yes. I actually met with some of the executive team from CCBE a few weeks ago. They were out here for an executive committee and they talked to me about the resources that they provide. They know that initially, we didn't join them because we had to do it with CSBA. Now there is an opportunity, because actually the staff did do CSBA, so we can just carve out and do this portion for us. I really think the resources are worth it based on the discussions. I said something about, well, can you give me this handbook to give the other trustees to look at? And they said, "Well, no, you have to become a member and then we will give you the handbook." And I said, oh, got it.

Nina and I had a brief conversation about, I guess the—it is actually in July, so I'm going to check in with them and see if maybe we will approve it. Then if we could start it at July, or they will give us some kind of pro rate because we are coming in so late. But I do think that we will benefit from the resources. There is a governance meeting in March in Sacramento, so it is not far to travel.

They have their annual meeting in Monterey, again, not far. I do think there is a lot of benefits. Just talking to the couple members of the Executive Committee, one is in Marin County, the other is in Santa Barbara, very rural, just different perspectives. They loved hearing about some of the things I told them we were doing, so I just think it would benefit us. It is not a huge cost to join and I think the resources are worth it.

SPARKS: Okay. Thank you for the description and I appreciate your background homework on that. Any other questions?

BARKE: Okay, then I will make a motion to approve.

SPARKS: I will second it. All in favor?

BARKE, SPARKS, SHAW, VALDES: Aye.

SPARKS: Okay, passes 4-0.

BARKE: Okay. You want me to go ahead with the second part since it kind of tags along?

SPARKS: Yeah.

BARKE: Okay. So the second part was just to approve board member travel to the upcoming conference in Sacramento in March. I know it's not an expensive adventure. I know they are staying at like the Embassy Suites. It's not some crazy first class hotel. Airfare, if you book it 30 days out, it is very cost effective. I would like to ask for any board member, I would love to go. I'm just excited to really learn from these people across the state. I would encourage anybody else who would like to go that it is worth the time. It is not terribly far, and you don't really have to take time off work if that is a pro. Well, it's a Friday, Saturday, I believe. Just something to think about, so I would like to ask you guys to approve travel to the event in Sacramento.

SPARKS: Okay. Is that a motion?

BARKE: Yes, please.

SPARKS: All right, do I have a second?

VALDES: I just have a question. Didn't we approve like a fund for things like this already?

BOYD: There is a budget for travel, but you don't have blanket travel for this because you didn't have a membership in it. Now the way it's written, it's a blanket travel for any board member who wanted to attend. Once you all let us know, then we would be able to book the hotel and pay the registration.

BARKE: I think there is some deal if you book by this Friday or something, wasn't there a cut?

BOYD: There is an early bird registration by this Friday. If you all let Darou know by tomorrow if you plan to attend, then we can take advantage of early bird registration. If not, then we would pay the higher rate, which I think is a \$75 difference. It's not major.

BARKE: Well, you can sign me up, Darou. If they all agree to pass it, you can sign me up. I will make a motion to approve for Board travel.

SPARKS: I will second it. All in favor?

BARKE, SPARKS, SHAW, VALDES: Aye.

SPARKS: Okay, great. All right, now I will call Renee up to the podium for item 16 on Rancho Soñado.

HENDRICK: I'm very excited to show you the first look of the plans for Rancho Soñado, the rebuild of Ranchos Soñado. We had talked about, we worked with this architect firm. They call it visioneering. A couple of the principals come from Disney so that was their path. I will not do it as eloquently as they will, but I will walk you through some of that. They do everything with a story.

[Presentation is displayed.]

For those of you that may not be aware, this is kind of the geographic area where Rancho Soñado sits. It is off Santiago Canyon and it borders against Silverado Canyon and Tucker Wildlife. This is the property that was donated to us. It is 100 acres. This is the earmark of that, Rancho Soñado through our process we found that that translates to “the ranch that I dreamed of.” We actually didn't know that.

BARKE: Oh.

