

SOLANO COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT  
GOVERNING BOARD

UNADOPTED MINUTES

Special Meeting

January 7, 2009

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5. COMMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Board President Young recognized Ms. Maureen Bates, employee of Solano College, and citizen of Vallejo, who requested to comment on the state of the College.

“My name is Maureen Bates, and I am an employee at Solano Community College and a citizen of Vallejo. My friends and neighbors are the people that elected two of you to this Board. These same citizens were instrumental in passing Measure G. They ask me, ‘What is happening at YOUR college?’ They see a Board divided and I don’t know how to answer their question. How do you answer your constituents on the state of the College? The citizens of Solano County deserve the great college that I know SCC can be. And that will take teamwork.

I work in a small department with a small budget. When a program is counting pennies like we do, an updated budget is mandatory in order to run the program efficiently. We need to know where we stand at all times. This has not been the case in the recent past. How can a program function without accurate up-to-date information? Although I know most employees in Fiscal Services work very hard, ultimately someone is responsible to report accurate and timely fiscal information to the College.

Most of the employees spend more time here than with their families. The environment we work in has been toxic at times. Although I can only speak for myself, the climate is beginning to change for the better. Students recognize it, and employees recognize it. I would like to thank the Board for appointing Dr. Lisa Waits as Interim Superintendent/President. Morale is better and confidence in the executive team is rising. Part of this is due to Dr. Waits’ leadership style. Trust is established when there is communication and transparency at the top levels of administration.

I have worked with Dr. Waits on several occasions. I have no doubt that she places the student first. Before any suggestion is entertained, she asks, ‘How is this going to impact our students? How will this benefit our students? How does this help serve our students?’ Our students are always her number one priority. They must be the number one priority of everyone associated with Solano College.

I attend the Student Services Institute that she (Dr. Waits) was instrumental in bringing to the College. I learned many valuable lessons that I have been able to use in my interaction with students. One message will always stay with me. Dr. Waits told us that no matter what position we hold at Solano, we are all able to educate our students.

Is it not 2009, a time for new beginnings? We are searching for a permanent Superintendent/President. In the meantime, I hope the Board will put aside any personal issues or agendas and concentrate on the future and solidarity of Solano College. I

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believe the appointment of Dr. Waits to the Interim Superintendent/President position was a positive move that ensures leadership and stability to a campus in crisis.”

Board President Young thanked Ms. Bates for her comments.

Board President Young recognized Ms. Mary Ellen Murphy, CSEA member and Benicia voter, who requested to comment on accreditation and the rumored release of Interim Superintendent/President Waits.

“There is a saying that you can’t teach an old dog new tricks and I am hoping, perhaps beyond hope, that tonight we will prove that adage wrong. To do so, we need to step back, take a deep breath, and recap.

In the past five years, Solano College has had three Superintendent/Presidents, three Chief Business Officers, five Human Resources Directors, four Vice Presidents of Student Services, and five Vice Presidents of Academic Affairs. This has led us to the distinct possibility of being placed on either probation or probation with cause by the Accreditation Committee. This is such a severe situation that the newly appointed California Community College Chancellor, Dr. Jack Scott, felt the need to come and address this Board of Trustees. His message was very clear—at least to those of us in the audience. In fact, Chancellor Scott took the time to approach me afterwards and thank me for a ‘very good speech in support of your (our) Superintendent’s efforts.’ I believe that sends a very clear message as well. Obviously, the folks in the Chancellor’s Office who have been working with Dr. Waits in the past couple of months have been impressed with her efforts too.

He (Dr. Scott) and we understand what I fear you Trustees do not. You have all been sworn to serve the public, the students, and institution of Solano College. You are not here to serve your own needs, wants, and desires—nor the needs, wants and desires of your personal friends or political agendas. Right now we are at a critical crossroads. We, as an institution, need stability. We currently have that in Dr. Waits. In two and one-half months, she has made tremendous strides on our path toward redemption, if you will.

