



City of Malibu

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November 2, 2020

Sent via Email to BDrati@smmusd.org

Dr. Ben Drati, Superintendent
Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District
1651 16th Street
Santa Monica, CA 90404

RE: Petition for Unification of a Malibu Unified School District

Dear Dr. Drati:

We are in receipt of your [letter](#) dated October 28, 2020, in which you express disappointment “in what appears to be a retreat to a position [you] thought we had all moved beyond in our discussions.” We understand and share your disappointment, but let’s take a moment to correct the record for those who have only recently been apprised of our progress.

First, your October 28th letter was the first correspondence we have received from Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District (“District” or “SMMUSD”), despite our two attempts to engage in dialogue with the District on remaining terms material to our negotiated agreement. In both our letters of [April 21, 2020](#) and [June 1, 2020](#), we asked the District to clarify its position on (1) the parcel tax special legislation, and (2) the City’s proposal to revisit the redistribution of Malibu property taxes to the Santa Monica community after the 50-year term of the negotiated agreement had expired. We never heard back from the District about either issue, so it seems a bit disingenuous to claim that the City “abandoned our collaboration.”

Second, as you are fully aware, the City asked for time to have a third-party review the District’s financial projections and methodology since the District claimed that its methodology was the only way to accomplish two feasible and independent school districts in the Santa Monica and Malibu communities. We made it clear in both our April 21, 2020 and our June 1, 2020, correspondence that we intended to brief the Malibu City Council before sharing the findings of our review with the District. We knew there would be incredible interest by Malibu residents and we hoped that in-person meetings would resume after the summer. When we realized that in-person meetings were further out than anticipated, we chose to brief the Council on October 12, 2020 during a virtual meeting to facilitate meaningful input from Malibu residents. We followed that Council meeting with a Town Hall meeting that took place on October 28, 2020, further affording Malibu residents an opportunity to ask questions and be heard on the issue of school separation. All of these meetings and briefings have been public and completely transparent.



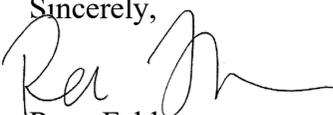
Third, your statements about the presentation shown at the Malibu City Council meeting are misleading, and your link omitted the [entire presentation](#). It is correct that per pupil funding for the two future school districts will not be the same, but that is the case across all of the school districts in the State. On a per pupil basis, the two new school districts will end up with higher per pupil funding than the current SMMUSD because, in addition to the general property taxes, the Santa Monica-generated local taxes (i.e., sales taxes, parcel taxes, joint use, and redevelopment taxes) will all remain with the future Santa Monica USD, boosting their funding far above the average per pupil funding in districts with far less community support. Even with this reality, we tried for two years to come to a reasonable solution that provided the future Santa Monica USD with additional property tax revenue from the Malibu community in an effort to create a form of equity. However, the District refused to consider any methodology that did not result in a permanent redistribution of Malibu property taxes – a formula that could have totaled \$4 billion over the proposed 50-year term. This is not an acceptable solution for Malibu residents, as reflected in the City Council’s October 12th action.

Finally, the City has always been and remains interested in a thoughtful and strategic plan that will allow for the successful creation of two new school districts. In fact, we understood that one impediment to reaching an agreement was the need to resolve how both new districts would be able to retain their respective parcel taxes, as detailed in your letter dated September 11, 2019. As the parties agreed during negotiations, the City approved a [formal declaration](#) supporting special legislation to preserve the Measure R parcel tax. However, to the City’s surprise, the District’s Board declined to approve a formal declaration supporting the special legislation at its March 5, 2020 Board meeting after Board President Kean discouraged the declaration. This was one of the final demonstrations by the District that it was not being forthcoming during our negotiations, thereby prompting the City Council’s October 12th action.

The City Council and the residents of Malibu remain committed to an independent and locally controlled Malibu Unified School District. Even though the path of a negotiated agreement did not work, the City still hopes that the District will cooperate as the City pursues its Petition for Reorganization through the LACOE County Committee. In this spirit of cooperation, we ask that you forward our letter to the entities identified below to whom your October 28, 2020 letter was addressed and whose exact identities cannot easily be determined by the City (see list labeled “cc from SMMUSD”). Alternatively, we can request a copy of the distribution list under the California Public Records Act. Please confirm when you have completed this transmission.

Obviously, we all agree it is the interest of both communities to allow for the successful creation of two new school districts. We look forward to working with the District to accomplish this.

Sincerely,


Reva Feldman
City Manager



cc: Mayor Farrer and Honorable Members of the Malibu City Council
Honorable Henry Stern, California State Senate, 27th District
Honorable Ben Allen, California State Senate, 26th District
Honorable Richard Bloom, California State Assembly, 50th District
Honorable Sheila Kuehl, Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, 3rd District
Mayor Kevin McKeown and Honorable Members of the Santa Monica City Council
Honorable Members of the SMMUSD Board of Education
Dr. Allison Deegan, Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE)
Lane Dilg, Interim City Manager, City of Santa Monica
George Cardona, Interim City Attorney, City of Santa Monica
Kasey Earnest, Executive Director, Malibu Boys & Girls Club
Craig Foster, President, Advocates for Malibu Public Schools (AMPS)
Malibu Facility District Advisory Committee (M-FDAC)
Laurel Rosen, President/CEO, Santa Monica Chamber of Commerce
Santa Monicans for Renter's Rights
Max Arias, Executive Director, Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 99
Sarah Braff, President, Santa Monica-Malibu Classroom Teachers Association (SMMCTA)
Linda Greenburg, Executive Director, Santa Monica Education Foundation
Gabrielle Cohen, President, Santa Monica-Malibu PTA (SMMPTA) Council
City of Malibu Media

cc from SMMUSD:
SMMUSD Parents
SMMUSD Staff
SMMUSD Financial Oversight Committee
Santa Monica Facility District Advisory Committee (SM-FDAC)
SMMUSD District Advisory Committees/DELAC
SMMUSD Community Email List
Samohi Puente
AAPSSG
Media

