

**Transcript of the April 3, 2024, Orange County Board of Education Meeting**

**SHAW:** Good afternoon, everyone. I would like to call the regular meeting of the Orange County Board of Education to order. Darou, will you please call roll?

**SISAVATH:** Trustee Barke?

**BARKE:** Here.

**SISAVATH:** Trustee Williams?

**WILLIAMS:** Here.

**SISAVATH:** Trustee Shaw?

**SHAW:** Here.

**SISAVATH:** Trustee Sparks?

**SPARKS:** Here.

**SISAVATH:** Trustee Valdes?

**VALDES:** Here.

**SHAW:** Thank you. Do I have a motion to approve the agenda for the meeting?

**BARKE:** So moved.

**SPARKS:** Second.

**SHAW:** Okay. All in favor?

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

**SHAW:** Any opposed? Passes unanimously. We will go to the approval of the Minutes for the regular meeting of March 6, 2024.

**BARKE:** So moved.

**SPARKS:** Second.

**SHAW:** Okay. All in favor?

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

**SHAW:** Wonderful. We will go to the budget study session, David Giordano. Giordano, how is that? A little bit better? Giordano.

**BARKE:** I always want pizza when I hear your name.

**GIORDANO:** There is one in Chicago, right?

**BARKE:** Yes. That is my favorite, Giordano's in Chicago. Oh my gosh.

**GIORDANO:** I have heard that was good.

**SPARKS:** Yeah, it is good. Good stuff.

**BARKE:** Deelish.

**SHAW:** Oh, thank you.

**HENDRICK:** Unless you guys remember yours from last time.

**BARKE:** Thank you.

**GIORDANO:** All right, well thank you and good afternoon, President Shaw, members of the board. Tonight, we have our budget study session, which of course begins preparations for budget development for the upcoming fiscal year 24-25. We provided each of you a copy of our 23-24 Second Interim Budget Book. If you could keep that handy, I would like to just walk you through some of the key information that is included in that report as we begin the budget study session. Included in the first several pages of the Budget Book, pages B2 - B27, it is a detailed narrative with graphics that highlights the key historical information regarding the Department's operating budget. The information includes details regarding the Department's federal, state, and local revenue sources, as well as key expenditure data. Also included is a list of any budget changes that were in excess of \$25,000; that is since the board approved the budget back in December.

Part one, or tab number one, includes some of the key planning factors that we used when we put the Second Interim Budget Book together. Tab two highlights the key changes between the First Interim and the Second Interim Financial Reports in a narrative format. Tab three highlights the major object code variances between the First and Second Interim Financial Reports. Tab four summarize the Department's adopted first interim, second interim, general fund budgets on the state required Form 01, and also included in there is a variance column that shows you the differences between the first and the second interim budgets. Tab five provides a summary of the Department's multi-year projection for the current, and then also the two subsequent years. And of course, that is required by the state of California.

Tab six provides the state required criteria and standards form, which includes a trend analysis of budgetary information. Tab seven reflects the Department's average daily attendance, and this is on the state required Form A. Tab eight provides a listing of all the Department's funds, and you

will notice it is in summary format. It has on their total revenues, total expenditures, and fund balance for each of the Department's funds. Then, tab nine or, Form 10, reflects the North Orange County SELPA pass through fund, which is used to account for the SELPA's financial activities and highlights key revenue and expenditure data for the SELPA-member districts.

Moving on, this is tab 10 or Form 12. This is used to account for the Department's child development programs. Tab 11, or Form 14, this is used to account for our Department's facility needs, maintenance needs, which include major facility repairs and also major facility system replacements. Tab 12, or Form 17, this is a special reserve fund that is used for non-capital facility related projects. Tab 13, or Form 35, this is the county school facilities fund that is used to count for state school facility apportionments, and of course the construction projects that go along with that funding. Tab 14, or Form 40, this is a special reserve fund that is used to account for capital outlay projects related to our Esplanade property. Tab 15, or Form 56, this is used to account for debt service activities for the loan on our Esplanade property. Tab 16, or Form 67, this is used to account for self-insurance activities on our Delta Dental Program.

Tab 17, this is a listing of all of our entitlement's, contracts, and grants, and of course we posted all that information on our website as well. Tab 18, this provides information on our holding account. This is object code 4399, and this is used to temporarily account for expenditures until the final project budgets have been determined. Then, tab 19 provides detailed information on all the COVID-19 relief funding. These are the one-time, federal and state dollars along with their allowable uses. Then lastly, tab 20, that contains all the other required state forms, such as the Indirect Cost Rate Form and also the Cashflow Form. This slide just highlights the key components of the state's standardized account code structure. Of course, the two-digit fund and then the four-digit object code numbers are defined by the state of California. Those are the two fields that the board is used to seeing when you take a look at our standardized account code structure's financial reports.

However, there are a total of eight other state and locally defined fields that are used behind each of those financial transactions. These fields include the following. First, we have the four-digit resource code. This identifies federal, state, and local revenue sources that have specific restrictions on how those dollars can be spent, an example would be our Title I program. We have the one-digit project year field, and this identifies projects whose reporting year is different from the fiscal year. We have the four-digit goal field, and this identifies specific instructional goals and objectives, such as regular ed, alternative ed, and special ed. The four-digit function code field, this identifies detailed activities or services performed for each goal and objective, such as instruction, instructional supervision, and then pupil related services. We also have the three-digit school field, and this identifies schools with a unique CDS code, such as our Juvenile Court Schools and our Special Schools' programs. The four-digit manager code field, this identifies the respective manager that is assigned responsibility over a particular budget. The four-digit cost center field, and this includes the department that uses to track locally defined projects and programs. Then lastly, we have the three-digit site code field, and we use this to track our major programs, such as our ACCESS program and our Special Schools' programs.

Next, we are just going to provide a quick overview of the current economic outlook, and this is based on UCLA's December forecast. We know the university is forecasting that headline

inflation will fall to about 2.7% in 2024. Although they are not forecasting a recession in the near term, they are forecasting three quarters of slow growth of around 1% before increasing to 2.5% growth with the final quarter of 2024. The university is also forecasting interest rate cuts this year. Currently, the effective federal funds rate stands at 5.25 to 5.5% and is expected to drop to about 4.8% by the end of 2024. Fortunately, the employment rate in the U.S. still remains really strong. The U.S. unemployment rate is at approximately 3.9%. That is as of month-end February. However, when you look at California's unemployment rate, it is sitting at 5.3% as of month-end February, which is right now the highest in the nation.

Here is a quick review of some of the key highlights contained in the Governor's January budget proposal for next fiscal year. Of course this proposal again represents just the start of the budget cycle for fiscal year '25. First, the Governor is estimating a state budget shortfall of \$37.9 billion for next year. Again, this is largely due to those tax collections coming in well below estimates for last year, 22-23, which were not known at the time the state developed the budget for the current year. And of course, this again is directly related to that November tax extension. Of course, this is going to have a major impact on the state's operating budget in the coming year. The good news is the Governor's proposal for next year aims to protect education funding from that significant drop in the Prop 98 Guarantee due to those lower tax collections.

The Governor's plan also includes a series of budget balancing measures, including drawing down \$13.1 billion in state general fund reserves and another \$5.7 billion from the state's Prop 98 Reserve Account, along with several other budget balancing measures including proposed borrowing, funding reductions in the non-Prop 98 side of the budget, funding delays, deferrals, and then of course the use of more optimistic revenue assumptions. We are going to talk about those assumptions here in a moment. Here is a look at the Governor's "Big Three" tax Revenue Estimates. This is as compared to the LAO's office estimates, and this is for fiscal years 22-23 through the budget year 24-25. Again, as you can see from this chart, the Governor is estimating personal income tax collections to come in higher by \$9.1 billion in the current year, that is 23-24, and then \$1.8 billion higher in the budget year 24-25.

Then, on a similar note, the Governor is estimating sales and use tax collections to come in higher by \$1.6 billion in the current year and \$2.3 billion higher in the budget year. Additionally, the Governor's corporate tax estimates are about \$400 million higher than the LAO's office estimates. In total, the Governor's "Big Three" tax revenue estimates are roughly \$15.2 billion higher than the LAO's office, which again poses a significant risk for the May Revision if those revenues don't come in as projected. Unfortunately, state revenues are trending right now about \$5.6 billion below the estimates contained in the Governor's January budget proposal, and that is through February-end of this year. We should receive an update on state revenue collections for the month of March here in the next few days.

This chart just highlights the impact of the Governor's revised revenue estimates on the Prop 98 Minimum Funding Guarantee for schools. Again, due to those lower revenue estimates, that guarantee has been revised down since budget adoption by \$9.1 billion for last year. That is 22-23, and then \$2.7 billion for the current year 23-24 for a combined downward adjustment of nearly \$12 billion over those two fiscal years. Here is just a look at the state's Prop 98 reserve account. As you can see from this slide, the Governor is proposing to withdraw roughly \$5.7

billion in 23-24 and 24-25 combined. This would leave roughly \$3.8 billion in the state's Prop 98 reserve account at the end of the budget year. Again, the good news is really what is not in the education budget. Despite that significant drop in the Prop 98 guarantee, for last year, 22-23, the Governor is not proposing any cuts to overall Prop 98 funding, and no deferred payments to schools at least at this point. Additionally, the Governor is not proposing to sweep any of the unallocated program funds.

Here is just a quick recap of some of the assumptions that we used to build our Second Interim Financial Report, and then you can see here we have included the current year 23-24, also the two subsequent years. If you are to look at the salary accounts in our Budget Book, you would see the increased cost reflected for the negotiated settlements with our certificated and our classified bargaining groups. You would also see the increased cost reflected for step and column included in there. Then if you were to drill down and take a look at the statutory lines, you would see the increased costs reflected for CalSTRs and CalPERS pensions.

Then on the health and welfare benefit lines, you would see the increased premiums for healthcare costs that are projected for the coming year. Then for 24-25, you can see that statutory COLA, it is projected at 0.76%. We heard recently that that number will come in, it is expected to come in a little higher, in the 0.8% range. But, definitely not enough to cover our operating expenses in the coming year, those increased costs. Average daily attendance is up a little bit over the prior year, about 130 students. It is projected to come in this year at 4,608 students, and then you can see its projected to increase slightly each of the next two years. LCFF funding projections for 23-24 projected at \$108.5 million, and then in 24-25 you can see a projected decrease. It is about \$1.64 million, and that is due to the ADA losses that we experienced during the pandemic, partially offset by that 0.76% cost of living adjustment. Then in 24-25, you can see LCFF funding increases again to just over \$109.5 million.

Tuition for our ACCESS and Special Schools in the current year, budget at \$43.5 million and then is expected to increase slightly each in the next couple of years. Here is a look at the combined multi-year projection. Again, this is just in summary format. If you were to take a look at our Budget Book, I believe it is under tab four. It is a little bit more detailed version of this same report. But if you look at the current year, 23-24, and again, this includes both unrestricted and restricted operating accounts, all of our categorical programs as well. For 23-24, we are projected to close out the year in very good financial position heading into, again, what looks to be a really difficult year next year, in 24-25, as well as 25-26 for the state of California.

When you look at 24-25, we have got surplus, a small surplus projected of just over \$2.2 million, and that is as we spend down all that one-time state and federal COVID-19 relief funding. Then in 25-26 you can see it increases slightly to just over \$5.1 million. Here is a look at some of the key factors that are impacting our multi-year projection as we move forward. We know the CalSTRS employer contribution rates are forecast to remain steady at 19.1% for the current year, 23-24, and the budget year 24-25. That is based on the latest information that we have available from CalSTRS. As you can see from this chart, since implementation of the LCFF back in 2013-14, the CalSTRS employer contribution rate has increased from 8.25% to 19.1%. Of course this places a tremendous strain on school district operating budgets. Prior to implementation of the LCFF, the rate had remained steady at 8.25% since 1986.

Here is a look at the CalPERS employer contribution rate for the current year, 23-24, as well as the rate projections for the next five years. For 23-24, the CalPERS employer rate is set at 26.68% and then is expected to increase to 27.8% in 24-25; 28.5% in 25-26; 28.9% in 26-27, and then 30.3% in 27-28 before dropping slightly to 30.1% in 28-29. Then similar to CalSTRS, since implementation of that LCFF formula, the CalPERS employer contribution rate has also increased dramatically, up from 11.442%, again, placing tremendous strains on school district operating budgets.

Here is a look at the minimum wage forecast, the state of California's minimum wage forecast through 2029. Effective January 1 of this year, the state's minimum wage has increased from \$15.50 cents per hour, which is one of the highest minimum wage rates in the nation. The current federal minimum wage is sitting at \$7.25 per hour. For California-based fast food workers for chains with 60 more locations nationwide began earning at least \$20 an hour this past Monday, April 1, or \$4 higher than the overall minimum wage rate for the state of California of \$16 per hour. Of course, this is going to place upward pressure on salaries for some of our workers, which could have that trickle up effect on other positions, which is why of course we are going to watch this very closely.

This slide just highlights the statutory cost of living adjustments, going all the way back to 1983-1984, and you can see from this chart the large fluctuations in the COLA from year-to-year, which of course make it very, very difficult to try to anticipate the level of state funding in the coming year. Aside from the last two fiscal years where the statutory COLA has exceeded 6%, the trend line for the COLA is beginning to normalize at a much lower level. Here is a look at the change in the projected statutory COLAs that we received from the Department of Finance. Back in June when the Board approved our budget for the current year, the statutory COLA for 24-25 was projected at 3.94%, which we know of course has been revised down to 0.76% as of the Governor's January proposal. Likewise, the projected statutory COLAs for fiscal years 25-26 and 26-27 have been revised down by 0.56% and then 0.08% respectively. Again, that is since the budget was approved back in June.

Another challenge that districts face is the expiration of all the one-time federal and state COVID-19 relief funding. The final round of ESSER III funds have to be obligated within the next six months. By September 30, those have to be encumbered, and then they have to be liquidated or spent by January 31, 2025. At the same time, the benefits of the ADA protections that were put in place during the pandemic years, those are beginning to diminish. In fact, many districts are expected to feel the full impact of those ADA losses over the course of the next year or two.

Switching gears for a moment, here is a look at some of the major projects that we have planned for the coming fiscal year. Recently, we did hire a project manager to help us facilitate completion of the Rancho Soñado project. Over this past month, we met with the Department of State Architect, the Orange County Fire Authority, and our Outdoor Science school staff to discuss project planning. Currently, our architects are incorporating feedback that they received from the outdoor science school team on those project design plans. We are going to provide some additional updates on this particular project to the board in the coming weeks. We also plan to replace several portable buildings that are used in our Special Education program, and those

new buildings are going to replace some older units that have extended well beyond their useful life. Then lastly, our Sunburst Youth Academy program will also receive a refresh this summer, and we plan to replace all the flooring, repaint the interior of the facilities, install new classroom countertops, lighting, and also new whiteboards.

Here is a summarized look at the Board of Education's budget. We have included actual expenditures for last year, 22-23, as well as the second interim budget for the current year 23-24. We have also included a placeholder budget for next year, 24-25. For the current year under the salary and employee benefit line items, you can see we spent just over \$213,000. Really, what that includes, it is the nominal stipend the board receives for service on the board and the statutory benefits that go along with that nominal stipend. The majority of the costs that you see there reflect on that line is for health and welfare benefit premiums. Those are the same premiums paid for all the employees that are offered benefits here at the Department.

Materials and supplies are coming in at just over \$658 for last year. Services and other operating expenditures, excluding legal and advocacy services are coming in at just over \$32,235. Legal services contracts, a little over \$956,000, and then advocacy contracts at \$215,000. You can see we spent just over \$1.41 million, and then you can see for 23-24, we do have the second interim budget reflected there. We will update the second interim budget as we begin preparation of the budget for 24-25. We will update that and present the board our estimated actuals in June with the actual expenditures to date. Then again, we just wanted the board to have a snapshot of the budget as we begin budget development for 24-25 in case you wanted to make any adjustments.

Here is a look at some of the key challenges that we face moving forward. First, we know that costs for step and column movement, PERS and STRS pensions, and also health and welfare benefit premiums are going to continue to place additional strain on our operating budget as well as districts throughout the county and the state. We also know that inflationary cost pressures in other areas, such as supplies, services, and equipment also remain persistent. Other challenges include the expiration of all that one-time state and federal COVID-19 relief funding. Our county offices minimum state aid excess tax status, as well as the continued decline that we are seeing in enrollment throughout Orange County, which of course could have an impact on our programs. Finally, all the uncertainty surrounding the state's budget outlook for the coming year. And of course, that is due that significant decline we have seen in revenues for last year, 22-23, as well as what we are continuing to see in the current year.

I just want to wrap up with a budget timeline and then open up to questions the board may have. Again, back in December, early December, the board took action and approved the Department's first interim budget. Again, that included our transactions to date through October. It also included updated revenue and expenditure forecasts. Then in early February, staff presented the mid-year LCAP update. Then last month, the board approved the Second Interim Report. Again, that included actual financial transactions through January 31, updated revenue and expenditure forecasts for the current and two subsequent years. Of course that report was built on the Governor's January Budget Proposal. Again, tonight we are holding the study session for the upcoming budget. Then in early June, we are going to hold the public hearings for both the LCAP and the adopted budget for next year. Then in late June, we will present both the LCAP and the adopted budget for the board's final approval. The adopted budget will be based on the

Governor's May Revise, and that is expected to be out in the mid-May timeframe. The May Revise always contains tax collections through the month of April month end. Last year of course it didn't, which is why we had the problem with the tax extension. But normally, it includes tax collections through month-end April, and that will give us a much better idea of what the state's budget outlook will be for the coming fiscal year. And of course, we will keep the board updated as the budget progresses. Thank you. That is the presentation. I would like to open up to questions.

**SHAW:** Thank you. I want to begin by just complimenting you guys on the great work, as always, in putting these budget presentations together. I know how much work must go into that, so appreciate that hard work. I made a few notes to myself. I didn't want to interrupt you. But the inverted yield curve, we had an inverted yield curve and yet we didn't have a recession. Do you ever recall such a thing happening?

**GIORDANO:** I'm definitely not an expert or an economist. But I don't think it is the norm for it to go that long without having a recession. I do think that the yield curve is definitely a good signal for whether or not we might have a recession, and I know there is a lot of economists that track that very, very closely. But, it is sort of an anomaly. We have had an inverted yield curve for years now. It has been some time, so I don't quite have the great answer for that one.

**SHAW:** Okay. I was looking at slide 11 that you had, and I wanted to make sure I understood this. It looks like we are projecting a slight increase in ADA, but we are talking about declining enrollment. I just wanted to make sure I understood what we are saying here on slide 11.

**GIORDANO:** I think I'm going to have—I think messed this up. Here we go. I'm getting it.

**HENDRICK:** Got it? Currently, our programs are actually growing a tiny bit. Districts may be declining.

**SHAW:** I see.

**HENDRICK:** But currently, our programs are actually are seeing a flattening and a small increase.

**SHAW:** Okay, got it. I was curious also when we were looking at the pension contribution rates, I just find it remarkable, like I'm looking at slide 13. From 1986 to 2013, we didn't have any increase in the employer contribution rate. We went from 8.25% in 2013 to now 19.1% in the current year. It just seems remarkable to me that we went so long without any increase, and now we have more than doubled.

**GIORDANO:** Yeah.

**SHAW:** I know as an employer the strain that puts on the budgets. I just was curious. Is this people living longer, is this the great recession and the losses there, all of the above?



**GIORDANO:** One of the things under the old funding model, the revenue limit funding model, school districts were actually protected from those increases in the CalPERS rate. There was an offset in that funding formula that adjusted our funding for any changes, so we were protected. We didn't see those increases on the CalPERS side. For the longest time, CalSTRS was running fine. I know they made some changes to the plan several years ago where they increased the benefits. I know they have had a number of years with poor returns because of the market. But I think there is a lot of factors contributing. I think the point that you make about folks living longer, those actuarial tables I think factor into it too. I think there is a lot of different factors.

**HENDRICK:** If you also remember many years ago in their infinite wisdom when they thought the fund was doing well, they actually had PERS members no longer pay into PERS. Now, schools were not actually exempt from that. It got reduced from our revenue limit; whereas, state and other public agencies, cities and stuff, they didn't have to pay into PERS. That happened for quite a few years, and that did not help in their overall funding. I think also GASB 68 made a bigger impact because now you have to book all those liabilities. I think that highlighted the depth of the unfunded liabilities I should say. This is the state's attempt to catch up.

**SHAW:** Yeah. All right, terrific. I know we will probably all have questions. Dr. Williams, I see you scribbling. Do you have some questions here?

**WILLIAMS:** These high rates, basically, what you were sharing with us, Renee, was that they are making up for the past practice of not contributing appropriately?

