MINUTES OF THE SAN MATEO COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

Meeting Date: January 20, 2021
Meeting Location: Held Remotely
Board Members Present: Susan Alvaro, Chelsea Bonini, Hector Camacho, Jr., Jim Cannon, Beverly Gerard (arrived 6:22), Ted Lempert, Joe Ross
Staff Officials Present: Nancy Magee, Secretary
Jennifer Perna, Executive Assistant
Other Staff Present: Niambi Clay, Claire Cunningham, Jennifer Frentress, Jeneé Littrell, Patricia Love, Lori Musso, Anjanette Pelletier, Denise Porterfield
Youth Commissioner Liaison Present: Allyson Chan

1. OPENING ITEMS

   A. Call to Order

   Board President Hector Camacho, Jr. called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m. He announced the County Board was conducting the meeting as a webinar in light of the current health emergency and the Governor’s March 17, 2020, Executive Order N-29-20 suspending certain provisions of the Brown Act to allow governing boards to conduct meetings through remote access. Board President Camacho also noted in the effort to increase accessibility and opportunity for community engagement, simultaneous interpretation of the meeting was being implemented in Spanish using Zoom technology through the end of Public Comment, and would continue further into the meeting if people were utilizing the channel.

   Board President Camacho welcomed Youth Commissioner Liaison Chan, thanked her for being part of the team this year, and noted how valued the youth voice is as part of the Board’s discussions.

   B. Approval of Agenda

   After a motion by Mr. Lempert and a second by Ms. Alvaro, the Board approved, by a vote of six in favor (Alvaro, Bonini, Camacho, Cannon, Lempert, and Ross), none opposed, and one absent (Gerard), by roll call vote, the January 20, 2021, agenda as presented.
2. **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Kathy Catalano, retired SMCOE teacher, addressed the topic of remote work during the pandemic.

3. **EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH**

   A. **January 2021 Employee of the Month, Jill Vandroff, Nurse on Special Assignment, Office of the Superintendent**

   Board President Camacho recognized the January 2021 Employee of the Month, Jill Vandroff, Nurse on Special Assignment, Office of the Superintendent. Board President Camacho congratulated Ms. Vandroff on behalf of the Board and noted her check and commemorative token would be delivered soon.

4. **PRESENTATION FOR SCHOOL BOARD RECOGNITION MONTH**

   A. **Presentation for School Board Recognition Month**

   Superintendent Magee shared a presentation to recognize School Board Recognition Month and both thank and show appreciation to the San Mateo County Board of Education. She highlighted the notable efforts and accomplishments of the Board, including work in the areas of equity, anti-racism, policy and advocacy efforts, oversight of Oxford Day Academy, and the Outdoor Education and YMCA partnership.

5. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

   A. **December 9, 2020, Regular Board Meeting**

   After a motion by Ms. Alvaro, and a second by Mr. Lempert, the Board approved, by a vote of five in favor (Alvaro, Camacho, Cannon, Gerard, and Lempert), none opposed, and two abstentions (Bonini and Ross), by roll call vote, the Minutes of the December 9, 2020, Regular Board Meeting as presented.

   B. **December 16, 2020, Special Board Meeting**

   After a motion by Ms. Gerard, and a second by Mr. Lempert, the Board unanimously (Alvaro, Bonini, Camacho, Cannon, Gerard, Lempert, and Ross), by roll call vote, approved the Minutes of the December 16, 2020, Special Board Meeting as presented.
6. **CONSENT AGENDA**

B. Receive Staffing Reports  
C. Adopt Joint Resolution No. 21-1 Recognizing January 27, 2021, as International Holocaust Remembrance Day  
D. Adopt Joint Resolution No. 21-2 Recognizing January 30, 2021, as Fred Korematsu Day of Civil Liberties and the Constitution  
E. Adopt Joint Resolution No. 21-3 Recognizing February 2021 as National African American History Month  
F. Receive Quarterly Report on Complaints, as Required by the Williams Settlement  
G. Establish Process for Small School District Purchase of Supplies and Equipment  
H. Adopt Joint Resolution No. 21-4 Honoring Lee McKusick on His Retirement  
I. Receive 2019-2020 San Mateo County Office of Education School Accountability Report Cards (SARCs) for the Court and Community Schools and Special Education Programs (Published in 2020-2021)

After a motion by Mr. Cannon, and a second by Ms. Gerard, the Board unanimously (Alvaro, Bonini, Camacho, Cannon, Gerard, Lempert, and Ross), by roll call vote, approved the Consent Agenda.

7. **BUSINESS SERVICES DIVISION**

A. Receive Report on 2021-2022 Governor's Budget Proposal

Deputy Superintendent Porterfield began by stating that the 2021-2022 Governor’s Budget includes significantly more revenue than was expected nine months ago and by extension, an increase in Proposition 98. She described this unexpected economic turnaround allows the Governor to propose deep investments to learning in a COVID-19 environment. It allows the Governor to pay a significant amount of the apportionment deferrals in 2021-2022 and revisit other proposals put forward prior to the pandemic, including investments to address the state’s teacher shortage.

Deputy Superintendent Porterfield explained that the K-12 budget includes revenues from three fiscal years, 2019-2020, 2020-2021, and 2021-2022. Fiscal year 2019-2020 has an increase of $1.9 billion since last estimates, fiscal year 2020-2021 has an increase of $11.9 billion, and fiscal year 2021-2022 is estimated to have an increase of $3 billion. This brings Proposition 98 funding to $85.8 billion. Proposition 98 is in a Test 1 year, meaning K-14, which includes community colleges, is entitled to 38% of the state General Fund. She continued that last year’s 2020-2021 Budget Act included a multi-year plan to supplement Proposition 98 and mitigate projected declines due to revenue reductions. Specifically, the 2020-2021 Budget Act projected that Proposition 98 funding levels in 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 would drop below the target funding level into Test 2, by a total of approximately $12.4 billion.

Deputy Superintendent Porterfield said that in order to accelerate the recovery from this anticipated funding reduction, the 2020-2021 Budget Act included annual supplemental appropriations above the constitutionally required Proposition 98 funding level, beginning in 2021-2022, in an amount equal to 1.5% of the General Fund revenues per year, up to $12.4 billion. The 2020-2021 Budget Act also proposed to increase K-14 schools’ share of the General Fund from approximately 38% of
the General Fund in Test 1 years to 40% of the General Fund. Instead of a $12.4 billion drop in Proposition 98 funding in those two years, the budget now projects a decline of $511 million and the guarantee is now at a level that, under previous projections, would have taken years to reach. As a result, the Budget proposes to remove the supplemental payment from statute. However, in recognition of the needs of students and education related to COVID-19, the Budget includes a one-time supplementary payment to K-14 schools of $2.3 billion in 2021-2022.

Deputy Superintendent Porterfield explained the 2020-2021 Enacted Budget included almost $13 billion in K-12 deferrals, $1.9 billion from the deferral from June 2019-2020 into July in 2020-2021, and an additional approximately $11 billion from 2020-2021 to 2021-2022. The Governor’s Budget proposes to pays down $9.2 billion of the K-12 funding formula deferrals, which effectively eliminates the ongoing deferrals scheduled for February through May 2022. She emphasized this pay down does not impact the deferrals currently scheduled for February through June 2021. The repayment schedule for these deferrals remains, with districts receiving these apportionments July through November 2021, beginning February.

Deputy Superintendent Porterfield noted it is important for all districts, and more importantly local control funding formula (LCFF) funded districts to plan for cash flow in order to remain solvent under these deferrals. Districts must have positive cash on June 30 to be considered solvent. LCFF districts in particular will need to borrow cash, since approximately 40% of their apportionments will be deferred into the next fiscal year. However, this does not impact SMCOE which is funded by property taxes.

Deputy Superintendent Porterfield discussed how the proposed cost of living adjustment (COLA) for the LCFF in 2021-2022 is 3.84%, a compounded amount of 2.31% COLA paying back for 2020-2021 and an additional 1.5% for 2021-2022, applied to all LCFF grants. The other educational programs funded outside of the LCFF (Special Education, Child Nutrition, Preschool, Foster Youth, and the Mandated Block Grant) will only receive the 1.5% COLA designated for 2021-2022. She reported the compounded COLA will be applied to the SMCOE LCFF and will increase the per-pupil amount received in court schools and for those students receiving average daily attendance (ADA) in community schools. However, operational funding remains in hold harmless, which increases the target and does not change funding. SMCOE will continue to receive the same funding as in 2013-2014.

Deputy Superintendent Porterfield explained that statewide, ADA is expected to continue declining. The Governor’s Budget Proposal acknowledges that due to health and safety concerns, it is likely that in-person instruction will continue to be a challenge, and alternative instruction models will need to be offered. The 2020-2021 budget is funded based on 2019-2020 ADA, which protected all districts and SMCOE’s court schools from declining resources. The Governor’s Budget proposal does not include an ADA hold harmless for 2021-2022, except the declining enrollment protection in Education Code. She reported that districts or county offices will be funded on either the current year or the prior year, whichever is greater. For declining enrollment districts and county offices, the cliff will happen in 2022-2023. Those districts need to start planning now to manage the reduction. 2022-2023 will be the second year in a district’s multi-year projection, and if they are
unable to meet their reserves, they will need to certify as qualified or negative, which will increase the county office’s need to provide greater oversight.

Deputy Superintendent Porterfield shared that Governor Newsom is calling for swift and early action by lawmakers to appropriate at least $2 billion in one-time Proposition 98 funds to aid in the safe reopening and operation of in-person instruction for K-12 students. The base grant is $450 per ADA for a February reopening and $337.50 per ADA for a March reopening.

Superintendent Magee said that she has drafted a list of concerns about the incentive funding structure, as presently organized. She noted the legislature has yet to work on this proposal and may come back with adjustments, but currently, in order for districts to receive funding they must be able to commit to meeting all benchmarks in the new California Department of Public Health (CDPH) guidance released last week.

Superintendent Magee explained in San Mateo County, the adjusted case rate is still above the benchmark of 25 new cases per day per 100,000 population. She stated there are seven public school districts with students already attending school in person out of 16 elementary districts. The challenge is that many of the districts who have yet to return to school may not have the capacity to meet the timelines or implement all the necessary protocols required in order to apply for the grant money. Therefore, those districts already serving students in-person are more likely to receive the money, while those schools not yet open for in-person learning would potentially lose out.