HENDRICK: It is providing a unique space for the local community to see the landscape of Orange County before human intervention. This is their plan for our master plan site, so you can see all the trails and everything. You can see the area in red. The red dots is our actual plan. We have an easement for the park driveway that is actually not on our property. We have an easement, though with the Irvine Company for that.

What we have asked is for them to give us a breakdown in stages because we weren't sure what the cost would be. We would want to be thoughtful, and what would that look like? The first thing is the grove. Currently, if you have not been at this site, it is right off the road. You have no turnout to get in, so that was one of the first things they talked about. As our students are coming up, they are super excited. They have been on a bus and they get off, and they are on the side of the road. They are saying really opening it with a way. This is kind of the look at—we only had a restroom in one of the buildings up there prior and some outhouses. So one of our first things is we need restrooms.

As soon as they would get off the bus, they would hike up the little hill. You could see this is a restroom. The building is a restroom. It holds four restrooms. They have tried to use sustainable items and everything. This one currently has a garden on it. Then using a lot of the natural earth and kind of making a walkway into the entrance.

SPARKS: How do you get to that garden?

HENDRICK: Well that is a good question.

BARKE: By helicopter.

HENDRICK: I think the question I had is, how do you sustain it? I don't do well unless they are silk, so I would be the wrong person to ask that. But this is what our team does, so I think they will figure it out.

SPARKS: Yeah.

HENDRICK: This is the plan of what it would look like. They will develop an actual circle way for the bus to come in off the street. Then the students would start their walk through that little entranceway. Then they are going to run up that path and that starts their experience. We had said, well, should the bus go up the road? The teachers all said, no, they need to run because they have been on the bus for a while. This is just part of their journey.

Some exciting stuff we learned through the process is, some of the native plants that were there, we do have somebody that may be willing to make a donation. Some of the arborists that we actually use for that area said he may be willing to donate some of the trees if we would do like a study with him. So that is some of the stuff the team is working on. Once you get up to the site, this would be the general parking for staff. If we had any community members coming up, it would look like this. So you can see, as soon as you come up the building is the restroom. But then the kids are coming up this little walkway. Then they go through the arch and they are starting their journey.

Restroom plan, gender neutral bathrooms. Then they are using kind of different trail sites. A lot of what the educators who use the site really wanted to see different focal points. This first one is called The Ridge and it is kind of overlooking the valley. This has some like steel beams, things like that. The Summit is another one. The other thing is our existing site wasn't really ADA accessible for most people. This full plan, except for that walkup, we can get motorized bikes or like vehicles for them to get up. But everything else, a person in a wheelchair or that needed handicap assistance would be able to enter. The way they have designed it, it will be a flat entry for them. That is very exciting for us.

You can kind of see the different maps of each place. This is called The Summit. This is The Lookout. This is one of the favorites by the educators. They really like this. It's building out, overlooking. All of these are teaching stations where they may be doing some form of an experiment with the student. Okay. Most of our roofs, we try to incorporate solar to use as part of their lesson also. This is the one of the cool ones we all like. This is called The Nest. It is kind of using concrete things to make this area where the students feel like they are kind of a bird or whatever that is. The Backcountry is another one. This will come right out of the hill, incorporating some of the local trees if possible to kind of build around that to give it that look. This is just another view of that.

This is where all the big stuff goes. Basecamp is what we call it. We know one of the requirements from the Fire Authority is going to be a large roundabout for firetrucks. Right? This incorporates that. Also, those little benches are rocks that are seats. So you could actually have a class right there. Then, moving to a fire pit with an amphitheater that you could use. It is a gas fire pit, so it is safe and zoned. But you could hold classes there. Also, if you had a community event, it would be a nice outdoor area large enough to have that. The small one on the right would be the lunch shelter.