**HENDRICK:** For PERS specifically, yeah, that is what the state had done. I think it was like in 2008. There was multiple years where they just didn't—we had our funding reduced, so we technically still, as schools, contributed, because they reduced our funding by that amount. But other agencies didn't pay into the PERS system, universities, cities, counties, and all of that. That did not help their unfunded. Then I think when they started having to count that 30 years' worth of unfunded liability, they found that they were short.

**WILLIAMS:** Going back to Tim's identification in slide 13 about the employer contribution rate, for many years it was nothing. When I look at that table, the three-column table that you created, is that 19.1% in '22, then it goes up another 19.1% in '23, and the same for '24?

**GIORDANO:** I'm sorry, I'm looking at slide number 13 in the bottom right hand corner. What slide were you looking at? Was it the—

**SHAW:** They are not numbered the same. I think he is on—

**GIORDANO:** Oh, they are not?

**SHAW:** —slide 14.

**GIORDANO:** Fourteen, okay.

**SHAW:** I think.

**GIORDANO:** There we go. CalSTRS employer contribution rates?

**WILLIAMS:** Right. Yeah, it's not marked right here on what we have. I will repeat what I said. We went for many years as Tim noted with no increase, and then all of a sudden we started getting these increases going from 8.25, 8.88 all the way down now we are in '24, we are going to have a 19.1% increase. Is that every year?

**GIORDANO:** Yeah, that says, "a percent of our salaries."

**WILLIAMS:** Oh, percent of. Okay. I see.

**GIORDANO:** Percent of salaries for those that qualify for that pension system. That is 19.1% of their salary will go into the CALSTRS program.

**WILLIAMS:** Okay.

**GIORDANO:** That is correct.

**WILLIAMS:** As Renee marked, this is because we are behind, and we didn't contribute, and we are in a deficit. The Governor wants to fill that void. Is that correct?

**HENDRICK:** Not we, the state. The PERS system. Not we, but the state system.

**WILLIAMS:** The state.

**GIORDANO:** I don't think it was just the state of California.

**HENDRICK:** The state of California. No.

**GIORDANO:** My former program that I was in, I worked for another county for many years and it was a similar kind of thing. They weren't contributing to their program, and they were running deficits. They are borrowing from the funds. I think it was an issue many years ago. I think they have cleaned that up. I don't think you can do that anymore, but there was an issue for many years.

**WILLIAMS:** Going to probably slide 17 on your model, it's 16 on our document here.

**GIORDANO:** Okay.

**WILLIAMS:** Who defines the statutory COLA? Is that the state?

**GIORDANO:** The state, yeah. The state actually—it's an implicit price deflator, I think is what the technical term is. Basically what it is, it's a basket of government goods and services. It's an index. It is like the CPI, but it's looking specifically at government goods and services. They track that. There is like eight different components to it that come up throughout the year. I believe there is only one component that is still out there remaining, and they will know exactly

what the COLA is going to be for the coming year. I think by the time we get to the May Revision, it will be known.

**WILLIAMS:** Okay, so Sacramento establishes that?

**GIORDANO:** Yes.

**WILLIAMS:** Just looking at these historical trends, when we went, and again, I'm not an economist. I'm just a plain family doctor. But in 2006-08, that is when we kind of had a downturn in the economy.

**GIORDANO:** Seven and eight, yes.

**WILLIAMS:** In the Obama administration, the COLAs went up. Now that we are kind of heading into what I think is the downturn in the economy, we see the COLAs go up. Is there a trend, or am I just seeing things that maybe aren't there, or am I seeing things correctly, that there is a relationship?

**GIORDANO:** You know, it is a good question. I haven't looked at it enough to be able to say one way or another. I really haven't.

**WILLIAMS:** Okay.

**HENDRICK:** I will say as a reminder though, even though they show those COLAs, from 2007-8 through I think 13-14, even though we had COLAs, the state didn't pay us COLAs.

**GIORDANO:** Yeah, that is right.

**WILLIAMS:** Oh, really?

**HENDRICK:** Yes.

**GIORDANO:** That is right.

**HENDRICK:** They gave us a deficit.

**GIORDANO:** That is absolutely right.

**HENDRICK:** They gave us a deficit on our income. They say, oh, you should get 4%, but we are not going to pay that to you. Now, they did have to end up paying all that money back—

**WILLIAMS:** Got it.

**HENDRICK:** —in later years. Just because we get a COLA doesn't necessarily mean—

**GIORDANO:** That is right.

**HENDRICK:** —the state will fund it.

**WILLIAMS:** Wow.

**GIORDANO:** That is right.

**WILLIAMS:** Last question, then I will let my other board members. Those portable classrooms that we are retiring and replacing.

**GIORDANO:** Yes.

**WILLIAMS:** We own those outright?

**GIORDANO:** We do.

**WILLIAMS:** Okay. If I can put dibs in, as we used to say in school. Can we sell those?

**HENDRICK:** Well, the reason why they are being replaced is they are over 30 years old.

**WILLIAMS:** How old?

**HENDRICK:** They are over 30 years old, and they are falling apart.

**GIORDANO:** They are in very bad condition.

**HENDRICK:** Otherwise, we wouldn't be getting new ones.

**GIORDANO:** We might have to pay somebody to—

**WILLIAMS:** Are they salvageable at all?

**HENDRICK:** Well, I know at least the one in one of the districts, not at all. But that is something we could look at.

**GIORDANO:** Look at, yeah. Yeah.

**WILLIAMS:** I'm just thinking that maybe we can put them up for sale and let our charter schools pick from whatever we have if that helps them out.

**HENDRICK:** If they would like to pay to have them moved.

**WILLIAMS:** Oh, you will do it for free then?

**HENDRICK:** No, what I was saying—

**WILLIAMS:** Maybe a dollar.

**HENDRICK:** Actually, that is something we probably could look at, but it is very costly to move them is what I was going to say.

**WILLIAMS:** Oh, is it?

**HENDRICK:** Mm-hmm.

**WILLIAMS:** Okay. Well I just bring it up because that is something—we will have a conversation later.

**HENDRICK:** I think the ones that are most on the list, we are sad that our staff is in them currently.

**GIORDANO:** Yes.

**HENDRICK:** How is that?

**GIORDANO:** They are in pretty bad shape.

**HENDRICK:** They are pretty bad.

**WILLIAMS:** Okay.

**GIORDANO:** They are in pretty bad shape.

**SHAW:** Thank you.

**BARKE:** Attempting a move might hurt them. They might fall apart more trying to move them.

**GIORDANO:** It's possible.

**BARKE:** My question is really with the CalPERS. I'm trying to understand that. The rate increase that is 19.10, is that the employee contribution that is increased, or who is paying that 19.10?

**GIORDANO:** Yeah, it is a great, great question. That is the employer contribution rate.

**BARKE:** Oh, the employer.

**GIORDANO:** Yeah. So that would be the Department. The school districts are all paying that rate. Then, on top of the employer paying in, there is also a rate that is established that the employee pays as well. Depending on when you were hired, whether you are hired before 2013 or after, there is a difference in those rates slightly.

**BARKE:** Approximately is it half that rate or how much is that? I think it's about—is it seven?

**HENDRICK:** I think if you were hired after the PEPRA, it's like eight point something.

**GIORDANO:** Is it? Okay.

**HENDRICK:** I think the STRS is up to 10%.

**GIORDANO:** Is it now?

**HENDRICK:** If I remember correctly.

**GIORDANO:** That sounds about right.

**HENDRICK:** It depends on when you were hired, yeah.

**GIORDANO:** I can get those rates.

**BARKE:** Is this funded? I mean here I think we have plenty of reserves, but at districts, is that a funded?

**GIORDANO:** They don't specifically fund the PERS or the STRS separately. Years ago the Governor was giving some additional monies to help pay down the liabilities and actually giving additional monies, passing them on to school districts and county offices. He hasn't done that in a number of years. We don't get any separate funding from that. It would come in the form of our unrestricted monies, like our local control funding formula dollars, same thing with the school district. It would be their unrestricted discretionary dollars that would pay for those. If an employee is charged to a categorical program, the categorical program could pick up that cost as well.

**BARKE:** Okay. I would imagine some of the districts that are really hurting, that would be a huge burden to come up with.

**HENDRICK:** It is. Just as a reminder, this is in state statute, so we don't really get a choice. Right? They pick the rates.

**GIORDANO:** That is right.

**HENDRICK:** They pick the employee contribution, but this has been probably one of the biggest burdens on our districts moving forward. Yeah.

**BARKE:** Yeah, I would guess that. Okay. All right, thank you. I appreciate that.

**SHAW:** Great. Dr. Sparks?

**SPARKS:** Yes. Okay, if we look at section four, B33 through B41-ish, if I recall correctly from past budgets, I'm seeing a lot of negative numbers here. First, on B33, under services and

operating, line number nine and capital outlay, I'm seeing a negative 3.2% and negative 29.8%, and I'm wondering what is going on, what the explanation is there. I'm seeing—

**HENDRICK:** I'm sorry, what page you on?

**SPARKS:** B33.

**GIORDANO:** You are looking at the services and other operating expenditures.

**SPARKS:** Line nine and 10.

**GIORDANO:** Yeah. In that variance column, I think you are looking at the \$2.5 million negative on the difference column.

**SPARKS:** Yeah. Yeah.

**SPARKS:** That is looking at the difference in columns B and column D. Between the time the board approved our budget back in June for services at that time were budgeted at \$78.4 million. Then, by the time we got to the second interim budget, which represents our projected column there, it had increased to \$80.9 million. When you are looking at the difference there, for expenditures, if it increases, they are showing it as a negative.

**SPARKS:** Right.

**SPARKS:** That is a number of different factors that are included in there, but a lot of times there will be additional grants or entitlements really that come in that we would have to budget, because the budget is a living document. As we are getting new funding, that new funding has to get budgeted, so it will increase the budget depending on where we allocate it.

**SPARKS:** Yeah.

**GIORDANO:** It could be in the supply account.

**SPARKS:** Right.

**GIORDANO:** It could be in the services.

**SPARKS:** Right. Well, that is the point that I'm making. I'm just seeing a lot of negative numbers. Then, the capital outlay, you are also seeing that negative 29.8% there on-line number 10. There is pretty big discrepancy there.

**GIORDANO:** Yeah.

**SPARKS:** If you move on to B35, under supplemental taxes, you are seeing a negative 27.5% differential.

**HENDRICK:** Yeah, so this is kind of just the total budget. Also, if you see revenue also went up by \$16 million. As the new revenue increases—

**SPARKS:** Right.

**HENDRICK:** —we are going to increase expenditures—

**SPARKS:** Right.

**HENDRICK:** —to go with that. What you are seeing is the difference, not necessarily that those programs are any negative. Does that make sense?

**SPARKS:** Yeah, it does. I feel like I'm seeing more of them than I have seen in the past.

**GIORDANO:** I think part of this is when you look at the capital outlay for example, there is that negative 2.8. Remember all that one-time COVID-19 relief funds, we have to have it encumbered by September 30 and spent by January 31. For example, when you look at the capital line item, a lot of that is our ESSER monies. It would be on the restricted side of the budget, not our discretionary dollars.

**SPARKS:** Okay. Okay. Then, there is a couple more that I want to just bring up just for clarification for the public. On page B36, under the LCFF transfer, the second section there, it says transfer to charter schools in lieu of property taxes. We see a negative 10% there.

**GIORDANO:** Let's see here. I'm sorry, what object code you looking at?

**SPARKS:** I am on B36, and I'm under LCFF transfers. That second section on that page.

**GIORDANO:** Yes. Yes.

**SPARKS:** In the middle of that, transfers to charter schools in lieu of property taxes, and I have a negative 10% differential.

**GIORDANO:** That is simply, any property taxes that charter schools are entitled to get transferred to them automatically. There is adjustments in property taxes throughout the year. We will get updates from the Treasurer's Office. As those property taxes get adjusted, we have to adjust our budget to match that. That is all that is.

**SPARKS:** Okay. Okay. A couple more things. Well, on page B39, I see a lot of differentials here under—well, you already explained some of it with the STRS and the PERS under the employee benefits.

**GIORDANO:** Yes.

**SPARKS:** I'm on B39, so I think I understand that. Then, I see on books and supplies a lot of adjustments there, like negative 81% for approved textbooks and core curricular materials.



**GIORDANO:** I'm sorry, what page again?

**SPARKS:** B39.

**GIORDANO:** B39, and materials and supplies, 4300 object code?

**SPARKS:** 4100. I see a negative 81.9%.

**GIORDANO:** Oh, textbooks.

**SPARKS:** Differential on approved textbooks and core curriculum materials.

**GIORDANO:** Yes. I could find the details behind that, but more than likely there was some adjustment between first and—well, I should say between budget adoption and Second Interim Report where we had to increase the budget for some reason. But I can get you the exact reason.

**SPARKS:** Right. Yeah, I'm just kind of wanting some specifics.

**GIORDANO:** It could have been a new program. It could have been a new program.

**SPARKS:** Okay.

**GIORDANO:** There is some justification. I can get you that.

**SPARKS:** If we could have specifics on that?

**GIORDANO:** Sure.

**SPARKS:** I think that would be of interest to the public. Yeah?

**HENDRICK:** Can I—just a reminder. When you did the second interim, and we gave you the changes, over \$25,000, that is when you approve those.

**SPARKS:** Yes.

**HENDRICK:** This is just looking from one budget to the next.

**SPARKS:** Yes.

**HENDRICK:** It's kind of a little bit different.

**SPARKS:** Yeah, no, I understand that. Sometimes we see things at different times in different ways too. Then, same kind of thing, but on that same page, under capital outlay, you have got a negative 33% for land differential and a negative 113.9% for building and improvements of buildings, so maintenance.

**GIORDANO:** Okay. I'm still on that same page.

**SPARKS:** That would be 6100 and 6200 project codes.

**GIORDANO:** Gotcha. Yeah, so if I'm looking at the board-approved budget of \$403,430 for object code 6100 land—

**SPARKS:** Yeah.

**GIORDANO:** —and then projected year totals at \$539,832, so an increase of \$136,000. Again, we could provide the detail on that.

**SPARKS:** Then, the same for 6200 on the buildings and improvement of buildings, that has got a differential of negative 113.9%.

**GIORDANO:** That is primarily tied to the construction, or the improvements that you saw here in Building A.

**SPARKS:** Yeah.

**GIORDANO:** Also will be going on in Building D.

**SPARKS:** Okay.

**GIORDANO:** Yeah.

**SPARKS:** But that clarification is important. Then, the last thing, while I'm having fun with all of this, is on the board of education budget—

**GIORDANO:** Yes.

**SPARKS:** Which would be, let's see, slide 20 on your little slides here.

**GIORDANO:** Yep.

**SPARKS:** Do I add one?

**GIORDANO:** Here we go.

**SPARKS:** Twenty-one.

**SHAW:** Twenty for us.

**GIORDANO:** Sorry about that.

**SHAW:** It's okay.

**SPARKS:** Okay. Yeah, that is the one. I'm wondering why there is the increase in the salaries and employee benefits when there hasn't been any real change.

**GIORDANO:** Between 22-23 and 23-24?

**SPARKS:** Yeah. Yeah.

**GIORDANO:** It really comes down to—yeah, there is no change in the stipend, right? The monthly stipend.

**SPARKS:** Yeah, the little pennies.

**GIORDANO:** There is nothing, pennies. It's very small. It's the health and welfare benefits.

**SPARKS:** Okay, that is what I thought.

**GIORDANO:** That is what it is.

**SPARKS:** That is what I thought. I wanted clarification on that.

**GIORDANO:** Yep.

**SPARKS:** Okay. I think those are my main questions. Thank you.

**SHAW:** Thank you. Trustee Valdes?

**VALDES:** I think I have similar questions regarding the Board of Education budget.

**GIORDANO:** Okay.

**VALDES:** I think first and foremost, for the benefit of the public, the line that says salaries and employee benefits is just factually not correct. Shouldn't that say trustees? Because that is us, right?

**GIORDANO:** It is.

**VALDES:** This is us.

**GIORDANO:** It is, yes, you are correct.

**VALDES:** We don't get paid a salary.

**GIORDANO:** Yeah.

**VALDES:** I think for purposes of the public, it shouldn't say salary.

**GIORDANO:** Yeah.

**VALDES:** It should say trustee stipends and health benefits. Right?

**GIORDANO:** Yeah. Just to clarify, because this is a state required report, and this is the only object code that is assigned to be able to charge those two. Again, when we talked earlier about the standardized account code structure, we don't establish those codes. You can actually go online and see those.

**VALDES:** So, you cannot change that? It has to say that?

**GIORDANO:** It is in the actual SACS financial report.

**VALDES:** Well, I just want to make clear to the public that I don't think that that is accurate.

**BARKE:** Right.

**VALDES:** But it sounds like we can't change it.

**HENDRICK:** We can change it for this slide.

**GIORDANO:** The slide.

**HENDRICK:** We could do that, but it will actually show up in salaries and benefits in the form documents.

**GIORDANO:** That is a good point.

**SPARKS:** Some counties actually do get a full salary. I think L.A. County, they get a salary.

**HENDRICK:** I didn't check L.A. County. But I have been looking at it and know there is no other county that I have seen.

**SPARKS:** I thought L.A. County got a full salary.

**HENDRICK:** That is one county I haven't looked at yet.

**SPARKS:** Yeah.

**BARKE:** Think there have a tiered system, whether you are employed or not employed, other than the board. I believe there is pretty healthy minimums.

**SPARKS:** Yeah.

**BARKE:** I know when I was in L.A. County and I spoke of our stipends, they were shocked. It was quite different.

**HENDRICK:** We are doing some research on that currently, so I will have all that data for the Executive Committee.

**SPARKS:** So the public knows the stipend is like \$500—

**BARKE:** \$62.61 or something. Is that right? Something like that.

**GIORDANO:** Yeah. The stipend? It is \$561 something.

**SPARKS:** Per hour or something?

**BARKE:** No, per month.

**GIORDANO:** Per month, per month.

**BARKE:** Per month, yes. It's per month.

**SPARKS:** It is \$62?

**BARKE:** No, \$562.

**SPARKS:** Oh, \$562.

**BARKE:** \$561.62.

**GIORDANO:** And \$0.72. Something like that.

**BARKE:** Yeah, something like that.

**GIORDANO:** I can get you the exact number.

**BARKE:** Yeah.

**GIORDANO:** It's very small.

**SPARKS:** Then, if you do the benefits, it subtracts from that.

**GIORDANO:** The statutory benefits are calculated on top of it, but it's very, very small.

**SPARKS:** But I think the public should know that.

**GIORDANO:** Yeah.

**SPARKS:** Because, this is volunteer work.

**HENDRICK:** It is listed on your website—

**SPARKS:** Yes.

**HENDRICK:** —which I will commend you on. I found very few county offices that do have it listed on their website, so I commend you for being transparent on that.

**SPARKS:** Yes. Okay. Sorry, Jorge, I had to pipe in.

**VALDES:** Oh, It's okay. Next question is how does materials and supplies go from less than \$700 to 45,000?

**GIORDANO:** Less than \$700 to—

**HENDRICK:** That was actually the printing of the flyers—

**VALDES:** Oh. Okay.

**HENDRICK:** —that went out and were posted and mailed to everybody.

**VALDES:** Okay. All right. Legal services contracts, I'm guessing that is our attorneys.

**GIORDANO:** Yes, that would be the attorneys.

**VALDES:** But why would that go from \$956,000 to \$2.2 million?

**GIORDANO:** Yeah, so that is just the budget for 23-24. I think if I look at—and I have got additional detail I can provide the board if you would like to see more of the detail there. If I look at the actual transactions to date, I think that is spent. I can tell you, because I have got it right here. To date, for 23-24, as of second interim, which would have been as of January 31, \$453,053.47 cents. What is encumbered is another \$591,332.76. As of right now for the current year, there is a balance of \$1,155,613.77. That is the balance right now so that when we talked earlier about coming in, when we adopt the budget in June, we will be doing an update on our estimated actuals. We are going to be shoring up these numbers, and then we will use those numbers as we budget for next year. This is just to make sure that we are covered. You just never know, especially on legal costs. It is so hard to guesstimate what those numbers can be.

**VALDES:** What you are saying is that 23-24, you are just ball parking that.

**GIORDANO:** Yes.

**VALDES:** You are just kind of throwing out a number?

**GIORDANO:** That is a guesstimate, absolutely.

**VALDES:** All right. Advocacy contracts, is that our lobbyist?

**GIORDANO:** That is, yes.

**VALDES:** Okay. Mr. Giordano, as far as the Covid funds, the ones that need to be allocated by September—

**GIORDANO:** Yes.

**VALDES:** —and the ones that have to be spent by January 1. Right?

**GIORDANO:** Yeah.

**VALDES:** How much is completely unencumbered and not allocated left?

**GIORDANO:** Unencumbered and not allocated? I would have to go back in and take a look at it. When we were looking at this about a month ago, we had about \$18 million, close to \$18 million that we needed to spend. We have been working real closely with school sites, departments on coming up with items to expend those dollars.

**VALDES:** Because Trustee Williams and I have an agenda item tonight regarding a loan account. You are saying that the Department has \$18 million unallocated and unencumbered—

**GIORDANO:** No.

**VALDES:** —that has to be spent by—

**GIORDANO:** There are ESSER money. There is specific restrictions on how the dollars can be spent. When we looked at this back about a month ago, we had about \$18 million that we needed to spend by that time. I need to go back in and take a look. We have come up with a pretty extensive list. I'm sure there is still dollars that are unallocated there. It's just a matter of what we would spend those monies on.

**VALDES:** Okay.

**HENDRICK:** Dollars have to be encumbered. Air conditioning is one of our big purchases. We did new air conditioning units. We have to have a PO by September 30. We would actually have to have them completely installed and paid for by that January 1 date.

**GIORDANO:** That is right.

**HENDRICK:** It is not funds that you can hold. They actually have to be spent and what they call liquidated—

**GIORDANO:** That is right.

**HENDRICK:** —by that date. And there is specific restrictions on whether it's direct instruction, non-direct instruction, and those type of things in those funds.

**GIORDANO:** Yeah, yeah.

**HENDRICK:** We do reporting on that, which you will see in your handouts to the state and fed. And, for anything over \$5,000, we actually have to send justification to the state to get approval.

**GIORDANO:** Yeah, yeah.

**VALDES:** Okay. I do recognize all these really significant packets that get put together for us multiple times a year. I'm just curious, how large is our accounting department? How many people are in there?

**GIORDANO:** Oh boy, you put me on the spot. I think we probably have about 20, about 20 total. We have got a pretty decent sized staff.

**HENDRICK:** Which includes, yeah, Accounts Receivable, Accounts Payable, Payroll.

**GIORDANO:** Special Projects.

**HENDRICK:** Special Projects.

**GIORDANO:** Special projects alone—

**HENDRICK:** Contracts and purchasing.

**GIORDANO:** —yeah, 113 programs that we have. That is a special unit unique to the county because of the different programs that we manage.

**VALDES:** One last question. I'm not sure it's a budget question, but more of an allocation question. As many of you know, I have an older son who is autistic. For many years I would go to his classrooms, and for some reason all his classrooms were outdoor portable classrooms. I noticed that on your slide 20, you are doing some deferred maintenance on special education portable building replacements, which we have just talked about. Maybe this is more of a question for Ramon than yourself, Mr. Giordano, but why do the special education kids always get put into portable classrooms outside?

**GIORDANO:** Yeah, it is a tough question. Those facilities, the portables that we are talking about are actually at school districts. We are actually requesting space from them to run our programs. Oftentimes, and it's not just for special ed. It would be anything that we wanted to put on their campus, rarely are they going to give up permanent classroom space. It's sort of like preschool programs as well. Oftentimes if you are running a preschool, they are going to run those in portables. I think it's the nature of sort of the business that we do that oftentimes that we end up in portables for a lot of our programs.

**HENDRICK:** This board had approved two projects that we had completed. One at Mann Elementary in Anaheim, a joint use project with Anaheim Elementary where we actually built a school with them. We have very nice classrooms there. We also had a joint use project in Irvine, the University of Deaf and Hard of Hearing. That is our opportunity to be able to do a joint use project with the district. Our special ed programs must be mainstreamed on a regular campus, so



we can't have them segregated by themselves. We are sharing facilities and depending on the districts to give us more space and nicer space. But we do try to do as much as we can to assist the district in making sure we have the best space for our students as we can.

**VALDES:** Well, I guess it's more of a request than anything else.

**GIORDANO:** Yes.

**VALDES:** But to the extent that we can, this trustee is asking everyone here to try and put our special education kids in regular classrooms and not relegate them to portable classrooms. It is certainly important to me. I'm sure it's important to my colleagues up here.

**SHAW:** It is. Thank you for those questions. It was kind of reminding me, going over these things, as a board, we don't have the fun of negotiating collective bargaining agreements with employees. It was bringing me back a little bit to my city council days. I was just thinking about how when we would have huge increases in pension costs, medical insurance, and dental insurance. The cost of employing a person has gone way up, and then they walk in the door and they say, okay, well, where is my raise? Just to keep you from being cut at all, we already have expended quite a bit. Now, they want the raise, so it's like, oh. But they don't see it in their paycheck, so it's kind of hard to appreciate that I guess from the employee's perspective. Did that sound familiar, Renee? Just a little bit. Oh sure, Dr. Williams?

**WILLIAMS:** Just real quick, on objective code 6100, on page B39, we have some funds in there to buy land. Did we anticipate buying land with those funds?

**GIORDANO:** B39.

**HENDRICK:** I think its just improvement to land. It was like \$136,000.

**GIORDANO:** Right.

**HENDRICK:** That probably was some of our shade structures that we had done with ESSER funds.

**WILLIAMS:** It's not actually going out and purchasing land? Okay.

**HENDRICK:** You would know about that.

**WILLIAMS:** Yes. Yes. Okay. And just real quick, just going back on the Covid funds. There is an estimated \$18 million or so. The PO has to be in by September 1, and it actually has to be spent by January 1. Is that right?

**GIORDANO:** Yeah. It has to be encumbered by September 30.

**WILLIAMS:** September 30.

**GIORDANO:** Then 120 days after September 30, it has to be completely completely spent.

**WILLIAMS:** Okay.

**GIORDANO:** Yes.

**WILLIAMS:** Do we have a list of priorities, how we want to spend those funds?

**GIORDANO:** Do we have a list of priorities?

**HENDRICK:** Yes.

**GIORDANO:** We have got a whole list of projects that are planned.

**HENDRICK:** Yeah, our concern is can we get them completed by that time?

**GIORDANO:** Right.

**HENDRICK:** Those portables, as an example, that is \$6.9 million.

**GIORDANO:** Yeah.

**HENDRICK:** We don't know if we actually could complete all those projects by December 31, and so they may not qualify. That is what we are in the process of going through.

**WILLIAMS:** So it's not the purchase order. It is actually you have to get it, complete it, and in.

**HENDRICK:** Yes.

**GIORDANO:** You have to be—

**WILLIAMS:** If the money isn't spent, we have to send it back?

**HENDRICK:** Yes.

**GIORDANO:** You have to do that.

**HENDRICK:** We are not going to do that, so we will move to other type of expenditures. We do have existing expenditures that we could transfer, which is what will probably end up happening, that would qualify under that, which gives us more funds in our general fund.

**WILLIAMS:** Got it. Okay. Thank you.

**SHAW:** Very good. Any other questions from the board? Seeing none, I think we better skedaddle into our closed session. Hopefully we won't start too late. Renee, is there any comments received related to closed session items?

**HENDRICK:** I have none.

**SHAW:** Very well. The board will now recess into closed session with counsel to discuss closed session items one through three. We will try to get back at 5 to start our meeting. Thanks.

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

**SHAW:** Good evening, everybody. It's great to see so many smiling faces out there. We are going to come back into open session. Forgive us for being a little late. We were in closed session, but we will now get started. We have with us this evening, from Coaches of Influence, Nelson Cook, to lead us in the invocation.

**NELSON:** Great. Fantastic. Is everybody excited?

**AUDIENCE:** Yes.

**NELSON:** Well, that was mediocre. Well, I'm excited. I am excited. I am privileged. Honored, Board and revered people. Thank you for the opportunity to come and share. Nobody is unaware of the issues going on in our country. A recent Pew Research report said two thirds of American respondents claim that it's not necessary to believe in God to be moral. George Washington claimed that religion and morality are each indispensable supports of democracy. If we are going to claim in our secularized culture that morality is personal and subjective, it's like an archer who shoots an arrow and then draws a bullseye around it wherever it lands. We need one another. We need to have boundaries.

I'm thinking of a time in Vietnam when a friend of mine told me, he was a chaplain and he said, there was a key verse. It says, above all else, guard your heart with all diligence for out of it proceed the issues of life. Above all else. He just gave a quick little simple example. He said, when we would go out to a fire base that if the people in the fire base did not clear it and let bushes, and trees, and weeds, and stuff grow up around it, it would be overrun. That is true today for us. If we allow anything in our hearts, bushes and weeds and junk to fill our hearts, then we will be overrun. I just want to encourage us with those words.

I do lead a ministry to athletic coaches called Coaches of Influence, because we are trying to help coaches, instead of just win. There is nothing wrong with winning. It's just how we go about it. We want to build character and values into kids' lives so that they come out as better people. John Wooden was one of my heroes. He just said very simply, we need to humble ourselves in the sight of God and that he will lift us up. When success turns your head, you face failure. This favorite quote of Wooden's was not about handling adversity, rather about managing success. We have a very successful country. He had successful teams, winning 10 national championships, seven of them in a row, which is unheard of. But he did that because he had that pyramid of success that was built on character and values.

I just exhort us and the Board to remember that the Lord is the one that we serve, bottom line. We just celebrated Easter, and that day changes everything if you believe in that. I would just like to offer a prayer, and thank you for the opportunity to come and share with you. Father, in

the name of Jesus, I just thank you for this board. I thank you for their service, their willingness to give of their time, and their talents, and the things of wisdom, and the knowledge, and the understanding and discernment in such a complicated world. Tonight, I ask you to imbue on them your wisdom. That you would empower them to see things like they have never seen them before, but from your perspective. That they would humble themselves before you so that you could be exalted in any decisions.

For the people in the audience that are coming to share, thank you for a country that allows us to come and share with our leaders. There are other countries that do not, and I thank you for that privilege that we have. That everyone would have a listening ear and an open heart to what is being said and then the wisdom to make the right decisions. Bless all the people involved tonight and especially the Board and Al, who I understand, Al Mijares who is struggling with some physical issues, that you would touch him and encourages his heart. I ask these things in the wonderful name of Jesus. Amen.

**SHAW:** Thank you, Nelson, for those words and that invocation. I don't know that we have someone prepared to lead the Pledge of Allegiance. Perhaps I could call on Trustee Barke.

**BARKE:** I would love to.

**SHAW:** Thank you.

**BARKE:** If you would like, please put your right hand over your heart and join me. 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. Thank you for that honor.

**SHAW:** Thank you. Okay, Renee, do we have any introductions this evening?

**HENDRICK:** We have none this evening?

**SHAW:** All right, so we will proceed to public comments. I know we have a number of you, so how are we looking, Dr. Sparks?

**SPARKS:** We have more than 20, so I was thinking we give—oh, hello. We have more than 20, so I was thinking that we give everyone a chance to speak, perhaps a minute each.

**WILLIAMS:** How about two minutes?

**SHAW:** All right, two minutes.

**SPARKS:** Two minutes?

**BARKE:** Two, yeah.

**SPARKS:** Okay.

**BARKE:** Yeah.

**SPARKS:** We will do two minutes each. We want to make sure everyone has a chance to speak. I'm going to call the first name, and then I will call who is on deck. We will just kind of run through the public comment. All right, first we have Bill Masters, and on Deck is Michelle Sapanara.

**BILL:** Good evening, board members. My name is Bill Masters. I'm a resident of the City of Orange. I would like to thank the board members for their diligent work that they do and sometimes very thankful. But I'm thankful and I'm very grateful. Some of the things I want to talk to you about. This came across my desk not too long ago, and it's a new SB Bill, SB 907. Yeah, what they want to do is they want basically to take your rights away as parents. They are pushing, two senators, David Min and Josh Newman. They are both pushing and they are being backed by the teacher's union to have this be successful for them. We cannot let this happen.

Los Angeles, when it comes to board members, they are not voted in. They are appointed in, which means that you have no authority to say too much. What happened just recently, Orange Unified School District, this is how easy it is to get rid of people. What they did, they got—already yellow? They talked about getting rid of the two members. These are two Christian conservatives. Two down, two more to go. That is the way they look at it. They don't care about us. They don't care about the parents. They don't care about your rights. We have to stop this. We cannot let this bill go through.

Los Angeles, okay, Los Angeles, they are one of the worst. I can't believe that. I don't have the numbers, but as far as GPA, they are one of the top, bottom school districts in the United States. Do you want that for your kids? Do you really want that type of education? We are supposed to be there to prepare our children to be able to get out there and perform in life, to be able to sustain themselves. What is going to happen is these kids are going to turn 35 years old. They are going to turn to their parents and go, it's your fault. You are right. It is your fault parents because you are not paying attention.

**SPARKS:** Thank you. Michelle Sapanara, and on deck is Rudi Krause.

**MICHELLE:** Good afternoon, President Shaw, and distinguished members of the Board of Trustees. My name is Michelle Sapanara, and I'm the assistant superintendent for Student Support Services for Springs Charter Schools. After attending your monthly meetings for this school year, it is my great pleasure to speak to you today. Springs Charter Schools has been serving students in Orange County since 2006, and we have been authorized by the county since 2016 as Citrus Springs. We currently serve students in 25 districts across the county and our schools consist of three main programs. The first is a typical seat-based K-8 program in Santa Ana. The second is a hybrid program with two days at school and three days of home study. The third is a personalized homeschool program. We are pleased to announce that we wish to add a three-program charter to Orange County with our submission of a countywide benefit charter named Orange Springs.

We have been working with staff for over a decade through Citrus Springs and have a wonderful relationship that we hope to continue for years to come. I want to thank Trustee Jorge Valdes for visiting us in the fall, and I would like to invite you all to come visit our Santa Ana Student Center, meet our wonderful students, and see our site. On behalf of Citrus Springs, Orange Springs, and the Springs Network, we want to thank the staff for their collaboration thus far. Any further questions will be answered during our public hearing and the subsequent vote in June, or you may contact us directly. Thank you again for your time today.

**SPARKS:** Thank you. Rudi Krause is up and Stephen Sprague is on deck.

**RUDI:** Okay, well this country is going to hell in a hand basket, real fast. The board of education, you guys are the enablers of the World Economic Forum agenda that Newsom is the pawn of over here. Obama and Newsom, core education. What are we going to do? Well, this is what we are going to do. I'm running for Governor in '26. Global control party, we establish global control from California. We become the global controllers. We don't take our fifth highest economy in the world and send our money to Davos to Klaus Schwab to implement his what, global homo program here in California. All their divisive education programs like ESG. No, you guys can't do it. You guys don't have the intestinal fortitude. I do. My name is Krause. I'm a man, not a mouse. I'm a genius. I'm a super genius. I solved Covid. I proved my points.

I'm running for Governor in '26. Put Krause in the Governor house. You vote anyone else, you guys will be slaves by 2030; 2030 is right around the corner. Don't think that Schwab is one of these people that is going to come in 2030 and say, we tried. No, he is going to get it done. Newsom ain't going to do it. No democrat, no republicans is going to do it, because they are all complicit with the global agenda. This board of education, too with your vaccine mandates and jabbing all the kids, and long-range suicide on them, and your stupid masking and all that. All of you guys, low IQ. I got a high IQ. I'm quick.

**SHAW:** All right.

**RUDI:** Thank you.

**SPARKS:** Thank you.

**SHAW:** As a reminder, speakers should be making comments directed to the subject matter jurisdiction of this board, which is education in Orange County.

**RUDI:** It is education. If you had given us more than one minute, I was getting ready to go to the young power, creative intelligent revolution that is necessary.

**SPARKS:** Stephen Sprague is up and on deck is Heidi Landgraf.

**STEPHEN:** Thank you for allowing me to speak. I have 16-year-old twins who have attended OCSA since seventh grade. They are Jewish through their mother who was born and raised in Israel. All four members of our family have always valued OCSA's inclusiveness. Our teenagers have always felt safe and respected for who they are as individuals, regardless of their ethnicity

or the national origins of their parents. After the Hama massacre of Israelis on October 7, Palestinian organizations have attempted to infiltrate local city councils and school boards. I attended two such meetings in Santa Ana. Mayor Valerie Amezcua, as well as the city council members who declined to support these anti-Israel attacks masquerading as ceasefire initiatives were called out and threatened. We know where you live.

This is how public discourse is conducted in the O.C. these days, and O.C. Jews and Israeli natives are the primary recipients of this hatred. While our kids cannot be completely shielded from the negative consequences of this conflict, OCSA's Jewish community were blindsided when an anti-Israeli hatred was promoted through the OCSA newspaper *Evolution*. An article titled, "Update on the Crisis in Palestine," was a brutal hit job, not only on Israel, but on anyone who supports the very existence of the Jewish state. Four color maps dominated the entire right-hand corner of the article, dishonestly attributed to the University of Richmond when they were in fact from a Vancouver organization called Palestine Awareness Coalition, which seeks the elimination of the Jewish state.

Ironically, the University of Richmond used these maps to point out how maps can be used to intentionally misrepresent the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This article in *Evolution* also accused Israel of using biological warfare without providing any evidence, which has been a long-standing tactic of Jewish hate groups since the medieval days when Jews were accused of poisoning the wells of Christians, except now they are being accused of using biological weapons against Palestinians. Since coverage of this conflict has so polarized public discourse, public schools should not take it upon themselves to fan the flames of hatred. It seems public school policy when it comes to conflicts adverse to other ethnic groups is don't even go there. Perhaps that should be the best course of action with this conflict as well. Thank you.

**SPARKS:** Thank you. Heidi Landgraf and Nancy Watkins on deck. Heidi Landgraf?

**HEIDI:** Landgraf.

**SPARKS:** Landgraf, yes.

**HEIDI:** Yeah, all right. Thank you, esteemed board members. I'm here again, last two times as well. Now I'm speaking on behalf of families whose students attend Suncoast Preparatory Academy, a non-classroom-based charter school, which is a personalized education plan for families. Parents share they especially appreciate the availability to adhere to their own family values, flexibility, and freedom to choose their own curriculum. Parents and teachers have an opportunity daily to work cohesively to mold the best students possible. Most importantly, the students thrive, are enthusiastic, and excited to learn every day in the best possible environment. Opportunities to pursue their personal goals, interests and career paths are possible and readily available.

Being at Suncoast allows the parent to build character, develop a whole and well-rounded human. As one mom commented, the world is their oyster. Last comment, if it wasn't for a school like Suncoast, many families would actually leave California. Thank you.

**SPARKS:** Thank you. Nancy Watkins is up and Karen Jaffe is on deck.

**NANCY:** Good evening. I owe two items I will highlight tonight. One is the resolution to establish the charter school special fund and the other is the election results. The resolution to establish a charter school special fund proposes to create a dedicated funding mechanism for board-approved charter schools in Orange County to provide financial assistance in situations that it deems as an emergency. Several aspects of this initiative are concerning. Providing this funding for charter schools diverts financial resources from county programs. The resolution lacks transparency and oversight and needs to include detailed guidelines on the criteria for expenditures. I also see potential for conflicts of interest if these guidelines are not established. I look forward to learning more about the legality of the resolution.

The second is election results. Please review the turnout and consider that the election was not a mandate of your agenda as stated in the *OC Register* commentary. All three incumbents collectively garnered 154,229 votes, but 121,026 did not vote for you. Whether they voted for you or not, they are still your constituents and may have different views on your political agenda. Election financial filings for the three incumbents detail \$500,000 from three donors, the Charter school PAC, OC Charter Advocates and Service First. With this amount of money spent, what are the expectations of benefit from the charter organizations for the incumbents?

Those of us who believe that the board is wasting taxpayer's money, power grabbing control from local districts, and attempting to privatize public education will continue to watch and hold accountable the actions of this board.

**SPARKS:** Thank you. Karen Jaffe and on deck is Doug Husen.

**KAREN:** Very good. Thank you very much, and to Dr. Williams in particular, for inviting me here today. I appreciate it. What has brought me here is the shocking level of antisemitism that is rapidly becoming normalized in our schools and in particular at OCSA. The most sacred right of our society, the right to an education is being hijacked by radical ideologies and opinion-based instruction that is corrupting our youth and creating a rampant culture of hate, while perpetuating misinformation. Today, I am focusing on OCSA, but know that there are many occurrences in Orange County.

Instructors are taking advantage of the intellectual laziness that pervades our youth today, due in large part to social media, and are abdicating their responsibility for teaching critical thought. Absence is the proper historical recitation of fact about the region and an alternative narrative has taken its place that begins only in 1948 with an incomplete and inaccurate presentation of archeological detail is being integrated into our curriculum. The incident that brought me here was a horrendously inaccurate and violently antisemitic article that appeared in the student newspaper. This week the school disseminated a message wherein the free speech California Code was cited. Mr. Siachic completely disregards two stipulations in the same code that expressly prohibits speech, which is obscene, libelous, or slanderous, and also covers the responsibility of the journalism advisor or advisors of pupil publications within each school to supervise the production of the pupil staff.



