

Bonita Unified School District Board of Education
League of Women Voters of the Claremont Area Observer Report
By Observer Dawn Thielo
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The Bonita Unified School District offers schools in San Dimas and in La Verne. There are 8 elementary schools, 2 middle schools and 3 high schools with a population of 10,202 students. The Bonita Unified School District provides special education classes, a model continuation school with alternative educational setting and guarantees enrollment for students who have uncertain housing or no permanent physical address. The school district also provides music and art curricula. Students in those programs often perform at the Bonita Center for the Arts.

The School Board consists of 5 members elected at-large to 4 year terms. Members are elected on a staggered basis every other November at the even-year cycle. Each year the Presidency of the Board is rotated through the members.

Glenn Creiman, President

Term as board member expires December 30, 2020

Chuck Coyne, Vice President

Term as board member expires December 30, 2018

Elected to the board on November 8, 2005

Patti Latourelle, Clerk

Term expires December 30, 2018

Elected to the board in November 2001

Diane Koach, Member

Term expires December 30, 2020

Elected to the board in November 2007

Jim Elliot, Member

Term expires December 30, 2020

At every board meeting staff members are also in attendance:

William F Roberts, Assistant Superintendent/Human Resources

Nanette Hall, Assistant Superintendent/Educational Services

Ann Sparks, Assistant Superintendent/Business Services

Mark Rodgers, Senior Director of Student Services

School Board meetings are held monthly on the first Wednesday of the month. The agenda is posted on the district's web site. The open meeting begins on time (7 pm) following a closed meeting. The meeting usually ends by 8:40. The meetings are videotaped and may be accessed on TV by the community. They are also posted on the district web site. The web site is very easy to navigate and has information as to what is going on in the district and the individual schools. With a click, one can begin the process to enroll a student.

Most meetings take the same format. The members of the board and the superintendent report on current activities. This is followed by recognition of teacher and staff for exemplary leadership and students' outstanding accomplishments. The board room is filled to capacity with students and their families. Also new hires may be introduced during a meeting.

Reports on school activities are given by student representatives. The board and the audience are very attentive and delighted with the students' presentations. At the July meeting Dr. Christina Goennier was introduced as the new superintendent of BUSD. The interview process was very extensive, included 29 candidates and four rounds of interviews. During subsequent meetings, it was very apparent that the board and the superintendent work well together.

Throughout the year the board gave approval of funding for various programs which needed to be outsourced. Examples of these programs are: specialized evaluation and instructional services for students who need intervention in reading, students who need vision therapy, special education and related services as outlined by students' IEPs, short term mental health services, and a program for drug and alcoholic dependency. New this year is a specialized cyber curriculum at Lone Hill and Ramona Middle Schools, a pilot study using Chromebooks. Three hundred students will take home district-owned devices to aid in their learning.

In January there was a ribbon cutting to celebrate the district wide solar program. The thirteen schools in the district have solar panels which are positioned on shade structures in parking lots or in lunch areas. This project was funded using Clean Renewable Energy Bonds and Measure AB Bond funds that were approved by the taxpayers in 2008. The solar program will be paid off in 15-17 years and the district will save \$1.5 million per year on electric bills.

Other projects, funded by Measure AB, are in progress: Lone Hill Middle School Gymnasium and Ramona Middle School Gymnasium. A project soon to begin will be the District Office Modernization and Expansion.

All of these projects were discussed at the school board meetings. An excellent summary covering completed projects, projects in progress, and projects in development was presented by Ann Sparks of Business Services. The Board is very attentive during budget presentation, during reports of various educational plans (e.g. LCAP-Local Control Accountability Plan). The board members do their homework and have read reports prior to the meeting. Presentations by the staff are excellent, clear and concise.

General Impressions

As outlined by the California School Boards Association a school board provides community leadership as advocates for children, the school district and public schools. The BUSD school board is doing an excellent job in fulfilling this responsibility. They are informed, attentive and are comfortable in asking questions to clarify a point. They work

together with ease. Every member at one time or another remarks that the board's main focus is the education of the child.

At every meeting the public is invited to speak. The procedure to address the board is clearly outlined in the agenda. The agenda is made available to the public several days before the meeting.