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Conclusions

Some incumbent directors demonstrate ill will towards each other that impedes their ability to cooperate. This has had a negative impact on the ability of the district to move ahead with a number of proposed projects, including such simple projects as painting a four square court or hopscotch on asphalt.

The lack of a current, comprehensive Policies and Procedures Manual, to which the directors and the general manager adhere, has fostered an atmosphere of extreme animosity at the board meetings. This contributes to endless discussions at board meetings.

Updating and editing policies and procedures at meetings of the board of directors is poor utilization of meeting time and is an impediment to handling the business of the district. This approach to updating the policies and procedures has created agendas with an unwieldy amount of unfinished business, most of which is related to changes in policies or procedures.

Compilation of updated policies and procedures has been haphazard and there is no way to know what changes have been made.

The general manager's ability to perform is impeded by the lack of an approved job description and the absence of annual performance evaluations. This has intensified the ill will between directors who feel the job is being performed adequately and those who feel it is not.

The letter of intent to resign by an incumbent director was made public immediately after election results were posted in November 2000. The Grand Jury questions the timing of this action. This letter states that the general manager withheld knowledge of the incumbent's intent to resign from the other directors. When this letter was made public, the fact that the general manager had known of the intent to resign was revealed, which gave the appearance of impropriety on the part of both the incumbent director and the general manager. This further undermined the relationship between the general manager and the other directors.

Limitation of the public at the podium on any one agenda item has improved the ability of the board to move ahead in meetings.

Recommendations

1. The BCR&PD should have a comprehensive, updated Policies and Procedures Manual.
2. Current job descriptions for all employment positions should be available in concise, organized formats and be approved by the board of directors.
3. The general manager should receive a performance evaluation on an annual basis.
4. Members of the board of directors should look beyond their differences and attend to the district business.
5. To fill the BCR&PD vacancy, the Board of Supervisors should immediately appoint a new director.

Response Required

Entity	Recommendations	Respond Within
Board of Supervisors	5	90 Days
Boulder Creek Recreation & Park District Board of Directors	1 – 4	90 Days



County of Santa Cruz

Schools and Libraries

Review of the Organization and Structure of Site Councils in Santa Cruz County Public Schools

Background

The *School Site Council Handbook* from the California Department of Education states “The basic principle underlying the establishment of the School Site Council (SSC) is that those individuals who are most affected by the operation of their school should have a major role in the decisions regarding how their school functions. This involvement occurs through the development of a school improvement plan.”

School site councils are campus-based groups composed of parents and community members, teachers, other school personnel, school administrators and students at the high school level.

According to the *School Site Council Handbook* the School Improvement Plan (SIP), the School-based Coordination Program (SBCP) and the Motivation and Maintenance Program (MMP) were established in 1977, 1981 and 1985, respectively. They were envisioned as ways to increase school-wide effectiveness, improve student achievements, and better prepare students to be productive workers and responsible citizens. These programs require a school site council as a condition for receiving and expending supplemental funds. Approximately 75% of all public schools in California have one or more of these programs.

Scope

The Grand Jury reviewed the organization and structure of school site councils in Santa Cruz County public schools.

The review included the following:

- All California Education Code sections pertaining to school site councils
- Interview with County Superintendent of Schools
- Interviews and a panel discussion with three principals
- Two Grand Jury surveys of school site councils. The Grand Jury designed and wrote two surveys for distribution to principals and chairpersons of school site councils at all Santa Cruz County public schools. One version was sent to 58 principals and the other was sent to 58 chairpersons. Questionnaires were returned by 35 principals and 28 chairpersons.
- Attendance at several school site council meetings
- Attendance at a site council training session