The sin of omission is misleading the parent body by hiding behind selected cherry-picked aspects of the free speech code. Defending students for peddling fiction, distortion, and misinformation as fact, under the guise of free speech, is not the best interest of the public education and is in clear violation of the Educational Code. Why is sharing biased, one-sided, a-historical information about Israel necessary for the general student socio-emotional learning. Per the Educational Code, there should be the requirement of dual perspective; otherwise, it is skirting a dangerous line to discrimination. In OCSA in 2022, the same libelous and inaccurate maps were a part of the lessons in global history. We are witnessing a rewrite of history. We are witnessing the decimation of our culture.

**SPARKS:** Thank you. Your time is up. Thank you.

**KAREN:** Please help.

**SPARKS:** Thank you so much. Doug Husen and on deck is Tina Tran.

**DOUG:** President Shaw and Trustees, thank you for your work, your insight, and oversight. I stand today as a resident outside the county, but one who has served for the last three and a half years on the Irvine International Academy Board. That school was started thanks to many who are on the board now. We are in our third year and things are going fantastic. Scores are off the charts, and we are just grateful for your trust in us. The idea of establishing a fund that would help charters would be great. Let me just illustrate what would be the benefit to a school like Irvine International Academy. When a charter starts up, if we have not raised private money as donations, we are going to incur expenses before our money comes from the state for our daily attendance. We have to borrow that in the public market. For us that meant, in the last 12 months, \$250,000 that we could have, had this fund already been in place, borrowed from you, repaid, and put \$250,000 into the classroom. I hope it becomes a reality soon. Thank you for the wisdom in seeking it out.

**SPARKS:** Thank you. Tina Tran is up and on deck is Laurel Feldner.

**TINA:** Good evening, honorable president and honorable trustees. My name is Tina Tran. My colleague, Austin Ezzo and I are here on behalf of Senator Janet Nguyen to address a very important matter that is near and dear to her heart. Unfortunately, she is in Sacramento in session right now, so she is unable to be here to talk about this issue. But, I will read a letter on her behalf. Provided in front of you is a copy of that letter. I will not read the letter of its entirety due to time constraints, but I will point out key points. I will read certain sections and point out key points.

I'm contacting you today in regards to the development of the Vietnamese Refugee Model Curriculum currently underway for students grades K-12 in the Orange County Department of Education, as put forth by my legislation, Senate Bill 895 and Senate Bill 369. To preface, it is important to note that more than half a million Vietnamese refugees reside in California, and Orange County's Little Saigon is home to the largest Vietnamese population outside of Vietnam. I have had the honor to represent Little Saigon for over 20 years and the legislation has been monumental to the Vietnamese-American community here and statewide.

I have concerns about the process, the inability for myself and the community to participate, and the proposed content of the development of the model curriculum. This process was intended to be public, allowing for multiple public hearings where community and stakeholders could comment. This hasn't been the case, and frankly, goes against regulations in the statute for this process. Now, in sections one and two, section one points out the process and how the community is denied public access. Section two points out the inability for State Senator Janet Nguyen and the community to participate.

Now, I will read out section three which addresses the content. Now, the content does not align with legislative intent. OCDE has refused to provide a draft of the proposed curriculum to state senator; however, they provided an outline of topics that they plan to include. I have reviewed the outline. Taking that as face value, I found several problems with it, namely the entirety of unit four in my legislation SB 3609. It clearly states that the timeline to be included in the curriculum we will cover 1975 to 2000.

**SPARKS:** Thank you. Your time is up. Thank you so much.

**TINA:** Thank you.

**SPARKS:** Laurel Feldner is up, and on deck is Galina Bukh.

**LAUREL:** My name is Laurel Feldner, and I was an IUSD student starting in the seventh grade and graduating in 2020. I loved my very first day of middle school. My last class of the day was science and I hit it off with my partner. He must have felt the same way because he invited me to a service at his church. I appreciated the offer but told him that I couldn't. I'm Jewish. He told me, Laurel, you are really nice. But, you are going to hell, and I can save you. Before then, antisemitism was just an abstract concept, but at 12-years-old, at Jeffrey Trail Middle School, it became very real. The antisemitism I faced reached a fever pitch in my senior year at Portola High when I was harassed for months in my Spanish class by a fellow student who would make what he called jokes but were actually horrific comments making light of the Holocaust and blatantly telling me that I should have suffered the same fate as the 6 million Jews who were systematically murdered.

In order to stop this harassment, I had to involve my teacher, administration, and ultimately the anti-defamation league. The student was spoken to, removed from my classes, written up, and took a course on tolerance, and that was it. His life continued like nothing had happened. Antisemitism has been a cancer at IUSD for years, and it is time to cut out this ever-growing tumor. Students who engage in antisemitic behavior must be held accountable for their actions so they remember that it's never okay, just as Jewish students like me remember the discrimination we faced from our peers. From generation to generation, we pass along the stories of those in power leaving us high and dry. Let this be the first moment of change. Let the next generation of students, both Jewish and non-Jewish, tell their children that the department of education protected them, that their peers were not allowed to make them feel unsafe or uncomfortable in their school community. All kids should feel safe at school.

My greatest hope is that one day the only thing Jewish students fear is a pop quiz. Thank you.

**SPARKS:** Thank you. Galina is up and on deck is Deborah Steinberger Raz.

**GALINA:** Hello, my name is Galina. As you can see, I don't have anything written down because I decided not to use that. I'm here to talk to you as a parent, parent to parent. I'm a very concerned mother of kids who attend OCSA, a school in your district. They have been attending the school since 2018. I have been a very active parent and dealing and talking to the administration since 2018 about various acts of antisemitism that my kids have faced or had a knowledge of. My kids are also very, very proud Jewish kids who are very active on campus. My son started the Jewish Students Club on campus. He graduated from OCSA and then my daughter continued. Every step of the way, from asking a Holocaust survivor to come to school, was a fight. To celebrating Jewish Heritage Month, is a fight. Every time, anything that has to do with—and we are not talking about Israel, forget about even mentioning Israel. We don't even go there. We are talking about the social club, a cultural club, who is just simply trying to show and teach other kids what Judaism is, who are Jews.

Talk about the holidays, talking about the heritage, talking about the history, and nothing else. Every single thing that the club wanted to do is a fight with the school. There is a particular teacher on campus who has been spewing antisemitic stuff since I have known her, since 2018. Now I wouldn't call her an anti-Semite. She is just simply a Palestinian born in Jordan. However, the information she is getting, and the same thing was in the article that was mentioned earlier, is the information from the wrong sources. Now we are talking about school, school and principal and vice principals who have absolutely no knowledge of what is in the curriculum.

**SPARKS:** Thank you. Thank you. Your time is up. Your time is up. Thank you so much.

**GALINA:** Thank you.

**SPARKS:** Deborah Steinberger Raz is up, and on deck is Cyndie. I can't read it, Borcoman.

**DEBORAH:** Good afternoon. I also don't have prepared statements. You will hear from my daughter shortly. I am a parent of four children. First, all of them were in the Tustin Unified School District, and I do currently have three who are students at OCSA. Other people have spoken to more details, or more specific issues, that we are dealing with currently at my children's school. I want to speak more generally as a parent also about where we are in today's world and where I think that there is a responsibility at all levels, not only at the school level but also at the department of education level to institute programming to address what is going on. I am the granddaughter of Holocaust survivors. I was born in Europe. We moved here in the '70s when there were antisemitic terrorist acts against Jewish communities, Jewish institutions.

My parents moved to California to be able to raise us Jewish in a more open, and welcoming, and inclusive environment. In my various travails, I ended up in Canada with my family. When we moved to Orange County, I was shocked first again at the Tustin Unified School District by my children being told Holocaust jokes, things that I in my now 50 years I had never heard from in any setting. Where we are today, is that my husband and I are urging our children not to wear any visible symbols of their Jewish identity. My daughter, who is a very proud, young Jewish woman, wears a star of David. Whether she is walking the dog or whether she is in school, we

have told her not to wear outward symbols of her Jewish identity. That is pretty pathetic. I do believe that there needs to be programming in place at all levels because this is where it starts.

**SPARKS:** Thank you.

**DEBORAH:** As they grow up, it's only going to get worse.

**SPARKS:** Thank you. Your time is up. Thank you. Cindra is up and on deck is Noga Raz.

**CYNDIE:** Hello, my name is Cyndie Borcoman. Greetings, Board. I'm here as a retired teacher for ACCESS and a child advocate. I have been told that the teachers from ACCESS were told not to come here by Miramontes. I started getting calls and letters sent to me about the hostile environment created by Superintendent Miramontes about five months ago. First, he wanted dissolve the school for impoverished youth at Skyview. That has been put on a pause because the school board actually went there and realized how special this school was. The parents and the families needed that school because they had a food pantry, and they had many special community resources. Miramontes, according to the teachers, has created a hostile workplace. Please check if any teachers or staff have claimed stress leave recently. They are scared of this leader.

They had an advocate with them with Vern Burton who is no longer there. They have no idea where he went. He cared and listened to them. The bottom line is they don't know where he is, and they are afraid. They call it retribution. If you speak against Miramontes, it is his way or the door. I guess, according to Vern, or not according to Vern, but according to the teachers, he is out. Miramontes hired Fred Navarro who was from Newport-Mesa School District. He ended up resigning because he created a hostile workplace according to his staff and cabinet. You can look that up on Google. Miramontes is working together with the teacher's union President Laurie Martinez. According to the teachers, Miramontes has been present to their meetings and urged teachers to unseat the present school board. Isn't that unprofessional to do this? Many teachers are not in agreement with Laurie Martinez. They want a voice.

The bottom line, I'm a taxpayer, and I don't appreciate it. I want to even know where Fred Navarro even got his salary. Thank you.

**SPARKS:** Thank you. Noga is up and on deck is Alex Rothenberg.

**NOGA:** Hello, my name is Noga Raz. As a senior at Orange County School of the Arts, vice president of the Jewish Student Union, and part of the Coalition for Anti-Racism and Inclusion, I stand before you today deeply unsettled, unsafe, and uncomfortable on our campus. Over the past few years, our school has experienced a series of troubling incidents that have heightened tensions and fostered an environment of fear and division. From antisemitic comments, and discriminatory behavior, to the spread of hateful student-led propaganda, our campus has become a breeding ground for intolerance and hostility. We have witnessed swastikas painted on school property, insensitive remarks made in classrooms that caused me and fellow Jewish students to feel ostracized, and unwelcome, and a disturbing lack of response from the school administration.

In 2021, an article in the OCSA *Evolution* portrayed Israel in a negative light leading to hurtful experiences for Jewish Israeli students like myself. Throughout 2023, multiple swastikas were discovered on campus, and antisemitic rhetoric was normalized, making me feel angry and unsafe. Despite reporting these incidents to school officials, little was done to address the underlying issue or providing a sense of security for affected students. The events of October 7 and leading into 2024, have only exacerbated our concerns. From callous, hurtful comments about Jews and Israelis, to the publication of a biased article in a school paper that promotes misinformation and demonizes one side of this complex conflict, there is a palpable animosity towards Jewish students and/or students who support Israel, such that we feel we need to hide our identity and silence our voices instead of providing programming in the immediate timeframe to address what is happening right now and perhaps promoting a productive dialogue amongst students. Our campus has become a battleground for opposing ideologies. It is clear that our school administration has failed to adequately address these issues and create a safe and inclusive environment for all students. The lack of proactive measures to combat hate and promote understanding is unacceptable.

It's imperative that the administration take concrete steps to address these issues, including implementing education programs on cultural sensitivity, providing support for affected students, and holding perpetrators accountable for their actions. This means bringing in more antisemitic education.

**SPARKS:** Thank you. Your time is up. Thank you so much. Alex Rothenberg and on deck is Inbol Greenberg.

**ALEX:** Hello, my name is Alex Rothenberg. Like Noga, I'm a senior at the Orange County School of the Arts. My school has always had problems with antisemitism, but nothing compared to the last few months since the tragic events of October 7. There have been many instances of antisemitism since then, as mentioned by multiple other speakers. An article in *Evolution*, my school's newspaper, gave a very biased and misinformed account against Israel's creation and actions in the Israel-Hamas war. This, by the way, was allowed to be published by a school faculty member. Through all these instances, our school administration has often been unresponsive and are unwilling to do anything proactive to assist the Jewish and Israeli community in fighting against this misinformation and hate we face constantly at school. They have said they understand how difficult this is for us and vaguely promised to take action against these problems, yet almost nothing happens. Due to lack of education in my school, I have had to explain to a very close friend of mine, who is one of the kindest and best people I know, that Israel, the home of my people, was not colonized and ethnically cleansed of Palestinians.

I have had friends who have been harassed and discriminated against by peers due to their identity. I have seen people that say the Jewish people use the Holocaust as an excuse for apartheid, and I could go on and on naming times and instances that these problems have come up. Because of the time constraint, however, I simply urge the Orange County school board to act against this bigotry and misinformation and provide better education so my community, my friends and I, can feel safe being who we are. Thank you.

**SPARKS:** Thank you. Inbol Greenberg and on deck is Stephaney Avital.

**INBEL:** Hi, I'm Inbel Greenberg, the IAC, Israeli American Council, regional director in Orange County, and I wanted to share about the rise of antisemitism in Orange County. Since October 7, I'm getting daily phone calls from parents, from students, that shares many incidents that is going on during school hours and afterschool hours, whether it's in elementary schools, middle schools, or high schools. The community feels unsafe. Therefore, I'm here to share that. I do ask the Board to have actually more education about Israel. I know that since October 7, the world has a little bit changed. There is a Jewish education in school district today. But, we do need more about Israel as a country, Israel conflict so teachers, educators, staff and students will know more details and more of the story versus the social media. This is why I'm asking you to help us and assist with this. Thank you.

**SPARKS:** Thank you. Stephaney is up and on deck is Ilana Rosenblatt.

**STEPHANEY:** Thank you for allowing me to speak today. We moved to Orange County 15 years ago with our three children, and they attended schools in Newport-Mesa School District. They had overall wonderful experiences. But, my youngest daughter experienced something that was so shocking by her four friends. She was hanging out with four young boys in the sixth grade. They saw an older brother in the eighth grade who, they were reading "Night," in the English classes of course. The older brother did a heil Hitler to my daughter when she was at their house, and they all thought it was funny. That continued throughout the school year.

Not only that, comments of one of the young boys, whenever she was an earshot, would mention Hitler or the Jews when he knew that she was within earshot in the classroom; or, he would do a quiet, small little heil Hitler to her. Again, these were her friends. She had mentioned certain things to me, and I said, okay, well stand up for yourself. Tell them they can't do that. It's not nice. But, that didn't happen. It culminated at the end of the year. The principal at the time took care of the problem. I ended up going to her. The last comment was they were playing a game on the recess playground of roasting each other and one of the young boys said, "I'm going to have to roast the feminist because the Jews have already been roasted." Of course they think this is funny in sixth grade.

Well, we did go to the principal. The principal handled it beautifully. My concern, I want to understand more about how it trickles up or down the system between board trustees, superintendents. I mean, if a principal handles a situation in her school, does it stop there, or does it get reported? Does it get written down? I know that there is a process, and she didn't go put it on the boy's record because they were young. They all had to write letters of an apology, and whatnot, and so forth. She handled it that way. I just would love to know more about how it's handled as far as the process of keeping record of things, because often things don't get reported to the police even, unless it escalates to that of course. But anyway, thank you.

**SPARKS:** Thank you. Ilana Rosenblatt and on deck is Max Toporek.

**ILANA:** Hello, and thank you so much for your time today. I would like to speak as a parent that is just very concerned for the safety and wellbeing of my children also at OCSA. Since October 7, there has been a huge rise in antisemitic events that my children have faced. They go to school every day with so much anxiety, thinking, is something going to happen today? Often it does. On

an individual basis, when one of my daughters was bullied by another student, the school did handle it adequately, not publicly at all. The student is still there, and I don't think even was suspended. But as long as that was handled, I was okay with it.

Really, I'm just so concerned with this huge rise in antisemitism that is spreading, and that article that everybody has been talking about, it was just so egregious, just so many blatant antisemitic propaganda lies. It is just being allowed to go out to the student body, and the school doesn't really do anything about it. So many parents have just been outraged over it, and the school just sent out this ridiculously bland response that meant absolutely nothing to us and left us even just feeling like they just don't care. Every day my students have to live with this, like I mentioned. One of the teachers has a Palestinian banner hanging in her classroom. This teacher is also spreading openly antisemitic lies. I know that these instances cannot necessarily be labeled as bullying. But it significantly affects the students, and their wellbeing, and the stress level that they are enduring at school. I'm sure you can imagine, that age, middle school and high school is such a vulnerable time for them anyway. These kids already have so much stress and anxiety, and they go to school every day living with this. Thank you so much.

**SPARKS:** Thank you. Max is up and on deck is Laurie Suvall.

**MAX:** My name is Max Toporek. In seventh grade I attended Ensign Middle School, and I had faced antisemitism multiple times. First one was in PE, and I had swastikas drawn on my back and in the sand on the beach volleyball courts. When I walked into the locker room, some kids would even heil Hitler at me. At first, I felt dehumanized, alienated, and shut down. Honestly, I was just scared to be a Jew. When people asked what holidays I celebrated or where my family was from, I couldn't even answer that honestly. Later in the year in public speaking class, a classmate of mine decided to dress up as Hitler to school and give a speech about him as if it was his idol. Even the teacher of the class kicked me out of the class during the speech because I complained about it. She was even against me.

In seventh grade, I felt like the world was against me as a Jew. I felt extreme hate and experienced it to my face. Everyone looked at me and laughed because I was the Jew. I was always known as the Jew and eventually I just got used to it. It was part of my identity. Just imagine the first thing people see about you is that you are the one dirty Jew at school and are a free punching bag. Then, imagine facing that at a time in life or what people think about you shapes your perception of yourself as a young seventh grader. Attending Enson made me lose all interest in being a Jew, and I was brainwashed into thinking that being Jewish was a crime. Is this really what we stand for in Orange County? Because this is what happened to me, many people I know, and to this day, so many other Jewish students.

In the middle of the school year, I decided it was best for me to move schools and attend Tarbut V'Torah. To be honest, I was embarrassed to go to school here at first, because, why would I want to be around so many Jews? The kids and faculty at Enson had gotten into my head. They made Jews seem so horrible that I had no idea what it meant to even be Jewish anymore. I'm talking in front of you today, six years later, as a proud Jew. I will stand up for being Jewish until the day I die because being Jewish is a gift.

**SPARKS:** Thank you. Lori Suvalle is up.

**LORI:** Wow, what a brave young man. Thank you for sharing that story. It affected me very much because my son, as well, had terrible experiences. We are in the Irvine Unified School District. In seventh grade, my son was choked in class. A few months later he was held up against a wall and told that all Jews should burn. At that point he said that he did not want to return to school. The school spent two weeks doing paperwork to transfer him to another school. He was homeschooled for two weeks, and he felt like he did something wrong. The kid who held him against a wall and choked him got back to school. He had a one-day suspension.

My son also was put at TVT, a private Jewish day school because he wasn't safe. He wasn't looked out for at all. He was marked truant when he was in the counseling office, refusing to go back to class. The school didn't even know where he was and marked him truant. He was there in the counseling office, so he spent four years in the private schools. He wanted to go back to Woodbridge High School for his senior year. Six weeks into being at Woodbridge, he got into a verbal altercation with a young man in the bathroom at school. This young man struck my son in the face, so my son fought back. This was an Arab young man. Later that day, all of his friends started making fun of him saying, you let a Jew beat you up and this and that. Two days later, this Arab young man stalked my son, found him with his friends at the Woodbridge Center. He told my son, I have a gun in the car. I am going to kidnap you, take you out to the desert, chop you up in pieces, go back to your house, and kill your whole Jew family. He was arrested. He was put in jail for a short time. He was expelled from the school system, but this is what is happening in your schools.

When I was a kid, school was the only safe place. Now, it is the opposite. You guys have a lot of work to do.

**SPARKS:** Thank you. Thank you. Those are our public comments.

**SHAW:** Okay, well thank you everyone for your comments. We don't comment on comments. It's not on our agenda, but I know. I was taking notes and very much affected by your comments. We will proceed to our consent calendar. I will be pulling item number six for separate discussion. Do I have any other items from the consent calendar to remove? If not—

**WILLIAMS:** I will second that motion.

**SHAW:** Okay, I will move approval of the balance, and Dr. Williams will second. All in favor?

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

**SHAW:** Any opposed? For item number six, I would like to register an abstention, as this is a reimbursement for my travel. This was related to Senate Bill 907, a bill and committee up in Sacramento. There is going to be another hearing on this bill on April 16. We had set the agenda and then found out it will be heard again at the Elections Committee on April 16. We were thinking about ways to have the Board discuss the travel for Dr. Sparks and myself. We are going to tag team it. When I was up there alone, it didn't work. They still voted the wrong way.



