

## Spediacci, Sheri

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**Subject:** Brisbane Elementary School District Fiscal Problems

--- On Fri, 1/25/13, Ken Walker <bayvista101@gmail.com> wrote:

> From: Ken Walker <bayvista101@gmail.com>  
> Subject: RE: Brisbane Elementary School District Fiscal Problems  
> To: "'Raymond Miller'" <rc.miller@yahoo.com>  
> Cc: "'Clay Holstine'" <clayh@ci.brisbane.ca.us>  
> Date: Friday, January 25, 2013, 7:15 PM Mr. Miller, I'm sorry my  
> mention of the redevelopment funds was of concern to you and, I  
> imagine, the city. No offense intended. My main goal of the message  
> was to show that the community's support of the parcel tax was a good  
> cause. I was light on details in other areas. I can't say it seemed  
> so clear cut when we were reviewing the merits of the case, but we did  
> come to the conclusion that the city was being honest and there was  
> not likely much, if any, funds to recover. We appreciate our  
> partnership with the city and the support they have provided. We  
> look forward to working with you as mayor.

> Best regards,

> Ken

> -----Original Message-----

> From: Raymond Miller [mailto:rc.miller@yahoo.com]

> Sent: Friday, January 25, 2013 12:17 AM

> To: bayvista101@gmail.com

> Cc: Clay Holstine

> Subject: Brisbane Elementary School District Fiscal Problems

> Dear Ken,

> Many thanks for your very thorough background essay on the fiscal  
> issues facing the District. There was, however, one troubling  
> paragraph, namely paragraph two under "fundraising ideas."

> A possible implication of your discussion is that there were  
> redevelopment funds going to the City that legally belonged to the  
> School District, but you did not go after them because of the cost of  
> litigation and undermining the positive relationship with the City.  
> The City has categorically denied this allegation. We were able to  
> demonstrate to the Community College District, who did file  
> litigation, that their information was incorrect.  
> They then withdrew their lawsuit.

> Furthermore, with the demise of Redevelopment, the City's  
> redevelopment accounting has come under intense scrutiny. The law  
> requires oversight from a panel that includes representatives from the  
> County, the Community College District, and the Jefferson High School  
> District.

> After this panel approves  
> the accounting, it goes to the County Auditor/Controller and then on  
> to the State Department of Finance. Every report submitted so far has  
> been validated and approved by all these levels of review.

> Therefore, I would appreciate your future discussions of this issue  
> accurately reflecting the fiscal facts.

> The City is very sympathetic with your fiscal problems, and as I said  
> in my recent letter, we are pleased to collaborate with you in

> appropriate ways.  
>  
> Ray  
>  
>  
> Sent from my iPad  
>  
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## Spediacci, Sheri

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**From:** Ken Walker [bayvista101@gmail.com]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 22, 2013 10:06 PM  
**To:** Discussion regarding the community of Brisbane, California.  
**Cc:** Spediacci, Sheri  
**Subject:** RE: [BrsNet] Merger between Bayshore & Brisbane School Districts - enough is enough!!

Jessica, I understand your frustration with what has been a multi-year budget crisis for our school district and most school districts in the state. I have a master's degree in finance and six years on the board, but still scratch my head with the money shell game that is school financing.

While I can't change how school financing works, I can explain what we have done and are planning to do. First, however, let me assure you that balancing the budget is the primary agenda item for our next board meeting on February 20. No hollow threats here. Some teachers and staff will likely lose their jobs. We've avoided more drastic cuts with some of the measures I describe below. Still, we don't feel we have lot of excess in our district and the cuts we have to make will be felt by our kids.

Sorry for the very long answer. You raised important concerns that I thought should be addressed.

You mentioned that you have not seen the impact of some of the drastic measures the board and superintendent have said they want to avoid. I think that means we have been doing our job. Here are some of the measures:

1. Passed a parcel tax (Measure Q) last year that raises \$500,000 annually for next 6 years. This measure passed by about 20 votes. The core leadership was primarily board members and teachers. No group canvassed harder than our teachers. We knew during the campaign that our real projected deficit was \$800,000. We also knew from voter surveys that any tax above \$150 was not likely to pass, so we really did get the max money from the community. As advertised, the parcel tax helped avoid 7 teacher cuts that we rescinded after the election. This is very risky, however, in that we are no vote away from losing substantial funds. We need to look for ways to fund our district that are not based on short-term taxes.
2. Renewed our Art & Music parcel tax in 2011 that raises \$300,000 for art & music instruction and teacher aids annually. If this doesn't pass, there is no art and music instruction and we lose some aids that parents find very useful. Again, our teachers were a driving force in the campaign. This is another risky source of funds, however.
3. Used \$500,000 in excess Arts & Music tax funds from our prior art & music taxes to cover 3 teachers. Our new business manager found that we were unnecessarily setting aside some funds from past Art & Music taxes that weren't spent on art and music. She understood that the tax allows money to be spent on class size reduction in addition to art & music. These funds had accumulated over the life of the previous tax measures. We used this money to cover 3 teachers, including 1 that addressed a parent request to reinstate a kindergarten teacher at Brisbane Elementary so that some Brisbane kids didn't have to attend Panorama School. This was one-time money that runs out this year.
4. Raised about \$100,000 from various PTO fundraisers, with \$75K coming from Spring Thing. This covers library aids and miscellaneous teacher wish list items. Another risky source of funds, however.
5. Used reserve money. The sale of land in Southern Hills, Daly City has kept our schools strong for many years. The reserve has gone from \$5 million 12 years ago to \$2.4 million today. There is no appetite on the board to continue deficit spending.

