SMMUSD Financial Oversight Committee Meeting Minutes
Date: Tuesday, March 18, 2025
Time: 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm
Location: Board Room, SMMUSD District Administrative Offices
1717 4th Street, Santa Monica, CA 90401

I. Call to Order : 6:07 pm

6:08 pm

Committee Members:	Ryan Chin	Payal Maniar
	Dillon Christensen	Atul Porwal
	Matthew Crawford	Michael Rotgin
	Alex Farivar *(late 6:25p)*	Jonathan Wong
	Seth Jacobson	
	Michael Kremer *(via Zoom)*	
Staff:	Melody Canady	Gerardo Cruz
	Kimberley Curry Blue	Victoria Hurst
	Sarah Wahrenbrock *(via Zoom)*	
Board Liaison:	Jon Kean	Alicia Mignano *(via Zoom)*
	Stacy Rouse (*via Zoom)*	
Absent:	Brittany Teague	

II. Approval of Agenda

6:09 pm

A motion was made by Ms. Maniar and seconded by Mr. Chin to approve the meeting agenda with an amendment to move Item V. D. Policy/Practice Discussion on Hybrid FOC Meetings Guidelines, to precede the approval of minutes.

AYES: Nine (9) - Mr. Chin, Mr. Christensen, Mr. Crawford, Mr. Jacobson, Mr. Kremer, Ms. Maniar, Mr. Porwal, Mr. Rotgin, Mr. Wong
NOES: None (0)
ABSENT: One (1), Ms. Teague
ABSTAIN/NO VOTE: One (1) Mr. Farivar

III. D. Policy/Practice Discussion on Hybrid FOC Meetings Guidelines

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1MiZiqL6VOAH-ZYpPdR0HWMd69dGJVcxm/view?usp=drive_link

6:21 pm

Discussion led by Sarah Wahrenbrock, Assistant to the Superintendent, regarding policy guidelines and requirements permitting the FOC to conduct hybrid meetings. The committee is allowed to utilize either of the options, deciding before the 72-hour agenda posting requirement. The following legal options were provided:

1. Address where the voting member will be remotely attending (via Zoom) must be reflected on the agenda. This practice allows for constituents to know where the FOC member is participating from remotely. Public would not be afforded the opportunity to also attend remotely – they must attend in person. A majority of FOC members must attend in person.
2. Just Cause Attendance: Committee members may participate remotely without listing the address. The reason must be due to a "just cause",(e.g., illness, caring for someone, traveling for business and unable to attend in person). Maximum allowance for Just Cause attendance per member: Three (3) times per school year and/or three (3) times consecutively. The majority of committee members must be participating in the same room, within district boundaries. The public must also be afforded the opportunity to participate remotely, allowing public comment via Zoom.

   Possible issues/Solutions:

   1. If there are technical issues, the meeting may not be called to order until the issue is resolved, if the meeting is a Just Cause format.
   2. Last minute – If a member has an unforeseen circumstance within the 72-hour posting window, the agenda is amended with their physical address and at the beginning of the meeting, a vote is cast to permit remote attendance of the FOC member. The Brown Act guidelines restrict/limit the allowable reasons this attendance format can be granted.
   3. In Transit – If a member will be attending remotely but will be in transit during a portion of the meeting, the address where the member will be is posted on the agenda and the member can log in remotely; active participation is not permitted during that time. Once the member arrives at the posting location, they are roll-called into the meeting, and then they will be permitted to actively participate.

A motion was made by Mr. Rotgin and seconded by Mr. Wong to permit the FOC Chairperson the ability to decide which format the meeting will be held, within the 72-hour period.