Hopefully, with Lisa's help, we will turn them around. I would ask that the Board would consider authorizing travel for Dr. Sparks and I. Can we do it that way, Renee?

**HENDRICK:** Yeah, I think you can.

**WILLIAMS:** Yeah, we can do what we want to do. I will make the motion to approve item number six with the additional pre-approval. We can come back under consent calendar to approve the next meeting that you fly up to, which is in two or three weeks to address that committee.

**BARKE:** I will second that.

**SHAW:** Okay. All in favor?

**VALDES, BARKE, WILLIAMS:** Aye.

**SHAW:** I will abstain. Okay.

**SPARKS:** I should abstain too since—

**SHAW:** Why don't you—

**SPARKS:** —I'm on the deck as well, so I'm going to abstain.

**SHAW:** Okay, very good. Thank you. We will—

**WILLIAMS:** By the way, I don't think from a parliamentary procedure that there is a conflict of interest if you voted.

**SHAW:** Probably not.

**WILLIAMS:** You are doing board business, but I know—

**SPARKS:** Yeah.

**WILLIAMS:** —there is politics out there.

**SPARKS:** No.

**SHAW:** Err on the side of caution.

**WILLIAMS:** Yeah.

**SHAW:** Item number eight, charter submissions. Renee, are there charter submissions this evening?

**HENDRICK:** Yes, you have two, and you should have received them in your packets on Friday. The first one is a material revision from the Orange County Classical Academy. The public hearing for that will be on May 1, and action will be taken by the Board on June 18. The second is a countywide petition by Orange Springs Charter School. They also will have a public hearing on May 1 and action on June 18.

**SHAW:** Terrific, so we will look forward to those. Okay, item number nine, charter school public hearing. Tustin International Charter School. Aracely Chastain, director of the Charter School Unit will facilitate this public hearing.

**CHASTAIN:** Thank you. Good evening, President Shaw and Trustees. Today, the board will hold a hearing to consider public input regarding the charter petition submitted by Tustin International Charter School on February 16 after denial by the Tustin Unified School District governing board. The charter school proposes to operate a classroom-based program serving students from transitional kindergarten through grade five for an initial five-year charter term from 2024-2029. Before public comments, representatives from Tustin International Charter School are allotted 15 minutes to address the board. Representatives from Tustin Unified School District will not be addressing the board today. I now call representatives from Tustin Unified School District to the podium.

**SHUHAN:** Good evening, dear President Shaw and esteemed trustee members. Thank you for giving us this opportunity to address you today. Let's see, how do we make sure this is on?

**HENDRICK:** Our media team will turn it on.

**SHUHAN:** There you go. Okay, so my name is Shuhan Wang, and my colleague here is Steven Chuang, and Joe Liu, and also Delano. Basically, let me tell you a little bit about myself. I am president of ELE Consulting International, and I'm working internationally and nationally. I am a senior advisor to Asia Society. I'm also the director of Chinese Early Language and Immersion Network at Asia Society, and I have been serving as an advisor to Singapore Ministry of Education on their Chinese as a mother tongue project and curriculum. Meanwhile, I am a grandmother of six wonderful grandchildren. What is really very interesting is that our family's own search and journey for the best public school, or the best educational experiences for them, and I will talk about that later.

Basically here, our vision for Tustin International School, I will call it TICS, is to empower students for global success. The proposed school will bring transformative educational experiences beyond just academic excellence by fostering multilingualism, global competency, and a culture of inclusion. TICS will equip students with knowledge, skills, disposition, and the mindset for leading and working in this interconnected world. We have five major points to make today, but we will go through them one by one. I'm not going to read the list to you. The first one though is Mandarin English, dual language immersion, is a viable educational choice for many, many parents and communities. As I said earlier, I have three children. One of my daughters lived in Manhattan, moved to New Jersey because there is a Chinese immersion dual language program there. She moved there and then the school moved on her. So she had to travel 40 minutes one way each day just to take the kids to school. Two hours on the school, and the

kids are two years old, four years old, and five years old. Imagine those kids spending two hours back and forth on the road.

The other daughter lives in Boston area. They have no Chinese immersion program, so she had to sign them up for virtual online tutoring program for her children so that they can become bilingual, bicultural. These are the quests that the parents are making. Of course, I realize my daughters have more resources, but not every family has that kind of resources to find the best education program possible for their children. But, the world needs it, also the community partnership. TICS will bring in, not only the local, connect with the local, but also bring in global resources and connections. We, as an immersion school, by nature it is already valuing, and welcoming, and respecting all languages, cultures, and different identities. In fact, we foster that kind of global identities to show people, to show students, how to be productive citizens in the world.

On the other hand, as I said, the examples from New Jersey, New York, and Boston, and also here, it really shows. I know that in the U.S. there are 350/60 Chinese immersion programs in the country. We really need a lot more. The idea here, TIC is not trying to get the pie off anybody's plate. Rather, it is trying to create more innovative, delicious, and wonderful pies so that more kids, more families could have them. That is the kind of opportunities that we would try to bring in. In Orange County alone, since the 1980s, because a Chinese Mandarin program was never available in the community, parents get together, have formed the Chinese heritage schools. To date, there are 12 Chinese heritage weekend schools, 3,000 students. That is the parents, families from Taiwan. In the meantime, from China, they have a similar number of students in the area attending the weekend schools. But if they have the option in the public schools, they will send their children here.

Also, the wonderful Irvine Chinese International Academy, since they are opening the doors, they actually attracted 60 families from Tustin area to Irvine. As we said, we need to create more pies. A Chinese immersion program is not only just for Chinese background, it really is for all students because we all need that. Two thirds of population in the world are bilinguals, and every country invested in language education. More than 80 countries signed an MOU with the Chinese government. They are making Chinese language study as a part of their primary education. My son lives in Thailand. In Thailand, it's a national policy. Every university must offer Chinese. It tells you that people are looking that. Countries are looking at that as a good investment for their human resources.

On the other hand, as I said, the parents' demands are not being met. Everybody is talking about AI. We are in the AI age. In the AI age, research has shown over and over intercultural, interpersonal communication, and the ability to collaborate, to communicate, with teams of different backgrounds, different disciplines, those are education premiums, critical thinking, problem solving skills, and the ability to have the openness in mind and empathy, and the ability to adapt to change. I remember there is a book on the mouse, "Who Ate My Cheese?" Right? Here in Orange County you already have the multilingual capacity. That is a wonderful, wonderful human resource. You need to tap into that. You need to develop that even more so that Orange County can be the number one in the country, as a model for how you do it. That is really a mandate. You already have that wonderful resource. Use it. Use it. Cultivate it.

The multilingual education research have shown over 30 more years of international studies shown it unlocks the cognitive advantages. Cognitive skills are the skills that we need in the AI age, and development, academic achievement, and also the global competency. These are all what we need.

The third point is that we brought in proven leadership that provides effective school management. I will turn that to my colleague, Steven Chuang, here, and he will talk about that.

**CHUANG:** Board members, directors, and parents, good evening. My name is Steven Chuang. I used to be a Chinese teacher for 15 years in Philadelphia. Then, I moved to Northern California to be the principal of College Park Elementary School in San Mateo-Foster City School District. Under my principalship, I was able to turn that school around, especially to improve the academic performance for ELL learners. In 2018, College Park is identified as one of the 2018 Distinguished School with high academic performance. Nearly four years ago, as most board members can remember, Doug Husen and I stood here to advocate for the first Mandarin immersion program in the city of Irvine. We are so glad that the board approved it, and we do see the strong demand that many more parents want to enroll their child in MIP, Mandarin Immersion Program. We see the concern from Tustin Unified School District, at least 60 families, parents, they have to travel more than an hour. That is what we learned during the public hearing at Tustin Unified School District. That is why I'm standing here again to advocate for all these families. Hopefully, we can have more Mandarin immersion programs that can tailor parents' needs.

Among our founding team, we also have other leaders from other charter schools. It has been proven successful. For example, we have Dr. Luyi Lien from Yinghua Academy in Minnesota. She helped to build a school, and it has been more than 18 years. Her school is identified as one of the Blue-Ribbon schools. Another one would be Ruby Costea. She built the Mandarin immersion program in Maryland. Right now they have the program all the way to high school. We are also collaborating with Yu Ming Charter School, the very famous charter school in Oakland. We just want to let you know that we do have a plan. Once the charter petition is approved, we will collaborate with other successful school programs. We will work with CCSA as well to make sure the school will be successful.

As to the teachers, we will be working with the local universities like Chapman, Pepperdine, Loyola Marymount, and UCLA. We want to make sure that we have enough. How do you qualify credential teachers, especially in Mandarin? We know there is a shortage in recruiting credentialed teachers in California, and we will make sure the school will hire all the highly qualified teachers. Thank you.

For the financial health, we are working with Delano Jones from North Compass Consulting, and they have been working with many, many charter schools to make sure they plan it right. We will apply for the state and federal grants to make sure we have extra resources to help to operate each program. We value the transparency and accountability. We will post the monthly physical report on our website to make sure everything is transparent. We also gather parents' input during the LCAP meeting to make sure we value parents, value and also meet each individual student's need.

**SHUHAN:** Wonderful. The last point we would like to make is that the charter school TICS will increase the students and communities' connections with Asia, while enhancing technological and media literacy. On the surface, TICS is teaching Mandarin, language and culture, in addition to English and so forth, the regular school curriculum. That is on the surface. On the other hand, they are learning about the countries, the regions, the people who are using those languages. By extension, they are also learning the whole Asia. Our curriculum in social studies have been Eurocentric since we started schools. We have not been updating the knowledge, any information. We don't really know how to interact and what is happening, much of what is happening out there. On the other hand, the technological advancement is happening in Asia. Through the study, and the use of those tools, and virtual, and real connections, and partnerships, our students will really learn, have all that.

**SHAW:** I think for now your time is up. It doesn't mean we are done, because we are going to have public comments and questions from the Board.

**SHUHAN:** Wonderful.

**SHAW:** Okay.

**SHUHAN:** Thank you so much. That is my last one.

**SHAW:** All right, thank you.

**CHASTAIN:** Thank you so much. The hearing is now open for 15 minutes of public comments. Deputy Superintendent Hendrick, are there any public comments for this agenda item?

**HENDRICK:** I do not have any public comments.

**CHASTAIN:** The public hearing is now concluded. The Orange County Board of Education Staff Recommendations, including recommended findings, will be published by May 21. At the June 5 meeting, the Board will conduct a public hearing and take action to grant or deny the charter school petition. President Shaw, I now close the public hearing and return the meeting back to you.

**SHAW:** Terrific. Thank you. Do any members of the board have questions?

**VALDES:** Yes.

**SHAW:** I will start with you, Trustee Valdes. Please.

**VALDES:** I'm going to be a while. Mr. Chuang, would you come back to the podium?

**CHUAN:** Hi. Good evening.

**VALDES:** Good evening, sir. I have been preparing for this for about a month since I saw this charter. A little background, I live in Tustin. Your proposal is near and dear to me because the

school that you would propose to start would very likely be in the legacy, which is right across the street from where I live. My neighbors would go there. I pay attention to all of these, but I paid particular attention to this one. Contra to the public comment that we just rubber stamp these things, I want to go through a list of concerns that I have with respect to this petition. You sir, started the Irvine International Academy?

**CHUANG:** Yes.

**VALDES:** Okay. I don't think it's not public knowledge that this board had a lot of problems, and the Department had a lot of problems with the Irvine International Academy while you were heading that academy. Would you say that that is a fair statement?

**CHUANG:** There were differences, yes.

**VALDES:** As far as I can tell, the Department issued the Irvine International Academy when you were the executive director—

**CHUANG:** No, I was not.

**VALDES:** You were the principal?

**CHUANG:** Yes.

**VALDES:** Okay. Five notices of concern. One of them was dated December 21 of '21, and it was regarding failing to pay taxes. Another one was May 2, '22. Failing to adopt a conflict of interest code, failing to abide by the school's nepotism policy. Another one is March 23, '22, failing to properly protect personal and confidential information, failing to submit mandatory 700 Conflict of Interest forms. What is our assurance as a board, that, for example, if you were to head this school, which you are proposing now, problems like that are not going to happen again?

**CHUANG:** Okay. As I shared earlier, that we value the transparency, so we will make sure all the information is shared during the board meeting. The five problems you just mentioned, that is beyond my control. I don't think it's about me, when I was the principal there. Actually, when the school is audited, I'm the one to help with the audition. The director may have more information and detail regarding that. Moving forward, again, I was well trained. I always follow the guidelines. When I was the principal at College Park Elementary School, I have a coach. I always have the highest work ethics. I know what would be the guideline to follow, not to break against anything, the problem you just mentioned.

**VALDES:** In this new school, would you be the principal again?

**CHUANG:** No, not exactly.

**VALDES:** What would your position be?

**CHUANG:** I'm a board member right now.

**VALDES:** Okay, so you would be a board member. Who would be the principal and who would be the executive director?

**CHUANG:** So far, we are still not like 100% defined. We will recruit leaders with the credential and experience.

**VALDES:** Okay. You want us to approve a charter school, but you can't identify an executive director or a principal tonight?

**CHUANG:** I would say Ruby Costea, if we want to define tonight. She has many years of experience building her own Mandarin immersion program, and she has a credential.

**VALDES:** That is a real problem for me. When I look at these charter schools, and I'm looking at some charter school leaders in our audience tonight, I am looking at these charter school principals and executive directors as highly accomplished people with huge track records. To me, that is part of my decision-making process, because the executive director and the principal, they are the two people that everybody answers to. This is like a business. A business starts from the top. For you to not have identified two people that are going to be the ED and the principal is really problematic to me if you are just a board member.

Let me continue. As far as the business viability, I think I can get past that. I have called around. The Irvine International Academy has a wait list, so I think I can get past the fact that you are proposing to teach another 400 kids in Mandarin. I think that may be viable, but the question has come back to your leadership and what the leadership would look like at this new school. Let's see here. I was told, and I'm going to keep these people anonymous, but that you held a meeting with staff at the Irvine International Academy with parents and staff to forcibly oust Michael Scott from the school. Did you do that?

**CHUANG:** No, that is not true.

**VALDES:** All right. I was told that the Department had an annual inspection. Apparently, we go to the schools to inspect every year, and you didn't want to participate in that annual inspection. You told the staff to handle it.

**CHUANG:** No, that is not true.

**VALDES:** All right, did a parent sue the school while you were the principal for ignoring duties surrounding bullying? Did a parent sue the school?

**CHUANG:** I'm not aware of.

**VALDES:** Okay. Where are all your families tonight in support? One of the things we do here is to look for the support. I have already mentioned that I think I can get past that, but do you have anyone here that would support this school?

**CHUANG:** Well, we got an email from Teresa Johnson saying that there will be many people here during the board meeting. They said another way to show the support is to email the board.

**VALDES:** Okay. Well, I don't know if my board members got anything, but I didn't. Another concern I have is that CCSA is not going to submit a letter of support for this school. Are you aware of that?

**CHUANG:** They said because of the timeline we submitted the charter petition, we missed that screen. They said at this point they won't be able to do that. If we consider the first year to be the planning year, then they will be able to support us.

**VALDES:** Okay. I just want to tell you, these are real significant concerns for me, because there is a huge knowledge base there and a support structure for new schools. Not being part of CCSA is a big problem for me. If you have a problem with a petition, or if you have a problem finding a vendor, they are going to help you do that. They are going to educate you in how to properly run a school.

**CHUANG:** Yes.

**VALDES:** Not being a CCSA member and not getting that letter of support from them is a big deal to me. I don't know if it is to my colleagues, but it is to me. I went through the Tustin denial, and for the most part it's just what I would expect from a local school board. It really has very little substance to it in my view. There is not a lot of good reasons there. Although, I did see one reason for denial at the local school board that I wanted to ask you about. Lack of teacher signatures in the local area I thought was something that I would at least concern myself with. Do you have any teachers lined up to teach at this school at all?

**CHUANG:** We didn't go to the, how do you call that, public to recruit teachers in the nearby area. The signatures we are able to collect is from one of our founding team members, Dr. Luyi. She is the professor at California State University in San Francisco, and she has been training teachers to teach Mandarin. That is why we are able to gather all these data of support in such a short period.

**VALDES:** Did you say that person was from Northern California?

**CHUANG:** Yes.

**VALDES:** Okay. But who would teach in Tustin? Do you have anyone lined up to teach in Tustin?

**CHUANG:** At this point, we don't.

**VALDES:** I'm going to move this along to my colleagues, Mr. Chuang. My personal opinion right now is this petition is not ready. That is my inclination today. You don't have the teachers. I'm not real satisfied with the answers you gave me regarding the Department's notices of



concern. I certainly am not here trying to create more work for Aracely who has got, I'm sure, plenty of work; but, I will defer to my colleagues.

**SHAW:** Very well. Dr. Sparks?

**SPARKS:** Yeah. Just to confirm, I did get some emails. I did get some emails in support. To echo a lot of Trustee Valdes' concerns, I would definitely be inclined to support, given that you have worked closely with CCSA and that they are confident that the school has dotted all its i's and crossed all its T's. I'm hearing from some of your answers that maybe there is more work to be done there. As I think a lot of folks know, we very much want to approve high-quality charter schools. But if you are not ready, we are not inclined to do that. We certainly don't want to get in a situation like we found ourselves with the Irvine Academy after that approval, because some of those i's hadn't been dotted, and t's hadn't been crossed, and some of the lack of leadership there.

We want to make sure that everything is in place before we are going to be in a position to support. We are going to be looking very closely at the financials, be looking very closely at the student interest, the family interest. These things do need to be brought here. I mean, I would like to see families and support here in person and not just through the email. We do have the public comment avenue for that. Those are just some of my concerns and what I would like to see moving forward. Hopefully, you will take some of our comments to heart and be as prepared as possible.

**CHUANG:** Sure.

**SHAW:** Thank you. Dr. Williams?

**WILLIAMS:** Yes. Just to put the record straight, let me give a historical sequence of the International Academy. Mr. Chuang was the first principal. It was Dr. Michael Scott who brought that petition to us originally about a year earlier, I believe. Then, when we approved it, and it was rejected by Irvine Unified School District, we actually rejected it. It was not the best language. It was not something where the i's were dotted and the t's were crossed, and there was some weaknesses in the charter petition. We thought in our wisdom, unlike what has been said about this board, we just don't rubber stamp every charter school. Which by the way, for those who still think that charter schools are privatized, you are not. You are a public school, aren't you? You have anybody in the public that can attend your school.

In fact, we have some great charter schools that if you were to go to them, they would charge \$20,000 a year back east in some of these great charter schools. But you don't charge any public tuition. You are a public school. Charter schools are public. Let me just lay that as a foundation here. Dr. Scott came to us that first year. We said you got to improve upon it. You need to work with the state charter school association. He worked with the charter school association. He went through the entire process again, actually. He went through the Irvine, they denied it, and then it came back to us. But that petition was much more strong. It had all the t's crossed and the i's dotted, and I think the state charter school people assisted in that process. Anyway, that is just to correct some of the fallacies and the statements that is brought into this board meeting as part of a political campaign.

But, let's get back to the resolution. There was quite a lengthy resolution by the Tustin School Board here, and it is a little bit longer, and there is some concerns. I think Trustee Valdes brought up that the teachers, there were teachers who were signing this who are not from this area. It looks better if you have teachers that are local that want to participate. It looks like you are kind of going out to recruit in areas that those teachers may not actually come here. That would be my initial concern here. There is a lot of other issues in the resolution that was passed by the Tustin School Board, which is kind of typical. I really don't pay much attention to that. Because, whenever they say that the curriculum is going to be non-effective, to me, that just means it's going to be. Every charter school that we passed here has been effective and has had a significant impact upon the community in helping those kids.

Again, the teachers' signatures, that might be something that would be a concern. The SELPA membership that they brought up, I don't know if you have changed that or rectified that. That was something they brought up. These are the technicalities that make a difference in a successful school.

**CHUANG:** Yeah. For SELPA, the LA County SELPA will accept our membership once it is approved. It is like chicken and eggs. You must be approved first—

**WILLIAMS:** Right.

**CHUANG:** —otherwise, you cannot be a member. As to the concern regarding recruiting local teachers, again, because this is not like we are able to hire them. Because the charter has not been approved. These teachers, they will not sign, especially in this area. Because, they don't want their current school to go after them since this is all public record. That is the catch 22. Just to let you know, that is the teachers' concern in this area if they are currently in working as public-school teachers. Charter schools is just like another public school, they need credential. That explains why it is really challenging for us to have the name of the teacher. We will be teaching at Tustin International Charter School once it's approved. It is, again, like chicken and egg. We are not approved yet. We are not there yet at all.

**WILLIAMS:** We know that. We know by history, that is always something that is a big challenge. The starting up of funds to start the school, the facilities is the other big key.

