

Claremont Unified School District Board of Education  
League of Women Voters of Mt. Baldy Area  
Observer Report by Judith Tanenbaum  
May 23, 2019

According to the California School Board Association's website, "The role of the school board is to ensure that school districts are responsive to the values, beliefs and priorities of their communities." The Claremont Unified School District Board of Education has filled this role by working together and with staff.

There was not a contested election for the second consecutive cycle. While I believe the current members of the board are dedicated and diligent, without an election or regular press coverage there is lack of public discussion of issues. The current members (with term expiration dates in parentheses) are President Hilary LaConte (11/2020), Vice President Dr. Beth Bingham (11/2020), Clerk Nancy Treser Osgood (11/2022), Member Steven Llanusa (11/2022), and Member David S. Nemer (11/2022). Each member has a minimum of five years of experience on the board. Student board members have been given the opportunity for an advisory vote and occasionally they comment on an issue. Each meeting has been run efficiently and the public is encouraged to speak and is treated respectfully. The members of the Board treat each other with respect, even when they disagree. It appears that they come to each meeting having read the material and have been in touch with staff so everyone is prepared.

Superintendent Dr. James Elsasser has been serving Claremont for almost seven years. The newest assistant superintendent is Brad Cuff, a former CUSD teacher and CUSD principal, who now leads Student Services. Dr. Julie Olesniewicz is the Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services, Lisa Shoemaker continues to head up Business Services, and Kevin Ward in the Human Services Department completes the cabinet.

CUSD Board meetings are generally on the first and third Thursdays of the month with exceptions noted clearly and often related to the academic calendar. There was one Board workshop in order to have time to spend on issues in depth. Joint meetings with the City Council and community meetings are held when appropriate. I attended all of these meetings with the exception of the most recent meeting on May 16 which was covered by Mary Caenepeel.

The funding structure for school districts was changed in 2014 and while the District previously received funding at the median level, with the change it is now in the lowest 25% of per pupil funding despite the fact that its percentage of unduplicated students (e.g., foster, homeless, socioeconomically disadvantaged students) has remained about the same (three-year average of 37-39%).

Separate from state funding issues are projects related to Measure G, which was passed in 2016. Every quarter a magazine from the District, Up Front, is sent to each household. A new issue is due soon, but updates include

- Completed roofing project
- Air conditioning units complete at multiple locations
- Claremont High School gymnasium and nearby bathrooms updated
- Portables replaced with modular buildings (those designed to be temporary versus those designed to be permanent)
  - Six sites all occupied and final details (e.g., landscaping) will be completed over the summer
  - Remaining sites, Condit and Vista de Valle, are out to bid
- New student center at Claremont High School has been approved and is out to bid
- El Roble and Claremont High School pools need one additional approval from the Division of State Architects and then will go out to bid

All votes have been unanimous, but there was disagreement on an issue that did not go to a vote because the motion did not receive a second. The District received a grant to set up an ROP Logistics Pathway Program at the Claremont High School. When the plans were submitted to the Division of State Architects, significant changes were mandated. The Board's decision came down to whether the changes could be made and approved within the allotted time, because the money would be lost if it were not. The other option was to give the money to the regional ROP, which already had plans in place. The Board Meeting Highlights on the website note that

Mr. Llanusa motioned to apply for the Baldy View ROP Career Technical Education Incentive Grant (CTEIG) with the estimated amount of \$1 million from District funds to complete the project. The motion failed due to lack of a second.

A motion that was not controversial but was brought to the League's attention in December was the passage of a "Resolution to Initiate the Process of Establishing Trustee Areas and Elections By-Trustee Areas." The District will eliminate at-large voting effective November 2022.

Many positive events are highlighted at meetings. Students were recognized for academic, artistic, and athletic accomplishments. There were many speakers on the topic of the start time for high school students and a pilot program is being offered. Mental health has been a focus and many workshops have been available, along with meetings about positive parenting. Changes to the family life (formerly known as sex ed.) curriculum motivated many parents to speak to the board, mostly to encourage them to adopt a program that would be taught before the end of the current academic year. A cancelled field trip to Riley's Farm has brought a lawsuit to the District and a local lawyer commented on it several times.

I hope to be able to continue observing the CUSD Board of Education. Thank you for allowing me to be of service.

Respectfully submitted,  
Judith Tanenbaum