

From: Lundgren, Leslie

Sent: Friday, March 09, 2018 5:08 PM

To: Karen Loebbaka; Anderson, Laura; Owens, Barbara; Futterman, Michael; Ford, Chuck; Yoshihara, David

Cc: Dan Oppenheim; O'Leary, Mary

Subject: Re: "TUHSD Board Approves Motion Heading Toward 16 % Decrease in Per Student Spending"

Dear Karen,

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, thank you for your email regarding the parcel tax. I am including some of the information that I provided to Mr. Oppenheim in my response to you in hopes of clarifying the Board's actions at the last meeting.

The District is comprised of over 74,000 citizens, of which about 63,000 will vote during the November 2018 election. We are extremely fortunate that the parent community at our five schools is supportive of a parcel tax measure. And, we greatly appreciate the amount of support that the Redwood Foundation provides to our students. The Board represents the entire community (over 74,000) and to that end, it is incumbent on the Board to understand and acknowledge the concerns and values of the entire community and the acceptable level of parcel tax increase. If the community we represent doesn't support the revenue measure by at least 2/3, it won't pass. If the measure doesn't pass in November 2018, the budget cuts will be fully implemented.

The District contracted with a professional polling firm to survey the voters, as is prudent whenever voter approval is required. The survey was comprehensive and provided information about matters important to the community and the level of parcel tax that this community is willing to spend. The voter survey showed that a revenue measure with an increase of 50% of the current parcel tax value had a 73% informed voter approval with a margin of error of plus or minus 3.7% (or 69.3% to 76.7% approval). This is in contrast to a parcel tax valued at a 100% increase, with a projected informed voter approval of 64.8 %, plus or minus 3.7% (or 61.1% to 68.5%). The District must consider both ends of the range and not assume that the approval will only swing in favor of the measure.

The Board is considering a combination of thoughtfully planned cost saving measures and a successful revenue measure to avoid negative impacts to the District's high quality educational services. Our District is blessed with such a supportive parent community. I know we can work together to address these challenges. I look forward to talking with you further.

Any time a quorum of the Board receives an email, we include it in the "Board Communications" section of an upcoming agenda. Consequently, I have copied our Executive Assistant, Mary O'Leary, and Superintendent Yoshihara on this reply, so it can be added to the March 13,2018 agenda materials.

Respectfully,

Leslie Lundgren Harlander
Board President, Tamalpais Union High School District

See page 2

From: Karen Loebbaka
Sent: Thursday, March 8, 2018 4:03 PM
To: Anderson, Laura; Lundgren, Leslie; Owens, Barbara; Futterman, Michael; Ford, Chuck; Yoshihara, David
Cc: Dan Oppenheim
Subject: Fwd: "TUHSD Board Approves Motion Heading Toward 16 % Decrease in Per Student Spending"

Dear TUHSD Board and Dr. Yoshihara,

I wanted to follow up on the powerful and thoughtful email that Dan Oppenheim sent after last week's Board meeting. As you may recall, at the meeting I had expressed my belief that "we" go for more than the safe/palatable, suggested (by the consultant) and "random" 49% increase in the parcel tax renewal, but, rather, use the percentage increase equal to what it is we need to cover the gap in our budget - 65%? 75%?

At the RHS Foundation Board's meeting this past Monday, we discussed the parcel tax measure and all of its implications. There was hearty discussion and almost unanimous agreement that the District should go for at least what is needed to cover the budget gap, but just as much support for going for a 100% increase, to bring the total to \$570 per year, in order to maintain the high quality experience that students, parents and the community has come to expect from our schools. I think Cory DeMars said it best: if we are having to make budget cuts (to the tune of \$3M) that will negatively impact the quality of education and experience to our students, then we will be misrepresenting the true value of the parcel tax increase of "keeping" our schools great, unless we ask for what is needed in order to eliminate for budget cuts.

Without having seen the next Board meeting's agenda, I imagine that there will be continued discussion around next steps with the Parcel Tax. Please know that there will likely be good community representation asking the Board to increase the amount to go out for on the November ballot. I reiterate that you have incredible support from the RHS community, and we are determined to work together to get this passed. Let's use this energy to get what we NEED for TUHSD!

Respectfully,

Karen Loebbaka
Redwood High School Foundation
President, 2017-2018

Begin forwarded message:

From: Dan Oppenheim
Subject: Fwd: "TUHSD Board Approves Motion Heading Toward 16 % Decrease in Per Student Spending"
Date: February 28, 2018 at 8:14:46 AM PST
To: Karen Loebbaka
FYI - Just wanted to pass this on. (see pages 3-5)

Forwarded message -----

From: **Dan Oppenheim**

Date: Wed, Feb 28, 2018 at 8:08 AM

Subject: "TUHSD Board Approves Motion Heading Toward 16 % Decrease in Per Student Spending"

To: Laura Anderson; Lundgren, Leslie; Barbara Owens; Futterman, Michael; Chuck Ford, David Yoshihara

"TUHSD Board Approves Motion Heading Toward 16 % Decrease in Per Student Spending"

Scary headline, right? Well, those are the numbers, if one considers a \$3-4 million reduction in the budget at a time when enrollment increases 22% from 2016-2017 to 2020-2021. (The numbers are based on an approximately \$82 million budget – assuming a \$3-4 million reduction and enrollment growth from 2016-2017 to 2020-2021, comparing actual per student spending in fiscal 2016-2017 to resulting spending per student with a \$82 million budget and a 22% increase in enrollment).

