

VENURA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
Declining Enrollment Committee
March 2, 2022
Minutes

Call to Order

Ventura Unified School District held a teleconference meeting of the Declining Enrollment Committee on March 2, 2022. The meeting was called to order by VUSD Superintendent Dr. Roger Rice.

Roll Call

Committee Members Present: James Forsythe, Dan Nelson, Rebekah Acker, Mike Lazarus, Todd Tyner, Mayra Vega-Manriquez, Mike Johnson, Claudia Caudill, Laura Nicholls, Carol Peek, Matt Almaraz, Rosie Wilcox, Laurie Campbell, Velma Lomax, Danielle Reyes, Stefanie Ortiz, Jesus Vega, Michael Owens, Heather Lacayo

Absent: Allison McKay, Steve Strong, Cary Glenn, Carolyn Grimm, Maria Melo, Martha Payne, Cassie Lawhead, Kassi Harris

VUSD Support Staff Present: Dr. Roger Rice, Dr. Rebecca Chandler, Dr. Rene Rickard, Anthony Ramos, Gina Wolowicz, Maria Elizarraras, Anna Campbell, Andrea Crouch, Dr. Greg Bayless, Marieanne Quiroz

Dr. Rice began the meeting after asking VUSD support staff and committee members to identify themselves and give a brief introduction. Dr. Rice gave a reminder that the committee was empaneled to provide the Board of Education a set of recommendations and strategies that the community felt was effective in dealing with the impact of declining enrollment. The role of the support staff is to assist in answering questions, facilitating dialogue in meetings, providing information to make informed decisions. Dr. Rice pointed out that unlike other boards, this is a working committee that was empaneled by the Board of Education with the sole purpose of producing work product. Dr. Rice stated that the previous committee meeting went on longer than had been anticipated, and the goal moving forward would be to maximize the time available for the committee to have necessary discussion and accomplish the work needed.

Election of Committee Chair and Co-Chair

Dr. Chandler and Mr. Anthony Ramos were invited to explain how the process to elect a chair and co-chair of the committee. Dr. Chandler began by asking if there were any volunteers for the position of committee chairperson, she recognized Mr. Forsythe and Mr. Owens, who both raised their hands using the function on Zoom. Volunteers interested in the co-chair position were then asked to virtually raise their hands, Mr. Johnson and Mr. Owens were recognized. Dr. Rice thanked Mr. Owens for his willingness to fill either position, and asked Dr. Chandler to verify if Mr. Owens was a committee member or an alternate. Dr. Chandler confirmed that Mr. Owens is an alternate, and also recognized that Ms. Reyes had raised her hand to volunteer for co-chair. Mr. Ramos clarified that as an alternate, Mr. Owens would not be eligible to serve as chair or co-chair of the committee. A role call was called to begin the vote for the position of chair, Mr. Ramos clarified that anyone designated as an alternate would not vote until they actually replace a city member. Dr. Rice further clarified that in the 7-11

Advisory Committee, it was agreed that a community representative would need to be absent an agreed number of times in order to be permanently replaced by an alternate. All committee members eligible to vote voted "Yes" for Mr. Forsythe. The election of the co-chair began with Mr. Johnson and Ms. Reyes giving a brief statement before voting began. Mr. Ramos explained that because there were two candidates, there should be a motion from the committee to elect a co-chair. Mr. Lazarus made the motion to nominate Ms. Reyes to the co-chair of the committee, Ms. Ortiz seconded the motion. Each voting committee member was asked to vote "Yes" or "No" for Ms. Reyes. The resulting vote was 10 "NO" votes, 4 "Yes" votes, and 3 members who chose to abstain. Dr. Chandler announced that the motion to nominate Ms. Reyes did not pass. Ms. Lacayo made the motion to nominate Mr. Johnson as the co-chair of the committee, Todd Tyner seconded the motion. A "Yes" or "No" vote was called by Dr. Chandler resulting in 12 "Yes" votes, 1 "No", and 3 members abstaining. The motion to elect Mr. Johnson as co-chair of the committee passed. Dr. Rice thanked the new Chair and Co-Chair of the committee, and had Mr. Forsythe take over facilitating the meeting.

Meeting Norms: Public Comments

Mr. Forsythe thanked the committee members and moved on with the agenda. Mr. Ramos gave some background about the protocols and norms for the committee members, explaining that discussions could be had if there was anything they'd like to do differently. Because meetings are being held via Zoom, there must be verbal votes. With regard to public comments, because this is a working committee and a work product must be produced, Board bylaw 9323 provides committees such as this to limit public comment to 20 minutes on an item on the agenda. That 20 minute limit may be relaxed if there is an exceptional or controversial issue that requires more discussion.

Ms. Reyes stated that she does not support the 20 minute limit on comments, she believes that public comment input is valuable. Committee Co-Chair Mr. Johnson was recognized and stated that he does support the limits, pointing out that when public comments go for longer than usual the attendees may become overwhelmed and not be able to give the speakers towards the end of the meeting the appropriate attention. Setting limits on comments is a way to make sure the public can be heard without overwhelming meeting attendees. Ms. Lacayo agreed with Mr. Johnson stated, reiterating that if there is a hotly contested item, the committee can vote to extend the time for public comments. Ms. Peek also stated that she also supports the time limit for public comments, and asked if it was possible to have those comments that weren't heard in writing instead. Ms. Quiroz informed the committee that public comments may be submitted in writing 24 hours prior to the hour before each meeting, and are provided to committee members. Mr. Forsythe asked Mr. Ramos asked for clarification if the time allowed for public comments included time to call for a motion to extend the time and vote for the issue. Mr. Ramos confirmed that it does, and that a copy of bylaw 9223 would be provided to the committee.

