

# MDUSD MONDAY MEMO

A Weekly Update of District Activities and Education-related Issues  
from the Superintendent's Office, Mt. Diablo Unified School District

Week of February 23, 2009

## Board acts quickly to place parcel tax initiative on May 19 state ballot

A phone call from the Contra Costa County Registrar of Voters Office last Thursday afternoon set in motion a flurry of activity that resulted in an emergency meeting of the Board 24 hours later. At that meeting the Board took action to place a parcel tax initiative on the May 19 state special election ballot.

As reported in last week's *Monday Memo*, the Board adopted a resolution at its February 10 meeting to place the following proposition before the voters:

"To provide all students with a quality education, including reading, writing, math and science; ensure reliable, local funding to protect against harmful state budget cuts; attract and retain quality teachers; maintain vital college and work force preparation programs; and enhance classroom technology; shall the Mount Diablo Unified School District be authorized to levy \$99 per parcel annually, with no funding for district office administrator salaries, an exemption for seniors and strict monitoring by an independent citizen oversight committee?"

At its regular meeting on February 24 the Board will hold a public hearing on the resolution establishing a parcel tax and ratify the action taken at its February 20 emergency session.

The parcel tax would generate approximately \$7 million a year for the District. That's about the same amount of money the Board is now faced with cutting from the MDUSD budget as a result of the state budget adopted last week. And that amount is in addition to the more than \$6 million in cuts the Board has already approved over the past two months. Consideration of budget reductions will continue at the February 24 meeting, held in the Multi-Use Room at Monte Gardens Elementary School, next door to the MDUSD Dent Center.

The call from the Registrar's Office saved Mt. Diablo UDS up to \$750,000. By revising its February 10 resolution and submitting it to the Registrar by 5 p.m. on Friday, February 20, the Board was able to include the parcel tax initiative in a newly announced statewide special election on May 19 rather than finance a special election just for District voters in June.

The parcel tax campaign is now under way. It is--and must be--separate from and independent of the school district. A citizens' committee, Community United for Excellent Schools (CUES), has been formed. Those interested in information from CUES can send an e-mail to [schoolmeasure@gmail.com](mailto:schoolmeasure@gmail.com).

No District funds or resources of any kind may be allocated to the campaign, though informational materials may be disseminated. Information about the parcel tax as well as guidelines explaining what the District, its employees, and parent organizations may and may not do during a political campaign will be posted on the MDUSD web page, [www](http://www).

[mdusd.org](http://mdusd.org) and available in the Superintendent's Office by Friday, February 27.

## Sun shines on the new District web page

Since late Friday, February 20, visitors to the District's website have been surprised--and some a bit confused--to see a whole new look, highlighted by a sun-covered Mt. Diablo, awaiting them.

Launched without fanfare, the remodeled website is a work in progress, as a scroll through the site will show. Pre-construction began last June with a task force of about 25 members--district and site employees and a few parents. Over the course of several lively meetings with Jon Cornelison, project director of SectorPoint, Inc., a website development company, they agreed on the design, layout, colors, and, after a lengthy search, the photo, "Diablo Dusk," by Patrick Smith ([www.patricksmithphotography.com](http://www.patricksmithphotography.com)).

The site not only has a new look, it is also easier to manage. The software that supports it is user-friendly, similar in its application to Microsoft Word. This accessibility allows staff in each District department and school site to construct, maintain, and modify their own pages, with certain control measures in place.

Once the task force had set the look of the site, a number of enthusiastic staff members from various District departments signed up to learn how to manage the site's pages. SharePoint's technical staff converted the components of the existing website into documents for these trained "website contributors" to update and upload onto the evolving site. Eventually at least one staff member in each department and school site will be trained as a "website contributor."

The most noticeable difference between the new site and the old has prompted many visitors to ask, "Where is everything?" The task force was determined that the home page be free of clutter, so the random odds and ends of information previously seen there are now tucked away, though just a bit. The web site's structure is based on three main passages, shown on the homepage as buttons--Community, Parents, Staff--to the information individuals in those groups are likely to be looking for. Employees who want to use the District e-mail system, for example, click on the "Staff" button to access it. Some information, such as the School Library Catalogs, will have a link behind more than one button.

Another change to the website is its shorter address: [www.mdusd.org](http://www.mdusd.org). Employees, parents, students, and community members are invited to stop in for a visit. Because it is in its developmental stage, comments and suggestions are especially welcome. Send them to Sue Berg, coordinator of the website remodeling project, at [bergs@mdusd.k12.ca.us](mailto:bergs@mdusd.k12.ca.us).

Delete e-mails. Save Tech time.

Last week a number of employees clicked on attachments or links embedded in e-mails with such titles as "Hallmark E-Card" and "Job Application." Each click activated a virus that infected hundreds of computers throughout the District. The only sure way to fix a computer with this virus is to "reimage" it, i.e., take it back to the way it was when new, then add back documents and e-mail that have been backed up. Since Wednesday and over the past weekend, Technical and Information Services (TIS) staff have been personally cleaning each attacked computer. A typical cleanup takes one to three hours.

For those who have not received a message about this virus, here is important advice from TIS:

If you know you clicked on the attachment to these e-mails (activated the virus):

- Shut down your computer. If you leave it on, it will download additional viruses and be much harder to clean. It will also attempt to infect other computers.
- Do not use any flash drive or external hard drives that have been attached to your infected computer. In some cases these devices will pick up the virus from your main computer and then infect any other computer it is plugged into.
- Be patient as the techs work diligently to get to all of the computers that have been infected.

If you are not sure whether you activated the virus:

- A small program will check for the presence of the most common form of this virus. To run it, go to [www.mdusd.k12.ca.us/tis/downloads/Hallmark-JobApp Checker.exe](http://www.mdusd.k12.ca.us/tis/downloads/Hallmark-JobApp%20Checker.exe). When asked to Save or Run the file, choose Save. Save it to the desktop and then double click to Run it. You will see an indicator about the status of this virus infection almost immediately.
- If the program indicates that your computer has the virus, immediately shut down the computer and go through normal channels for requesting tech support.
- Even if the program indicates that your computer does not have the virus, take time to look for other indicators, such as AVG antivirus warnings or difficulty/slowness in booting up your computer.

If you are absolutely sure that you did not activate this virus:

- Thank you for practicing safe computing!

## In others' words . . . *on computers (of course)*

*"Home computers are being called upon to perform many new functions, including the consumption of homework formerly eaten by the dog."--Doug Larson, journalist*

*"A computer terminal is not some clunky old television with a typewriter in front of it. It is an interface where the mind and body can connect with the universe and move bits of it about."--Douglas Adams, British writer*

*"A computer will do what you tell it to do, but that may be much different from what you had in mind"--Joseph Weizenbaum, MIT computer science profession*

*"Man is still the most extraordinary computer of all."--John F. Kennedy*

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