Right now we don't have a formal lunch—well, they didn't have a formal lunch shelter. This would hold up to 150 students. This is kind of what it looks like from the air. The round building, I will give you a better view. That is going to be our multipurpose room and that would seat up to 120 students. The lower one is the amphitheater. The first, kind of square building you look at, that is the existing building that is left standing, believe it or not. We are not really sure how much work it will take to rebuild it, or would it be less expensive to replace it. So they have kind of drawn the same shape. Again, utilizing solar, and then the lunch shelters on the other side. This is just another view of the lunch shelter next to, they call it The Barn. That will house some offices and some more restrooms also. The roundabout for the firetruck.

Then this is the multipurpose room, which is pretty exciting. All that glass is actually extractable. Is that the right word? They actually will pull open so they can be completely open to the outside. It could house up to three separate classrooms, or you can combine it to make it one. See how it is built into the Earth using natural environments also. They work with a landscape architect for all of this, to do all natural plants, and also fire suppressing plants. This is the floor plan for that. The Ranch House floor plan. The Barn.

This is the pond. Building around the pond, the pond was completely destroyed from mud debris and everything else. That is one of the things we would really have to really look at to see expense-wise if we build it. I will tell you, most of the community members, this was their favorite part and a lot of our staff. It is hard to maintain and all those things, so I think programmatically they really have to look at that. That would be one of the things we would continue to look at. But they did a very nice design to include that. They do a lot of water testing, things like that. It would not be this big. That looks like a really big lake or something. To scale, it would be smaller than this. But it would be down from the multipurpose room. You would see the pond and then adding T2 stations there also.

This is The Overlook, which goes over The Summit. There actually was a waterfall a couple weeks ago when we had all the rain. Normally, I don't think I have ever seen a waterfall out there. One of the things they did talk about is, we talked about shade structures where we have the solar and the permanent ones. But they said most of them should be placed with, I can't even say the word now, polypropylene I believe is the word they used. During a fire, it would just melt and it wouldn't be flammable. They looked at all those types of things, and they would have to be replaced every couple of years. We do know that, but that would be more beneficial for the environment.

This is Creekside. This is probably one of our most traveled areas for students, so replacing some of the trails with wood, iron, and things to make it more accessible. That would kind of be a view of the site overall, what it looks like. Then they have it kind of mapped out, the different sites. Students normally will split up, go to different ones, and circle back around. They may only hit two or three. Our plan is that, if approved and built, we would look at maybe being able to open it to the community on the weekends maybe with donations or something like that. Because currently, it hasn't really been opened for that. So that is our plan.

SPARKS: Beautiful. Very nice. Okay. Thank you. You may as well stay up there, right?

HENDRICK: Sure.

SPARKS: For item 17.

HENDRICK: Yes.

SPARKS: The budget.

HENDRICK: Yes. We hired an architect, they would like to know a dollar amount. We are like, we have no idea. How much is this going to cost? We asked in phases. What we are asking you

to approve at this point is up to \$15 million. The funds for that would come from, some from insurance funds that we would receive. We also have some funding in our redevelopment plan so that is money that came from the redevelopment agencies. It has to specifically be used for facilities that accommodate the county as a whole, so we feel that would be a good point. We will try to utilize some of our federal Covid funds depending on the timing. That would make up that 15.

We hope that would be the high end. But I will tell you it's very early in the planning. One of the things that came up today was, if we think the Fire Authority is going to require us to have a fire hydrant up by the buildings. I said, okay, well that is going to be probably about \$250,000. Those type of things could come up. We tried to build some of that. I also think that would be if we did all the phases that we have shown. I'm not sure that we will do all of them now. We may do half now.

At this point, what we are asking for is up to that \$15 million. But we could come back at another time and give you an update. But just so we had an area with the architect to say, this is what we can do. Right now, I'm like, I don't know, which they didn't feel gave them very good direction by the way.

SPARKS: Yeah. Did they indicate this \$15 million would—I mean, do you think half of it could be done with that amount of money?

HENDRICK: Well, what they gave me—

SPARKS: Yeah.

HENDRICK: It's \$14,900,000 and some thousand. I'm not sure that built in enough for all the contingencies we may have. But that could also give us room to scale back. I feel like that is a very good number to do most of it.

