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## **FARMERSVILLE SCHOOL ISSUES**

### **BACKGROUND:**

The Tulare County Grand Jury is tasked with oversight of public agencies, including schools. This oversight includes monitoring compliance with laws such as California's Ralph M. Brown Act, Government Code section §54950 et. seq. (Brown Act), which requires meetings and actions of governing bodies of local government agencies and subsidiary bodies created to be open and public. It was intended that the Brown Act implement a strong public policy. This policy ensures the public's right to attend and participate in the meetings of local governmental agencies.

In addition to compliance with laws, the Grand Jury monitors the efficiency and appropriate management of public entities which include the manner in which they respond to their client base and fiscal decisions enacted by elected bodies.

Each school district is governed by an elected Board of Trustees (Board). The Board for each district contracts with a superintendent to execute all Board policies and to manage the academic and administrative staffs. The superintendent interviews potential employees and presents recommendations for hiring to the Board. Each superintendent periodically evaluates employees of the district and serves as the district's representative to all collective bargaining matters. The district superintendent typically acts as Secretary of the Board and represents the district to the community and various agencies. School superintendents are evaluated periodically by the district's Board.

The Farmersville School District (District) has six (6) schools, utilizing 119 certified and 89 classified personnel serving a 2,578 student population in Grades K-12. The revenue limit per Average Daily Attendance (ADA) is approximately \$6,000 per year for each student. The District board meetings are conducted the second and fourth Tuesday of each month.

### **REASON FOR INVESTIGATION:**

The 2015-2016 Tulare County Grand Jury received a complaint from a citizen alleging excessive and/or improper spending on the part of the Farmersville Unified School District Board, as well as illegal hiring and inappropriate conduct during board meetings. The complainant further alleged that the bond oversight committee had not been conducting meetings.

### **METHOD OF INVESTIGATION:**

The Grand Jury attended District Board meetings and interviewed witnesses. Requested District documents were also reviewed. This report is not intended to represent an in-depth analysis of the school district but a review of the manner in which the board is functioning.

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# TULARE COUNTY GRAND JURY REPORT 2015-2016

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## **FACTS:**

1. Numerous credit cards were issued to employees and Board Members of the District.
2. The previous superintendent recalled a majority of the credit cards.
3. District policy for mode of travel states, "The most expedient and cost effective manner of traveling should be used."
4. District policy for food purchased must be outside of the 50 mile radius of the District.
5. The current Superintendent has been placed on paid administrative leave pending investigation. A previous Superintendent has been hired as an interim consultant/Superintendent.
6. A longstanding board member resigned during their term.
7. A staff development meeting was held off site.
8. The Bond/Citizen's Oversight Committee meets to oversee the expenditures of the \$4.8 Million General Obligation bond.

## **FINDINGS:**

- F1. The number of credit cards has been significantly reduced.
- F2. Credit cards have been used without an approved purchase order.
- F3. Staff and board conferences were frequent and expensive. Their preferred method of travel included numerous commercial airline flights.
- F4. Contrary to established policy, food was purchased for local meetings.
- F5. Two Superintendents are being paid at the same time.
- F6. A resigned board member had not been replaced at time of this report.
- F7. An off-site staff development meeting cost in excess of \$4,000.
- F8. The Bond/Citizen's Oversight Committee meets approximately every other month.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- R1. That the District follow the Tulare County Office of Education purchase order process.
- R2. District Policies regarding travel expenses should be followed.