**CHUANG:** Yes.

**WILLIAMS:** That is always a challenge for charter schools.

**CHUANG:** Yes.

**WILLIAMS:** But I think, and I echo many of the comments by Trustee Valdes, getting connected with the state charter people can really help. Do you have an attorney working with you?

**CHUANG:** Yes, we work with Young, Minney, and Corr.

**WILLIAMS:** Oh, okay.

**CHUANG:** Yeah, Janelle.

**WILLIAMS:** Right.

**CHUANG:** We have been working with her. Our charter petition, she went over everything with us.

**WILLIAMS:** Okay.

**CHUANG:** As to CCSA, we are communicating. Again, I don't know if I can name, I didn't give their name out. Director Jennifer and Javier, they said because, again, because of the timeline we submit the petition, it is too late.

**WILLIAMS:** Got it.

**CHUANG:** They said they only accept the annual membership.

**WILLIAMS:** Got it, got it. Okay.

**CHUANG:** Not that they don't want to work with us. They say they are very willing to work with us. If we can consider, and I totally agree with their proposal to put first year as the planning year, instead of opening the school. Once it's approved, and we say we totally go for that and work with CCSA.

**WILLIAMS:** Right.

**CHUANG:** Yeah.

**WILLIAMS:** So May 21st is when the Department will give us their opinion and their overview, and we will have more information at that time. Thank you.

**CHUANG:** Thank you.

**WILLIAMS:** Thank you

**SHAW:** Trustee Barke.

**BARKE:** First of all, I want to thank you for coming tonight. I do believe like you believe that there is plenty of pie to go around for choice here in Orange County for Mandarin immersion. I appreciate your efforts in wanting to do that. I think it is great, and I am always a big fan of school choice. The more the merrier. The more opportunities we can provide our families, judging by the wait list, there is plenty of room for more. But on the same token, I am concerned. Now, I didn't get any letters, so I don't know why some of us are getting letters or some aren't. Maybe somebody knows how full my inbox is and didn't bother me this week. But in any event,

I did not get anything. Even if parents or the community doesn't want to come speak, it is nice to see them in the room just to see general support. Not seeing support, not receiving letters; also, CCSA is also a big factor to me.

**CHUANG:** Yes.

**BARKE:** I feel they are a great leadership organization, a great resource. I think it really behooves any charter to engage with them, so I think that is important. Certainly, Janelle being on board, that is a highlight. We, here, all work with Janelle. We adore Janelle. We think very highly of her, so that is important. My concern at this time is, and also leadership, I do think it is important if we sign off on a charter school to know who is leading that charter school. I would like to know that you have a list of teachers or you have some teachers. In the past, somehow, they have gotten by this not wanting to disclose because we have had them come, we have had them sign. My concern is that I would like to see public support, I would like to see community support, I would like to see leadership from the CSSA supporting you. I do think there is a lot of things missing. I think there is room. I would love to see you guys succeed, but I think we have a lot of work to do. I appreciate your time. I appreciate you coming.

**CHUANG:** Okay, thank you.

**SHAW:** I wonder if I could ask Aracely a quick question. I was wanting to clarify this question around teachers. I think I heard his answer, but I would love to hear it from you. In this case this school has not been chartered, so how can they be making offers of employment when they haven't been chartered. What would be the normal sequence of events here? I just want to be fair. I can understand from their perspective it is like, how do I have all these teachers lined up when we haven't been chartered yet? What is the normal way that works?

**CHASTAIN:** In the Ed. Code, in order to submit a petition, one of the threshold things that you have to meet is you either have to submit signatures from parents who are meaningfully interested in attending the school, or teachers who are meaningfully interested in teaching at the school. It appears that this school has submitted signatures of teachers. That tends to be a lot less signatures than the parent threshold, so that is what you tend to see more often now, are teacher signatures. That is what they submitted. We don't do any sort of background work on these teacher signatures, and that was the will of the board.

If a teacher has signed that they are meaningfully interested, what we will do is we will check credentials and make sure that those teachers meet the credentials to teach at that school. Right? We want to make sure that we don't have high school teachers who have said, I'm meaningfully interested in teaching at an elementary school because they are not appropriately credentialed at that point. We do do that due diligence. That is being done now in order to make sure that they have met that threshold of teacher signatures who are meaningfully interested to teach.

**VALDES:** Aracely, did you just say that it was the rule of the board—

**CHASTAIN:** Will.

**VALDES:** Will of the board to not have you do like an investigation?

**CHASTAIN:** Correct. Yes. We used to call and make sure that parents and teachers were actually meaningfully interested. We used to do a sampling.

**VALDES:** Hold on. Hold on. The will of this board?

**CHASTAIN:** The will of an Orange County Board of Education. Yes. These things don't come up every single time, but yes, they were.

**VALDES:** Can you tell me what year that was, where that was the will of the board?

**CHASTAIN:** I cannot.

**VALDES:** I really do want you to do—

**HENDRICK:** Mr. Valdes, I just want to protect Aracely. That is a question for your fellow board members, please. Thank you.

**WILLIAMS:** I don't remember ever saying that.

**SHAW:** Well, you haven't been here for very long.

**WILLIAMS:** No.

**VALDES:** Do we need to change that with another resolution to the contrary?

**HENDRICK:** I think that would be something the board could give direction on, but that was very clear.

**SHAW:** Why don't we talk about that at our director comments at the end of our board comments. Maybe that would be an appropriate thing for a future agenda. Do you think? Is that okay? All right.

**WILLIAMS:** Yeah.

**SHAW:** Thank you for clarifying that, Aracely. We will look forward to hearing you guys.

**SHUHAN:** May I just have one word? It won't take too long. Just one word.

**SHAW:** One word. Okay, you get one word.

**SHUHAN:** Thank you so much, because this is very important to clarify. Two things, number one, Chinese language teachers are the hottest commodity in education today. They are very hard to come by. However, southern California area, the Orange County area, there are a lot of hidden gems. We know where they are. It is just that the process, were not very clear and so didn't do a

very good job in getting the teachers the signatures. But, we will be able to get really qualified credentialed teachers. We know, personally, I know a lot of professors in the area, and we collect the data from Asia Society. There are 175 master's certification programs for Chinese language teachers, and we know them all. We can get them to work with us. The school can also be a laboratory for training teachers, because they are a commodity. Everybody is grabbing them.

Number two, the most important thing, I do feel I have to clarify Steven's record, track record. I knew him in 2003 when he came to take a course at the University of Pennsylvania when I taught an assessment course. He was my student, so I got to know him. At that time, he graduated. He just got his master's degree from Penn. I followed him throughout, in Philadelphia as a teacher. I watched him go through the certification process in Pennsylvania to get his principalship. Then he came over to be the leadership of the college bar, and we did a feature of his schools on Asia Society side. There are a lot. We all know during public work there are a lot of personalities, a lot of personal or whatever agenda that is around. I don't know the details of what is happening at Irvine. But I can attest to his personality, his leadership, and his integrity, his ethics. I think that needs to be clear.

Therefore, when Steven heard that there might be some issues or rumors going around talking about his record. He decided maybe I won't be the principal or the executive director. When I first talked to him, I actually thought he would be the principal or the executive director. That is why I decided I would help him to start the school and all that, because we have seen his leadership.

**SHAW:** Okay.

**SHUHAN:** That is something.

**SHAW:** Okay. That was more than one word.

**SHUHAN:** I know. I know. Thank you. That was a paragraph.

**SHAW:** All right, all right. We will see you next time.

**SHUHAN:** Thank you for giving me the opportunity.

**SHAW:** Okay.

**SHUHAN:** And all your points are well taken. Thank you.

**SHAW:** Thank you. We will proceed to item number 12, public hearing. Mr. Giordano.

**BARKE:** Giordano. Where is the pizza?

**GIORDANO:** All right, well thank you President Shaw, members of the board, thank you for allowing the superintendent to conduct this hearing for public input on the Orange County

School Educators Association proposal to the superintendent for the 24-25 school year. Each of you should have a copy of that proposal. It is coming around.

**BARKE:** Thank you.

**GIORDANO:** At this time, I would like to open the public hearing and ask Ms. Hendrick if we have any public comments regarding this item.

**HENDRICK:** I have none.

**GIORDANO:** Okay. Hearing no comments. This hearing is now closed.

**SHAW:** Okay. Then we will go to item number 13, another public hearing. You didn't go far.

**GIORDANO:** Thank you, again. Good evening, President Shaw, members of the board, thank you for allowing the superintendent to connect this hearing for public input on the superintendent's proposal to the Orange County School Educators Association for the 24-25 school year. You should have a copy of that proposal. Again, at this time, I would like to ask Ms. Hendrick if we have any public comments regarding this item.

**HENDRICK:** I have none.

**GIORDANO:** Okay. Hearing no comments, this hearing is now closed.

**SHAW:** Thank you. We will proceed to item number 14, board action on a resolution regarding the establishment of a charter school special fund. Do we have public comments for this? It looks like we do.

**SPARKS:** Okay. We have a few. All right, we start out with Dr. Maria Rowell and on deck is Javier Orduño. One second.

**SISAVATH:** We got to change the clock.

**SPARKS:** We got to change the clock. Just a second.

**HENDRICK:** We want to make sure we give you the appropriate time.

**SHAW:** For those who haven't done this much, your time goes by faster than you think.

**AUDIENCE:** (Inaudible).

**SHAW:** One word. One word.

**HENDRICK:** Okay. We are ready. Thank you.

**MARIA:** Thank you. Good evening, distinguished board members, President Shaw. My name is Dr. Maria Rowell, and I would like to speak on behalf of a special fund resolution. First and foremost, equity in funding, access to special bridge funding would level the playing field for charter schools in Orange County, ensuring that all students have equitable access to resources and opportunities. Secondly, emergency support, charter schools often lack the same access to funding that our sister traditional schools do. Third, ensuring student access by providing financial assistance to board approved charter schools during exigent circumstances. This resolution aims to safeguard the continuity of education and support services for students.

Fourth, budget challenges, with ongoing budget challenges in the state charter schools face increasing pressure to maintain operations and deliver quality education. Access to special bridge funding would alleviate some of these budgetary pressures, allowing charter schools to focus on their core mission of educating students. Fifth, in promoting thriving charters, special bridge funding can help thriving charter schools in Orange County and continue their positive impact on students' lives by providing additional resources when needed most. Six, addressing urgent needs, in times of extrinsic circumstances, such as our natural disasters or unforeseen financial challenges, charter schools require immediate access to funding to address urgent and unanticipated needs. This resolution would provide a mechanism for charter schools to access the necessity financial supports without any delays.

Seventh, supporting innovations, recently, CCSA recognized Magnolia Public Schools as one of the top charter schools in Orange County. We received the Heart Award for vision, equity, and innovation. Unlike my school, charter schools are known for innovative approaches to education, but they often face financial constraints that limit their ability to implement new programs or initiatives. Special bridge funding would empower charter schools to continue innovating and adapting to meet the diverse needs of all of our students. Eighth, ensuring fairness, all students regardless of the type of school that they attend, deserve access to quality education and support services. By providing special bridge funding to charter schools this resolution promotes fairness and equity in education funding across Orange County. Thank you.

**SPARKS:** Thank you, Javier. On deck is Lynne Riddle.

**JAVIER:** Good evening. Dear President Shaw, members of the Board of Trustees, my name is Javier Orduño. 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 the proposed charter school special fund resolution. CCSA is the membership and professional organization serving the vast majority of the 1,300 public charter schools in the state of California. I would like to acknowledge and thank the board for considering this resolution. Some of the important proposals include, inclusion of charter schools to provide special bridge funding and financial assistance to the board-approved charter schools in the event of (inaudible) and urgent, or emergency circumstances; provide charter schools access to financing that will help alleviate the upcoming budget challenges, and will help schools to keep serving students in vulnerable communities. On behalf of the 9,000 students, K-12 students and families that are being served by the 24 diverse CCSA-member charter schools and authorized by this board, we thank you for considering the passage of this resolution. Thank you very much.



**SPARKS:** Thank you. Lynne Riddle is up, and on deck is Jason Watts.

**LYNNE:** Good evening. I'm Lynn Riddle. With respect to the board, while your proposed resolution, with respect to establishing a charter school special fund, may well be ready tonight for discussion, it is my legal view that it is not ready tonight for a vote. Therefore, I would advise and I would request that you refrain from voting on this measure tonight and put it over into May. Why would I make that suggestion? Well, looking at your whereases, which are the foundational facts to support your suggested therefore and action. I refer you to whereas number four, where you cite to a 1996 OCBE resolution that you count on as being a persuasive basis to go forward with this matter. Then you say, see Exhibit 1. There is no Exhibit 1, and therefore, the public has been deprived of having the opportunity to examine something that you have identified as essential to your argument.

Secondly, let me simply suggest that you have listed there three statutes of the Education Code. They are all important. They are all dense. While we in the public can go online and read those statutes, we have only had two days or three days, at most, to go to the Law Library to be able to look at the background to these statutes, the statutory intent behind them, the way in which some cases have identified and defined the essential terms, how they have been implemented, the positives and the negatives, et cetera. The public has not had the kind of opportunity that you would wish to give it so that we can aid your discussion with our view once we have done our homework.

So, again, I request that you just simply put this matter, discuss it tonight of course. But if you will, please put it over to the next meeting before you vote. Thank you.

**SPARKS:** Thank you. Jason Watts, you are up.

**JASON:** Good evening, President Shaw, and trustees. My name is Jason Watts, executive director for Scholarship Prep Charter Schools. I'm here in support of the charter school special fund. Because of this board's staunch belief in empowering families with the opportunity to choose which public school is best for their child. Since our approval in 2016, we have been able to grow to two school sites in Orange County, serving nearly 650 students, over 25% of which are struggling with homelessness or are in the foster care system. Now, getting to this point in time has not been easy. Not only does our student population require significant budgetary resources to ensure we can continue providing comprehensive wraparound supports and services, but we also manage ongoing challenges with ensuring adequate facilities to accommodate our program, let alone increasing staffing costs that are difficult for small organizations like ours as we try to compete with local school districts for talent. That said, it is far more difficult for standalone charter schools who have to scrape and claw just to make ends meet while still ensuring a high-quality educational program than meets the unique needs of their students and families.

Our school was originally approved to provide, in part, a strong instructional program and support system for foster youth. However, we soon discovered how housing issues were impacting our students greatly. This caused us to pivot in many ways and address head-on the many impacts of homelessness and poverty, including food insecurities, clothing needs, a lack of

school supplies, and of course, housing. We altered our enrollment preferences to allow unhoused students to have a priority. We made creative programmatic changes to better support our students' needs, and we made shifts within our budget to accommodate our new direction. This ability for charter schools to pivot to the extent that even missions and visions change, makes us unique and valuable to the entire public education ecosystem. But, change requires resources, which includes critical funding opportunities such as bridge funding that supports the many vulnerable families being served by Orange County charter schools.

This resolution being brought forth tonight moves us close to the goal of ensuring more equitable funding for charter schools, particularly as we move into what appears to be a fiscally treacherous time for public education in California that will undoubtedly stifle growth, innovation, and the integral niche that charter schools fill. Frankly, the timing of this resolution could not be better. Thank you to the entire board for your foresight, steadfastness, and empathy for the incredible students and families of the entire Orange County community.

**SPARKS:** Thank you, and thank you for all you do.

**SHAW:** That was it?

**SPARKS:** That is it.

**SHAW:** Thank you for those comments. I know this was brought forward by Trustee Valdes and Trustee Williams. I think Ken probably did the lion's share of the writing here, so why don't I go to you, Dr. Williams?

**WILLIAMS:** Thank you, Tim. And yes, Trustee Valdes and I are on this committee that we selected last November, the Public Charter School Facility Subcommittee. We are addressing many, many issues. This is just one of many of the good things that we are going to make changes to are good charter schools. Judge Riddle, you are going to be very happy tonight with me for the first time probably ever.

**LYNNE:** Probably.

**WILLIAMS:** I agree with you. There are certain documentation that, and I will take blame, Jorge, because I'm trying to get this over. We have timelines. When we get it over to Renee to get it put on the public agenda, and they have to get it out at a certain time before a Friday. As you know, we worked pretty hard, and we had an election just recently, and this was put off for about three years. I think we talked about that. This is something that actually Mr. Husen brought up to us, or to me personally. I have talked with other of the charter school leaders that there is a great inequality and difficulty in getting these charter schools established. Kind of the thought that Jorge and I from my other board members is we are going to use some of the funds that we have in the unrestricted funds that we have in our budget to help bridge this gap that these charter schools have.

I have received a lot of criticism from charter people about the language and technicalities, and I have talked to the attorneys at the state of charter school. This is a bridge loan. It's not meant as a

fund or grant. This is meant to be much like the state approved finance authorities that allow these loans to be paid off at a certain period of time. This is much akin to that, that we talked about. That the money will be repaid. It's not free money. It will be easier access to. It will be less than what they are paying right now, but there needs to be input. I do agree, part of this in the final language—and by the way, this was a draft. It wasn't the final one. That is why I'm going to make a recommendation that we lay it on the table and bring it back.

Part of the motivation that Jorge and I had is because it is the April meeting that we are doing our budget, that we want to make sure that this item gets into the budget.

**VALDES:** Makes it to June.

**WILLIAMS:** Yeah, yeah. The one that we approve eventually in June. We wanted to put it on the budget. This is the first part in just getting things moving. But the final version, I look at this as not being operational until eight months. We talked about this, and you brought it up. That was one of your criticisms, that we need more details.

**VALDES:** As far as the comment earlier tonight about what these loans look like in the application process, the operations, this resolution does not address that. We haven't gone far enough in thinking that part of it through. Our motivation was to put it on the agenda, start the ball rolling, start the discussion rolling for the June meeting where the budget is going to be approved so that this can be placed as a line item in the budget. Dr. Williams and I are keenly aware that the details are not there yet. They haven't been worked out as far as how this bridge loan would work, how the application process would work. But that was the motivation for putting this resolution on the agenda tonight.

**WILLIAMS:** I apologize. I mean, this is a very early draft. Unfortunately, for the public's knowledge, once it gets submitted to Renee, then it is usually, what, you have just a few hours to get it out in public before you guys leave for the weekend. Once it is out there, that is it.

**HENDRICK:** Right. Your delivery is normally Friday morning. Thursday night I think is when we got it.

**WILLIAMS:** Right. So you don't pick it up till Friday, and yeah.

**HENDRICK:** Well, you get it on Friday, the courier packages are ready Thursday.

**WILLIAMS:** Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.

**HENDRICK:** It's delivered to you Friday morning.

**WILLIAMS:** In a very earnest attempt, honest attempt to get things out, there were little mistakes made in here. If it is okay with the board, we have a motion and a second. Right? I would like to receive input.

**SHAW:** Ken is making a motion, I believe, seconded by Jorge to put this off for a month.

**BARKE:** On the table.

**WILLIAMS:** It is my Alzheimer's. My wife will complain to me.

**SPARKS:** Do we discuss or add a comment?

**WILLIAMS:** Yeah, let me make a formal motion—

**SPARKS:** Okay.

**WILLIAMS:** —to actually adopt it. Jorge, if you want to second it. Now we go—

**VALDES:** I second it.

**WILLIAMS:** —and we go to discussion. Then I will lay it on the table later on and bring it back for the next meeting with a lot of Judge Riddle's comment.

**VALDES:** But I really would like to hear the other trustees' input on this.

**WILLIAMS:** Sure.

**VALDES:** We don't talk during the month, so.

**SHAW:** Okay.

**VALDES:** I would like to hear what you guys think about this. Lisa?

**SPARKS:** My initial, I guess additional comments would be, the spirit of it sounds fantastic, and in the spirit of it, I would love to see something like this worked out. We, I think need to make sure that we have our i's dotted and our t's crossed.

**WILLIAMS:** Right.

**SPARKS:** And that we are following proper California code and that the public understands the legalities around this kind of thing. Where, I believe a bridge, we need to talk with our attorney about what all this means. But a loan, it has to be paid back within the year. How does that work? Just to make sure that we are following everything from a legal perspective. But in spirit, I think it is a fantastic idea. I know it is always a struggle for charters to sort of get going, and the facilities are always an issue. It just removes a barrier. If there is any way that we can remove a barrier and we have crossed all of our t's and dotted our i's from a legal perspective, I'm all for it.

**SHAW:** Terrific. Mari, do you have any comments?

**BARKE:** I would just go ahead and reiterate what Dr. Sparks says. I do believe it removes a barrier. It also, I agree, levels the playing field to put all public schools on the same playing field. I'm absolutely in support of anything we can do to help our charter school community, which

helps the overall community. I think we just have to do what we tell everybody else is, dot our i's and cross our t's. I'm confident that we will figure this out by our budget so that we will have this available very soon. I'm very, very excited about it.

