



May 17, 2012

Via Hand Delivery & Email
Superintendent Jon Gundry
Pasadena Unified School District
351 South Hudson Avenue
Pasadena, California 91109

Dear Mr. Gundry:

The Board of Directors of the West Pasadena Residents' Association (WPRA) shares the deep concern of San Rafael Elementary parents caused by PUSD's precipitous rush to close San Rafael. The WPRA is an active supporter of San Rafael, our last public school in West Pasadena, and has been enthusiastic about its dynamic revitalization in the last several years. We view the school as an essential part of our community, and expect that any discussions concerning the school's future include our input and that of parents and other stakeholders.

One week ago, PUSD first informed parent leaders at San Rafael that the school faced imminent closure. The closure, as represented by PUSD, is required by prohibitions limiting school construction near potential earthquake hazards. PUSD then suggested that final decisions, affecting hundreds of students, their families and the community, be made at a Board of Education meeting in late June, little more than six weeks from the first mention of the issue.

Based on our review of documents provided by PUSD, we have concerns about the applicability of any prohibitions to renovating San Rafael's school buildings, the alternatives being considered, and the process for identifying and evaluating alternatives. Further, since PUSD assures us that there is no threat to student safety, we see no basis for what can only be described as a rush to judgment rather than a full consideration of the situation and potential resolutions.

More specifically:

1. We question whether the geology supports PUSD's position. According to the peer review paper presented by PUSD, the presence of any *active* fault is not certain and the application of code sections limiting construction has not yet been determined. In fact, the peer review paper recommends additional study, and does not state that the school must be closed.

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2. According to PUSD, the current campus is safe for students and staff, and all structures meet Field Act requirements to ensure the buildings' integrity during an earthquake. In terms of upgrades to the existing campus and structures, we are unclear as to the applicability of the relevant code to the planned or required improvements under consideration, including those approved with the passing of Measure TT.
3. We believe that any discussion of alternatives is appropriate only when it is clear that alternatives are required, and that parents and neighbors must be involved not only in the selection and evaluation of alternatives, but also in defining both the alternatives and the criteria for evaluation.
4. Since decisions regarding San Rafael will have a generational impact on West Pasadena, WPRA believes it is essential that PUSD form a Stakeholder Committee, including representatives from San Rafael parents, neighbors, and the community, including WPRA. The Stakeholder Committee should meet monthly, and be empowered by PUSD to conduct public hearings, review and analyze staff recommendations, and make recommendations to the Board of Education.
5. We are very concerned with the speed of this process. Given the complexity of the situation, the number of alternatives to consider, and the long-term impact of any decisions on so many families, an entire neighborhood, and the broader community, WPRA believes that requiring a final decision before the end of June is both unrealistic and unjustified. In our view, a period of 18 months would be reasonable for this process, including stakeholder input, review, evaluation and final recommendations.

In summary, WPRA believes that PUSD must establish a more deliberate timeline, one that allows a Stakeholder Committee to resolve questions regarding the necessity of any action before recommending that the Board of Education make a final decision, and that also includes the community in all aspects of evaluation. The school, the community, and most especially the children, deserve a careful and thorough process to determine the best way forward.

To that end, we invite you and your staff to attend WPRA's board meeting on Wednesday, June 6 at 6:30 p.m. We hope you will join us to begin discussion about the future of San Rafael School.

Sincerely,



Catherine Stringer
Vice President



Blaine Cavena
Treasurer



Vince Farhat
Past President