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Alum Rock Bond Reviewers Blast Construction Management

May 12, 2017 | By Sharon Noguchi | www.mercurynews.com

EXCERPT: SAN JOSE - The Alum Rock Union school board was blasted by its bond oversight committee for spending millions on new buildings while allowing students to suffer in chilly and overheated classrooms and endure flooded bathrooms with broken fixtures.

In its annual report, Alum Rock's Citizens Bond Oversight Committee chastised board members for failing to fix essentials like heating and bathrooms, which it said voters clearly had signaled they wanted repaired.

"You have asked the voters to support three bond measures which have brought in over \$400 million," committee Chairman Raymond Mueller said, referring to ballot measures passed in 2008, 2012 and 2016. "Yet last week my son was forced to take state testing in 95-degree heat."

... The committee called on the board to refocus bond spending. ...

Jocelyn Merz, president of the district's teachers union, also expressed dismay at Alum Rock's construction priorities. She told trustees that neglecting to provide for basic needs makes it difficult for teachers to campaign for bond measures and ask voter to spend more money.

The oversight committee, whose job is mandated by state law, produced a compact report that highlighted key problems with construction and its management - an area so troubled it has triggered an investigation by the state's school district auditor, known as the Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team, and reportedly by the Santa Clara County District Attorney's Office as well.

The FCMAT report had been promised in early spring to the Santa Clara County Office of Education, which requested the investigation. A draft is due out soon said Michael Fine, FCMAT's chief administrative officer, and will be made public after review.

Alum Rock's bond review committee noted that many construction and improvement projects identified on a decade-old needs assessment haven't begun. ...

The bond committee also suggested a more rigorous, independent audit of bond-financed work. It noted that the audits on which the committee must base its reviews are minimal, omit change orders and provide "nothing more than boilerplate statements, with no real analysis of the data."

"It is very difficult for this body to truly certify what is happening with such minimal information provided," the report stated. ...

To read the complete article please visit:

<http://www.mercurynews.com/2017/05/12/alum-rock-bond-reviewers-blast-construction-management/>

School Bond Watchdogs Urged to Call Out Misbehavior

April 26, 2017 | By Ashly McGlone | voiceofsandiego.org

EXCERPT: More than 50 citizens tasked with overseeing school bond programs from across the state gathered in Sacramento Tuesday for the **California League of Bond Oversight Committees annual conference.**

Nick Marinovich, a league director and chair of the Sweetwater Union High School District bond committee, urged attendees to ask tough questions and provide vigorous oversight to fulfill their role mandated by state law since 2000, when California voters made it easier to pass local property taxes to pay for school construction projects.

Marinovich retraced the recent history of how Sweetwater went from "absolute crap" with a pay-to-play contracting culture that ended in criminal convictions for multiple school leaders to a "well-oiled machine right now."

"Bond oversight, well, it was an absolute joke," but now, "we've got a better bond program because we've got strong oversight," he said.

On site tours, overseers need to look at the good and the bad, he said. A Sweetwater high school that had received \$60 million in bond work still lacked air conditioning in half of the classrooms, even though air conditioning was included in the bond measure's 75-word ballot summary put before voters.

"Call them out on that," he said. "We could all look at the grand opening of a beautiful library, which is fine to a point, but we want to look at what hasn't been done." ... *To read the complete article please visit:* voiceofsandiego.org/topics/government/sacramento-report-a-social-media-star-is-born-in-the-assembly/

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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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