AYES: Ten (10) - Mr. Chin, Mr. Christensen, Mr. Crawford, Mr. Farivar, Mr. Jacobson, Mr. Kremer, Ms. Maniar, Mr. Porwal, Mr. Rotgin, Mr. Wong
NOES: None (0)
ABSENT: One (1), Ms. Teague
ABSTAIN/NO VOTE: None (0)

IV. Approval of FOC Meeting Minutes *(5 min)* February 12, 2025

6:22 pm A motion was made by Ms. Maniar and seconded by Mr. Chin to accept the minutes from the February 12, 2024**,** meeting with discussed amendments. *Linked minutes below*:

2/12/2025: *https://drive.google.com/file/d/1rvw-LLa0kQAf_aXZa1MJ5zIDAQN_dlrp/view?usp=sharing*

AYES: Eight (8) - Mr. Chin, Mr. Christensen, Mr. Kremer, Ms. Maniar, Mr. Rotgin, Mr. Farivar, Mr. Porwal, Mr. Jacobson,
NOES: None (0)
ABSENT: One (1), Ms. Teague
ABSTAIN: Two (2)- Mr. Wong, Mr. Crawford

V. Assistant Superintendent, Business and Fiscal Report – Melody Canady

6:36 pm

Ms. Canady notified FOC members of her impending retirement (June 30, 2025) indicating Mr. Gerardo Cruz will be the new Assistant Superintendent, Business & Fiscal Services beginning July 1, 2025.

Update regarding the Reserve policy: February 27, 2025, the SMMUSD Board removed the topic of the Reserve Policy and created a subcommittee (Laurie Lieberman, Jennifer Smith and Alicia Mignano). The policy will be returned to the board for further discussion, but the date has not been provided.

VI. Discussion/Action Items

6:41 pm

A. Special Education Report, *Victoria Hurst – Director, Special Education*
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1WG_2xtcpUMkfB6yBoTBsr-S3L3dCZTkH/view?usp=sharing

Minutes:
Ms. Hurst presented the Special Education Report to the committee. (*linked above*) Major items/topics discussed for additional consideration by the FOC were:

1. Requested the number of settlements "last minute backed out" of lawsuit
2. The Special Education Conference in April '26. An FOC member was familiar with this conference but would not be attending this year.
3. Committee suggested creating a non-compete clause between the district and the staffing agency that provides Paraeducator temporary staff.
4. Creating a paraeducator study (April '26) to review signing bonuses and/or incentives for new hires to encourage more candidates/applicants.
5. Approaching law firms to provide pro-bono services or accessing legal clinics for services to support the costs of defending legal cases in Special Education.

6:55 pm

B. 2nd Interim Report to the Board – *Gerardo Cruz – Director, Business & Fiscal Services*
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1oLOJ3GAJkn_D86-lA7L4KmL8fnuXy5cx/view?usp=sharing

Minutes
Staff reviewed the 2nd Interim Report (linked above). Major items/topics discussed were:

1. Audit findings resulted in a benefit (positive number) to the district's ending fund balance. Adjustment to the COVID fund contributions were restated into the General Fund balance. This resulted in minimal changes to the balance.
2. FOC member inquired on the total number of S.A.M. claims (Sexual and Molestation) submitted. Staff advised one (1) claim has been submitted (total), settled.
3. Reserves for future spending increased for this year to incorporate furthest years out salary change not previously included in 1st Interim.

4. Discussed projected decrease in revenue from Measure R funds, as more exemption requests are projected in the 2025-26 tax year.

7:05 pm C. Proposed Measure R Annual Plan*, Gerardo Cruz, Director, Business & Fiscal Services*
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Uwwgmi5gtPsjxALwdjug5h9t2_Xi4vv2/view?usp=sharing

Minutes

Staff reviewed the proposed annual plan for Measure R (linked above). Major items/topics discussed were:

1. Answered questions regarding pianos and Lincoln shell. Lincoln shell to be removed; item was on the presentation in error. Breakdown of spending for pianos in 24-25, and pending refurbishment in 25/26, as the piano to be refurbished was purchased over 15 years ago.
2. Review of the decrease in General Education Teacher funding, clarifying the reduction is a reflection of the salary schedule changes and funding location updates.

