



May 30, 2014

ISSUE 57



### West Contra Costa USD Revises CBOC's Agenda

## Bond Oversight Committee 'Mad as Hell'

May 22, 2014 | By Theresa Harrington | [www.ContraCostaTimes.com](http://www.ContraCostaTimes.com)

**EXCERPT:** ...The presentation did not provide any information on total assessed property values in the district or other information the committee needed to make an informed decision. And some committee members complained that the last-minute presentation appeared to be aimed at fulfilling a state requirement that the district "consult" with community members before submitting the application, but they denied that any "consultation" had taken place and refused to rubber-stamp the plan. ...

**To see the complete article & videos links, please visit:**

[www.contracostatimes.com/richmond/ci\\_25817708/west-contra-costa-districts-bond-oversight-committee-mad](http://www.contracostatimes.com/richmond/ci_25817708/west-contra-costa-districts-bond-oversight-committee-mad)

### West Contra Costa USD - Support for Kids or 'Pay to Play'

## School Bond Program Draws Massive Campaign Spending by Contract Recipients

May 24, 2014 | By Robert Rogers | [www.ContraCostaTimes.com](http://www.ContraCostaTimes.com)

**EXCERPT:** RICHMOND -- Roughly \$2.8 million has poured into campaigns to pass West Contra Costa school district bond measures since 2002, the bulk from groups that have benefited from the massive taxpayer-funded construction projects that the successful ballot measures have unleashed, according to an analysis of campaign finance records by this newspaper.

The bulk of the contributions have come from construction companies, architectural firms and organized labor, groups that have been heavily involved in building and renovating dozens of schools throughout the district thanks to the \$1.44 billion the measures have freed up since 2002. If voters approve Measure H, a \$270 million proposal on the June 3 ballot, it would be the seventh bond for school construction in the district passed since 1998. ...

Campaign finance records available from the office date back only to 2002, so it is unclear how much money was spent to support the first two bond measures passed in 1998 and 2000.

But the cash volume into the campaign committee appears to be unprecedented for school bond campaigns in Contra Costa County. Election services specialist Olga Hernandez said the office was unaware of any other campaign finance committee for school bonds with contribution totals approaching those [For the Children of West County](#). ...

The Seville Group Inc., a Pasadena-based construction-management firm that has overseen the bond-funded school building projects, has pumped about \$250,000 into the campaign committee, according to campaign finance records. WLC Architects, based in Rancho Cucamonga, has contributed more than \$361,000. The school district has not provided records requested by this newspaper on how much money the two firms have made from the bond program.

SGI has also contributed to political campaigns backing Ramsey -- for his current run for mayor of Richmond and an unsuccessful 2002 bid for Assembly but not for his school board campaigns -- and school board member Madeline Kronenberg. WLC also has been a major donor to Kronenberg's campaigns. The two board members run the powerful Facilities Subcommittee, which approves construction cost increases and makes contract recommendations to the full board. ...

SGI has a checkered history, including at least 19 violations of Fair Political Practices Commission rules and charges that it wined and dined school district officials in San Diego to score lucrative contracts. ...

Ramsey acknowledged that district staff recently recommended switching from SGI to a different firm, which had a lower bid, for part of the construction-management job during hearings last year. But the board opted to disregard staff advice. ... *Staff writer Theresa Harrington contributed to this report.*

**To read the complete article, please visit:**

[http://www.contracostatimes.com/west-county-times/ci\\_25829799/west-contra-costa-school-bond-program-draws-massive](http://www.contracostatimes.com/west-county-times/ci_25829799/west-contra-costa-school-bond-program-draws-massive)

### West Contra Costa Unified School District - 7th Bond Measure

## Pricy School Construction Spending Draws Scrutiny in Bond Measure

May 25, 2014 | By Theresa Harrington | [www.ContraCostaTimes.com](http://www.ContraCostaTimes.com)

**EXCERPT:** ...The free-spending school district builds at will, proud of a \$1.6 billion program that gives school communities everything they want -- including large theaters, swimming pools and dental clinics -- at costs that appear to far exceed the norm in other districts.

And on June 3, the district is going hat in hand once more to district residents, some of the poorest in the county, seeking another \$270 million for such basic upgrades as removing asbestos and repairing overloaded wiring, as well as for renovating and replacing schools, including some that had been marked for possible closure due to declining enrollment.

But this year's request comes as significant opposition to the district's spending habits -- and the secrecy with which it shrouds them -- is beginning to bubble. This time around, the district is asking residents in Richmond, El Cerrito, El Sobrante, Hercules, Kensington, Pinole and San Pablo for more, even though it has not yet spent \$600 million from earlier bonds and it won't provide details of how previous bond money has been spent....

District staff failed to provide much of the detailed financial records of costs associated with the bond contracts in response to numerous requests from this newspaper and the public. But a review of publicly available data appears to show that West Contra Costa -- with more than 50 schools and about 30,000 students -- spends far more than many other districts on school construction.

School construction cost expert Paul Abramson, who creates an annual school construction report comparing costs nationwide and regionally, found the average new high school in the region that includes California cost about \$43.5 million for about 1,250 students, approximately \$321 a square foot, in 2013.

But in the West Contra Costa district, projected costs for 1,300-student Pinole Valley High, which is slated to be rebuilt over the next four years, have skyrocketed far beyond that. In January, Fay told the oversight committee the school would cost \$200 million, more than four times the state average. By Wednesday, his estimate had increased to \$250 million, including "soft costs" for architects and other services, or about 93 percent of the \$270 million that voters are being asked to approve for Measure H. ...

*Staff writer Robert Rogers contributed to this report.*

**To read the complete article please visit:**

[contracostatimes.com/ci\\_25829237/west-contra-costa-district-wants-voters-pass-seventh](http://contracostatimes.com/ci_25829237/west-contra-costa-district-wants-voters-pass-seventh)

[Audio: West Contra Costa schools official explains "scope" budgeting for projects](#)

### In This Issue

[CBOC 'Mad as Hell'](#)

[Support for Kids or 'Pay to Play'](#)

[Pricey School Construction](#)

[Pay to Play in School Bond Measures Presentation](#)

[Mission Statement](#)

[Archived Newsletters](#)

[Join Our Mailing List!](#)

CaLBOC May 9, 2014 Conference Presentation

Pay to Play in School Bond Measures

What it is and Why it is Wrong

[2014CaLBOC\\_PaytoPlay.pdf](#)

Presented by Lori Raineri of Government Financial Strategies, GFS

### San Diego Grand Jury

Sweetwater & Southwestern - South County transcripts -

By Ricky Young

[www.utsandiego.com](http://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](http://utsandiego.com/news/2013/jun/17/south-county-grand-jury-transcripts-compiled)

### INDEX:

[GJ\\_Index.pdf](#)

### 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.

### Archived Newsletters

To view all with topics visit:

[calboc.org/reviews.html](http://calboc.org/reviews.html)

[ISSUE 56 - May 6, 2014](#)

[ISSUE 55 - May 1, 2014](#)

[ISSUE 54 - April 29, 2014](#)

[ISSUE 53 - April 21, 2014](#)

[ISSUE 52 - April 10, 2014](#)

[ISSUE 51 - Dec. 17, 2013](#)

[ISSUE 50 -- Nov. 7, 2013](#)

[ISSUE 49 - Oct. 7, 2013](#)

[ISSUE 48 - Sept. 5, 2013](#)

[ISSUE 47 - July 9, 2013](#)

[ISSUE 46 - May 31, 2013](#)

[ISSUE 45 - May 6, 2013](#)

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