We also gave serious consideration to several other fundraising ideas:

1. Become a K-12 unified district. The premise here was that \$4.7 million if property tax money goes to the Jefferson High School District when we only have about 200 kids

attending Jefferson UHSD schools. Why not keep the money and run a K-12 district? This was the real reason we met with the City of Brisbane in our 2x2 meeting just prior to our meeting with Bayshore last week. The idea was being pushed by a city council member. The board and district feel that this would not be a viable solution because: 1) we couldn't offer a comprehensive high school curriculum that is required by law; 2) was not popular with our K-8 parents; 3) would not likely pass several state tests for unification.

2. Sue the City of Brisbane for redevelopment funds. This became moot after redevelopment agencies were abolished. Our prior superintendent felt there might be some funds due to the district and was the first to inquire. After some review, the board felt that the risk in our relationship with the city was not worth the potential funds that could be extracted. Still, we spent several weeks revisiting this idea after some strong community insistence.

3. Get money from UPC. Some parents met with UPC privately and believed that UPC was willing to provide substantial funds to the district. We got numerous requests to attend some meetings with them at parent homes. We talked to UPC directly and discovered that there was no intent to donate the funds mentioned by the parents. We also felt that we didn't want to handcuff the City of Brisbane with any deal, or even a talk of a potential deal, that was tied to the sensitive issue of development. While UPC has a major economic interest in Brisbane, I feel they have been like any supportive member of the business community for us and has never asked us to do anything that helps them gain favors with the city.

4. Merge with the Bayshore School District. This one is still being discussed by the board. We didn't believe the \$1,000,000 in extra money the first study showed. We do believe our current study which doesn't show a significant monetary benefit for the merger.

What is ahead:

We are focused on balancing the budget in a way that minimizes the impact on our kids. We basically have 3 options in front of us: 1) merge, close one of the middle schools and reduce teachers/staff; 2) don't merge, close one of our existing 3 schools and reduce teachers/staff; 3) don't merge, keep our 3 schools open and reduce teachers/staff. The impact, in terms of the percentage of staff reductions (and impact on class size) seems to be lowest with #1 and highest with #3. Our mission isn't to create and maintain teacher jobs, but we have to acknowledge that our teachers work hard for our kids and knocked on many doors to give us the district we have and help pay their salaries. Furloughs are also being considered with all 3 options and is another tax on the teachers and, ultimately, our kids who miss school and on parents who must pay for extra childcare.

The decisions we need to make are not easy, nor taken lightly. There are some things I wish we did differently in hindsight, but I want to make sure the community understands the complexity of our choices and school financing. We have gotten a lot of constructive input and questions from the community and welcome more.

Respectfully,

Ken Walker  
School Board Member & Citizen

-----Original Message-----

From: brsnet-bounces@smrn.com [mailto:brsnet-bounces@smrn.com] On Behalf Of Jessica Aloft  
Sent: Saturday, January 19, 2013 4:03 PM  
To: Discussion regarding the community of Brisbane, California.  
Cc: Schroeder, Sheri  
Subject: Re: [BrsNet] Merger between Bayshore & Brisbane School Districts - enough is enough!!

Thanks for this, Kathy. I was really pleased that the School Board listened to the community on this issue. I'm just sorry it had to come to this -- a lot of time and energy has been spent, and we're right back where we started a year ago. We have a projected \$600,000 budget gap for the 2012-2013 school year, with no real leadership on closing it.

We all need to demand that our School Board trustees\* \*get back to\* Job #1: BALANCING THE BUDGET.\* I hope that everyone who cares about having a fiscally sound school district will \*send the School Board an email at\* \*brisbaneschools@race.com\*. They are not hearing from enough community members about this -- now is the time for action.

