

June 26, 2017

The Honorable Kelly V. Simmons
Marin County Superior Court
P.O. Box 4988
San Rafael, CA 94913-4988

Jay Hamilton-Roth, Foreperson
Marin County Civil Grand Jury
3501 Civic Center Drive, Room #275
San Rafael, CA 94903

Dear Judge Simmons and Mr. Hamilton-Roth:

The San Rafael City Schools (SRCS) Board of Education, together with Dr. Michael Watenpaugh, Superintendent, acknowledge the efforts of the 2016-2017 Marin County Civil Grand Jury for highlighting challenges with affordable housing in the greater Marin community, outlined in its report dated April 6, 2017, titled "Overcoming Barriers to Housing Affordability." Attached please find SRCS' response to the report, specifically to the recommendation (R4) that "Each school district should investigate building teacher and staff workforce housing on their land."

We appreciate that the Grand Jury recognizes that housing costs in Marin are a hindrance to recruiting and retaining the best-qualified teachers and staff for our schools. While Senate Bill 1413 paved the way for schools to establish and implement affordable workforce housing, research is currently underway to determine how to best approach a situation that requires land, financing and property management.

Thank you for your continued interest in and support of our public schools.

Sincerely,

Michael Watenpaugh, Ed.D.
District Superintendent

Rachel Kertz
Board of Education President

Response from San Rafael City Schools
To
“Overcoming Barriers to Housing Affordability”
2016-2017 Marin County Civil Grand Jury Report

R4:

Each school district should investigate building teacher and staff workforce housing on their land.

Response:

The recommendation has been implemented as a collaborative effort of all school districts in Marin County, including San Rafael City Schools (SRCS).

Workforce housing is a complex issue with many significant factors to consider, but it does have the potential to benefit all school districts in our county. Given this, it was prudent for area school districts to collaborate to research, identify options and potentially implement a system that would be successful for all stakeholders.

In 2009, the Efficiency and Effectiveness Task Force (EE), which includes local superintendents, school district board members and the Marin County Office of Education, was established to identify ways in which the schools and agencies could work together to be more effective and efficient in their daily operations. SRCS has had leadership and representation on this important task force. Additionally, a SRCS trustee was co-chair of the EE during the 2016-17 school year. Over the past year, the EE has made the topic of affordable housing a priority and is currently investigating this issue through a variety of methods, including:

- Developing an inventory of currently available property,
- Surveying teachers and staff to determine the level of interest/need,
- Reviewing unique financing options available, and
- Reviewing successful efforts elsewhere in the state.

In addition, the EE hired a consultant to develop a realistic cost estimate for providing workforce housing for education employees, including the alternatives of building on currently owned land or purchasing an existing multi-unit facility. Such possibilities exist under Senate Bill 1413, which was signed in 2016.

The work of the EE will continue into the 2017-2018 school year and SRCS looks forward to continuing to participate.

Ultimately, the local Boards of Education, superintendents, and the entire school community will need to engage with the issues if we are to be successful. Local elected officials and governmental bodies (city councils, planning commissions, county government, etc.) are also critical to the process and must be involved.