SPARKS: Okay.

HENDRICK: That did include the pond restoration also.

SPARKS: Okay.

HENDRICK: That is working with the landscape architect and all of those things.

SPARKS: Yeah. You certainly don't want to put \$15 million to something and then you have an eighth of the project done.

HENDRICK: Right. No.

SPARKS: Then you can't do anything with it.

HENDRICK: The \$15 million on their plan, should be the majority of it.

SPARKS: Okay.

HENDRICK: Okay.

BOYD: I think it's important for the Board to understand too, we would phase this project. The approval of the money would not all be expended or we would not have the architect build into that budget. But it at least gives us the opportunity to ask them to do the scope. We have got tentative design and then we can make determinations. We will continue to have dialogue with the Board with regards to the phases that would be worked on first. Then also we want to get students back up to Rancho Soñado sooner than later. If we can phase this where we have some areas completed so that students can start taking advantage of the environment up in the hillside again, then we want to be able to do that. We don't want to scope it where we are trying to do the full scope of design. Then it is five years later before we have anybody who can go up there. I think it's important to make sure that there is clarity there.

SPARKS: Yeah. Well I think we ask a lot of our charter schools to line item every single detail. I think we want this to move forward and we want to support it. But I think we need to know what the phases are and what the numbers are next to the phases.

HENDRICK: We could do that.

SPARKS: More specificity, I think.

VALDES: Fifteen million is a lot.

SPARKS: Yeah. Yeah.

HENDRICK: Yeah. Well, you would think so, but—

SPARKS: Yeah.

HENDRICK: We can do that, but we have to start the process to go through the architectural plans.

SPARKS: Yes.

HENDRICK: Before I can get more definite costs. I'm just looking for authority to go up to, and then we can come back with the actual plans.

BARKE: Makes sense.

HENDRICK: Yes.

VALDES: Renee, can you tell me what kind of classes are going to be held up there?

HENDRICK: Okay. We have what they call Inside the Outdoors program. Right? What they do, the kids come up. They are usually fourth-sixth graders. They are coming up and they are learning about the water tables. They are learning about different ecosystems. We could share that curriculum. We have a lot on our website. Normally, the schools throughout Orange County and actually even outside of Orange County, would normally send their fourth-sixth graders to this for a day. There is just a whole bunch of different environmental—

One of the plans with this is that, since we have this opportunity, this is a much bigger site than what we had in the past, the capacity. They would like to also increase the age span and maybe offer some CTE for fire ecology for high schoolers, which we didn't really have that opportunity before. The program is putting together even more things that we could offer. But it kind of goes back to the phasing, like Ms. Boyd said. We would want to make sure that we had everything done. But (inaudible) they had a pretty robust program. They offer the same programs right now in different OC parks.

BOYD: I think it's also important that this board wasn't here at the time. But when this property was deeded to us, it was with the understanding that we would hold title to the deed as long as we were providing environmental field study programs to students throughout the county. So it is imperative that there are a number of entities that were also trying to get their hands on this property. We don't want to be in violation, even though there was a fire and there is some grace, we want to make sure that we are meeting the term so no one can come back and challenge our use of the property.

BARKE: Makes sense.

SHAW: Can you remind me how much we got from insurance? Do you know that number?

HENDRICK: About \$2 million.

SHAW: Okay.

HENDRICK: Which we have already spent, some of it.

SHAW: It is long gone.

HENDRICK: Well, for the cleanup, right. Because we had some major hazards. If you remember, we only had that one small building. We had a caretaker's house. Then we had another office space, is all we had there. They insured for the property that we had. Normally, for insurance you can only rebuild what you had. We said we can't do that because that doesn't fit our program, so this is what our trade-off is. I'm still arguing over a few pieces to get a little bit more money for our underground septic tanks and stuff like that, but it's probably not going to be much more.

VALDES: Renee, is the bid that you got from an architect or a builder?

