



City of Malibu News

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City Council Unanimously Votes to Move Forward with the City's Petition for Unification of a Malibu Unified School District

(Malibu CA) – On October 12, 2020, the Malibu City Council voted unanimously to reinstate the City's petition for unification of a Malibu Unified School District to the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) Committee on School District Organization.

"Having sent our children to local Malibu schools, this issue could not be more dear to our hearts. We are disappointed in the SMMUSD negotiations but are encouraged by the work that has been done and are very excited to be moving the City's petition for unification of a Malibu Unified School District forward," said Councilmember Karen Farrer and Councilmember Rick Mullen, members of the City's School District Separation Ad Hoc Committee.

Malibu families have long advocated for separation from the Santa Monica Malibu Unified School District (SMMUSD) citing inequities between the educational opportunities offered in Santa Monica and Malibu and an overwhelming desire for local control over their children's education among other concerns.

To address residents' concerns and support the community's efforts for local control, the City Council has established school district separation as one of the Council's top three priorities under public safety and Woolsey Fire Rebuild for the last two years.

On August 28, 2017, the Council directed the City Manager to submit the petition to the Los Angeles County Committee on School District Organization as authorized by City Council Resolution No. 15-60.

On April 9, 2018, after communication with SMMUSD, the Council directed staff to send a letter to LACOE requesting formal acceptance of the City's petition and suspension of the petition pending the outcome of negotiation efforts with SMMUSD.

Councilmembers Karen Farrer and Rick Mullen who currently serve on the City's School District Separation Ad Hoc Committee and have been overseeing the negotiations with SMMUSD presented an update on the status of the negotiations along with the City's financial consultants at the October 12 Council Meeting.

The Ad Hoc Committee reported that negotiations on the financial arrangements of the separation have stalled. Councilmember Mullen explained how the City diligently pursued special legislation to secure the continuation of the existing Measure R parcel tax as SMMUSD asserted that successful negotiations were contingent upon its continuance. Despite the City's best efforts to secure the parcel tax that SMMUSD had identified as a prerequisite to the successful negotiation, the SMMUSD Board of Education considered and rejected a formal declaration of its

support of the special legislation in support of the parcel tax funding measure at its Board Meeting on March 5, 2020.

The City's consultant team, who have been analyzing SMMUSD's financial proposals, presented a summary of their findings. Their findings show that SMMUSD's proposal that a portion of Malibu's property tax base be permanently redistributed to the proposed Santa Monica School District is not necessary to make both the Santa Monica Unified School District and the Malibu Unified District whole nor is it within the state guidelines on school district separation.

At the recommendation of Councilmembers Farrer and Mullen, the City Council voted unanimously to move forward with the City's petition. As Council directed, the City will begin to prepare the reports necessary to advance the City's petition through the LACOE Committee on School District Organization (County Committee) process. If approved by the County Committee, the City's petition will have to be ratified by the State Department of Education.

The School District Separation Ad Hoc Committee will continue to provide updates on the City's petition for school petition for unification of a Malibu Unified School District at future Council Meetings. Video of the October 12 Meeting is available online at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ildumXb_kqM.

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