



~~August 16, 2013~~

SEPT. 7, 2013

Mr. Joe Hurd  
Bullis Charter School  
102 W. Portola Avenue  
Los Altos, CA 94024

Dear Joe,

Thanks for the note. I can assure you that there is no gamesmanship involved. On August 6th when you, Mark Goines, Peter Evans, and I discussed how we might explore the BCS concerns, I raised the issue that the District's interest is in developing a long term solution. I expressed the concern that the long term solution must be part of the discussion. The short term accommodations from BCS would have significant impact on LASD students and the broader community. We can work together to convince the public that is OK, if we are simultaneously presenting them with a viable long-term solution. In direct response to my request, you personally proposed alternating the meeting schedule (short term/ long term/ short term/ long term). That made sense, because it allows both parties to understand that their objectives are being met. The District has been very clear that our willingness to reopen the 2013-14 facilities offer is, in fact, contingent on the BCS willingness to work with us on steps necessary to facilitate passing a bond and solving this problem for the long term. Despite the BCS request to put the first two "short term" meetings first, the District remains committed to the overall framework of considering both the short term and the long term needs as a package. But we have agreed to a series of 6 meetings – two short term meetings, followed by a one week break requested by BCS, followed by 3 long term meetings, followed by one more short term meeting. Expecting an outcome before the full series of meetings is premature. We have always indicated that our willingness to entertain the short term enhancements requested by BCS is directly tied to BCS's willingness to work with us to achieve passage of a bond to build a new school for BCS.

You've frequently spoken of "trust" and observed that the level of trust between our respective organizations is very low. I agree with you. It's an unfortunate byproduct of where we are in the relationship, but we have a

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chance to rebuild that trust. One of the ways to do that is we both take small steps together. Neither party is willing to take a giant leap of faith on their own, so the path to building trust is that we both put our needs on the table, and then see if each side is willing to “give” a little bit to “get” something in return. BCS seems to be asking the District to take concrete steps to solve the BCS short term concerns while asking us to “trust” that the long term will fall into place. That’s a leap I don’t think we are ready to make. It’s actually why we four agreed to a parallel process- both sides will get their needs on the table and addressed at the same time.

The District Trustees did meet in closed session this week, and we did discuss this as part of the ongoing litigation. My personal take is that it seems like we might be able to address many/ most of your requests. Clearly we still have to follow the process. We can’t skip over steps in CEQA, but we are making forward motion. As an example, the District has already begun taking student counts at both sites. I understand from other correspondence that BCS has taken umbrage to this, but we’re just trying to get out in front and make some progress. As Ken’s letter yesterday notes, Mark Goines has also followed up with you about additional specific information requested by our CEQA consultant. Again, though, making short term concessions that would negatively affect District students and the surrounding community impacts our ability to pass a bond and build a new site. If the District is to consider that, we need to understand that BCS is also willing to take concrete actions to help us with that bond.

I planned to spend Tuesday’s meeting discussing the community comments and concerns we have received. From there, we hope to discuss ways to collaborate to address those concerns to improve the chances of passing a bond. There’s not a lot of radical new content- but we’ve applied a lot of thought and careful consideration to how the District and BCS might collaborate in a manner that is respectful of the program BCS has been building while balancing that with the broad concerns raised by community members and the SCCBOE. It is our belief that the District and LASD could work together to make minor adjustments that would help BCS to address these concerns. Some of our ideas build on discussions I’ve previously had with BCS Board members. In other areas, we’ll need to brainstorm new approaches together. But we believe that we could collectively come up with ways to help assuage the community’s concerns and meet our respective long term goals. That, in turn, would make it much easier to convince the public that the short term trade-offs are worth the impact.

The devil is in the details for all of this. If it is helpful, the District is prepared to draft a document that lays out our suggests of what we can do to meet the BCS short term asks as well as some suggesting on the longer term items. This step – creating the final language- is the step at which we collectively stumbled last spring. By starting from a draft document, we’ll eliminate the possibility of mis-steps and we can resolve the concerns directly. Please let me know if this is acceptable, as we will need to work quickly to develop such a draft.

The District remains extremely committed to this process. We believe, as I said back in August, that we are on the precipice of an agreement between both organizations that could finally lay to rest a decade of community strife. That's a lot of work to be done to get to the finish, but it is within our reach. I look forward to seeing BCS at the long term negotiating sessions, so that we can continue to make good progress and ultimately solve this problem.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'DS' with a stylized flourish.

Doug Smith  
President,  
Los Altos School District Board of Trustees