HENDRICK: We had paid for a feasibility study, so they won't go into the full bid until they do the architectural plans. Then we would have to go through a public works bid and that would be an open bid. It is very detailed. Then we would have exact dollars. But I needed to give a framework for them to work in. Because if you came back and said, no, we only want to do \$5 million. That would cut the scope back and we would only do that scope at that time.

At this point, this is what they are saying if we did everything. That is what we are trying to get the authority to know. We can come back when we have a detailed plan.

VALDES: How many people in the Department have vetted this, do you think? That weighs heavily on me. I mean, this is \$15 million.

HENDRICK: We have had a huge committee and we actually had community involvement also. We had at that first thing, Base Camp. We brought in all of our team, the people who actually worked in that program who have hands on, the administrators from Educational Services, myself, a lot of my team, the Facilities team. We had members from Anaheim Elementary School District because they were our largest client. We had members from Inside the Outdoors Foundation, so there is probably about 25 or 30 who have gone through this whole process. Then once they had the additional plans, the group also has looked at what would be their priorities and what does that look like.

As far as the cost estimates, we have just seen those in the last few days. I will tell you based on the school that we just built, it does seem very reasonable and they are trying to use very natural elements. We have the road that has to be redone. That is about \$400,000. But if you saw the earth that you have to move and repave, some of that is factored in there. Costs for a building in a public works bid, you have to pay prevailing wage and those things. The costs are going to be higher than a private entity.

VALDES: You said on the weekends the public could use this. You are opening that up?

HENDRICK: That was one of the questions that the Board had. That was the thing, could the community do that? We never had that facility before because we didn't really have restrooms that the public could use. That is an option in the future. We would have to look at how do you staff it? How do you pay for it? Those type of things before we could do that. But with that goal in mind, developing something that could be used for educational purposes.

VALDES: But if the community used it, it would be more like a park, right?

HENDRICK: Right. But it's kind of like if you have been to the Irvine Zoo, you can go and pay \$1 to help for upkeep. That is something that you could do with a donation to help pay for the upkeep.

BARKE: You also mentioned about accessing some federal Covid funds. How much of that do you think we would be able to use?

HENDRICK: It's going to depend on the timeframe. Right now, I think about \$4 million.

SHAW: Renee, I may not go down in history for much, but I will go down as the final chairman of the La Habra Redevelopment Agency.

HENDRICK: There you go.

SHAW: You kind of intrigued me on that.

HENDRICK: Well, thank you for our little sliver that we got.

SHAW: Yes. Yeah. You are welcome, I think. How much did we get out of the dissolution of redevelopment agencies?

HENDRICK: We still are getting proceeds every year, so that fund is actually built up over the last 10 years. We get a sliver of every redevelopment agency in the county.

SHAW: Do we know how much about? Could you ballpark how much?

HENDRICK: It's about—actually, off the top of my head, I don't know.

SHAW: But you said those funds have to be used for something that is a benefit countywide.

HENDRICK: As a countywide.

SHAW: Besides this, do we have very many opportunities? That is what I was—

HENDRICK: I think any of our facilities that we use for our personal schools that have kids from all over, we can say that.

SHAW: I see.

HENDRICK: But it does limit it. Some of the redevelopments had very specific guidelines. I think there is one in Anaheim that can only be used for a school in Anaheim. Some of those proceeds we used for Harbor Learning Center.

SHAW: Okay.

HENDRICK: But the majority, it has to be a countywide benefit if you are going to spread those. We don't have a ton of things that we can use it on, so I think this would be a great thing to do that.

VALDES: We would have educators on site all five weekdays, right? With rotating kids from—

HENDRICK: Yeah. I'm not sure if they would be there all five days. It would depend on what their schedule is. They book them ahead of time through school districts. People sign up for them.

BOYD: We currently have a program. It is called Inside the Outdoors, so we already have staff. Then we hire environmental field study folks. They are naturalists and they come in seasonally. They are not full-time employees. In the spring, where we seem to have more field trips, than we are hiring more teams of folks to come in and so forth. Right now, they do the wetlands. They are all over. We do some things in the parks because Rancho Soñado has not been operational. Right now, we are serving districts that are asking for field study programs. Some we are going into classrooms and doing things, and then others we are using area parks. In Anaheim, they use a lot of the area parks. They teach them about the leaves and the trees.