**SHAW:** I just want to thank you guys for working hard on this and thinking about innovative ways to help our schools. We want to see them obviously succeed and knocking barriers down is great. With that—

**WILLIAMS:** With that, we have better and greater things to come. With that, I would like to make the formal motion to lay on the table to our next meeting this item.

**VALDES:** I second.

**SHAW:** Okay. All in favor?

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

**SHAW:** All right, so we will take that up next time. We will go to some information items, announcements from the superintendent.

**HENDRICK:** First up, we have Deputy Superintendent Miramontes. He has some updates.

**MIRAMONTES:** Good evening, President Shaw, members of the board, and fellow guests. I'm proud to share three things. One is that our Ed Services team continues to do a lot for our students within the county. On March 12, they worked with Cal State Fullerton on a Health Education Pathway program hosted at Cal State Fullerton for people interested in the health industry majors and behavioral sciences. The event introduces students to a wide array of professional fields available in healthcare and behavioral healthcare, as well as the educational pathways that will prepare them there. We had over 250 students that attended, and a special thank you goes out to the OC Pathways team.

Second of all, I always like to add Connections and ACCESS. Currently, our Connections students and staff are on a well-deserved vacation this week. We look forward to having them back next week rested and ready to finish out the school year. And lastly, I wanted to share with the board the video clip in our *OCDE Newsroom* highlighting our ACCESS Program Educator Mr. Tom Kostick and his students. Within that video clip, Mr. Kostic talks about his students and alumni, and they talk about the relationships that are forged within his classroom. It's a great segment highlighting the impact of all of our teachers and staff have with our students. We are fortunate to have educators within ACCESS, and Connections, and the staff members that work in the Educational Services team serving the students of Orange County. Any questions? Okay.

**SPARKS:** Thank you.

**SHAW:** Oh, I thought you were showing a video.

**HENDRICK:** Oh, no.

**MIRAMONTES:** It is on the *OCDE Newsroom*.

**SHAW:** I'm like, the videos don't play.

**WILLIAMS:** I have a question.

**HENDRICK:** You do have Wednesday, May 1, is the next regular board meeting. Your submission deadline is April 17 with board packet delivery on April 26. We have the Memorial Day Essay Contest, which is going to be on that board meeting. I just want to remind, for those of you who haven't given your contributions yet, if you wanted to send those in. Then, I also know if any board members were interested in reading the final packets. I know sometimes some of you are. Would any of you like to—

**SPARKS:** When do you need the check by?

**SHAW:** Did you get mine?

**HENDRICK:** I did get yours, Mr. Shaw. Well, since we are going to give them money out on May 1, before then would be great.

**SPARKS:** Okay. I will swing by. Thanks.

**SHAW:** You want to read the essays, Ken?

**WILLIAMS:** Yeah. Yeah.

**SHAW:** Okay.

**WILLIAMS:** Absolutely.

**HENDRICK:** Okay. We can send you the finalist if you like, and then if you want more of them, we can also give you those. Okay. Remember, we also are including art this time for our Connection students. I also wanted to remind you that part of Dave's budget study session was to hear anything that the board wanted to include in that budget. Our June budget is very early in the month, and we have to post that 10 days prior to that meeting for the public hearing. If there was anything that you wanted included in that, it would be helpful if we knew that ahead of time. If you want to email me.

**SHAW:** Thank you. Did you want to ask Dr. Miramontes something?

**WILLIAMS:** Yeah, yeah, I have a couple.

**SHAW:** I think Dr. Williams wanted to ask you some questions, Dr. Miramontes. I think you were probably waiting for the video as well.

**WILLIAMS:** I was waiting for the video.

**SHAW:** We misunderstood.

**MIRAMONTES:** It is on the *OCDE Newsroom*.

**WILLIAMS:** Okay. These are not easy times. We live in a very divisive culture. Being here for a few years, I have gotten close to a lot of staff. They have been my patients, and they have been friends. I want to be careful about the words I share, because I want to be sensitive. We as the board are not the employer that is through statutory Education Code requirements. But, I have always looked at what we do, and this is for my fellow board members. The superintendent is the employer, and they handle all of the issues, the day-to-day, the micromanagement of the employer-employee relationship. But, that leaves at the superintendent's position, doesn't have any oversight. That is where the board kind of comes in. We are not going to deal with the nitty gritty, the day-to-day issues. But I just wanted to, if I don't say it, I would be betraying the nearly dozen-plus employees who have contacted me. I want to be thoughtful about the words I share, because I respect you very much as a human being.

As I have been talking to the many, many people, good people in our ACCESS programs, they are very concerned. I'm not being the intermediary. I'm not being a mediator. But, I just needed to share some things, because they are concerned about things that have happened in our ACCESS schools. Part of what is happening that I see after listening to many people who have called me up and wish to remain anonymous, and some who didn't care if they remain anonymous or not. I get emails. I get telephone calls. I get texts. I don't know how they got my personal information, but I guess it's public. But, they just wanted to communicate. Because they feel they can't come in here, and they can't talk. There is this fear of retribution. There is a fear of something will happen to them.

I just wanted to communicate on their behalf in a diplomatic, statesmanlike way. Whatever is happening out there, and again, I'm just listening to it. It is one sided, and I know there is always two sides to disagreements.

**MIRAMONTES:** Sure.

**WILLIAMS:** I recognize that. But there is a loss of the *corde esprit*, the spirit, and the enthusiasm, that everyone has shared with me that I have talked to and communicated with, that they feel is lost. A lot of it has happened through issues that I don't want to expose, but there were some issues that happened. First of all, the hiring of Dr. Navarro was a real big problem—that was kind universal in all my conversations. An individual who didn't leave Orange County, Newport-Mesa Unified School District in a good position. A lot of these ACCESS—and they are mid-level people. They are actually teachers. They are staff. They just don't feel comfortable with what has happened with him coming in. We have addressed the issue or someone in the public addressed the issue of one of the former Executive Committee individuals who isn't here. But there was some concerns also about, and these are rumors. Maybe you can help settle these rumors. You are not renewing leases at some of our ACCESS sites like the Tustin Main.

**MIRAMONTES:** First of all, I appreciate you coming to me, and I value the staff across the county. I believe in transparency. We actually had a meeting just to answer the Tustin. Fred

Navarro has been assigned to oversee ACCESS and work with the principals, work with the directors in the transition period of what we are looking at. As we peel back to understand things that should have occurred. Monday morning we were looking at, in our cabinet meeting, a round table, actually, we were looking at leases on Monday morning.

We pulled the list and we said, we need to look at some of these leases coming up. Lo and behold, I think a couple hours later we had an email, or Fred had an email from Laurie saying, “Hey, what is going on here?” There is, I don’t know, a lockbox that was put on the Tustin Main office. This should have been done months ago. Why are we waiting? I mean, you typically take care of leases six months in advance. Why we are waiting for the day of is a problem. But as you start peeling back some of the things within the ACCESS organization, right, there is some things that we have to go through.

To answer your question, yes, we are renewing leases. That was one of leases we are renewing. Right? I think it is on a month-to-month, typically. Isn’t it?

**HENDRICK:** Yeah. Can I share?

**MIRAMONTES:** Sure.

**HENDRICK:** We had talked to the board probably over two years ago about moving to larger sites and consolidating them. Yes, there are some leases that we will be ending because they only house one or two teachers. That is not big enough to provide all those services that we are trying to provide. We are trying to add more technical—you can speak about that part.

**MIRAMONTES:** Yeah.

**HENDRICK:** But in that whole plan, this is something that Dr. Mijares and Jeff Hittenberger had started actually five or six years ago. We are still in that process. We have spoken to you about that numerous times. This is still part of that same plan of re-looking at the sites to see what makes the best sense to help our teachers.

**MIRAMONTES:** Correct. And students.

**HENDRICK:** And students.

**MIRAMONTES:** Yes, so we are looking at the hub model, Harbor Learning Center North, Harbor Learning Center South. We are looking at where you can actually house clinicians, counselors, transition specialists so students and staff have all the resources they need at one site. It is hard to do a counseling session. If you have ever been to Tustin Main, it is a storefront. There are two classrooms. It's hard to do a private session with a student on a campus like that. Many of our students need services. They all need services to go back at least 10 hours’ worth of counseling. You can't get that in a facility like that, so we are working through that. Those are things that—we are trying to be as transparent as possible.



I just met with the principals. I didn't meet with the principals. I'm trying to empower our directors to take the lead on this and provide a 30, 60, 90-day transition plan to all the members within ACCESS, every single one. From the facilities person, to the school secretary, to the paraeducators, everybody needs to hear the same thing. That cascading message that we talked about, that everybody hears the same thing, that 30, 60, 90-day transition plan of what it looks like. The ultimate goal is credit recovery and attendance. You do that by building relationships, as I mentioned that Tom Kostic does and many of our teachers do, and many of our paraeducators do. Right?

That is the ultimate goal. As kids walk in every day, they see the same faces. Those faces greet people. They feel good about themselves, but it is very difficult to provide all the additional resources when you don't have a hub. Right? We are looking at finding hubs just like the charter schools. Actually, we have been meeting the last couple of months with the charter school leaders on just that, facilities, trying to find the right facilities.

**WILLIAMS:** Right. I'm trying to really be kind and graceful—

**MIRAMONTES:** I appreciate that.

**WILLIAMS:** —with great charity in my words. I hold the utmost respect for you, Ramon. You know that.

**MIRAMONTES:** Just so you guys know, my North Star is kids; 33 years, stellar career, in types of communities that are both affluent and non-affluent. My North Star is kids. As I work through things, I bring everybody along, and that is the goal. I don't want to be down in the weeds. I really don't. I want to do other things with other agencies that Dr. Mijares asked me to do.

**WILLIAMS:** Right.

**MIRAMONTES:** But as I'm peeling things back, I feel like I have to be there. I have to see this thing through.

**WILLIAMS:** You have to have that face-to-face interaction with the people—

**MIRAMONTES:** Sure.

**WILLIAMS:** —that you stand above.

**MIRAMONTES:** With, alongside.

**WILLIAMS:** Alongside. But, above in the way that you are the top dog, the employer, at this point. In listening to nearly the last three to four weeks of multiple employees calling me, the one central thing that I saw was that they didn't feel that they were heard. I was wondering, is there a mechanism that you have now? Or, if you don't, is there a mechanism where they can anonymously communicate with you without—

**MIRAMONTES:** I don't know if there is anything anonymous, you know. I have staff that stop me all the time. I do. I'm approachable. I try and meet with Laurie and Katherine Lu. Before that it was Laurie and Steve Slack, and I think I have only met with them three or four times. It hasn't even been a lot. I don't want to get into the negotiation stuff. That has to do with HR. I did HR as well. That is an HR thing. I want to know what is the teaching and learning and where we are going together. What will make their job better together?

I have been meeting with every principal and expressing the same sort of thing, along with Fred and Analee Kredel, because Special Ed is a big issue—

**WILLIAMS:** Right.

**MIRAMONTES:** —in our ACCESS program.

**WILLIAMS:** Where has Dr. Navarro been assigned to?

**MIRAMONTES:** Well, Dr. Navarro is at Argosy.

**WILLIAMS:** He is at Argosy. He is contracted, right?

**MIRAMONTES:** He is contracted. Correct.

**WILLIAMS:** Has he been officially assigned as an associate superintendent?

**MIRAMONTES:** No. He is just a consultant working with our principals and our directors.

**WILLIAMS:** He's a consultant. Okay. Does he have the ability to discipline any of our employees?

**MIRAMONTES:** No.

**WILLIAMS:** Okay. If he finds a problem, he is going to come to you?

**MIRAMONTES:** Well, yes. One of the things that Fred has been, from day one, he has been a consultant to coach principals and administrators on the positions that they are in. He has been doing a great job. I asked him—he really wants to go back to Mammoth. His wife wants to go back to Mammoth, but he also feels a true calling to help out. Right? Yes, so he doesn't do any of the discipline. The discipline came from the assistant sup and the chief of schools for Special Education. Those were the two people that did the discipline, but it really comes down to the principals as well. They are the ones that oversee/supervise their teachers. If there is an issue, it does come my way. But typically, the issues we are finding out is things aren't getting done. Things that should have been done, aren't getting done. They have not been completed. It's probably our biggest thing.

But I would gladly recommend if we could sit down. One of the things you talked about, is there a way to provide a mechanism? One of the things that I sat down, I forgot. I don't want to say the

teacher's name out loud, but she had come to see me. My office, I have an open-door policy. A teacher came to see me. She said, I really think it would be helpful if we did this. I said, yeah, I will talk to Mr. Burton about starting a steering committee where people can be heard. Districts have steering committees for different reasons. One of the things that I have asked Fred to do as well is start that, with Analee, to start that steering committee. That is part of that 30, 60, 90-day plan so we can sit together and resolve some of the issues that we have out there.

**WILLIAMS:** Sometimes we just need to go out and have a good beer together, or a shot of tequila—

**MIRAMONTES:** I don't—

**WILLIAMS:** —or a good Mexican beer and food.

**MIRAMONTES:** Yeah, no, I'm not a drinker. I will have a beer here and there, but it is not my thing.

**WILLIAMS:** Yeah. The idea and concept is—

**MIRAMONTES:** I hear what you are saying.

**WILLIAMS:** —you need to have open door communication and be accessible.

**MIRAMONTES:** Sure.

**WILLIAMS:** That is what leadership is defined as.

**MIRAMONTES:** I will be honest with you, Dr. Williams. When I went to visit San Juan Capistrano, right, the site that we have out there, I was out there twice in three months, four months. What I got from the principal, or not the principal, a couple of teachers, they mentioned to me that no one ever stops by San Juan. Right? No one ever stops by there, and I have been there twice. Some of these people that have been hired on in administrative roles have been here three-plus years, have never stopped by the school sites. One of the things that I asked our assistant sup to do is get a calendar out so that our directors can go out and see the good things that we are doing at the school sites.

**WILLIAMS:** Right. For the record, I did ask a question for everyone that called me.

**MIRAMONTES:** Yeah, yeah.

**WILLIAMS:** Is there anything illegal going on that we need to know of? The response is always negative. It is all about the morale of our folks.

**MIRAMONTES:** Sure. Change is difficult.

**WILLIAMS:** Change is difficult.

**MIRAMONTES:** I talked to Dr. Llamas, she is the only one I have hired on board. I have hired two principals, Dr. Sanchez and Asia Cordova. Those are the only three people I have hired on. But, Dr. Llamas is sort of dealing with this in Ed. Services as well. Not to the extent where the morale is—but when you move people's cheese, when you do things, and the thing is communicating why we are doing what we are doing. Right? That is the piece, I sit here, there are people in between me, when we sort of see these things, we resolve these things, we try and figure them out together. I expect people to deliver the message that we came up with, not Ramon, we came up with. I haven't sat in our teacher's shoes. I haven't sat there and had four different grade levels, 10 different subjects. I taught first grade, third grade, and middle school. Right? But I did sit for a year in the LA County Office of Ed visiting Halls, Camps, independent contract schools, and community day schools. One year I was on the committee walking through seeing good instruction. We have that here. We have very caring people here.

When you move people's cheese, and I did this at Argosy. We had clinicians. We had counselors. We had RSP teachers. We had a slew of people that worked up in our main building, which would be Kalmus. I moved them all to the school sites. Right? People were worried about the change. The first letter, the only letter that was written, because I expect letters to go out every three to four weeks, updating people what is happening. One letter went out and when we read that letter, people were a little anxious. They thought, oh my gosh, what is the change, Area 1? No movement of general education teachers.

I had to sit there, and I had to go through and say, we need to put that in there. Because people think when there is change, I'm moving everywhere. I had to insert that in that letter that went out to everybody for my subordinate, right? Area 1, no movement. Area 2, no movement. Area 3, no movement. Area 4, no movement, of general education teachers. Area 4, no movement. Area 5, there was movement. I think Laurie had asked for a transfer to Mission Viejo. Right? We put that in there. One person transferred Mission Viejo, and we closed the school site. We did close Wilshire. There were five kids on that campus, and Tustin is two miles away. That teacher didn't have any space, and we were struggling with subs in the summer. Closed the site. Moved them over.

We did the same thing with CCPA where we had 13 kids at Costa Mesa, and we had this facility that we were only using one day a week, one day a week. But, we had it for 20 days in a prime location in Costa Mesa. When you drive up Harbor Blvd, less than two and a half miles, we have a beautiful center. Harbor Learning Center South is there, right? Of those 13 kids, 12 kids were going to graduate. One was still a junior trying to move forward. Move her to the CCPA site there. End the lease there. Save some money. Put the money back where kids actually need it. Right? But we are so used to doing things that we have always done. I don't know. It is just not good for kids, so we have to look out what is best for kids. I agree, we need to bring people along. I wish those people would come to me.

I have had a couple of emails. I have invited them in, and we have had discussions on what is happening. No, I appreciate this. If there is anything else I can answer? I can tell you, I know you are looking at me. I'm passionate about doing the best job for kids. These are our most vulnerable kids. When Dr. Mijares said, can you come over and help?

**WILLIAMS:** Right.

**VALDES:** I have a comment, Ken, unless you are—

**WILLIAMS:** No.

**VALDES:** Ramon, I have been the owner/leader of a law firm for quite a while, so I employ people. I kind of understand a person in your position, so I'm just going to make a comment. I did get some emails. I always think there is two sides to the story. It concerned me that some of the emails say that there is this now hostile work environment, which is a catchphrase for a workers' compensation lawsuit—

**MIRAMONTES:** Oh, for sure.

**VALDES:** —or a civil lawsuit. But my gut reaction is that Al, and I didn't know him that long before he went on leave. He had a very, I'm going to say passive demeanor. I don't want to say wasn't aggressive in his speech, but he had a certain way of doing things that I viewed as very passive. One thing I have noticed about you is you are much more of that dynamic leader type personality. I think that change is very likely the cause of these emails. I'm just telling you that just so you are aware of it. If you are not, I'm guessing perhaps you are.

**MIRAMONTES:** Well, I appreciate it. I think my strength has always been just sitting down with people and having a conversation. I don't like getting out in front of people. I do it because it is part of the job. Right? I value when people come to me and say, these are the issues we are having. A lot of this stuff should have been taken care of way back in January when we set timelines up and things to follow through with.

**VALDES:** I think what people are concerned about is basically a very different management style, is my gut reaction to this. That is my 2 cents—

**MIRAMONTES:** I appreciate it

**VALDES:** —for whatever it's worth.

**MIRAMONTES:** Yeah. I appreciate it. If you hear things, send them my way. I know that oftentimes they don't want to say anything, and that is hard. As a school principal—

**WILLIAMS:** Well, they email us.

**MIRAMONTES:** Right, right. But as a school principal, we had the same thing. We would have people email you an anonymous letter. It's really difficult to deal with when they don't want to sit at the table with you. That is how you resolve conflict. That is how you help people understand the why of what we do. Right? Again, I have got a 33-year career as a teacher, vice principal, assistant principal, director. Not because of me, because of the people that I work with and side by side. I may sit at the top and be the top dog, but I'm no better than anybody in the classroom, any of these guys setting things up. It takes an entire team to be able to do that. But I do

appreciate the conversation. I will continue to work with this, and we will look at ways that we might be able to seek input for sure.

**SHAW:** Thank you, Dr. Miramontes for your candor.

**WILLIAMS:** Thank you.

**MIRAMONTES:** Yup.

**SHAW:** Appreciate that. Renee, were there any more comments under the deputy superintendent item?

**HENDRICK:** That is all I have. Thank you.

**SHAW:** You were done? Okay. We will go to legislative updates. I had on here Senate Bill 907 as was approved earlier in the agenda. There was travel for me. I attended the Senate Education Committee meeting on March 20. The discussion went probably half hour, 45 minutes, so I didn't want to do all that. But I thought maybe I would just share. I think we have it queued up. I spoke for about two minutes to the Education Committee, so let's see if we have that. Yes, no, maybe so? I could give away the ending. The bill passed 5-2.

**WILLIAMS:** No. Three to two, wasn't it?

**SHAW:** No. They registered Yes votes, those that weren't there.

**WILLIAMS:** Oh.

**SHAW:** You can do that in the Senate.

**WILLIAMS:** Oh.

**SHAW:** Vote after the fact, after the meeting.

**WILLIAMS:** Okay.

**SHAW:** Anyway, this bill will now be in the Senate Elections Committee. That is where Lisa and I will go give it another crack.

**WILLIAMS:** She is a very nice woman.

**SHAW:** I thought we would just share that real quick.

**HENDRICK:** What did you say your next date was?

**SHAW:** April 16.

**SPARKS:** Tuesday. While we are waiting, maybe we should—

**SHAW:** Should we have a report out of closed session while we are queuing that up. Is Mr. Brenner back there? Okay. Mr. Brenner, what happened in closed session?