Findings

1. School site councils are authorized under State Education Codes.
2. Education Code §52012 states, “A school site council shall be established at each school that participates in the school improvement program authorized by this chapter. The council shall be composed of the principal and representatives of: teachers selected by teachers at the school; other school personnel selected by other school personnel at the school; parents of pupils attending the school selected by such parents; and, in secondary school, pupils selected by pupils attending the school.” It also states the council shall be constituted to ensure parity between school personnel and parents/students.
3. Education Code §52012 states that the term and method of selection and replacement shall be specified in the school improvement plan. It also states that the Superintendent of Public Instruction shall provide examples of selection and replacement procedures that may be considered by school site councils.
4. Education Code §52011 states that the district governing board shall provide each principal with information regarding SIP and site councils and ensure that the information is provided to teachers, other school personnel, parents and in secondary schools, pupils.
5. Education Code §52034(c) states that the school district governing boards should adopt policies regarding the responsibilities of school site councils and establish communication procedures to ensure reasonable opportunities for each council or its representatives to meet with the governing body.
6. Specifications for site council membership are inconsistent within the statutes. For example, according to Education Code §52012 and §52852, SSC “shall be composed of parents of pupils attending the school selected by such parents.” Later these same codes define this segment of the site council members as “parents or other community members selected by parents.”
7. Education Code §52870 states, “It is the intent of the State Legislature that, to the extent possible, the members of the school site council represent the composition of the school's pupil population.”
8. As set forth in the Education Code, the School Improvement Plan and the School Based Coordinated Program receive numerous reviews resulting in approval or disapproval at the levels of site council, district governing body, and the State Board of Education. In addition, by statute, the principal is responsible for ongoing administration of the plan, and the district superintendent must, upon request, assist with the design and implementation of the plan.
9. The Education Code did not reveal any requirements for oversight of the school site council as a body.

10. Process for nominating parents varied among schools responding. For example, responses from principals included:
 - “Membership seems to be for anyone who asks up until the number of parents is met.”
 - “We have a table at Open House in spring with educational materials and encourage people to nominate themselves.”
 - “Interested parents self-select to run for site council seats.”
11. The use of a nominating committee, a standard election practice, was not mentioned in any of the responses from site council chairpersons.
12. Twenty percent of the chairpersons’ responses stated they had received a personal invitation to serve on the site council.
13. Some principals stated that it was sometimes difficult to get enough parents to serve on site councils. Other principals enjoyed an ample number of volunteers for the required parent seats with additional volunteers to act as alternates.
14. Survey results indicated that the three most widely used methods in the election process were:
 - ballots returned by parents and students
 - hand vote at a meeting
 - ballots placed in a secure ballot box
15. Survey results indicated that 18 different methods were used to count ballots. The most common counting methods were:
 - by principal and secretary
 - by projects coordinator
 - by staff and site council
 - by a show of hands or a ballot vote at meeting
16. Of 63 respondents (35 Principals and 28 Chairpersons) only 21 reported using more than one method of encouraging individuals to join their school site council.

17. Respondents were given the opportunity to indicate which method of communication was used. Six options included:

- school newsletter
- local newspaper
- back to school night
- school bulletin
- student
- other

Some schools used more than one option. Methods were as follows:

Communication Method	Frequency
School Newsletter	42
Back to School Night	25
School Bulletin	16

18. Communication methods not widely used were:

- A marquee at the front of the school
- A flyer
- Word of mouth
- A notice to parents hand-carried during child’s pick-up
- A parent newsletter
- A faculty newsletter
- At PTA meetings

19. Use of a local newspaper to encourage SSC membership was not indicated on any surveys.

20. After the formation of the SSC, the chairperson’s communications with parents showed a wider variety of communication techniques.

Communication Method	Frequency
School Newsletter	16
Meetings	4
School Bulletin	6

21. According to the *School Site Council Handbook*, “After the SSC is first formed or new members are selected to ongoing councils, the school/district should provide training and ongoing in-service to the members to assist them in carrying out their responsibilities. The training provided to the SSC should be on a regular basis, and the training should be appropriate to the tasks at hand.” Training is not being provided to all site councils in Santa Cruz County.

22. In the committee’s interview with the County Superintendent of Schools, it was stated “We are now looking at doing training for participants.”