Additionally, there appears to be no access, ability, or pathway for the comprehensive high school districts to meet the standards of the CDPH guidance so it remains unclear how these districts would access funds. Superintendent Magee expressed concern for the equitable distribution of the $2 billion, especially for those districts that have been impacted the most by local COVID-19 conditions. She said there is no way to know where this will land between the Governor and the legislature, but she is engaging with local legislators to share her concerns.

Deputy Superintendent Porterfield continued that the Governor’s Budget includes one-time funds to incentivize expanded transitional kindergarten and full-day kindergarten programs. It proposes $300 million in ongoing funds for the Special Education Early Intervention Grant, $264.9 million for Community Schools, $450 million for Mental Health Programs, and $10 million for School Climate Surveys. Additionally, it includes investments of more than $540 million in one-time funds to support professional learning, teacher effectiveness, and the teacher pipeline. She shared the Governor does not include any new funding towards the California Public Employees' Retirement System (CalPERS) to offset costs, however his previous investments reduce the employer contribution from 24.9% to 23% in 2021–2022. Similarly, in the California State Teachers' Retirement System (CalSTRS), the contribution was reduced from 18.1% to 15.92%. While the Governor’s Budget does not pay for the 2020–2021 COLA to provide reimbursement rates, it proposes to apply the 1.5% COLA in 2021–2022 to general child care and state preschool rates. Deputy Superintendent Porterfield described this as the beginning of the process, the Legislature will meet, the Governor will take feedback, followed by a May revise and final negotiations before we have a final budget.
Board President Camacho thanked Deputy Superintendent Porterfield for the report.

Ms. Bonini referred to discussion on a recent California School Boards Association (CSBA) call about Proposition 98 levels triggering the reserve cap negotiated a few years back, and asked if Deputy Superintendent Porterfield had any additional information. Deputy Superintendent Porterfield replied that based on information and estimates at this time, the cap would be triggered and rainy day fund contributions would need to be made in the year 2022-2023. A non-basic aid district would be required to have no more than 10% assigned or unassigned reserves. She explained there are three types of reserves: 1) committed, when a Board signs a resolution and commits the reserving of funds for a specific purpose, 2) assigned, done by a Superintendent and Chief Business Officer (CBO) in budget documents, and 3) unassigned, which fall to the ending balance and are not focused on any particular issue. Deputy Superintendent Porterfield explained that in San Mateo County, this could have an impact if seven districts were to stay non-basic aid, but otherwise basic-aid districts and smaller districts are exempt.

Mr. Lempert thanked and expressed appreciation to Deputy Superintendent Porterfield for the detailed report. He recalled how past budget headlines would cite big windfalls and historic increases that drew reaction from partners in government, but upon close inspection and listening, the budget did not live up to the hype. He noted that this budget includes a constitutional guarantee and perhaps a little more, but deferrals are still included. Mr. Lempert referred to the Governor putting transitional kindergarten (TK) funds into the Prop 98 budget, instead of actually increasing the budget.

He recalled once meeting with Senator Hill who felt they had a great budget, but it took local leaders to determine it was not so great after all. Mr. Lempert asked if it was fair to say this budget is not as good as it sounds and the headlines are woefully misleading, especially in terms of what students need and what Prop 98 requires. Deputy Superintendent Porterfield replied that year after year, there is caution from CBOs but it must be acknowledged that the budget contains $85.8 billion, which is higher than it’s ever been.

She referred to Superintendent Magee’s comments about reopening plans and how not all districts are poised to apply for that money. There is money being put into issues such as the teacher shortage, but as always, more money is needed. Deputy Superintendent Porterfield asserted it is not a bad budget given that nine months ago the belief was that we were headed into dire straits. Compared to that scenario, it is a great budget, but there is never enough money allocated to education.

Mr. Lempert spoke about vaccinations and the focus on seniors. He said this loses sight of those being disproportionately impacted, and referred to San Mateo County Health Officer Dr. Morrow’s remarks about teachers needing to get the vaccine right away in order to get students back into school. He inquired about vaccinations and how Superintendent Magee is speaking out about students being disproportionately impacted. Mr. Lempert spoke of New York City signing agreements with their teachers and other schools around the country opening in part because they are prioritizing teachers for vaccination. He said locally he only sees seniors rushing to get the vaccine, and while they need it, if seniors were informed on what is going on with students’ mental
health and learning loss, they would understand and likely choose to get students back to school first. Superintendent Magee expressed appreciation for Mr. Lempert’s question and explained she planned to address vaccinations in her Superintendent’s Comments.

Mr. Ross asked if in the Governor’s proposal there had been any change to Education Code §2578, the Excess Property Tax provision, as it applies to County Offices. Deputy Superintendent Porterfield reported there has been no mention that she is aware of. Mr. Ross shared he has spoken with newly elected State Senator Josh Becker on this topic and will share further information during Board Member Comments.

