

Bonita Unified School District School Board
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 La Verne and San Dimas. There are approximately 10,000 students enrolled in 8 elementary schools, 2 middle schools, 2 comprehensive high schools and a model continuation school with an alternative educational setting. The school district guarantees enrollment for students who have uncertain housing or no permanent physical address. The district also provides strong music and art curricula. Students in these programs often perform at the Bonita Center for the Arts.

Members of the School Board

Chuck Coyne, President (Elected November 8, 2005. Term expires December 2018.)
Patti Latourelle, Vice President (Elected November 2001. Term expires December 2018; she will not be seeking reelection.)
Diane Koach (Elected November 6, 2007. Term expires December 2020.)
Matthew Lyon (Appointed December 6, 2017. Term expires December 2020.)
Glenn Creiman (Term expires December 2020.)

Structure of the Board Meeting

The school board meetings are held on the first Wednesday of the month. The agenda is available on the district's web site several days before the meeting. A closed meeting begins at 6:00 PM and is followed by the regular meeting at 7:00 PM. At both meetings the public is invited to address the board. The procedure to address the board is clearly outlined in the agenda. The board members were present at every meeting.

Each meeting takes a similar format. Report of current activities in the district by the Board members and the Superintendent. This is often followed by acknowledgment of new staff hires and recognition of outstanding accomplishments of teachers, staff, and students. At each meeting there are reports from student board representatives of the three high schools: Bonita, Chaparral/Vista, and San Dimas. There are also reports from middle school representatives.

The Board room is very crowded with students who are receiving recognition and with their parents. As soon as they are recognized the board room empties and there are few citizens remaining.

Highlights of the Year

At the September 6, 2017, meeting Board member Jim Elliott announced he would retire from the BUSD board in December 2017. His term runs until December 2020. Therefore, a special board meeting was held on November 27, 2017, to interview candidates for the provisional appointment. There were eight applicants who were interviewed. When the interviews were completed, the candidates were invited to the open session to hear the Board's comments and discussion. After lengthy and thoughtful discussion Matthew Lyon was appointed to the Board of Education by a vote of 3-0 in favor.

On January 18, 2018, Superintendent Christina Goennier was placed on administrative leave. All members of the board voted unanimously on January 17 to terminate the Superintendent's

agreement for employment without cause. Carl Cole, Human Resources Development, was appointed Acting Superintendent.

Dr. Goennier had signed a 4-year contract in July 2016. She was selected from 28 candidates. She had been in her position as Superintendent of BUSD for 18 months. Prior to her being hired, Kurt Madden was the Superintendent. He began his term in July 1, 2015 and was put on administrative leave eight months later in March 2016. Mr. Madden resigned his position in April 2016.

The Cosca Group, an educational search team, after an extensive procedure, had recommended Mr. Madden for the Superintendent position. Since the outcome was not satisfactory they did not charge for the second search.

The Board decided not to use a search team and after thoughtful deliberation and interviews with Mr. Coles they offered him a contract for the Superintendent position. For the past 11 years Carl Coles has worked in the BUSD in various educational capacities. The vote to approve his selection was unanimous. Mr. Coles received positive statements of support from the Bonita Unified Teacher's Union, the California School Employees Association (BUSD), and the Bonita Unified Management Team.

Shull Elementary School was recognized as a 2018, Distinguished School. There are now 9 Distinguished Schools in the BUSD.

Lone Hill and Ramona Middle Schools now have new gymnasiums. The District Administration Office renovation will be complete in 2019.

The BUSD Board passed a resolution on April 12, 2018 calling for Full and Fair Funding of California's Public Schools. The BUSD Board urges the State Legislature to fund California public schools at the national average or higher by the year 2020. Among the statements listed: California ranks 45th nationally in the percentage of taxable income spent on education, 41st in per-pupil funding, 45th in pupil-teacher ratios and 48th in pupil-staff ratios.

General Impressions

The members of the Board provide an atmosphere of professionalism and courtesy. They come to the meetings well prepared and are comfortable asking questions.

Communication from the school board to the public is readily available. The meetings are Audio/Visual taped and rebroadcast on Channel 3. The BUSD website is easy to navigate and one may find information about the district, the school board's agenda and minutes of any of the meetings.