Presentation of New Data

Dr. Rice began his presentation by clarifying the information provided in the previous meeting was broken down by: school year, school site, grade span, grade levels, exit code, student cohort, and ethnicity. In response to questions during and after the last meeting regarding further breakdown of students leaving VUSD, Dr. Rice's presentation will include data/information on: students with IEPs, low socio-economic status, county and school where students enrolled after leaving VUSD, and private school enrollment data. Survey data from parents regarding students considering leaving VUSD will also be included.

A slide illustrating where VUSD students who left the district in 2020-21 showed that a strong majority of the students landed somewhere else in Ventura County. A small number of students (33) are listed as "Unknown" because a school name was given, but no district. The next two largest counties where former VUSD students were enrolled is Los Angeles and Santa Barbara Counties. Data from 2020-21 shows that 250 students transferred out of California, 96 to Vista Real Charter High School, 35 to home schooling, and a list of eight local private parochial schools where other students transferred.

A slide showing the data for 2021-22 collected to date shows that the majority of the students leaving the district have remained in Ventura County. This current data shows that there are more students leaving to Kern County and fewer to Los Angeles County. The year to date number of students transferring out of California is at 82, 43 students went to Vista Real Charter High School, 15 to home schooling, 11 to Ventura Charter School of Arts, and the list that transferred to local private parochial schools. Dr. Rice pointed out that although this is not a complete data set, it does seem like the number of students transferring out is down overall, with the number of students going to home schooling is about the same. The number of students going to local private parochial schools is significantly lower compared to the previous year.

Co-Chair, Mr. Johnson, mentioned that the median home price in Ventura County is about \$840,000, in Los Angeles County it's about \$800,000, and in Kern County it's about \$330,000. One of possible reasons for Kern County seeing the recent growth in population. Ms. Acker mentioned that class size is something she's heard other parents mentioning as a draw to private schools in the district. Principal Vega-Manriquez added that she has heard from family members who love the district, but aren't able to afford to remain in the district and must move elsewhere. She also inquired if it was possible to learn what areas in the county students who were leaving the district were moving to. Dr. Rice commented that that information is available, and could be reviewed. Mr. Lazarus asked if more students were leaving the state than were leaving the school district for in-state schools. Dr. Rice responded that the info was available and can be reviewed. Ms. Reyes opined that she feels many parents aren't being heard by the district.

Dr. Rice showed the data set showing where students leaving VUSD are moving to, the list shows the county and school names. Dr. Rice let the committee know that this information could be made available if there was interest in seeing it. A number of committee members stated that they would be interested in seeing the information.

Dr. Rice next presented a chart showing the 2018-2021 Stability Rate report for VUSD from the California Department of Education, showing percentage of students who are enrolled, and remain stable in a school for the entire year. Decreasing and increasing rates of VUSD schools were discussed.

Regarding the size of VUSD schools, Dr. Rice showed the enrollment of all elementary schools in the county, with 16 VUSD schools highlighted in yellow.

The breakdown of a pre-Covid district budget was presented next, Dr. Chandler was asked to point out highlights of the main differences between pre-Covid and current expenditures. Dr. Chandler explained that typically, 83 to 85% of the budget is for people/staff. During Covid, the need for materials such as PPE, air conditioning filters, and other materials means that in the amount for staff in the 2021-2022 district budget is at a lower percentage than the typical 83 to 85%.

The next slides presented were showing Catholic school student enrollment, which was higher in 2021-2022 than in the previous year, although enrollment had been seeing a steady decline in the years past. Pre-kindergarten enrollment in Catholic schools showed an identical pattern as overall enrollment.

The following slide was about housing affordability, showing that 24% and 25% of Ventura County residents were able to afford a median cost of \$840,000 for a home, which roughly equates to \$3900 per month.

Next, Ms. Quiroz, the Communication Coordinator for VUSD addressed questions that had been posed about past and current marketing vehicles. Ms. Quiroz also gave details about post-Covid marketing vehicles.

Public Comments

There were no public comments.

Committee Comments/Requests

- Ms. Wilcox offered her resources as a local real estate agent with information that may be helpful in future meetings.
- Mr. Nelson asked for a link to the data presented at the meeting, as well as information regarding the last time boundaries had been drawn up for schools in the district. Ms. Lomax stated that she believed the last boundary changes occurred about 23 years ago.
- Ms. Lacayo requested information on class sizes at VUSD schools.
- Co-Chair Johnson stated that he has been doing work on a presentation of census shifts in the city of Ventura that will be presented at various community councils.
- Principal Caudill asked for information about school of choice families, and what percentage of enrollment is school of choice. And, at what proportion do school of choice families leave compared to families that go to their home schools. Dr. Rice stated that there is data on the first part of Principal Caudill's question, the second part would require some effort but it can be worked on.
- Principal Vega-Manriquez asked about any changes in policies of inter-district permissions, as she has heard conflicting information from families going through the process. Her concern is that this may be a barrier to some families wishing to enroll students at VUSD.
- Ms. Lacayo asked if it was possible to see data on where higher income families are going after leaving the district.

Next Meeting

The next meeting was not scheduled, that information would be determined at a later date.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:01p.m. by Chairperson Forsythe.