For context, since my oldest started at BES 3 1/2 years ago there have been major battles over:

- 1) closing a school,
- 2) sending Brisbane kindergarteners to Panorama school in Daly City (which is chronically under-enrolled), and
- 3) merging with Bayshore school district.

These battles within our school district are emotionally draining and cause a lot of anxiety among the parent community. They make some parents decide to enroll their kids in private school, or even move away to more stable school districts. They undermine public support for our district, which we need when we come to you, the voters, to approve a school parcel tax (which you did last year - thank you!), or participate in fundraising events. They also steal energy and drive for working on positive solutions to our budget problems -- because we are so busy fighting to just keep what we have.

Through these past stressful few years, we have heard over and over again from the School Board and Superintendent that if we don't "do something" (meaning do something drastic) we won't have the kind of schools we want for our kids. We've heard that class sizes could go upwards 35 per class, that we could lose our library and computer lab, that our reading aides and other support for struggling students could disappear, that our schools will become dirty and unkempt from lack of custodial staff, and on and on.  
NONE OF THESE HAVE HAPPENED.

Despite the fact that the parcel tax we passed last year was never going to be enough to close our budget gap, somehow none of the drastic predictions came true: our schools are still well-staffed and lovely. Now some school board members are saying again that we have to look at closing a school or else.... you know.... our schools will be so gutted as to be unrecognizable.

I don't believe them any more. I think that, as in the past 4 years, we will find a way to hang on until the recession really lifts and property values (and the associated property taxes that fund our schools), rise from historic lows. We just need to hang on for another year or two.

We can do this by TEMPORARILY cutting back on support and extracurricular staff, cutting a few days from the school year (again, temporarily), freezing automatic staff salary increases for a year, and getting some new fundraising ideas going such as leasing out the empty classrooms at Panorama, for example. Many of us also expect get more revenue from State in the next few years as the recession lifts.

When households had to cut back because of the recession, most did it by cutting expenses AND raising income any way they could. That's what our school district should be doing: cutting expenses and putting some new programs in place to raise revenues. There are a lot of good revenue-generating ideas out there, and dedicated parents and community members ready to get to work, but we have to get our school board to focus on \*closing the budget gap\*, without going down any more rabbit holes that soak up time, energy, and resources with no results.

As you can probably tell, I'm extremely frustrated with this situation. Please join me in demanding that the school board take the necessary TEMPORARY measures to get our district finances back on track for the 2012-2013 school year, and to stop considering \*permanent solutions\*(school closure, district merger) to our \*temporary problems\*.

The district email again is \*brisbaneschools@race.com. \*

I would like to thank the Brisbane City Council for being so supportive of our school community during the ongoing budget crisis, and especially Councilmembers Lentz and Conway who attended many meetings over the past few months as plans for merging with Bayshore district moved quickly forward.\* \*They didn't have to take the time to get so deeply informed and involved in this issue, but we needed their help, and they responded.\*

\*Please make your voice heard!

Thank you,

Jessica Aloft  
Parent of a 3rd grader and Kindergartener at Brisbane Elementary

p.s. I am also posting this on the Residents of Brisbane facebook page and sending it to the Mothers of Brisbane group. Please feel free to forward to your Brisbane friends and neighbors!

\* \* \* \* \*

Jessica Aloft  
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j.aloft@gmail.com  
www.linkedin.com/in/jessicaaloft

On Fri, Jan 18, 2013 at 8:55 AM, Kathy Wall <kwallprudential@aol.com> wrote:

>  
> I attended the joint school board meeting last night. I stayed until a  
> little after 8:00 p.m. when it became incredibly clear that no vote would  
> be taken and that, if a vote were taken, the answer would be a big no. I  
> have just a few comments:

>  
> 1) I was incredibly proud of our school board members. They were  
> calm, open minded and articulate. It is abundantly clear that all they  
> want is the best for the children of our community. The citizens that  
> I heard speak from Brisbane also came prepared and spoke clearly and  
> calmly.

>  
>  
> 2) While I guess that it is a good thing to keep the talks going, it  
> seemed apparent to me that the residents of Bayshore will not allow  
> this to happen because if it does, their middle school will most  
> likely be  
> closed.

> I am not sure that any number of meetings will change their minds.

>  
> 3) I was disappointed that so few people were in attendance and that  
> hardly anyone (including myself) had been attending the school board  
> meetings discussing this extremely important matter that will have a huge  
> impact on our town (whether we have kids in the schools or not). We all  
> need to start paying a lot more attention.

>  
> All I know is that when we see them, we should give each member of  
> our school board a big thank you for the many, many hours they have  
> spent trying to figure this all out.

> Sincerely,

> Kathy Wall

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> BrsNet mailing list  
> BrsNet@smrn.com  
> <http://mail.smrn.com/mailman/listinfo/brsnet>  
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BrsNet mailing list  
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