



Independent, locally owned and operated!

www.lamorindaweekly.com 925-377-0977

Published January 20th, 2010

AUHSD Faces \$4 Million in Education Cuts and Teacher Layoffs

By Andrea A. Firth

"It's just a bleak picture," stated Chris Learned, Associate Superintendent of the Acalanes Union High School District (AUHSD) in the budget update presented to the Governing Board on January 13th. Based on the Governor's proposed budget, AUHSD will receive \$ 4 million less in revenue from the State in the next school year (2010-2011). This revenue loss, which has ballooned upward from the \$2.6 million deficit that the District had previously projected, could translate to laying off as many as 50 teachers and other staff.

Noting that notification for dismissal of teaching staff must be done by March 15th, AUHSD Superintendent John Stockton reviewed a draft list of staff cuts which would result in increased core class sizes, reduced elective choices and advanced placement classes, a skeleton counseling staff, and one librarian for the four traditional high schools. The District is also considering the closure of Del Oro High School, an alternative education program located in Walnut Creek.

"The solution is not in Sacramento," stated Stockton in his comments to the Governing Board, "The answer really is in the community." The Governing Board voted unanimously to conduct a public opinion telephone survey to assess the community's willingness to support an additional parcel tax measure to support schools through the current economic crisis. The parcel tax measure, if pursued, will be for a short-term tax; the amount of the parcel tax is yet to be determined. The District is considering placing the parcel tax measure on the ballot in the May mail-in or June election.

A parcel tax to support the AUHSD has been in place for over 20 years. Measure A, a six-year \$189 parcel tax with a senior exemption, will sunset in July of 2010 due to the passage of measure G last November. Measure G is a renewal of the \$189 parcel tax, which still includes a senior exemption but has no sunset provision. The existing parcel tax generates about \$6.7 million annually and has been spent to prevent the elimination of teacher positions and increased class size, and to maintain college preparatory and advanced placement classes, electives, and student support services. To generate \$4 million in revenue to cover the projected deficit would require a new parcel tax of \$110 to \$115.

Stockton and Learned remain pessimistic regarding the forecast for school funding going forward, noting that the State budget as proposed includes several policy reforms that will be difficult to enact quickly, if at all. Learned cited the example of contracting out services, which may save money but is currently not allowed by law. While the Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) concurred that the \$19 billion State budget deficit figure is reasonable, the LAO does not believe that receipt of \$7 billion in federal relief is realistic, leaving the State likely to fall several billion short of the Governor's proposed revenue goals.

"Districts will get hammered in the middle of next year," stated Learned, noting that there will likely be more cuts to education funding if the State's revenue projections fall short. "It's really an \$8 million problem over the next two years," he added.

The AUHSD has planned a series of meetings on January 20th (7 a.m., noon, 4:30 p.m., 7 p.m.) and January 21st (7 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.) at the District offices near Acalanes High School to discuss the school funding situation with parents, teachers, and community members.

Reach the reporter at: andrea@lamorindaweekly.com

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA