

MINUTES

RIALTO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Special Board Meeting of the Board of Education

June 19, 2020

Dr. John R. Kazalunas Education Center

Meeting was held TELEPHONICALLY and available to the public

Via streamlined-audio only

Members Present: Nancy O'Kelley, President
Dina Walker, Vice-President
Joseph Martinez, Clerk
Joseph Ayala, Member
Edgar Montes, Member

Staff Present: Cuauhtémoc Avila, Ed.D., Superintendent
Darren McDuffie, Ed.D., Lead Strategic Agent: Strategics,
Congruence and Social Justice
Mohammad Z. Islam, Associate Superintendent, Business
Services
Elizabeth Curtiss, Interim Lead Innovation Agent
Rhea McIver Gibbs, Ed.D., Lead Personnel Agent
Rhonda Kramer, Lead Personnel Agent
Also present was Martha Degortari, Executive Administrative
Agent, and Jose Reyes, Interpreter/Translator

A. OPENING

Call to Order

Meeting was called to order at 3:01 p.m.

B. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Nancy G. O'Kelley, Board President, led the pledge of allegiance.

C. PUBLIC COMMENTS

C.1 COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS

Any person wishing to speak on any item on the Closed Session Agenda will be granted three minutes.

Andres Denato, classified employee, whose position is being considered for elimination, shared that he understands that COVID-19 has impacted everyone and he is grateful that the District has been proactive in keeping the students and staff safe. However, he questioned whether the District would be so quick to let go of the people that put so much effort into the education of the students? He indicated that by the District cutting more than 200 jobs, it would mean that more than 200 people would be asking for government handouts, or unable to pay their rent, and 200 more people unable to contribute to our community, pay taxes and help the economy. He said that he works for the District because he cares for our students and looks forward everyday to working with his co-workers and being a positive role model. He is requesting that the District consider the lives of the people behind those positions, their families and the many years of effort that those classified employees have given to the community.

Bridget Wilkerson, Instructional Technology Assistant (ITA), shared the importance of her position, which has been an invaluable asset to the District's school sites and critical resource in providing efficient on-the-spot instructional technology support. She indicated that without the ITA position, students, as well as teachers, would not be prepared for instructional testing, or aware of how to use the internet safely. Students would suffer without the technology support. She explained how the ITA position has also been essential during distance learning. She urged the Board to re-evaluate where funds will be cut and consider this position.

Michael Harrison, product of Rialto USD who graduated from the district in 1990 and began employment with the District in 1992. He indicated that it has been an honor and blessing to work as a Safety Intervention Officer to help protect our children and community. He shared his concerns regarding the potential layoffs, specifically the position of the Safety Intervention Officers, for which the Board has stated in previous meetings is an absolute necessity. It is a position which has been considered essential during the pandemic in order for staff to efficiently set up the distribution of computers, breakfast and lunches for the children and community. He also talked about the various other programs that the officers are involved in to educate, mentor, counsel on anti-drug, anti-bullying, etc., and the other positions in the department which are crucial, such as the dispatch staff and supervising staff. He believes there are boundless other ways to cutback in the District, without the risk of

employees losing their positions. He requested that the "precautionary resolution" be tabled indefinitely.

Ana Garay, EL Program Secretary, shared her experience with a previous employer during the 2010 financial crisis. She talked about the staff being included in the decision making process and reaching a solution together where they would first eliminate those employees who counted on two incomes, so single mothers would not lose their jobs. This decision was very significant in her life because it demonstrated empathy from her supervisors and her team. She indicated that she has created a bond now with her Rialto USD family and she feels the proposed layoffs are heartbreaking. She understands the position of management to decide on options, but sees a disconnect between management and classified staff. She feels that as a family, decisions need to be made together and not against each other. She urges the District to work together with the Union representatives to find a solution that is reasonable for all stakeholders.

Chris Cordasco, on behalf of the classified staff, thanked the District for their action to table Resolution No. 19-20-55. He shared that the District met the day after the Board meeting and listened to them. After requesting additional information, they met again on June 16th. He indicated that the new resolution is vastly different and it is a result of mutual respect and teamwork. It shows equity and gives more flexibility. He thanked Dr. Avila for his leadership and transparency. He said that with this new process, he knows they can work together and continue to find ways to beat the budget challenges.

