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School Board Approves 2009/2010 District Budget

By Jesse Blake McCann

A dark cloud hung over the El Segundo Board of Education on Tuesday as it approved the El Segundo Unified School District's 2009/2010 fiscal year budget. It has not been an easy year for the District to balance the budget and it does not look like the future holds any comfort.

The 156-page budget document represents five months of work and details how the District will balance its budget for the 2009/2010 school year and for the next two years. It contains topics about the budget the Board covered at passed meetings.

School districts across the state are being forced to make cuts due to the state deficit. "Great uncertainty and a lack of decision making at the state level continues to cause significant challenges for the district," District Superintendent Geoff Yantz said.

Every district in the state is required to submit a balanced budget (for the next three school years) to the county at the end of the month of June. ESUSD enacted most of the reductions and cuts of two of the three phases it prepared to balance the budget.

Part of the difficulty the District experienced planning for next year's budget is the unknown State of California budget, which is not even finalized for this year. "School districts are still waiting for a final budget for the 2008/2009 school year with only eight days left in the fiscal year," Yantz said.

The Superintendent and the Board feel that revisions to the 2009/2010 budget will occur. According to the ESUSD's website, the District has 45 days after the State revises its own budget to resubmit a revised budget---if the State affects the District's financial status. The budget approved on Tuesday is based on the Governor's May revision proposal.

Before the Board approved the budget, Yantz read from a 1979 ESUSD directory and listed all the maintenance positions. The purpose of this was to compare time periods and show where the District was with its employee elimination process today. He listed off about 18 maintenance positions in 1979, and said currently there are four maintenance workers in the District. In addition, Yantz said he and Board member Bill Watkins estimated there were 2,000 students in the District in 1979; today, he said, there are about 3,300 students with even more facilities. "It makes you want to tip your hat to our current employees," Yantz said.

Unfortunately, it does not seem like the budget situation will get better anytime soon. "This year has been an incredible challenge and I know that next year will present even further challenges," Yantz added. "We anticipate a steady decline of funding for the next several years that will force the district to make extremely difficult decisions."

Board Recognizes Retiring Facilities Coordinator Maybrit Evans

In happier news, Facilities Coordinator Maybrit Evans was recognized for her work and achievements to honor her retirement. Director of Human Resources and Maintenance

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Graduation 2009



Majella Gerber, Kelsey Nocket and Oriana Luquetta Photos by Marcy Dugan for more photos go to marcyduganphoto.com

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New Signs Point to Stronger Downtown

By Brian Simon

A long-standing plan to attract more patrons to El Segundo's downtown finally came to fruition on Monday as crews began installing the first group of 56 directional signs at strategic locations around the city. Designed by Manhattan Beach-based advertising and graphic design firm Ryder Communications Group and mounted to four-inch diameter aluminum poles or light poles, the signs incorporate white lettering with red, black and green backgrounds and follow approved City fonts. Downtown Committee Chair and Good Stuff owner Cris Bennett said he views the way-finding signs as the most critical component of the ongoing marketing and branding campaign to draw people to downtown.

Approved by the El Segundo City Council in May 2008 and funded (\$110,000) five months later, the plan calls for four "Welcome to Downtown El Segundo" signs, 43 directional signs and nine public parking signs. The welcome signs will be seen at four main entrances to downtown: Main Street at El Segundo Boulevard; Grand Avenue at Concord Street; Main Street at Mariposa Avenue; and Grand Avenue at Eucalyptus Street. Directional signs will be placed along Main, Sepulveda Boulevard and Vista del Mar running north and south; and along El Segundo Boulevard, Grand, Mariposa and Imperial Highway heading east and west.

The signs will direct traffic to Civic Center, Public Parking, Downtown, Police/Fire, Recreation Park and Library. Signs placed on busier thoroughfares (Sepulveda, Imperial, Vista del Mar) will be four-feet wide, with the rest set at three feet wide. The parking signs will be posted at the entrance of the four public parking lots, the parking structure in front of Cooke's Market, and the two parking lots next to Recreation Park.

The way-finding signs were just one idea that came out of Downtown El Segundo Committee (DESI) meetings. Established

many years ago through the El Segundo Chamber of Commerce, DESI suffered a bit of a lull in 2008 but has recently rebounded in its quest to promote the interests of the downtown area. Co-chaired by The Jewelry Source owner Brenda Newman and Industrial Lock & Key owner Elyse Rothstein, DESI meets every other month (the third Thursday at 8 a.m. at the Chamber). "We've been seeing better and better turnout at the meetings lately," said Newman. "We feel the directional signs will help bring more people to downtown. Our next goal is to keep those people coming back by enhancing what we already have to offer here."

Chief among DESI's enhancement ideas is to beautify the center of the City Hall Plaza. "It's nothing but concrete in the middle,"

explained Rothstein. "We would like to make more it user-friendly, maybe include a stage and have some shade. So we'd like to get a quote to see how much it will cost to do this and hopefully get Council approval in the future to move forward."

Another considerably less expensive idea being bandied about is to set up a downtown table or kiosk at the weekly farmer's market where different business owners can take turns helping it. In addition to promoting the individual businesses, the booth could also showcase downtown events and activities.

Fourth of July Coloring Contest Underway

Meanwhile, the Chamber has partnered with DESI on a brand new project currently in

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Looking Back at the El Segundo PTA Council's School Year

By Jesse Blake McCann

It's difficult to put a value on volunteer work, but Council Parent Teacher Association President Jenny Davies says it's well over a million dollars. The El Segundo PTA Council is required to report its volunteer hours to the National PTA, and the total number of hours this school year was 63,194. "If you multiply this by what the PTA state values the volunteer time, at \$20.94 per hour, then the total would be \$1,323,282.36," Davies explained. But she reminds us that the PTA does not pay for volunteers. "Therefore, we are pleased that so many individuals are willing to volunteer their time and energy for all of our schools within El Segundo," she said.

If the volunteer time shows anything, it's that the El Segundo PTA Council had a lot going on this school year. The El Segundo PTA Council is comprised of a group of parents who work with the local schools and devote time, money, and energy to the betterment of the El Segundo Unified School District. For example, they volunteer in classrooms and sponsor charity events. The Council consists of all four schools in the district.

In March, all of the District's PTAs, along with the schools and City of El Segundo, held the 17th Annual Run for Education, where they raised over \$25,000

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