Board President Camacho thanked Mr. Lempert for pointing out the numbers regarding COLA and deferrals. He noted that whenever the Governor or anyone on the budget committee presents a budget, they use the same graph with increasing bars, which indicates that Prop 98 was intended as a floor. Board President Camacho asked about multiple scenarios in planning for the next year and asked if Deputy Superintendent Porterfield foresees another unexpected windfall. She responded that most of the windfall comes from the $11 billion from 2020-2021. She believes there is a cushion being built in, estimated at $3 million. The Department of Finance is using more conservative numbers right now. She knows there is speculation on commercial property and whether there could be an impact on property taxes. If property taxes drop, the state has a larger obligation, leading to challenges for 2022-2023. Deputy Superintendent Porterfield described risk and the need for districts to be careful about spending COLA increases on long-term, ongoing expenses.

Board President Camacho discussed local districts who have fallen into the trap of receiving cash intended as one-time dollars and applying it towards expenses. He asked how these conversations are going with local districts. Deputy Superintendent Porterfield said conversations are taking place, particularly if the districts are declining in enrollment or are LCFF-funded. If districts are declining too fast in student counts, they can artificially end up as Basic Aid and be funded lower than if they had maintained student counts.

Ms. Bonini asked if there is a sense of whether declining enrollment is happening in a lot of districts. Additionally, the topic was mentioned in the CSBA call after the budget was released, noting there was not a hold harmless in place for the coming year. Deputy Superintendent Porterfield confirmed there are districts experiencing declining enrollment, but she did not have specific numbers. Fortunately, in this current year, LCFF-funded districts are being funded based on 2019-2020 numbers or were allowed any growth they could prove and were protected this year. Next year, they will be funded on a combination of 2021-2022 and 2020-2021 ADA, but the problem with 2020-2021 is that engagement, rather than attendance, is being tracked. There will still be discussion on how to make this happen, and they may need to go back to 2019-2020 rather than 2021-2022. She summarized it is hard to project where districts will land on this issue.

Board President Camacho thanked Deputy Superintendent Porterfield for indicating this is just the beginning of the process and represents an initial proposal. He shared even the Legislative Analyst’s Office (LAO) had concerns with the initial proposal. Board President Camacho discussed that the San Mateo County School Boards Association (SMCSBA) is hoping to engage
legislators in this conversation because while local legislators are supporters of schools, education is not their issue. He emphasized that SMCSBA’s goal over the next year is to change that story so that each legislator makes education their issue. He expressed appreciation that the Board is engaged in the budget conversation and thanked Deputy Superintendent Porterfield for keeping them informed with detailed reports.

8. **OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT**

A. Superintendent’s Comments

Superintendent Magee began by sharing a presentation honoring former San Mateo County Superintendent of Schools Dr. Floyd Gonella, who served as County Superintendent from 1991-2003, serving three terms, and who passed away in early January. She shared numerous examples reflecting on Dr. Gonella’s leadership, how he turned vision to action at SMCOE, the prestigious awards he received, and how his extraordinary service and advocacy benefitted the children and youth of San Mateo County. Superintendent Magee invited Board members to share their memories of Dr. Gonella during Board Member Comments.

Superintendent Magee said she was excited to report that the previous day the Special Education program began returning students to in-person learning under the small setting guidance, with roughly 16 students returning who had not been in school for nine months. Executive Director Notch had shared a story of being on campus as the buses arrived and how one student, when stepping off the bus, had raised his hands, proclaiming “I’m back at school,” and then elbow-bumped with a paraeducator. Superintendent Magee described how this uplifting story is the reason teachers, paraeducators, principals, business, and transportation staff had worked so hard to address all necessary conditions for a safe return. She emphasized it has been a tremendous amount of work to get the students back to school, but they did it, and everyone is thrilled.

Superintendent Magee provided an update about vaccinations, discussing her close work with county health officials and with the larger medical groups who are receiving the vaccine supplies such as Kaiser and Sutter. She described working with superintendents on ways to support the equitable distribution of the vaccine when the time comes. Superintendent Magee shared being happy that those who are 65 or older are now on the list, but that this age group has been placed ahead of the workforce groups, including education. She explained how the vaccine is in short supply and that it could potentially be weeks before educators get vaccinated in large numbers. She explained that SMCOE put out a survey to all public school staff last week in collaboration with San Mateo County Health to collect data in preparation for the roll out. This information will be shared with medical partners and help inform a potential distribution plan. Superintendent Magee said as soon as a specific plan is confirmed, it will be shared with the community.

Superintendent Magee said she was happy to meet newly elected School Board members at the San Mateo County School Boards Association (SMCSBA) New School Board Member orientation the previous weekend and reported she presented to the Redwood City Leadership Group providing an
overview of education in San Mateo County. She noted that Board Member Lempert also presented to the leadership group later that same day.

9. **BOARD MEMBERS**

   A. **Receive Report from YMCA Housing Subcommittee**

Superintendent Magee discussed the attention dedicated to the YMCA housing discussion regarding the tentative location of two houses at Camp Jones Gulch. She explained the decision-making process was informed by the 25-year agreement document signed by the Board, the County Superintendent, and the YMCA in 2019. In preparing for the housing discussion, the team came to understand there were more details in the housing agreement that distinguished a role for a working group that provides input to capital improvements at Camp Jones Gulch.