Should you proceed in what is rumored to be the removal of Dr. Waits tonight, then you have not only sealed the fate of Solano College, but your own as well. You will have ignored the warnings of the Chancellor himself and the Accreditation Committee. To remove Dr. Waits right before the scheduled accreditation visit would be like a slap to their faces. It would come as no surprise then that the Chancellor would have no choice but to appoint the Super Trustee, as in the Compton model. In that scenario, you, the Trustees, would be stripped of all power.

We do not need to repeat the history of the past five years. It’s time for you to learn a new trick and not mess with something that’s finally working.”

President Young thanked Ms. Murphy for her comments.

Board President Young recognized Ms. Monica Brown, resident and parent, who requested to comment on the resolution before the Board in support of a Special Trustee. Ms. Brown’s comments were deferred to later on the agenda.

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Ms. Tara Norman, student from Solano College, was recognized by Board President Young. Ms. Norman addressed the Board on behalf of students acknowledging the difference Dr. Waits has made in support of students since stepping into the position of Interim Superintendent/President during questionable times. Three students stood with Ms. Norman in support of her comments before the Board.

“I have been involved with many student programs offered by our College and was a former student advocate for the ASSC. I am here tonight with other students to say we like the changes that are being made, for example, Dr. Waits stepping into the position during these questionable times. I am excited to see her make a difference, and she has made improvements in my eyes.

I would like to ask that when making choices for our College that you please put aside political or personal insights and think of the students that make this College their educational institution.

This is so important to me that I had to get two separate sitters for my small child to be here this evening.”

President Young thanked Ms. Norman for her comments.

Board President Young called upon Ms. Diane Rieschick, a Benicia resident, who requested to make comment on the current affairs of Solano College.

Ms. Rieschick, an alumnus of Solano College, was enrolled at Solano in 1972. Mr. Bill Thurston was one of her instructors and stated she is very concerned about the situation at the College. Ms. Rieschick has been active in educational matters and volunteers in the Benicia area. Ms. Rieschick indicated that she and her friends voted for Mrs. Thurston this last election because they thought her platform represented change and further stated she hopes Mrs. Thurston does not let them down. When Ms. Rieschick was a student at the College, there was no question that the units would count. “We have to make sure that the students who are enrolled today and the ones to come in the next few semesters have that same honor and privilege,” she said. The Board must set this matter straight and make things right. “If you fail to make things right,” she said, “and I am heartened by what I have heard in the last few days—it appears we are headed in the right direction—but, should you fail to be accountable to the citizens, then they can and should take action at the ballot box.”

Board President Young thanked Ms. Rieschick for her comments.

Board President Young recognized Trustee Claffey who requested to speak on Items from the Board. Trustee Claffey’s comments were deferred to later on the agenda.

Board President Young recognized Ms. Monica Brown, who requested earlier to speak on the resolution in support of a special trustee.

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Ms. Brown began by stating she is always promoting higher education. She is an educator, her daughter is finishing up at Solano, and her son will be enrolling at Solano in one and a half years. The family goes to community college and then on to higher education. Ms. Brown stated it is appalling to her that this matter of a special trustee must be addressed, and asked the Board, “what on God’s green earth has happened?” At the December 17<sup>th</sup> Board meeting, the College was compared to Compton and Lassen Colleges. “I thought we were better,” she said. “We are Solano County. Somewhere along the way something happened. I am not happy about it. I am not happy that I am promoting Solano Community College instead of DVC and Napa College. Word is going to get out—‘why are we going to come here?’” Ms. Brown stated that we passed a Bond measure, and we are improving our facilities, and no one will want to come here. Maybe this resolution is moving us in the right direction. Ms. Brown was unclear how long the special trustee would be at Solano and asked, as a member of the public, if she would hear everything that is going on and if there would be input from the public. Ms. Brown concluded her comments by stating, “As an educator, I am embarrassed.”

Board President Young thanked Ms. Brown for her comments.