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San Diego County

Sweetwater Trustee Officials Going to Trial

Dec. 13, 2013 | By Wendy Fry | www.nbcsandiego.com

EXCERPT: Negotiations for a plea deal quickly unraveled Friday for six current and former Sweetwater officials snared in a three-year corruption probe. ...

...What began as what District Attorney Bonnie Dumanis described as the largest corruption case in San Diego history - with more than 232 criminal counts filed against 18 defendants - appears headed for a lengthy and costly trial for the six remaining Sweetwater officials and the one contractor who has not yet accepted a deal.

Current Sweetwater trustees Bertha Lopez and Jim Cartmill were offered a plea deal of admitting to one misdemeanor charge of accepting gifts over the legal limit. They are each facing between 10 and 18 felony and misdemeanor counts. Current trustees Arlie Ricasa and Pearl Quinones, as well as former board members Greg Sandoval and former Superintendent Dr. Jesus Gandara, were offered a plea deal of accepting one felony count each. They are heading to trial facing between 20 and 29 felony and misdemeanor counts each.

"We are ready to go to trial," said defense attorney Marc Carlos. "Ms. Quinones is ready to litigate the matter if necessary."

Charges the defendants face include extortion, conspiracy to commit a crime, felony accepting bribes and felony perjury counts....

... Also among the 11 defendants who accepted plea deals are three contractors who agreed to work with prosecutors as a condition of their plea.

To read the complete article see the video please visit:

www.nbcsandiego.com/news/local/Sweetwater-trustee-officials-corruption-trial-235824711.html#ixzz2n13c8GW7

Prop 39 Ballot Descriptions

The School District's 'Bait and Switch' Bond Problem

Nov. 13, 2013 | By Mario Koran | VoiceofSanDiego.org

EXCERPT: ...The neighbors formed a group and called it Taxpayers for Accountable School Bond Spending. Their goal: Scrap the stadium lights at nearby Hoover High School, maintain the neighborhood. ...

...They hired a lawyer, and filed a multimillion-dollar lawsuit against the district for improperly using school bond money to construct the lights and for thumbing its nose at a requirement to properly assess the lights' impact on the neighborhood.

The residents won. On Sept. 20, the lights went out at Hoover High.

But the verdict may impact more than just football stadiums. It potentially opens the district to future lawsuits, and could ultimately change the game for how the district pitches bond sales to the public.

School board member Scott Barnett, the board's often-cited numbers whiz who led the charge for the district's most recent construction bond, Prop. Z, calls the judge's decision "foolhardy" and said it "changed a half century of bond spending policy and practice."

The legal and political implications of the ruling could negatively impact the school board's latitude to make smart fiscal decisions based on the changing needs of the school district, Barnett said.

All parties seem to agree that the district should be allowed to modify, in relatively small ways, the list of projects included on the proposition ballot. For example, if early plans called for a school to receive 400 pieces of audiovisual equipment, but it was later discovered the school only needed 300, the change would be seen as responsible.

But Felipe Monroig, president of the San Diego County Taxpayers Association, said he's OK with reductions to the list, but opposes any additions.

"Using (the ballot's project list) merely as a guide that can be diverted from is a 'bait-and-switch' and a blow for transparency," Monroig said. ...

... Thus, even if the district wasn't required to include the level of detail it sent out on the ballot, once it's been voted on, it becomes part of the district's stated intent. In short, legal questions are framed by what the district said they were going to do, and judges will hold them to that. ...

To read the complete article, please visit:

voiceofsandiego.org/2013/11/13/the-school-districts-bait-and-switch-bond-problem/

San Diego Fire-Rescue Department

Taking Action At Schools After Team 10 Investigation Into Fire Alarms

Nov. 29, 2013 | By JW August | www.kpbs.org

EXCERPT: The San Diego Fire-Rescue Department is now taking action at schools because of a Team 10 investigation into fire alarms.

Fire Chief Javier Mainar, who is with San Diego Fire-Rescue Department, said the department had been watching a series of investigative reports by Team 10 on the broken fire alarms in the Sweetwater Union High School District.

"One of the things your story has helped us identify is ... the school district should be providing these alarm reports so we can see how serious, severe the problems are," said Mainar.

Team 10 found the alarm reports done by a contractor. It showed that 486 alarms and alarm parts were broken in buildings across the district. ...

To read the complete article please visit:

www.kpbs.org/news/2013/nov/29/san-diego-fire-rescue-dept-taking-action-schools-a/

-- www.10news.com/news/investigations/chula-vista-fire-department-state-senator-question-sweetwater-school-fire-alarms11112013

-- www.10news.com/news/crews-battle-fire-at-chula-vista-high-school-after-smoke-seen-coming-from-cafeteria11282013

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Mission Statement

To promote school district accountability by improving the training and resources available to California's Proposition 39 School Bond Oversight Committees and educating the state legislature, local school boards and the public about the oversight and reporting powers these Citizens' Bond Oversight Committees (CBOCs) have, and to advocate on a state level, where appropriate, on issues of common concern to all CBOCs.

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To view all with topics visit: calboc.org/reviews.html

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Information from the May 10, 2013

CaLBOC Conference
www.calboc.org/may10.html

San Diego Grand Jury

Sweetwater & Southwestern

- South County transcripts -

By Ricky Young

www.utsandiego.com

U-T Watchdog has been covering the release of grand jury transcripts in the South

County corruption case brought by District Attorney

Bonnie Dumanis involving more than 200 charges against

15 officials and contractors at two school districts and one

community college.

utsandiego.com/news/2013/jun/17/south-county-grand-jury-transcripts-compiled

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www.CaLBOC.org

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