As the Board looks ahead to making committee assignments, Superintendent Magee wanted to review the difference between the working group for capital improvements as described in the 25-year agreement and the Board’s YMCA Housing Subcommittee. She clarified that Board members who are part of the working group only serve to provide input and will not bring actions to the full Board for approval. Conversely, the YMCA Housing Subcommittee would always bring recommendations of their discussions to the full Board for action.

Ms. Alvaro appreciated the thorough explanation. She suggested for the sake of continuity that there be a three-member YMCA Partnership Committee, with two of the members serving on the working group. Ms. Alvaro explained that the working group would be discussing issues regarding infrastructure capital improvements such as upgrades to the water system, electrical system, and dining hall, while the YMCA Partnership Committee will discuss issues in which the Board is actively involved, with the first priority being housing. She described how the committee is ad-hoc and may be disbanded after that issue is resolved, to be brought back if additional issues arise down the line. Ms. Alvaro reiterated the desire for the YMCA Partnership Committee to be comprised of three people, with two of the three to serve on the working group.

Mr. Cannon summarized that one group would focus on the housing issue and the other group would focus on capital improvements. Ms. Alvaro added capital improvements would also include redoing the fire road, which the group has already started to discuss. She explained a big distinction between the two groups is that money has already been allocated to the YMCA for capital improvements but decisions regarding the funding for the housing decision are on the Board.

Ms. Bonini asked if there are any aspects of the housing discussion which would be considered capital improvements, or whether there is a distinct line that all aspects of the housing discussion would be weighed in on by the Board. Ms. Alvaro clarified there are some aspects of the housing discussion which would be capital improvements, such as the utilities going to the housing location. She said the YMCA determined if there are capital improvements necessary for housing, they would...
put up 2/3 of the costs and SMCOE would put up 1/3 of the costs, however the funding for the housing itself was fully on SMCOE. Ms. Alvaro reiterated that part of the housing decision would be about capital improvements.

Superintendent Magee interjected that there are no students currently at Camp Jones Gulch and since there was no decision yet on the housing location, the YMCA is anxious to get the working group together and complete some of the capital improvements listed in the agreement. She said this aspect of the work would be immediate, while the work of some of the other committee assignments would occur later in the year.

B. Discuss/Act on 2021 Board Committee Assignments

Superintendent Magee explained that the 2021 assignments are organized differently than in previous years, with the subcommittees comprised of three members and Board representatives comprised of one Board member.

The chart below indicates the chosen assignments of Board members:

SAN MATEO COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION
COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS
2021

| COMMITTEES |
| ASSIGNMENT |
| BOARD MEMBER |

1) Budget Advisory Committee for 2021
   - Mr. Cannon (Chair)
   - Ms. Bonini
   - Ms. Gerard

2) Superintendent’s Salary Committee
   - Mr. Camacho (Chair)
   - Ms. Alvaro
   - Mr. Lempert

3) (Ad Hoc) Inter-district Attendance Appeal
   - Mr. Camacho (Chair)
   - Ms. Gerard
   - Mr. Ross
BOARD MEMBERS (continued)

4) (Ad Hoc) YMCA Partnership Committee
   Ms. Alvaro (Chair)
   Mr. Camacho
   Mr. Cannon

5) Legislative Committee
   Mr. Ross (Chair)
   Ms. Bonini
   Mr. Camacho

6) (Ad Hoc) Real Property Committee
   Mr. Ross (Chair)
   Ms. Alvaro
   Ms. Gerard

REPRESENTATIVES

ASSIGNMENT

7) SMCOE LCAP Representative
   Ms. Gerard

8) San Mateo County School Boards Association (SMCSBA)
   Area Representative
   Ms. Bonini

9) County Committee on School District Organization
   (CCSDO) Liaison
   Mr. Lempert

10) Coalition for Safe Schools and Communities Representative
    Mr. Cannon

11) Big Lift Representative
    Ms. Alvaro

12) Oxford Day Academy Oversight Team Representative
    Mr. Ross
C. Adopt Joint Resolution No. 21-5 Implementing Board Policy BP 9250 to Compensate Board Member Ross for His Absence from the December 9, 2020, Board Meeting Due to Family Emergency

Superintendent Magee reminded the Board that when a member is unable to attend a Board meeting due to illness or other unavoidable circumstance, the Board may take action to provide compensation for that Board member. She shared that Mr. Ross had lost a family member and was on a bereavement trip during the December 9, 2020, Board meeting.

After a motion by Mr. Cannon, and a second by Mr. Lempert, the Board approved by a vote of six in favor (Alvaro, Bonini, Camacho, Cannon, Gerard, and Lempert), none opposed, and one recusal (Ross), by roll call vote, Joint Resolution No. 21-5 Implementing Board Policy BP 9250 to Compensate Board Member Ross for His Absence from the December 9, 2020, Board Meeting Due to Family Emergency.

D. Board Member Comments

Youth Commissioner Liaison Chan
Youth Commissioner Liaison Chan shared she found the information presented tonight interesting. She noted she did not previously know of Dr. Gonella, but the presentation about him was compelling and she appreciates learning about the people who have impacted her education, even without her seeing it directly.