No way to avoid impacting the educational quality with proposed cuts at time of higher enrollment.

It was extremely disheartening to watch the board approve a motion that will lead to reduced funding for the schools and a sharply reduced quality of education. If you have any doubt about whether the potential cuts at this time of rising enrollment would lead to a decreased quality of education, ask yourself if a 16% decrease in per student spending would impact the quality of education. Of course it would.

Modest increase in parcel tax is contrary to interests of the district.

This motion to proceed with such a meager increase in the parcel tax in November will mean that funds are delayed by a full year relative to a June vote goes squarely against what is right for the district. Were there individuals or groups lobbying persuasively against a modestly higher parcel tax? I didn't hear them last night. I heard concerned residents speaking of their interest in and support for TUHSD.

A few items to consider before continuing down the path toward a decision that would have a lasting and negative impact on the schools.

- **A \$570 parcel tax actually has a reasonable likelihood of success in November.** As page 6 of the Revenue Measure Feasibility Survey from Godbe Research shows, there was 62.6% support for a \$570 parcel tax in the "uninformed" survey (prior to pitching the benefits). That is, before any efforts to gain support for the parcel tax, nearly two-thirds of likely voters would support the \$570 tax. A 4% margin of error means that it could potentially pass, even without any marketing or promotion of how the measure would help the community, both via high quality schools and higher property values.

- **Efforts to pass a higher parcel tax are similar whether the increase is \$143 or \$285.** There is significant need to raise awareness of the reasons for a higher parcel tax, regardless of amount of the increase. To ask school associations/foundations and community organizations to gather support and resources for a parcel tax increase that will still result in significant cuts to the schools is simply rude, and doesn't utilize or recognize the power of these people and organizations.

- **A parcel tax that doesn't solve the budget deficit is a tough sell to voters.**

As speakers noted at the meeting last night (February 27th), there is a desire to have top-quality schools in the TUHSD. Any concern mentioned about a higher parcel tax was based on concern about passage, not a desire to make cuts to the schools. To ask voters to pay a higher parcel tax (the \$143 increase), but not be able to assure these same voters that the increase would allow TUHSD to continue to providing the same quality education is odd, at best. Again, the community wants the strong schools, whether because of a direct benefit (children attending the schools), indirectly (better schools lead to higher real estate values), or a simply a desire to support the schools, believing that a community that is committed to its schools is a better community.

- **The potential cost cuts were mentioned as though removed from the challenge (enrollment).**

There was discussion of a \$3-4 million cut in funding to the schools, even with a \$143 increase in the parcel tax. Cutting funding at a time of flat or declining enrollment is one matter. Cutting the funding at a time of rising enrollment is far more significant. The Enrollment Growth Committee estimated a 982-student increase in enrollment from 2016-2017 to 2020-2021, and a 22% total increase in total enrollment during this enrollment bulge. A \$3-4 million cut to the 2017-2018 \$85 million budget represents a 4% decrease to the budget. Coupled with this overall increase in enrollment, means that per student spending would fall by 16%, looking at the spending per student in 2016-2017, relative to spending with an \$82 million budget and a 22% increase in enrollment from the 2016-2017 levels.

- **Far more difficult to reduce costs than Board comments imply.**

Comments from the Board indicated that cutting spending would almost be a healthy and worthwhile process, somewhat akin to spring cleaning. There's no question that careful and disciplined spending is appropriate and necessary. However, salaries and benefits represent 79% of the total spending in the district (\$67.2 million of the \$85.2 million budget). Any meaningful cut to spending would mean a reduction in the number of teachers and/or administrators. Again, this would happen at a time of rising enrollment, when there is likely need for more teachers and administrators. Could the cuts come through reduced spending on books and supplies instead of reduced headcount? Sure, just cut the spending on books and materials by 70% (to \$1.5 million from \$5 million). Probably not a great strategy either.

- **\$570 Parcel tax is a modest "ask" relative to other districts.**

There was mention of the challenges in passing parcel taxes in districts such as Mill Valley and Kentfield, but the comparison is ludicrous. The Mill Valley parcel tax is \$980 per year and the Kentfield parcel tax is \$1,500. In addition, one should not forget that the economy is currently healthy. If the Board is uncomfortable asking households (in one of the wealthiest areas of the country) to contribute an additional \$270 per year at a time like this...wow.

- **Godbe Research more focused on passage than on what is right for the district.**

Whether stated or unstated, Godbe Research aims to be able to boast about a high rate of passage for measures that its clients (school districts) pursue. Godbe Research does not claim to recommend what is the right or correct parcel tax based on the district's needs. Clearly, a lower tax is easier to pass than a high tax.

- **TUHSD Board and Superintendent must decide on what is right for the district.**

Even the initial “uninformed” survey from Godbe Research showed that passage of a \$570 parcel tax is certainly possible. Any increase to the parcel tax – whether a \$143 increase or a \$285 increase – will require work to ensure passage. Hiding behind the recommendation of Godbe Research to pursue a low parcel tax increase is an easy cop-out. Again, passage of a \$285 increase to \$570 appears feasible even in the “uninformed survey” (62.6% support). The TUHSD Board and the Superintendent must take responsibility for the decision, decide what is right for the district, and then work to accomplish that. Does the Board want to earn the designation as the Board to cut per student spending by 16%? That is the current path. Hopefully that is not the desired legacy. The Board and Superintendent should reconsider its path now in order to continue the tradition of top-quality schools in TUHSD.