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ISSUE 62



Ex-Sweetwater chief, Convicted in Pay-to-Play Scandal Ex-Schools Chief Must Forfeit Pension

Sept. 5, 2014 | Jeff McDonald & Ashly McGlone | www.utsandiego.com

EXCERPT: ... Disgraced former Sweetwater schools Superintendent Jesus Gandara has been forced to forfeit more than \$65,000 in retirement benefits accrued during the years he oversaw a widespread pay-to-play culture that landed him behind bars this past June. ...

Gandara, 57, admitted to taking \$4,500 in gifts from contractor Rene Flores in 2008 - more than 10 times the \$420 amount allowed under state law. ...

... Gandara was sentenced to seven months in county jail on June 27 for his ringleader role in the food-and-travel gifting scandal reported by U-T Watchdog as far back as 2010. He also received three years' probation, a \$7,994 fine and was ordered to serve 120 hours of community service. In total, the criminal investigation ensnared more than a dozen administrators and contractors and four of the five Sweetwater school board trustees.

Gandara is scheduled for formal release in late January, when his seven-month term expires. At that time, he will be eligible to return to Texas, where he relocated after he was fired in June 2011. **To read the complete article, visit:** www.utsandiego.com/news/2014/sep/05/tp-ex-schools-chief-must-forfeit-pension

Securities & Exchange Commission Subpoenas in WCCUSD Contracts Show School Board President, Not District, Client of Brother's Law Firm

Sept. 5, 2014 | By Theresa Harrington | www.contracostatimes.com

EXCERPT: RICHMOND - Contracts the West Contra Costa school board approved for legal fees related to a Securities and Exchange Commission subpoena received by board President Charles Ramsey reveal that his brother's firm may not disclose information gathered to the district.

"Although there is currently an agreement that the firm's fees and expenses in this matter will be paid and advanced by the West Contra Costa Unified School District, this agreement confirms that Charles Ramsey (and not the district) is our firm's client in connection with this matter," an Aug. 5 engagement agreement with Ramsey Erlich Attorneys at Law signed by Charles Ramsey states. Ramsey's brother, Ismail Ramsey, is a partner in the law firm. ...

An initial amount of \$18,000 was crossed out in the district contract and replaced with \$150,000. Boilerplate language requiring the firm to indemnify the district and to maintain general liability insurance was also crossed out, along with a clause that would have granted the district ownership of all documents produced. ...

In addition, the board agreed to pay F1 Discovery, which was hired by Ismail Ramsey's firm to collect documents in response to the subpoena, \$10,000 for work through June 30, 2015. Language assigning ownership of the documents to the district was also crossed out of this contract, which noted that Ismail Ramsey's firm "is trying to get the SEC to agree to new terms, thus reducing this volume."

Charles Ramsey received the subpoena in connection with an SEC investigation into the district's construction bond financing. The district, Contra Costa County treasurer, the district's finance team and some of its consultants and advisers also received subpoenas. **To read complete article with links to contracts, please visit:** http://www.contracostatimes.com/contra-costa-times/ci_26479625/richmond-contracts-show-school-board-president-not-district
Ramsey Ehrlich LLP Contract PDF: calboc.org/docs/RamseyEhrlichRedact.pdf

'Enhanced' Audit Approved for West Contra Costa District's Bond Program

Sept. 4, 2014 | By Rick Radin | www.contracostatimes.com

EXCERPT: RICHMOND - The chairwoman of a citizens committee in charge of overseeing the West Contra Costa school district's \$1.6 billion bond program this week cheered an "enhanced" performance audit planned for the district's massive bond construction program.

Ivette Ricco, chair of the district's Citizens Bond Oversight Committee, said at Wednesday night's school board meeting that negotiations with Superintendent Bruce Weder over the audit had produced an agreement to "bridge the gap between the district and the committee."

The CBOC has complained consistently that it needs more and better information about spending on school construction to do its job properly.

West Contra Costa has spent about \$1 billion on building new schools and refurbishing older schools out of the \$1.6 billion authorized under six bond measures passed since 1998. A seventh measure, Measure H, was rejected by district voters in June. The board on Wednesday selected a firm to perform the audit, with the scope to be finalized after the oversight committee reviews the contract.

"Thank you for getting this right," Ricco said. "Let's put an end to the arm wrestling. The future of the bond program might depend on this."

The audit, to be performed by the Pleasanton office of Vavrinek, Trine, Day & Co., will be completed by the end of November, giving the CBOC and the district months to review it before the March 21 reporting deadline, said Terri Montgomery, the company's office managing partner.

Under questioning from board President Charles Ramsey, Montgomery said the audit will scrutinize closely such issues as cost adjustments with school construction contractors, known as change orders. ...

To read complete article, please visit: http://www.contracostatimes.com/contra-costa-times/ci_26468473/enhanced-audit-approved-west-contra-costa-school-districts

Legislative Update - AB 2235

State School Bond Not on November Ballot

August 21, 2014 | By Luke Money | www.signalscv.com

EXCERPT: ... A statewide school facilities bond will not be on the November ballot due to a lack of support from the governor, its sponsors said this week. ...

... Assemblywoman Joan Buchanan, D-Alamo, said that her legislation, Assembly Bill 2235, will be moved to the state Senate inactive file despite having wide support as it moved through the state Legislature. But Buchanan said the bill did have one notable detractor: Democratic Gov. Jerry Brown. ...

Assemblyman Curt Hagman, R-Chino Hills, criticized Brown's decision not to support a school facilities bond. "The governor has made it clear since the beginning that he only wanted to focus on one issue at a time," said Hagman in a statement. "First, it was his ill-conceived high-speed rail plan; then it was the water bond. "However, now that we have successfully passed the water bond and Governor Brown has finally turned his attention to the school facilities bond, he has chosen to neglect the needs of our students that are suffering from having to learn in overcrowded and dilapidated schools," Hagman continued.

Brown's position not to support the bond came "even though it has received unanimous support throughout the legislative process," Hagman said. ...

To read the complete article, please visit Santa Clarita Valley News:

<http://www.signalscv.com/m/section/36/article/126418/>

To see Legislative bill and updates please visit:

leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201320140AB2235

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CaLBOC

Board Meetings:

Nov. 8, 2014, Friday
Feb. 13, 2015, Friday
May 7, 2015, Thursday

CaLBOC Annual
Statewide Conference:
May 8, 2015, Friday

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

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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San Diego Grand Jury

Sweetwater & Southwestern
- South County transcripts -
www.utsandiego.com

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

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