Youth Commissioner Liaison Chan stated she was happy to hear about the students in the Special Education program returning to school this week. She described how the slow reopening seems effective, and while her school has not returned to in-person learning yet, sports are starting up in small pods. She said these brief opportunities to interact with other students are exciting.

Youth Commissioner Liaison Chan shared that she has joined the California Student Board Member Association (CSBMA) as a delegate assembly member, alongside other district student Board members with whom she has been working closely since taking on her current position with the Board. She shared she was unable to attend the previous California School Boards Association (CSBA) Student Board Member Program, but she is interested in attending future conferences and becoming involved in similar opportunities.

Board President Camacho asked if CSBMA is affiliated with the CSBA student workshops. Youth Commissioner Chan replied CSBA is working on officially joining the programs.

Mr. Cannon
Mr. Cannon shared in light of the fact that it was inauguration day, he had been receiving many texts about the day’s uplifting events and he feels the country is in good hands.

Mr. Cannon commented that Dr. Gonella had a tremendous impact on the schools in Colma and Daly City in which Mr. Cannon worked, and he described how Dr. Gonella promoted partnership services
working with the Board of Supervisors and County Manager John Maltby. Mr. Cannon described how several school districts competed for a program won by his school district, which enabled them to receive vital services including from nurses, social workers, and counselors, all housed within the school buildings. Mr. Cannon explained how his school was skilled at helping students with their academic education, but were more challenged by how to educate their community about food programs, counseling, etc. He expressed how Dr. Gonella was instrumental in their district receiving that program which led to tremendous success. He has always been grateful for Dr. Gonella’s visionary leadership. Mr. Cannon added this also led to his interest in running for the County Board of Education, because in both professional and personal ways, Dr. Gonella positively impacted him as a school principal and inspired him to seek additional ways to serve.

Mr. Ross
Mr. Ross commented to Youth Commissioner Liaison Chan that every time she speaks, he feels that the Board is sitting in the company of a true leader. He thanked her for her service with the Board.

Mr. Ross requested a future agenda item present additional detail about the policy for staff remote work.

Mr. Ross shared being on the receiving end of phone calls from individuals worried about the vaccination rollout. He discussed the need to lean in to do whatever is necessary to get back to normal, which includes getting teachers and school staff vaccinated. Mr. Ross respectfully asked Superintendent Magee for a report to keep the Board fully informed along with suggestions for what the Board can proactively do on this issue.

Mr. Ross reported that Senator Josh Becker contacted him regarding excess property taxes expressing his desire to draft a bill to repeal the excess property tax diversion from the budget. Mr. Ross said he put together a draft with information on the issue and shared it with Senator Becker, whose staff hopefully will submit in a few weeks. He shared this is something to monitor and should raise attention on this topic.

Mr. Ross noted that a Board Member from the Sequoia Union High School District is championing an effort to consolidate data between elementary and non-unified high school districts, to provide longitudinal tracking of student outcomes. He believes this request will come to SMCOE, and he wanted to inform Superintendent Magee. Mr. Ross mentioned the Data Zone, being run by the Santa Clara County Office of Education, which may be similar to what is being advocated for by the Sequoia Union High School District Board Member. He said it is an interesting idea which he wanted to share with everyone.

Mr. Ross referred back to Youth Commissioner Liaison Chan, and said he is helping organize the California County Boards of Education (CCBE) annual September conference, which will likely be virtual, and she may want to attend presentations on education issues, as well as help in the planning. He informed her he would love to be in touch if she is interested. Mr. Ross said it was good to see everyone.
Mr. Lempert
Mr. Lempert described having the honor to be on a panel for Redwood City Leadership Day with fellow panelist Alyson Suzuki, Executive Director, Early Learning Support Services. He added that Executive Director Suzuki did an amazing job representing SMCOE and discussing early childhood programs. He said he enjoyed being on the panel with her.

Mr. Lempert referred to the fact he was wearing a tie, which was symbolic of the impact of Dr. Gonella on Mr. Lempert’s professional life. Mr. Lempert shared that upon joining the Board, at his new board member orientation, Dr. Gonella emphasized the need to always wear a tie when entering the County Office building. Dr. Gonella had also advised that Board members must always attend the CCBE Conference and must always attend the Saturday night dinner. Mr. Lempert described when he missed the dinner for his first time a few years back, he felt he was letting Dr. Gonella down. Mr. Lempert articulated how important Dr. Gonella was to him and reflected on how Dr. Gonella mentored and guided students and young people who were just starting their careers in education. Mr. Lempert described Dr. Gonella’s support when he declared he was running for the State Assembly. Dr. Gonella became one of Mr. Lempert’s original six volunteers to help with mailings and other tasks. Dr. Gonella believed in young people, which has helped inspire Mr. Lempert’s passion for students in education. Mr. Lempert also conveyed that Dr. Gonella was a true role model, educator, mentor, and friend, whose support impacted him throughout his career. Mr. Lempert reflected on the serious lessons, but also noted the fun, practical wisdom, taught by Dr. Gonella.