Roxanna Maldonado, Speech Language Pathologist, shared her concern in regards to not allow the Special Education Department to hire another therapist in order to replace one that retired. She indicated that this is important and necessary as it will impact all of their caseloads, workloads, and ultimately all the speech students. She ended the last school year with 60+ students and two school sites, which already complicates the ability to manage her cases and provide quality treatment sessions, evaluate, hold IEPs, complete evaluations, etc. She requested to please consider having the position filled.

Keith Rubio, SDC Teacher, shared his concerns in the timing of this meeting. He indicated that these are difficult times that everyone is experiencing with the onset of COVID-19, riots, social unrest, and economic hardships. Although it may be prudent to explore the potential

of budget cuts based on the Governor's fiscal projections, in his opinion, it is not necessary at this time and only adds additional stress to people's lives. He suggested tabling this discussion until there is a certainty of budget shortfalls, school operations have been solidified and elections of the Board of Education have been concluded.

Tobin Brinker, as a History Teacher in Rialto, he often questions, What if? He shared some "what if?" examples of historical events and why those questions force us to look deeper to try and understand the real context in which those events occurred. He then asked the Board to ask themselves "what if?" before they voted on this resolution. Such as, what if the Superintendent gave back the raise of \$30,000 he received last year, or what if administrators first took pay cuts, etc. He indicated that instead, what has happened is that a list was presented, that included hundreds of jobs that would potentially be terminated next year, and the largest group included Instructional Assistants who earn about \$10,000 per year. He said it is weird that this action is for next year but the School Board is asking to make this decision now, when the State has not passed the budget. He asked that the Board consider what action their vote would have on the November elections. He said he was impressed with the Board asking the right questions at the last Board meeting and now urged them to make the correct decision, as these cuts and this action is premature. He recommended that they vote against the cuts and direct staff to wait and bring this item back next year when more information is available.

Ray Verdugo, requested that the Superintendent and the Board reconsider the complete elimination of the Safety Intervention Patrol Team (SIO II). He indicated that the number one priority of the SIO II Officers is to safeguard the lives of the students and create a safe, engaging learning/teaching environment. They serve as mentors, counselors, protectors, and para-educators, and to completely eliminate the Safety Intervention Patrol Team, would endanger the safety of elementary students and staff. He is afraid of the possibility that so many will lose their jobs District-wide and the devastating impact that this will have on the lives of the children and families. He has faith that the best possible decision will be made under these uncertain times.

Crystal Smilden, A Speech Language Pathologist (SLP), shared her concern of the position of a Speech Language Pathologist who retired this year not being filled. She indicated that this SLP had a full case load of over 50 students between two sites. She is curious as to how this caseload would be distributed among those who already have a full case

load. She said this is not equitable for the SLPs, nor the students and this position needs to be filled to ensure all students get the services they need.

Rehannon Cote, Speech Language Pathologist (SLP), shared her concern regarding the possible elimination of a retired SLP's position. She explained that not filling this position would negatively affect students. Due to the end of year madness and uncertainty of the coming year, they are already at a disadvantage with meeting legal deadlines for IEPs, testing, therapy minutes, the majority of which are already out of compliance.

Jennifer Davidson, as a Speech Language Pathologist (SLP) for Rialto USD, she believes it is imperative to at least maintain the same number of SLPs that the department had last year and replace the vacancy left by the retiree. She indicated that in order to provide quality assessments and therapy to students, they need to have manageable caseloads, especially with the novel situation with Corona virus. She requested that the current caseloads be maintained; otherwise, it would jeopardize the quality of service we provide to our students.

Kayla Villamater, Speech Language Pathologist (SLP), shared her concerns regarding the caseload of a retired SLP being distributed among the current team. She explained the challenges of having three or more assigned to a site. This becomes challenging when scheduling. She also shared the other duties of an SLP, such as collaboration meetings and staffing meetings, which are required by the District. Ultimately, this affects the quality of the evaluations they conduct, which in turn can affect the quality of intervention they provide.

Miguel Favela, indicated that given the COVID-19 impact on both health and fiscal issues, the precautionary measure to layoff non essential workers in the previous meeting should have passed. Those jobs are deemed not directly related to the instructional needs of the students in the era of COVID-19. He asked why should Instructional Assistants and Security personnel be paid for staying at home doing nothing to directly benefit students? He indicated that the District took into account the necessity of those positions and the direct impact of student learning. He said that now with this new resolution, everything is on the table because it is not specific, which to him means that no one area is safe from layoffs.

