

Memorandum

To: Circulation
From: James G. Perkins & Patrick T. Waters
Date: August 6, 2008
Re: GUHSD's November 2008 Bond Proposal

As the former Chair and Vice Chair, respectively, of the Finance Subcommittee of Grossmont's Bond Advisory Commission, we would like to share our initial thoughts on the results of Monday afternoon's Grossmont Board meeting.

We believe that the outcome, when placed in proper context, was a "net positive" in the long-running effort to secure a Grossmont high school in the Alpine/Blossom Valley/Harbison Canyon area.

Some of you might currently endorse some of our thoughts. We hope that in the coming weeks, we can convince all of you to endorse all these thoughts, recognizing and respecting -- as we do -- that some of you likely hold alternative points of view.

As you know, the Grossmont Board approved a resolution on Monday whereby, assuming that the new bond passes, Grossmont would build an Alpine HS using new bond money provided that the aggregate District-wide student enrollment, at the time that the District seeks construction bids for the new high school, equals or exceeds today's overall District enrollment number of 23,245 students. (We'll call this the "Status Quo Proposal").

At first blush, one might reasonably conclude that the Status Quo Proposal precludes there being an Alpine high school. According to this view, since most analysts generally expect aggregate Grossmont enrollment to decline going forward, Alpine therefore likely won't be eligible for a new high school out of the November bond.

We would like to recommend an alternative conclusion. Under the circumstances, and given the alternatives, we endorse the Status Quo Proposal and believe it can lead to an Alpine high school. Here is our reasoning.

The Board took 2 key votes early in the meeting. The voting results were unsurprising and, in our view, fore-ordained.

1. The Collins Proposal

The Board voted on, but did not approve by the necessary 4-1 majority, a motion whereby Grossmont would build a new high school in Alpine without regard to District-wide enrollment numbers, assuming that the November bond passed.

Messrs. Shield and Kelly opposed, and still oppose, the building of a high school in Alpine without District enrollment conditions. We believe that no amount of further argument on Monday would have changed their vote.

2. The Kelly Proposal

The Board then voted on, but did not approve, a motion whereby Grossmont would construct a new high school in Alpine, if, but only if, the District enrollment numbers shall have increased -- from today's aggregate enrollment numbers -- by at least 500 students as of the time that Grossmont seeks new school construction bids. Trustees Urdahl and Schreiber opposed that motion so it did not pass by the necessary 4-1 majority.

As a consequence, the Board then had only 2 options. (One can conceive of other, more exotic options, but none seems plausible.)

1. Stalemate and No New Bond. The Board could have adjourned the meeting in a stalemate as a result of which there would be no new bond (and therefore no Alpine HS, barring an extraordinary change of events). That result might have been attractive to some who might reason that if there is not going to be an Alpine HS with certainty then, at a minimum, Alpine should not have to pay for continued renovations of the existing District schools. That option, however would have necessarily resulted in no Alpine high school for the foreseeable future.

2. The Status Quo Proposal. Alternatively, the Board could have sought approval of a November bond that at least leaves Alpine a chance to receive a high school under enrollment conditions less stringent than Mr. Kelly's 500 student growth requirement. And that's what the Board did. We all likely believe that Alpine deserves a high school without regard to any enrollment conditions. Unfortunately, there were not enough Board votes for that. Mr. Urdahl proposed that, and it failed. So, faced with the prospect of no bond at all this November, we believe that the Status Quo Proposal was the far better result from the standpoint of obtaining an Alpine HS.

If District-wide enrollment is expected to decline over the next several years, however, doesn't that mean there will be no Alpine HS? Not necessarily, for several reasons. First, just as the Board had the legal flexibility to decline to pursue the Alpine high school under Prop H, it will likely have the legal flexibility to build the Alpine HS even if District-wide enrollment is less than 23,245 when it seeks new-school construction bids. Board decisions of this sort require only a simple 3-2 majority vote. Second, if the District moves quickly on an Alpine HS -- which Alpine must loudly encourage -- it reduces the risk that the District-wide enrollment figures will materially differ from the trigger of 23,245. Third, we do not know—indeed no one knows -- what affect renovating the District's schools and adding enhanced curriculum options will have on maintaining or even increasing enrollment in the District. Similarly, we do not know how a softening economy and a weak housing market will impact District-wide

enrollment: will some families now switch their children from private to public schools because of financial considerations?

The point here is that Alpine remains very much in the running for a high school. A new high school does require, of course, passage of the November bond. It further requires that the composition of the Board does not change in ways that would be more adverse to an Alpine high school relative to the Board's current composition. Therefore, in the coming weeks, we hope that concerned Alpine residents can collaboratively devise an action plan regarding the November election. The turnout and passion on display at Monday's Board meeting was highly impressive. We need to continue to harness that energy and seek to build on it. After more than 10 years, Alpine has worked too hard to let the high school slip away now.