Then they bring in other items from different areas. We have animals. I use the term road kill, from the standpoint that they stuffed them. These kids have not seen raccoons, squirrels, birds of prey, and different types of birds of prey. They are giving them a type of education that, instead of it being in books, that they actually have real life experiences. That is the beauty of Rancho Soñado.

I think the other thing, even though we didn't make it available to the full county community, we were starting to offer programs where our employees could bring their children, or districts, some of the folks would bring their children and they would have Stargazer Night. They would bring folks up and then they would have an opportunity. They would teach them about the stars.

VALDES: That would be a cool class.

BOYD: Right, exactly. We were just moving into—

VALDES: Telescopes, that would be really cool. I would go to that.

HENDRICK: Yeah. The other thing is we did work with community partners. For example, Boeing had done a program engineering the shade structures with our students from ACCESS, actually built shade structures. So that was their community project. Disney has done that, rebuilding trails. I know even from my own division, we have had multiple staff development days where we cleared brush, painted, and did all kinds of cleanup. My team, we are all accountants and inside all day. They thought that was the best experience ever and it helped our program and our kids. I think that we feel this is an opportunity to expand our program beyond what it has been, also by using different aged brands. You know, just bringing the solar in, allows them to teach about solar energy, to the caption of those type of things. I do think it will be exciting.

VALDES: Is it open to all the kids from all the local schools? Who are the kids that are eligible to come here?

HENDRICK: It would have to be any school district that signs up. Their school is really signing up to bring them and they are transporting them there.

VALDES: But there is no cost to the local school district?

HENDRICK: They are paying a fee for this. Yes.

VALDES: Oh, they are paying a fee?

HENDRICK: They are paying a fee.

VALDES: Okay.

HENDRICK: Yes.

VALDES: Wow.

BOYD: That is what pays the salaries of the individuals, so it's a cost-neutral program. So it's not where—

VALDES: Oh, cost neutral?

HENDRICK: I don't know if I would agree with that statement, but—

BOYD: Well, she is the finance person.

SPARKS: Yeah.

BOYD: But I would say, the way that they try to scope it is so that it would be cost neutral. Because recognizing we are a nonprofit, it is not like we are trying to make a profit.

HENDRICK: Right.

SPARKS: Right.

VALDES: Right. Right. Right.

HENDRICK: Right.

SPARKS: Well, I love the fire pit. You could do s'mores and stargazing.

HENDRICK: Well, they actually did talk about singing and stuff like that.

VALDES: It would be really cool.

HENDRICK, SPARKS: Yeah.

VALDES: I love the cost neutral part, too.

HENDRICK: Yeah, I like that part too. Somebody had said, we could have like weddings and stuff, but it is not for that. It has to be for educational purposes only.

SPARKS: Yeah.

HENDRICK: Okay.

SPARKS: Okay. So do we do anything?

BARKE: I think we make a motion to approve up the \$15 million budget.

SHAW: Up to.

BARKE: Up to \$15 million and then once we see what they are coming up with, we can decide, yes, we are going to stay with it or scale back.

SPARKS: Okay.

BARKE: I'm fine with making a motion to approve up to \$15 million.

SPARKS: Okay. All right, I will second it. All in favor?

BARKE, SPARKS, SHAW, VALDES: Aye.

SPARKS: All right.

VALDES: I trust you, Renee.

HENDRICK: Thank you.

SPARKS: We want to see the specificity. Okay. Then you may as well stay up there for the real property delegation of authority.

HENDRICK: Yes. So what we have done in the past—well, we don't have a lot of real property that we own, actually. Our last project was Harbor Learning Center North and the school that we built, so there are a lot of applications' fees that somebody from the organization needs to sign. Since the real property is the Board's purview, instead of trying to bring each item, in the past, you have delegated that authority to myself or the Deputy to do that.