**BRENNER:** Mr. President, I'm happy to give the report out for the closed session items number one through three tonight; a discussion was held with counsel amongst all the board members present, which was all five. No action was taken as to each item, except with respect to items number one and two, the board approved EBG's invoice numbers 1153750 and 1153751. The vote to approve was five in favor, none against, and that concludes the report out for the closed session items for tonight's meeting. Thank you.

**SHAW:** Thank you. Did you get that team? Okay, wonderful. Okay. Any luck on the video? One second, he said.

**BARKE:** Hold one minute or one word?

**SPARKS:** One word. Yeah.

**HENDRICK:** Hopefully it's shorter than the one word.

**SPARKS:** But one really long word.

**SHAW:** While we are waiting, I want to wish Shannon Shaw a happy birthday.

**BARKE:** Happy birthday, Shannon!

**SHAW:** She is anxiously watching this meeting at home. No doubt.

**BARKE:** Hopefully, we will get Tim home soon.

**SPARKS:** Yeah, I'm sure she is on the edge of her seat.

**SHAW:** Yeah. All right, well is there any other committee reports? That is an item. Oh, all right.

[A video is played.]

**VIDEO VOICE OF SHAW:** Please. Thank you. I joined the board in 2020, so I have been on for just over about four years.

**SHAW:** This is not it.

**VIDEO VOICE OF SHAW:** The first conversation I have had with a member of the state legislature regarding any reforms, like this was two days ago when I met with Senator Newman. But nobody in the four years I have been on the board, I'm the president of the board, has ever tried to reach out to me to discuss this with me. We just heard about this bill being introduced, so

we didn't feel we were part of this process at all. I don't know what was happening decades ago. But as my experience, I would dispute the characterization that we aren't working well with our local constituents—

**SHAW:** This is what we wanted.

**BARKE:** Let's start it over.

**VIDEO VOICE OF SHAW:** —we all got reelected very comfortably. We do have a diverse board. We have Trustee Valdes, who is a Cuban American representing a very Latino district in central county.

**SHAW:** All right. This didn't work.

**VIDEO VOICE OF SHAW:** We have a Jewish trustee. We have a variety of backgrounds on our board.

**HENDRICK:** Okay.

[The video is stopped.]

**SHAW:** All right. It was one hour and 38 minutes into the meeting. It was my prepared comments I thought I would share.

**VALDES:** Thank you for the shout out by the way.

**SHAW:** Yes. I was looking out for you there, yes. We ended up having more back and forth, but I thought we would just share my two-minute prepared comments.

**BARKE:** Well, I did see it live, and it was excellent.

**SPARKS:** Yes, me too.

**BARKE:** I really appreciate the way you represented us.

**SPARKS:** Yes.

**SHAW:** All right, well thank you. The bill, we have taken a formal position to oppose Senate Bill 907, but the legislature is looking to change our board from a five-member board to a seven-member board and move the elections from the primary to the November elections. I mean, some of the points I made, I think we're pretty hard to argue with. For example, that the Los Angeles County Board of Education isn't elected at all. They are appointed. If you are trying to bring democracy to a county board of education, why on earth wouldn't you start there? Why are you thinking that the Orange County board needs to be changed? I never heard an answer to that one. I don't know how you can continue to argue with the straight faces. Is this about bringing better



democracy to a county board of education when the largest county in the United States of America is right next door, and they don't have a democratic process whatsoever?

But of course, if you change that process, you are taking away the political patronage of the county supervisors in Los Angeles County. We certainly can't have that. That is not possible.

**BARKE:** Well, and Tim, isn't San Diego County bigger than Orange County?

**SHAW:** That is correct.

**BARKE:** They are not looking to increase them from five to seven. Why in God's earth have they chosen us? I mean, what is the reason? Any idea?

**SPARKS:** And it's only Orange County out of the 58 counties across California. Correct?

**BARKE:** Yeah.

**SHAW:** Correct.

**VALDES:** I mean, it's just such an obvious ridiculous power grab. Well, okay. I would tend to agree with you.

**SPARKS:** What about local control? Didn't you make an argument about local control?

**SHAW:** Orange County is a charter county. We do not need the state to change our election processes. That is something that can happen here in Orange County. I started off with that point, I believe.

**VALDES:** Why can't we have some issues addressed in the primary elections? Our district attorney is elected in the primary, the county board of supervisor is elected in the primary. I mean, our county elections are in the primaries. They should be separate from November so we can have a different dialogue at a different time of year.

**SHAW:** I think one of the more compelling arguments is also when we have the visual aid. You hold up the primary ballot. Then you hold up the November ballot, which is substantially longer of course. When you are the average voter out there and you are having to wade your way through pages and pages of votes, of course, the county board of education is going to get buried under many other questions. I think there is a compelling argument that having us in the primary makes a more top of mind issue.

**VALDES:** Quite honestly, Mr. President, I'm certainly opposed to 907. But quite frankly, if this turned into a seven-member board, we would just have seven of us sitting up here. The arguments that we make in these elections poll so well from all sides. I'm opposed to it, but I'm not really all that concerned about it.

**BARKE:** What about also, don't we have a \$73 million budget deficit? I mean, I would think that this money could be better spent elsewhere perhaps?

**SPARKS:** I was going to add, I recall you making two additional arguments. One is the voter fatigue argument for moving it to the general. Another one was the financial argument. It would be very, very expensive.

**SHAW:** There is one-time costs and then ongoing costs.

**SPARKS:** Ongoing costs, right.

**SHAW:** Obviously having everything from printing the agendas to the trustees' stipends, to things like that.

**SPARKS:** Redistricting, maybe?

**SHAW:** Yeah. Well that would be like the one-time cost.

**SPARKS:** Oh, the one-time.

**SHAW:** Redistricting.

**BARKE:** And just the cost right now of doing it.

**WILLIAMS:** You know what is interesting for the public record is we have the California School Board Association maintain the same position that we did, which was unexpected, which was appropriate.

**SPARKS:** Yeah, good point.

**BARKE:** Can you say that loud enough for everyone to hear, Dr. Williams?

**WILLIAMS:** The California School Board Association maintains the same position that we do, and that was a complete surprise. But it was warmly received.

**SHAW:** All right, well, to be continued, I'm sure we will have an update probably next month. We will see how the next committee goes.

**SPARKS:** Could the public, if they wanted to access that video, where could they access that video?

**SHAW:** Senate.ca.gov is the homepage of the state senate, and I think—

**WILLIAMS:** Let's do even better. Why don't we put it on our website?

**SHAW, SPARKS:** Hey.

**SPARKS:** I like it.

**WILLIAMS:** I think that is the best thing to do.

**SPARKS:** Do we need to vote on that or we just say we want to do it?

**SHAW:** I think we just need consensus.

**WILLIAMS:** Renee, will you put it on our website?

**HENDRICK:** Yeah, I would just say that trying to find it was a little harder than I thought. You actually have to type in “tape testimony.”

**SHAW:** Then there is a media section, I think. That shows there is a bunch of different committees there. It is March 20, the Senate Education Committee.

**HENDRICK:** Yeah, I did find it. I just had to type it in a little bit differently. It was a little harder than I thought.

**SHAW:** Oh, okay. I will show you.

**HENDRICK:** I'm just saying as a public person trying to go and figure it out. It was a little bit hard than I thought.

**WILLIAMS:** You will never find it.

**BARKE:** We should put it on the website then.

**SPARKS:** So let's make it easy for the public.

**SHAW:** There you go. Right.

**HENDRICK:** We could put a link then to their site. Okay.

**SPARKS:** I would say let's put a link to the site. But, let's give them the timestamp of when your thing starts—

**HENDRICK:** Yeah.

**SPARKS:** —to start it, so it's not just this generic link that no one can find your testimony or whatever.

**SHAW:** Okay, perfect. Moving on, committee reports. Any other committees? Ken?

**WILLIAMS:** We have good things coming, Jorge and I, we will remain silent until we work out some of the details. We thought we worked out the details today, but we will get it right next time. That is all the committee, unless Jorge has something to say.

**SHAW:** Okay. Board member comments, I will start over here. Mari?

**BARKE:** Sure. Yesterday I went to ISAAC's Undoukai Sports Fest, a really neat event, a Japanese traditional event. That is the second cultural event I have been to there, maybe the third. They do these great cultural events, and it was wonderful. An organization actually hosted the whole event for them, provided volunteers. You got to see children, their siblings, their teachers, their coaches, parents just out there having fun, and playing, and doing relay races, and pushing these giant balls across the lawn. It was a super fun day. I got to present the trophy to the winning team. There were four teams, and it was just super fun. It is just great to go out and see kids actually playing, and doing things, and happy, and thriving. It was a great visit at ISSAC.

I also just kind of on the same note, Friday, no, Saturday afternoon I went to event at Corona Del Mar High School. It was an author from New York, Jonathan Haidt. He has written a recent book you can buy. It's called, "The Anxious Generation," and basically same bottom line, need more play, kids need to play. One of his takeaways is get cell phones out of schools. That was one of the simple things to do. The data is amazing. If you love to read, I would highly suggest his book. I'm hoping maybe to have some kind of presentation that we could host here, maybe even a video or at least shared on our website. But, it is really great information. A lot of people think that a lot of the issues that our kids are facing started during the pandemic. They really didn't. They started back in 2015-ish, kind of when cell phones became very prevalent among our children, so that is all I have say.

**SHAW:** Thank you. Ken, do you have any comments?

**WILLIAMS:** I sure do. To begin, on the Orange County School of the Arts, we had quite a bit of people who came here, parents, children, and students. Karen Jaffe who reached out to me about what's going on, just so everybody knows, she left this great book on Israel. It's a simple guide. Was I heard, should repeat and start over?

**SHAW:** Start that over.

**WILLIAMS:** Okay. I will start over because stupid me forgot to turn off the light. You turn on lights to mute here.

**BARKE:** I know, counterintuitive.

**WILLIAMS:** Counterintuitive. For the record, we had many, many families of the Jewish community who came in and shared with us about something that happened at one of our charter schools, the Orange County School of the Arts. I'm going to ask the staff to look into this. We heard probably at least 10 of the students and parents who showed and demonstrated that something was written in the student run newspaper by one of the faculty members there. They have a very strong antisemitic message, and I find that offensive. That was Karen Jaffe. I want to

thank Karen for reaching out to me. She left this book on our desk here for all of the trustees, “A Simple Guide to the Most Understood Country on Earth.” In honor of Karen and her efforts and the students who are there, all of us on the board are wearing the American flags and Israel flag on our lapels, because we support Israel. What happened on October 7 was terrible, terrible. If we can have the staff look into, write a letter, find out what happened here? If there is a consensus by the board.

**VALDES:** I was actually going to do more than that.

**WILLIAMS:** Oh.

**VALDES:** I was going to mention that in my public comments.

**WILLIAMS:** Okay.

**BARKE:** Sorry. Before it moves on, I do want to publicly, because I feel bad that they left. I want to thank all the families that came. If they are still listening or paying attention, we appreciate all of their comments. Antisemitism is a huge concern, and I appreciate the bravery of a lot of the students, and the parents, and the teachers who came out tonight. I'm sorry that you are not here to hear this, but hopefully you are listening on YouTube. We really appreciate that.

**WILLIAMS:** Did you want to contribute?

**VALDES:** Only after you are done.

**WILLIAMS:** Okay. If we can have the staff, if it is the consensus of the board to look into that? That certainly is not right. Especially with the students who came in and shared the terrible things that happened to the kids. Oh, that must be emotionally very difficult to handle, so I want to thank Karen and the pro-Israeli and Jewish community who came out to our meeting tonight.

The second issue that I want to talk about is a letter that we received. For the record, it is a letter dated April 3 by my good friend Janet Nguyen. She is the state senator that represents the Vietnamese community. She was concerned about the model curriculum, that two senate bills that she authored, that that bill is not being implemented properly. She wrote us a letter, and maybe we can talk about this. She is saying she wasn't included in the model curriculum. It wasn't what she designed, and she is not a very happy camper. She is probably going to be our county supervisor. If you can enlighten us to what happened?

**HENDRICK:** We are actually meeting with, I think Tim and Mari, they had asked for a meeting to understand the model curriculum. They will get more information. I will say there are many sides and views on this topic. Hopefully, with the two board members, we can figure out how to bring that back.

**WILLIAMS:** Do you have a copy of her letter that she sent to you?

**HENDRICK:** I did get a copy of that.

**WILLIAMS:** You did get a copy of that letter?

**HENDRICK:** Yes. I will agree that she is not happy, but I will disagree that she was not included in the conversations. I have all of the emails and everything where she was included in the conversations. I think the approach is a little bit different than what she was expecting.

**WILLIAMS:** Okay.

**HENDRICK:** There is other people in the state who also have differing views, so I think that is what we will go over with the two trustees that have asked to be included in that. Then when we talk with them, we can see how we let the rest of the board know that. It is a complicated process.

**WILLIAMS:** Oh, I believe it is.

**HENDRICK:** Yeah.

**WILLIAMS:** Tim and Mari.

**HENDRICK:** Mari.

**BARKE:** Yes.

**WILLIAMS:** You are going to be—

**HENDRICK:** I think we have a scheduled meeting on the nineteenth.

**WILLIAMS:** —heading up this? Okay. If you can just let us know. Lastly, the issue of the Tustin Charter School, about teacher credentialing not being a part of the board process. I'm not aware that we ever said that. Do you?

**HENDRICK:** It wasn't the credentialing. The board had asked that we not verify the signatures on the charter petition.

**BARKE:** Is that to protect their jobs? Is that why? I'm just realizing.

**HENDRICK:** No, it stemmed from a case where we had a couple different instances where we had said that they weren't valid signatures because they weren't people who lived in the area. The board says that it wasn't the staff's responsibility. They didn't want us verifying that signatures were valid.

**BARKE:** I don't know about that.

**WILLIAMS:** When was that?

**HENDRICK:** It was Linda and you, actually. It had to do with one of the charters who, it was parent signatures. They had had a signature gatherer who did it. When we were verifying them, the people were saying they had no idea what we were talking about. When we shared that as part of the petition, the board gave direction that that wasn't our responsibility to do that.

**BARKE:** To look at the parents' signatures or the teacher's signatures?

**HENDRICK:** Both.

**BARKE:** Both.

**HENDRICK:** We could do it differently, but that was the direction from the board at that time.

**WILLIAMS:** Okay.

**BARKE:** You know, I don't know why—

**WILLIAMS:** I think it's a little bit more complicated than that.

**BARKE:** Yeah.

**WILLIAMS:** And the context may not be proper. I would think generally, I mean how much time does it take to verify signatures?

**BARKE:** Well, I think that there was something—I'm just remembering hearing something and who knows. I heard it a long time ago, that in some cases parents were very confused. People went out and gathered their signatures, and somebody is calling to verify. They thought there was trouble and this and that. I think though, maybe our bigger concern is the teacher credentialing, looking into that I think is appropriate.

**HENDRICK:** We do check the teacher's credentials. That is one thing we do do.

**BARKE:** Okay.

**HENDRICK:** The question is whether they meaningfully want to be employed here. That is the question that is really being asked in the petition. It is not that they don't have the credentials. I think the question is that they are all from Northern California, and are they really going to move down here?

**SPARKS:** But that is a tough judgment call. It really is. There is no way of really knowing until the rubber meets the road, in my opinion.

**HENDRICK:** I think the people who were being called felt threatened, or felt like those type of things. That was one of the reasons we didn't want to be adversarial, but we do check credentials. That is what we do.

**SHAW:** I can see arguments for both sides.

**VALDES:** Yeah. I can see it now.

**SPARKS:** I just have a couple quick comments before Jorge goes if I may?

**SHAW:** Please.

**SPARKS:** One, I just wanted to reiterate Trustee Barke's comment about thanking everyone for coming out and particularly the children who came out to express their discomfort and their experiences. That is really important for us as a community to hear and tragic to hear as well. Secondly, to piggyback off what you mentioned about the research literature, actually I did a study on social media impact and depression, and it was way before the pandemic. I don't even know what year.

**BARKE:** It think it was around 2015 if I'm just remembering from Saturday.

**SPARKS:** But I mean my particular study that I actually co-authored—

**BARKE:** Oh, no.

**SPARKS:** —actually co-authored. Basically, the findings were such that, it was around, maybe about 10 years ago. The findings were such that students who engage in social media are more likely to become depressed if they engage in more than one social media outlet. The advice from, at least the research study that I did, and there is a lot of other research out there since that time, but it was kind of an early adopter kind of study in the social media context. If you are going to engage in social media, keep it to one social media site. Of course, limited activity would be the best if you want to avoid your kid being depressed or your student becoming depressed.

**BARKE:** Did you find it was more prevalent among girls than boys? That was something that kind of really showed on the charts that it was much more significant. Maybe because girls were affected more when social media and you know.

**SPARKS:** Our study didn't really have a gender difference.

**BARKE:** Okay.

**SPARKS:** But it definitely had the variables that kind of emerged about using multiple social media sites extensively, results in loneliness, depression, and those kinds of characteristics that we don't want our students to have. It is important information for parents.

**SHAW:** Thank you. All right, you are up, Jorge?

**VALDES:** I just wanted to say that I was very concerned about the comments tonight from our Jewish students. Apparently, there is been some harassment at OCSA. There was also a few people who came in and made similar comments about Irvine USD. For the benefit of the public,



we are the board for the ACCESS program, which is about 4,600 students. As far as I'm concerned, we have some level of oversight over the charter schools that we authorize. That is our purview for issues like this. I can tell the public that on my time on the board, I have personally gotten involved with two executive directors at different charter schools where a bullying issue arose and was brought to my attention. I did call. I called parents. I called the executive director and I got involved to try and figure out what happened.

I did get some contact information from two of our speakers tonight. I will contact them tomorrow to ask them more details about what happened. You don't get much of a presentation in two minutes, and I have no problem with calling up Teren Shaffer and setting up a meeting, which I intend to do. OCSA's in my district. It's a charter school in my area. I think these students, if they are going to come down here, I'm going to listen. That is part of this job, so I will report back next month on the findings that I make. If someone is going to come down here and complain about something like that, I am going to listen. As far as the people in Irvine USD, for me, I think you need to go to your local board for that. We don't have any jurisdiction over them or what happens in Irvine USD. I just wanted to explain that dichotomy to the public about where we think we are and where you would need to make that type of a complaint to a different board and a different entity.

**BARKE:** The one thing I think is—

**SHAW:** Thank you for those comments.

**BARKE:** —sometimes if they maybe feel they are not heard there, they come and share it with us. I'm happy to be an ear for that.

**SHAW:** Great. You guys said everything I was planning on saying. When I was up in Sacramento, I happened to run into Senator Nguyen. I called Renee. Yeah, she is unhappy. Thank you. I didn't realize they were going to come tonight and present that letter. But we had the meeting, I think it was on, coming up on April 19, Mari and I. Mari and I will be meeting with the staff to talk about the model curriculum and how that works and stuff.

**WILLIAMS:** Why don't you invite Janet Nguyen or her staff to be with you? I think that would go a long way.

**HENDRICK:** Well, we could, but why don't we have the meeting first so they understand what the process is. Then we could have, because I—

**SHAW:** I think that was the idea, but yeah, we are going to make sure that they are included to the extent possible. I did want to also share my profound disgust at the things that were said this evening about antisemitism happening in Orange County. I applaud your efforts, Jorge, for trying to get to the bottom of that. I just want to say I'm not Jewish, but I'm a friend of Jewish people. I can't just sit here and listen to that. That was very harmful and—

**WILLIAMS:** Hurtful.

**SHAW:** —hurtful. For whatever it is worth to those listening out there, I think our board, we are all friends of the Jewish community and very saddened by these accounts that we were hearing. Hopefully that goes away quickly. With that, I think we will go ahead and stand adjourned to Wednesday, May 1, at 5:00 PM here at 200 Kalmus Drive in Costa Mesa. We will see you then.

**HENDRICK:** Can I just clarify one thing?

**SHAW:** Oh, yes.

**HENDRICK:** Since Jorge is going to have the conversation with—do you still want us to reach out to OCSA?

**WILLIAMS:** Jorge, what did you say?

**SHAW:** He wants to go meet with them.

**VALDES:** No, first I'm going to contact the two people who left me their contact information, to get a detailed account of what has happened. If I think what they are telling me is detailed enough, I'm going to personally call up Teren Schaffer and ask for a meeting on it. Then I will report back. I think that is—what people are saying is really problematic to me. It deserves more than a letter. It is in my district. It is a charter school that we authorize. I think it is something that we should get involved in, so I plan to.

**BARKE:** Well, please, when you reach out to them personally, let them know that we all support you and appreciate that they came here, and appreciate their bravery, and what they are going through.

**VALDES:** I will.

**WILLIAMS:** Yeah. I would like to go with you to that meeting, so hold off on the letter until—

**VALDES:** Okay.

**SHAW:** Okay. So, there you go. We will see you May 1, 2024, here at 5:00 PM.