Raquel Castro, Speech Language Pathologist (SLP) indicated that there are three certificated positions that have retired this school year and it is her understanding that those positions will not be filled next school year. She is requesting that the SLP position be filled, as the retiree carried a full caseload of 50 plus students while servicing two school sites. She explained that it is important that her position be filled so that students can receive adequate speech/language therapy services, complete assessments, etc. Due to COVID-19, additional IEP compensatory services are now going to be required of SLP, in addition to their assigned duties.

Dr. Alison Jaffe, Speech Language Pathologist (SLP), indicated that on the Board agenda of June 10, 2020, it was decided that three positions which were vacated by employees who retired at the end of the school year, will not be filled. She shared that one of those positions is for a Speech Language Pathologist who carried a full caseload. She requested that the Board and the Superintendent reconsider filling this essential position so that RUSD students continue to receive their mandated speech/language therapy sessions, completed assessments, evaluations, Individualized Education Plans, all which require legal timelines. She also shared that due to COVID-19, the District SLPs will be required to provide added IEP compensatory therapy sessions, and thus backlog of assessments, reports and IEPs. Failure to meet these timelines could have legal ramifications.

Eddie Tejeda, City of Redlands Councilman and Special Education Teacher shared his concerns to the proposed budget actions for 2020-21 and options to consider before approving the proposals by administration. He recently was made aware that there are many positions that are being considered for elimination or layoff. As an elected office holder, he understands and acknowledges the cuts that must be made to balance budgets. Budget cuts are commonplace during economic downturns because revenues are projected to fall short of expectations. He also knows the importance of keeping as many people employed as possible during economic downturns because doing so can prevent the economy from collapsing at a faster pace that would be desired, and public agencies such as RUSD have an obligation to keep as many people employed as possible to avoid such devastating impacts to our local and regional economies.

He indicated that he has an understanding of budgets and while cuts may be necessary, it is always prudent to cut expenditures and salaries

simultaneously to avoid unnecessary job loss, and suggested that the positions which should be considered to cut are those that are no longer filled due to retirements. He also recommend cutting positions that have been added more recently and that are redundant, such as management positions which have been added over the past few years which consist of very high salaries. He recommend that the Board request an analysis of district positions be performed to ensure category and position redundancies are identified and that unnecessary management positions be eliminated or reclassified (as needed) to prevent loss of employment. He also suggested postponing projects funded by the general fund, eliminating licenses or contracts with companies that provide access to curriculum sites online that supplement or supplement classroom instruction and assessment.

Kimberly Mihalski, Special Education Teacher who has taught in Rialto USD since 1995, requested that the Board consider her concerns regarding the budget cuts presented. She asked how these budget cuts demonstrate that Rialto USD students and staff are valued, and whether the District can tap it's reserved to mitigate the proposed \$17 million in cuts before asking employees to take a hit. She also questioned how much money the District has saved in operations costs since March and during distance learning? She asked why more cuts aren't considered from recently created positions, specialty programs and duplicate management positions, rather than cutting those positions which work directly with students. She questioned the urgency in the District proposing these cuts now instead of waiting to see how things unfold.

Brenda Parker, Classified Employee and District African American Parent Advisory Council (DAAPAC) President, shared her disappointment with the precautionary proposal. She understood that there would have to be some cuts, however, as a RUSD family she thought that everyone would have done their part in keeping the family together. She stated that the precautionary proposal is biased and weighs heavily on the classified side more than any other. She thanked Mr. Montes, Ms. Walker, and Mr. Ayala for not agreeing on the proposal. She noticed a total abolishment of certain positions while other positions had gone untouched. She made some suggestions for consideration before taking action which consistent of: "what would be the impact if every classification had furlough days? i.e. 12 month employees – 6 days 11 month employees – 5 days 10 month employees – 4 days"; or, "what would be the impact if "every department in the district made equal cuts such as 10% per department?";

or "what would be the impact if every person in the district took a 1% pay cut which would later be reinstated after the crisis?".

