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June 27, 2017

ISSUE 113



## Mello-Roos Property Taxes Special Property Tax Lacks Robust Oversight, Accountability

June 21, 2017 | By Leo Castenenda | [www.cbs8.com](http://www.cbs8.com)

**EXCERPT:** ... *Here's a simple summary of how Mello-Roos generally works: A developer who wants to build housing submits paperwork to form a community facilities district. Voters who own land in the prospective development vote to pay Mello-Roos taxes to fund roads, community buildings and schools. Because no one yet lives in the area, the developer is usually the only one to vote. So taxes are often established by a vote of one person.*

(Rob) Gutierrez, of the taxpayers' association, said Mello-Roos tax rates can't be set based on a percent of a property's value, the way normal taxes are. That has led to some creative taxation. He said he found one Mello-Roos district in Santa Barbara that taxed property owners for the number of bedrooms in a house. That can be difficult to determine in a college town.

"So you've got this property next to a college, (University of California, Santa Barbara), and, you know, where do college kids sleep on the property? Probably anywhere," he said.

The district, in the Santa Barbara neighborhood of Isla Vista, changed its assessment in 2013-14 to charge \$93.30 for every "room available for sleeping" within a home, according to Gutierrez' research. If you're wondering about the area surrounding the major universities in San Diego County, there are no Mello-Roos districts near San Diego State University, University of California San Diego or the University of San Diego. California State University San Marcos has several nearby Mello-Roos properties.

More commonly, Mello-Roos taxes are based on square footage or the property type, such as an apartment or senior housing.

inewsource first looked into Mello-Roos taxes in 2012 and 2013, focusing on the Poway Unified School District. That investigation uncovered questionable spending of special taxes by the school administration, such as renovations at the district offices and upgrades at non-Mello-Roos schools. ...

*Over the next several weeks and months inewsourc*e will dive into the data and stories surrounding MelloRoos. ... *We can't look into every single Mello-Roos district in the county, so we want to hear from you about questions or concerns at [melloroos@inewsourc.org](mailto:melloroos@inewsourc.org), or find us on [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#).*

**To see the video and the complete article please visit:**  
<http://www.cbs8.com/story/35710593/hed-special-property-tax-lacks-robust-oversight-accountability>

## The Untold Story Behind the Sweetwater Schools Scandal

June 26, 2017 | By Ashly McGlone | [voiceofsandiego.org](http://voiceofsandiego.org)

**EXCERPT:** *An investigation into the Sweetwater Union High School District superintendent eventually snowballed into a massive scandal that resulted in convictions for several school leaders and dominated the news for years. Missing from most of those stories was the small, devoted group of parents and community members who set the whole thing in motion.*

"The culture of the district was basically based on retaliation, intimidation. Those are the two words that I can think of," said former Sweetwater school board member Bertha Lopez.

Exactly six years have passed since Sweetwater schools superintendent Jesus Gandara was terminated at 2 a.m. on June 21, 2011 following seven hours of closed-door meetings.

...

An investigation of Gandara's activities, as well as the Sweetwater school board and contractors by the San Diego County District Attorney's Office would last a few years and end in various criminal charges, including felony bribery and conspiracy. A couple Sweetwater leaders landed behind bars.

... **To listen to the podcast:**

[The Untold Story Behind Sweetwater](#)

**To read complete article with links, please visit:**

<http://www.voiceofsandiego.org/topics/education/untold-story-behind-sweetwater-schools-scandal/>

### In This Issue

[Mello-Roos Special Property Tax Lacks Oversight](#)

[The Untold Story Behind the Sweetwater Schools Scandal](#)

[Archived Newsletters](#)

2017 6th Annual CaLBOC Conference  
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[ISSUE 112 - June 1, 2017](#)  
Alum Rock Bond Review  
\* School Bond Watchdogs

[ISSUE 111 - April 21, 2017](#)  
Field Turf & 1,000 lbs Glue  
\* Conference Agenda

[ISSUE 110 - April 18, 2017](#)  
Alum Rock, Non-existent Construction?

[ISSUE 109 - April 12, 2017](#)  
Conference Keynote Speaker

[ISSUE 108 - March 16 2017](#)  
Little Hoover Commission Report Flaws in Oversight

[ISSUE 107 - March 1, 2017](#)  
Little Hoover Commission Report \* San Diego USD

[ISSUE 106 - Feb .15, 2017](#)  
San Dieguito UHSD Cancels Contracts \* Gov Brown Wants to Selling Bonds

[ISSUE 105 - Jan. 25, 2016](#)  
WCUSD Tough Choices as Bond Money Runs Out \* Gov. Brown Can \$9 Billion Bond Can be Divvied Up Equitably

### 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.

[www.CaLBOC.com](http://www.CaLBOC.com)California League of Bond Oversight Committees - [calboc@mail.com](mailto:calboc@mail.com)