Mr. Lempert shared that he owes a great deal of his career to Dr. Gonella and would not be on the Board without his influence. He recounted that when his term on the State Assembly ended, and he was running for the County Board, Dr. Gonella emphatically and sincerely informed him there was no more important or noble office, at any level, than being on a school board. Mr. Lempert spoke of how much this comment reflected Dr. Gonella’s view of schools and local district work. He expressed that Dr. Gonella thought the world of SMCOE and helped build it into what it is today, his inspiration will be missed, and his impact will last forever.

Ms. Bonini
Ms. Bonini expressed it was a special day and a new beginning with the inauguration. She spoke of listening to President Biden’s speech, whose message was consistent with SMCOE’s and Superintendent Magee’s vision of better together. Ms. Bonini referred to President Biden stating that with unity we can do great things including deliver social justice.

Ms. Bonini raised several issues being discussed in the community which could be future agenda items, indicating that Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) often have an agenda item of “future agenda items.” These involve planning, transparency, and reflection. In regards to planning, Ms. Bonini discussed how there are districts struggling to put together plans, and she wondered if there was a way to encourage planning and preparedness for the return to school when it is safe. She stated some districts are afraid to take the step forward. She acknowledged each community is different, but there are basic aspects of planning and preparation which would bring some peace and hope to communities.
In regard to transparency, Ms. Bonini stated there are requirements and reporting in place for the districts who are back, including for learning hubs, and asked if it would be possible to explore making this information easier to find, perhaps displayed on a dashboard. She indicated the information posted by SMCOE is in different places and does not seem to be updated, which she acknowledged is a task, but it would help to designate a central place to view different types of data. Ms. Bonini referred to requests from Daina Lujan and the San Mateo County School Boards Association (SMCSBA) asking Boards to look into and answer questions. She asked if it was possible to have more of a dashboard on the county level.

Ms. Bonini next referred to discussions with teachers and if there has been any thought put into a reflective process about what is possible for the future. She summarized that these are messages she hoped to share based on conversations she has been having in the community.

Ms. Bonini shared she never had the chance to meet Dr. Gonella, but in reviewing the dates the County Office moved to Redwood Shores, she recognized this was when she was teaching in South San Francisco. During that time, she visited the County Office many times to work on credentialing, attend conferences, and work with other teachers, so this connection makes the place itself special to her. She is thankful that Dr. Gonella had the vision to initiate the process. Ms. Bonini expressed feeling sad to hear of his passing.

Lastly, Ms. Bonini shared she is excited to participate in the first Masters in Governance program specifically for County Offices of Education, offered through California School Boards Association (CSBA) and California County Boards of Education (CCBE). She shared she had attended the original Masters in Governance program, and some of the information is the same, but the content is interesting. Ms. Bonini said she would share more information on the program in the future, that she appreciates the opportunity for continued learning, and knows she will learn a lot more from her fellow Board members, as well.

Ms. Gerard

Ms. Gerard stated it was nice to see Youth Commissioner Liaison Chan again and all the Board members. She reflected it has been quite a day, and she was able to watch much of the inauguration on television, which was a wonderful, uplifting experience which gives everyone hope.

Ms. Gerard shared that Board members could sign up for the CCBE County Board Governance Workshop and that she was on the committee that developed the training. She encouraged all Board members to attend and explained there would be two strands, one for new Board members and one for existing Board members. The workshop is divided into four sections and begins on March 9. She recommended that interested Board members could inform Ms. Perna if they would like to attend.

Ms. Gerard spoke of Dr. Gonella, sharing she has known him for more than 40 years. They met when Dr. Gonella was Superintendent of the Jefferson Union High School District, and she was representing her son Adam at an Interdistrict Attendance Appeal. Ms. Gerard described going before the Board to ask for the transfer and being incredibly nervous, which she noted has made her more compassionate when dealing with those parents requesting Interdistrict Attendance Appeals at the county level. She laughed that Dr. Gonella thought she was Adam’s sister, not his mother, the
Interdistrict Attendance Appeal was granted, and all three of her children went on to attend Oceana High School.

Ms. Gerard shared Dr. Gonella is the reason she is on the Board. She spoke of being active on the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) at the time, and Dr. Gonella asked her to join the district organization committee, promising it would only be one to two meetings per year. After agreeing to join, a huge issue arose with the Oceana High School border between San Bruno, Pacifica, and Daly City. In the end she lost count of how many meetings were held, but it was then that Dr. Gonella informed her that the person representing her area on the San Mateo County Board of Education was retiring and that a new person would be appointed. He asked if she would be interested. She responded that she was very interested in Special Education, the Regional Occupation Program (ROP), and the work of the County Office, and as a result, ended up joining the County Board ahead of Dr. Gonella’s superintendency. She emphasized that Dr. Gonella always had a vision and always seemed to accomplish that vision. He made an incredible difference at SMCOE and was well known throughout the state of California for his leadership and educational expertise. Ms. Gerard expressed feeling heartbroken about Dr. Gonella’s passing. He was a huge influence in her life. From her perspective, Dr. Gonella was an exceptional person.

Ms. Alvaro
Ms. Alvaro commented it was wonderful that Ms. Bonini was participating in the Masters in Governance training because she will learn more about how different County Boards are from local school boards.

Ms. Alvaro agreed with Mr. Ross that the Board should follow up on the request to look into policies about staff remote work.