She stated that after evaluating the second proposal she was disappointed at the fact that whomever put the proposals together would insult her intelligence by removing specific job titles and replacing them with just estimated cost. She is not convinced that any changes were made to the new proposal. She felt that the first proposal, although not favorable, at least showed transparency. The second was not clearly defined and seem to have a hidden agenda. She also questioned why there was such a discrepancy in the cut from Management, Supervisory, and Confidential, opposed to Certificated and Classified. She indicated that there is a lot of work that needs to be done to make this precautionary proposal equal for all employees of the district.

Chareca Lyons, Speech Therapist, shared that when she saw that several positions may not be filled this coming year, she became greatly concerned. She is concerned for how the caseload of the SLP position will increase for the current Speech Therapists, as their caseloads are already high with each having 2 to 3 schools. This also creates a decrease of effectiveness and efficiency for the delivery of speech therapy, and the quality of service diminished. This uncertainty adds to the uncertainty and worry that many are already experiencing in the education world and the world abroad.

Kimberly Somoano, Speech Language Pathologist, also shared her concern with the position vacated by the Speech Language Pathologist who retired and will not be filled. She urged the Board to reconsider as Rialto has worked hard over the years to fill all of their Speech Therapist positions, without the need to contract out. She worries that when they are given more work than they can manage, it causes them to look for work elsewhere. It is very important for our students, that these positions be filled.

Rachelle Werner, Safety Control Dispatcher II, shared that she is one of the unseen, essential workers that has not only worked during the pandemic, but also 24-7, 365 days a year. She talked about the Safety department, which consists of the dedicated control center, highly trained Patrol Officers, intervention programs for the kids, amazing EOC, who provide the around the clock safety and comfort that students, staff, and the community have come to rely on. They are the first responders and the ones who are ahead of incidents when they are happening or before

they happen. They are also the ones who are talking to students, parents, staff, and assisting in calming them down during lockdowns, when children go missing or other incidents take place in the district. They are behind the scenes when everyone has gone home to make sure the sites are secured and monitored throughout the night from vandalism and trespassers. They also monitor the temperature of the food and the temperature of the freezers where medication is kept for students. She indicated that she is not sharing this list of duties in order to receive kudos, but to bring awareness of what things will need to get done. She commented on the many instances the Safety department has received praise from the community for their work and how the District has impressed them with their efforts and the investment they have made in keeping our students and staff safe. She does not understand how the District can afford to cut them, since they were brought on to save the District money. She asked that the District take a closer look at the contributions made by their department instead of just the job titles.

D. CLOSED SESSION

Moved By Vice-President Walker

Seconded By Member Montes

As provided by law, the following are the items for discussion and consideration at the Closed Session of the Emergency Board Meeting:

Vote by Board Members to move into Closed Session.

Approved by a Unanimous Vote

**D.1 PUBLIC EMPLOYEE
EMPLOYMENT/DISCIPLINE/DISMISSAL/RELEASE/REASSIGNMENT
OF EMPLOYEES (GOVERNMENT CODE SECTION 54957)**

E. ADJOURNMENT OF CLOSED SESSION

Moved By Member Montes

Seconded By Clerk Martinez

Vote by Board Members to adjourn out of Closed Session.

Time: 4:15 p.m.

Approved by a Unanimous Vote

F. OPEN SESSION RECONVENED

Open session reconvened at 4:15 p.m.

G. REPORT OUT OF CLOSED SESSION

None.

H. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Moved By Vice-President Walker

Seconded By Clerk Martinez

Vote by Board Members to adopt the agenda.

Approved by a Unanimous Vote

I. DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

I.1 RESOLUTION NO. 19-20-63 - PRECAUTIONARY RESOLUTION TO ELIMINATE POSITIONS EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2021 DUE TO BUDGET CONSTRAINTS

Moved By Clerk Martinez

Seconded By Vice-President Walker

Adopt Resolution No. 19-20-63 as a precautionary resolution to eliminate positions effective July 1, 2021 due to budget constraints.

Vote by Board Members.

Recorded	Ayes	Noes	Abstain
President O'Kelley	X		
Vice-President Walker	X		
Clerk Martinez	X		
Member Ayala		X	
Member Montes		X	
Results	3	2	0

Approved by a Majority Vote (3 to 2)

J. ADJOURNMENT

Moved By Member Montes

Seconded By Clerk Martinez

Vote by Board Members to adjourn.

Time: 4:38 p.m.

Approved by a Unanimous Vote



Clerk, Board of Education



Secretary, Board of Education