A motion was made by Mr. Crawford and seconded by Mr. Farivar to support the Proposed Measure R Annual Plan for presentation to the board for public hearing.

AYES: Ten (10) - Mr. Chin, Mr. Christensen, Mr. Crawford, Mr. Farivar, Mr. Jacobsen ,Mr. Kremer, Ms. Maniar, Mr. Rotgin, Mr. Porwal, Mr. Wong

NOES: None (0)
ABSENT: One (1), Ms. Teague,
ABSTAIN/NO VOTE: None (0)

VII. Ad hoc Subcommittee Report

7:58 pm

A. Budget Recommendations –
   i. General: *Mr. Chin (Chair), Mr. Christensen, Mr. Jacobson, Mr. Porwal, Ms. Teague*. Ryan Chin – Emailed Reserve Policy excel sheet to the Board regarding potential Reserve Policy recommendations. Brief discussion with Board Liaison, Jon Kean for feedback. Inquired where the policy stands with the Board Subcommittee. Staff's suggested recommendation is to continue to update the report with the data for future reference.
   ii. Unfunded Liabilities: *Mr. Jacobson (Chair), Mr. Kremer, Ms. Maniar, Mr. Rotgin, Mr. Wong.* Update to Chairpersonship. Mr. Rotgin is stepping down from the position as chair, and Mr. Jacobson will assume the chairperson position.
B. Bond Oversight – *Mr. Kremer (Chair), Mr. Chin, Mr. Crawford, Mr. Farivar, Mr. Rotgin,* Michael Kremer – No separate / additional report.
C. Measure R Reporting and Process Review – *Mr. Farivar (Chair), Mr. Christensen, Mr. Crawford, Mr. Wong*
   Alex Farivar advised the subcommittee did not meet. Suggested the process be reconsidered/possibly modified to more closely coincide with the reporting and allow for better recommendations and communication to stakeholders. Subcommittee will craft a recommendation to send to staff.
D. Financial Communication and Reporting – *Mr. Porwal (Chair), Mr. Kremer, Ms. Maniar, Mr. Jacobson,*

Atul Porwal - No report presented. Reiterate the idea of using the next budget presentation in May to present Financial Communications to the community.

E. *Nominations- Mr. Wong (Chair), Mr. Chin, Mr. Jacobson, Ms. Teague*
Jonathan Wong: Three (3) candidates interviewing within the upcoming week. Student application created for distribution to the high schools. Application deadline most likely to be extended.

F. Malibu Unification – *Ms. Maniar (Chair), Mr. Kremer, Mr. Christensen, Mr. Crawford, Mr. Rotgin*.
Payal Maniar reported the subcommittee met with the consultants on February 3, 2025. Agreements received; numbers have not been received to date. Active mediations have halted between Malibu and Santa Monica. Public hearing attended. Take aways from hearing:
1. Original date for County Committee to decide was set for June 9 , 2025, but a different date was mentioned - April 2, 2025.
2. SMMUSD School Board to possibly take action to approve/not approve agreement presented at the April 23, 2025, meeting. Liaison Kean clarified the date the County Committee has to decide – June 2025. Feasibility study to be presented at the April 2, 2025 meeting. Committee may vote at any time until deadline date of June. April 3rd is tentatively scheduled as a discussion and April 23rd is tentatively scheduled as a vote.

VIII. Receive and File *(Limited Discussion)* None

IX. Public Comments None

X. Committee Comments None

XI. Next Meeting:

- Wednesday, April 2, 2025**
- Wednesday, May 7, 2025
- Tuesday, June 17, 2025
- TBD (July/Aug 2024) * Please note: This is a Joint Meeting / Study Session with the Board of Education – *SMMUSD Office Board Room, 1717 4th Street.*

*** April 2, 2025, meeting is a placeholder meeting. It has been added for calendaring purposes. The meeting is subject to cancellation if it is deemed necessary.*

XII. Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 8:47 pm