BOYD: We are recommending that you authorize and delegate that authority to Renee.

HENDRICK: You liked how she did that? Yeah.

SPARKS: Nice. Was it your item? Okay. All right. Do we make a motion or what do we need?

BOYD: Yes.

SPARKS: All right. I will make a motion to do that.

BARKE: I will second.

SPARKS: All in favor?

BARKE, SPARKS, SHAW, VALDES: Aye.

SPARKS: All right. Thank you. More work for Renee. Okay. Thank you. All right. That brings us to information items. Do we have any announcements from the Deputy Superintendent and/or Superintendent?

BOYD: Let me see. Next meeting, March 1, 5 o'clock. Submission deadline is February 15, just letting you know. National History Day is Saturday, March 11. I'm sorry. Darou will be sending out invitations we have received from our Ed. Services. If you recall, annually, we have National History Day that is on site here, an opportunity for you all to participate and join. They also offer guided tours with regards to the student work and so forth, early in the morning. If you all are interested in that, then just respond to the invitation that Darou is going to give you.

We also have Renee who is going to give you an Esplanade quarterly report. Inside your red folders, I believe we have already covered those items. I don't need to make mention of those. If there is anything else that the Board needs, then please contact Darou or myself. Renee?

HENDRICK: Yeah, just an update for Esplanade. This is through the second quarter, and so we are on target. Our revenue, we are about halfway there on our revenue. We do believe that we will meet those guidelines. Then our expenditures look like we are trending below our budget. We haven't really had any large tenants, except for our own. We are renovating some offices for our self, so they don't actually go into this budget. We should be on target.

Our occupancy has dropped to 96% because we did have a couple vacancies. It is up again to 97%. On the COP that we have, our outstanding payment is \$8,600,000, so we are close to having that paid off. Thank you to the action the Board had done previously to fix that rate at 2.84%. We are on track with this project.

SPARKS: Thank you. Perfect. Anything else?

BOYD: No.

SPARKS: No. Okay. We do have a legislative update. Mr. Rolan?

ROLEN: Thank you. In your red folder, there is a report from David Turch and Associates. As you recall some months ago, David Turch flew out from D.C. and addressed the Board, as to the services they could provide as a federal lobbyist. Since then, the president and I have had weekly meetings with DTA and they have explained the legislative environment, as it were and the opportunities for the Board.

In your folder, there is a report including a breakdown about the federal budget, the election of the speaker, funding notices, charter school resources, the congressional calendar, and congressional research. I don't believe it's necessary for me to read for public consumption the information on the budget and the election of speaker because we have seen that at nauseum. But

if it is the will of the Board, I can read the report on the funding notices and other resources so that everybody can know the progress that we are making.

SPARKS: I think I would like for people to know the progress that we have made. We have worked pretty hard on this.

ROLEN: For the six of you that are left, on October 7, David Turch and Associates sent the Orange County Board of Education a grant notice for the United States Department of Energy Renew America's Schools program. This funding opportunity for grants related to energy improvements at public school facilities. On January 7, DTA forwarded to the Board of Education a funding notice for the New School's Venture Fund on new schools. On January 26, we sent the Board a DOJ Bureau of Justice Assistance grant notice on improving adult and youth crises, stabilization, and community reentry programs. Just for everybody's edification, what we do is we meet and determine the best way to allocate resources, the most obtainable grants, the most useful grants, and then we target those grants using our office in conjunction with David Turch and Associates.

Charter school resources, David Turch and Associates has been researching associations, private foundations, and government sources to find entities that may impact issues on the national scene and provide funding opportunities for charter schools.

The congressional calendar, David Turch and Associates has forwarded to us a tentative calendar for the House on December 8, 2022. We sent the Senate calendar and a combined calendar on January 13. These calendars show when Congress will be in Washington, D.C. for useful planning purposes. If there is a meeting we need to have, we have to coordinate it with the Congressional calendars. That is why they sent those notices.