Ms. Alvaro noted she was wearing her pearls to honor Ruth Bader Ginsburg, who if she were around, would have been dancing in the streets because it was such a big day. She expressed being relieved that the following day President Biden would rescind the Executive Order that created the commission to promote patriotic education. Ms. Alvaro remarked that simply denying a racist history in the country does not make it go away, and quoted Winston Churchill’s paraphrasing of William Santayana that those who fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it. She emphasized that children need to learn the entire glorious, messy, ugly, beautiful history of the country if they are to become knowledgeable citizens of the world.

Ms. Alvaro spoke of having several conversations with Dr. Gonella over the past few years, and how they laughed and shared stories. She recalled a staff member coming into the county office on his vacation day to pick up paperwork, and Dr. Gonella being extremely upset that the staff member was not wearing a tie. Ms. Alvaro described Dr. Gonella as a kind, big-hearted, shrewd, and smart leader with whom she was privileged to work. He was full of integrity, honesty, strength, and passion, and even when they disagreed, they could work it through. She described him as a true inspiration and mentor to so many Board members.

Ms. Alvaro described when the building was dedicated to Dr. Gonella, he was so surprised and proud. She noted that because he was such a big softie, he had a no hugging policy. Ms. Alvaro shared that
BOARD MEMBERS (continued)

Dr. Gonella’s wife Margaret also has a gigantic heart for students and would give him a bad time about this. She shared that one year when the CCBE conference was held in January, Monterey flooded. Dr. Gonella was scheduled to do an important press conference on childhood hunger the next day with Jackie Speier, who was in the Assembly at the time. Tom Fitzpatrick arranged for a small plane to fly them both out of the Monterey airport during the rainstorm, landing at the San Carlos airport. Although Dr. Gonella absolutely hated flying, his willingness to get into a small plane during a storm to participate in the press conference demonstrated his passion and commitment to children. Ms. Alvaro added that we have lost a great human being and she offered her condolences to Dr. Gonella’s wife Margaret Taylor and the rest of his family, along with the entire education community.

Board President Camacho
Board President Camacho thanked everyone for the tributes to Dr. Gonella and although he did not know him well personally, hearing the stories helps him better understand what an important influence he has had on the county office.

Board President Camacho shared he attended the San Mateo County School Boards Association (SMCSBA) New School Board Member orientation, which he thought was successful. There was a great turnout and tremendous energy and engagement brought forward by the new cohort of Board members. He commented on how SMCSBA has really worked to engage Board members throughout the county and has created a county effort to educate and care for children. Board President Camacho said the new Board members had great questions and were excited about working together. He added it can be isolating to simply work with a five-member Board in one’s own district. He thanked Superintendent Magee for her presentation at the orientation, and added that he was grateful to have led a presentation as well.

Board President Camacho expressed he is sometimes hesitant to pop into SMCOE events unannounced, but he was really excited about the Creativity Residencies that he participated in earlier in the day. He showed his drawings and doodles and remarked about the stories being told about learning. He noted this kind of engagement tapped one’s inner creativity which is the exact purpose of the arts. He informed Superintendent Magee and the arts staff that these types of conversations are magical, and he loved the experience. He thanked them for allowing him to participate, and although he stayed off camera and silent, he was actively participating. Board President Camacho reflected that he loves what is going on with the arts, this portion of the Strategic Plan is tremendous, and he is excited to see the future Creativity Residencies.

Board President Camacho reported that SMCSBA will be doing another legislative day to meet with legislators. They are trying to schedule around the newly elected State Senator, to allow him to become familiar with School Board members throughout the county. He added all legislators will be invited, but he wanted to ensure the new State Senator had the opportunity to engage with SMCSBA. Board President Camacho said he would share the date once it is finalized.

Lastly, Board President Camacho expressed how it felt to be able to witness a President of the United State sign Executive Orders, particularly around immigration and defending Dreamers in Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), while in the background stood a bust of César
Chavez. He stated what it meant to him and his family and the generations of pickers in his family, is something he couldn’t have anticipated feeling. Board President Camacho reflected that the work is not done and while today is a day of celebration with tremendous history being made, one of his colleagues described this as a move “from defense back to offense.” He stated this is a good thing because there is so much more to fight for.

Board President Camacho emphasized that we need to continue to push ahead and expressed excitement about the places where people are ready to move forward and open to the experiences of others. He reiterated that today’s moment was special to him, and he knows everyone had their own special moments. He expressed thanks to President Biden and Vice-President Harris for providing the opportunity for everyone to experience that feeling.

10. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 8:31 p.m., in honor of Floyd Gonella Board, preeminent educator and civic leader who ably led the San Mateo County Office of Education as County Superintendent for three terms of office from 1991 – 2003. As County Superintendent, Dr. Gonella’s visionary and action-oriented leadership focused on achieving better outcomes for all students, and he was instrumental in establishing 101 Twin Dolphin Drive as the organization’s headquarters. It is fitting that the building was named in his honor in 2003 and today, all who enter the Floyd Gonella Education Center can reflect on his legacy that continues to inspire and empower us all to pursue excellence and equity in education.

Board President Camacho announced the next regular meeting would take place on Wednesday, February 3, 2021, at 6:00 p.m.

Nancy Magee, Secretary
Nancy Magee, Secretary