Congressional Research, DTA has been researching past participation and directed funding requests for Orange County congressional delegation and Senators. Congressionally Directed Spending is what the Senate calls earmarks now. Community Project Funding is what the House calls them now.

In the past, four members of the delegation participated in requesting funds. Two members did not. Both Senators have requested funds in the past. David Turch and Associates is closely monitoring the issue and is ready to request funds if directed to by the Board. We submitted to the Orange County Board of Education an email which contained the summary from Senator Feinstein's staff informing entities to prepare for congressionally directed spending. David Turch and Associates will shortly give the Board a summary of questions that will likely be needed to answer for project submission.

Again, this is what they do. They get ahead of these issues. If there is a form we have to fill out, a request we have to have to make, a meeting we have to have, we will know ahead of time. In light of the late hour and the annoying tone of my voice, that is the report. Is there is any questions?

SPARKS: Thank you. I think it gives people an idea of kind of what we have been wrapping our heads around and sort of aligning what our priorities are as a board, with ways that they can help us achieve those priorities.

ROLEN: We are going to try to do monthly notices like this. It just took me a little while to get caught up. Thanks.

SPARKS: Thank you. Thank you. Perfect. Okay. Any committee reports or board member comments? No?

SHAW: I do have one. Okay. I wanted to mention I was able to spend a few hours a few days ago with the superintendent of the Buena Park Elementary School District, Dr. Ramon Miramontes. Dr. Miramontes drove me around to several of their school sites and was kind of detailing the work they had done. They, like many districts, had the issue of declining enrollment. What they did, I'm going to try to remember this. They had six elementary schools K-6 and then one junior high that was 7-8. They decided to make that five elementary schools that were K-5 and then make one of those schools have two middle schools. Then it's 6, 7, 8, and that way they kind of rebalanced themselves and didn't have to close any schools. That was kind of innovative.

He just showed me around. He was very energetic, and I was appreciative to learn about that district. But the reason I'm bringing this up, in my tour there of the district, he mentioned they had had an unexpected death of a teacher just a few weeks back, I guess. If it's appropriate, I wanted to adjourn in memory of Jeanette Solomon. She was a teacher. Mrs. Solomon was hired as a classroom teacher in 1999, serving students at Whitaker Elementary. At the time of her passing she was the academy teacher at Whitaker School. Mrs. Solomon also made a positive and lasting impact at Pendleton School, where she recently served as an administrative intern and program specialist.

Where this really came up was Dr. Miramontes was mentioning the Crisis Response Network that the County Department offers. He was very appreciative of the support that they received during this horrible time for their district. Obviously, specifically at the sites where Mrs. Solomon was working, Whitaker and Pendleton. There is support animals and other things when they are telling the kids that their teacher is dead. They had lots of staff and support there to comfort and assist. I wanted to pass along their appreciation and thank the Department staff for helping out with that crisis.

SPARKS: Thank you.

BARKE: I forgot to mention too. I'm hearing about a great superintendent. I went to the Garden Grove State of the City and just an amazing—Gabriela Mafi, she just does such a great job. To hear some students come up, one gentleman, I can't remember his name. But full ride to Harvard, and he is somebody that Gabriela actually personally mentored. She personally mentored students that want to be mentored. Then they did a lunar celebration and it was quite an event. There were hundreds and hundreds of people there. A lot of dignitaries were there. Of course,

board members like Teri Rocco. Just impressive to see what that district is doing. It is a huge district. They really do a great job.

SPARKS: I will just finish up by mentioning that National School Choice Week was last week, the week of January 24. So just throwing a shout out for that, recognizing that. Then I just want to thank all of you for coming and sticking around, especially for you guys keeping us safe here. Really, thank you every time for coming here and hanging with us through all of our items. We really appreciate it. Thanks to the Media staff as well. We appreciate what you do to keep our voices on the mic and everything else. Thank you all for your help, and I will adjourn the meeting at this point. Thank you.