



## PLACER COUNTY GRAND JURY

# Trouble at Western Placer Unified School District

Report Date: April 12, 2011

## **Trouble at Western Placer Unified School District**

### **Summary**

The Western Placer Unified School District (WPUSD) has a number of facilities that are older and require extensive ongoing maintenance to ensure an environment that is conducive to learning and safe for students and staff.

The roof of the weight room at Lincoln High School was identified as leaking in October 2009. As of January 2011 it has still not been permanently repaired.

The investigation has identified troubling concerns with the deferred maintenance budget, and the work environment within the Facilities and Maintenance Department. The problems with the Lincoln High School roof are a symptom. As a result, the Grand Jury recommends contracting with a professional outside mediator to facilitate with the Facilities and Maintenance Department to improve teamwork, trust, and communication in the work environment.

The Grand Jury also recommends the WPUSD Board of Trustees develop, approve, and implement a new five-year deferred maintenance budget to be managed by the Maintenance Director.

### **Background**

Over the last several years, the Western Placer Unified School District (WPUSD) has had serious issues within the Facilities and Maintenance Department. This has resulted in personnel turnover, budget restricted maintenance activities, and complaints to the Grand Jury.

Lincoln High School is one of two high schools in WPUSD. In addition to the two high schools, there are seven elementary schools, and two middle schools. Several of the school facilities are older and require additional repairs and maintenance.

The Grand Jury began an investigation of the leaking roof in the Lincoln High School weight room which had not been repaired prior to the current rainy season, even though it had been identified in prior years. As part of that investigation the Grand Jury reviewed WPUSD policies for procuring maintenance services, the deferred maintenance budget, the timeline for the proposed roof repair, and the responsibilities of the maintenance staff.

## Investigation Methods

The Grand Jury received several complaints regarding the WPUSD Facilities and Maintenance Department and its practices over the past several years. In investigating the complaints the Grand Jury conducted a series of interviews with management and employees of the WPUSD. Eight interviews were held. The interviews solicited information regarding responsibilities, operational practices, and specifically the events associated with the effort to repair the weight room roof at Lincoln High School.

Grand Jury members visited the weight room at Lincoln High School and visually inspected conditions from ground level.

The Grand Jury requested and reviewed various WPUSD documents, including:

- Three years of deferred maintenance budget and expenditures;
- A five-year deferred maintenance plan adopted by the WPUSD Board of Trustees;
- The process used by WPUSD to procure maintenance materials and services;
- The timeline of events associated with the effort to repair the weight room roof at Lincoln High School;
- Roofing assessment plans prepared by roofing contractors in 1999-2000 and 2007-2008.

## Facts

- The five-year deferred maintenance budget plan adopted by the WPUSD Board of Trustees in 2007-2008 shows a planned expenditure of approximately \$400,000 per year on deferred maintenance.
- Deferred maintenance expenditures over the last two complete budget years, 2008-2009 and 2009-2010, have averaged about \$90,000 per year. 2010-2011 deferred maintenance expenditures for six months are about \$60,000.
- In October 2009 the Facilities and Maintenance Department was notified the roof over the weight room at Lincoln High School was leaking. This roof area was identified in at least two roofing assessments by contractors (1999-2000 and 2007-2008) as being in poor condition with many problems. As of January 2011 the roof still has not been permanently repaired.
- The principal of Lincoln High School claims to know nothing about the leak or the status of the repair. He is unsure if there were any student or staff safety concerns associated with the problem.
- Several individuals interviewed indicated that the repair to the roof should have taken about two weeks to complete.

- In the past three years, there have been three Directors of Maintenance for the WPUUSD.
- During the interviews it became clear to the Grand Jury; that there were serious concerns about intra-department retaliation.
- It was stated that there was no formal hourly time reporting process used to report attendance within the Facilities and Maintenance Department.

## Findings

- F1. The WPUUSD Board of Trustees approved a deferred maintenance five-year plan in 2007-2008, to spend approximately \$400,000 per year starting in 2008-2009. The deferred maintenance expenditures over the past several years have been less than 25% of the plan, which has negatively impacted overall maintenance. This has also contributed to the ongoing problem with the leaking roof at Lincoln High School.
- F2. There is a polarized environment in the Facilities and Maintenance Department. Issues with trust, respect, and communications impact the effectiveness of the organization to provide a safe environment for the students and staff of WPUUSD.
- F3. The Facilities and Maintenance Department does not have a formal time reporting system and, until recently, did not have a leave request notification process.

## Recommendations

The Grand Jury recommends:

- R1. The Board of Trustees develops and approves a new five-year deferred maintenance budget that can be implemented, given the current budgetary realities and maintenance needs.
- R2. The Director of Maintenance be responsible for executing the maintenance plan, setting priorities for all maintenance activities, and adherence to the maintenance budget.

- R3. The WPUSD consider consulting with an outside mediator to build teamwork, trust, and positive communication in the work environment. It is further recommended the WPUSD report to the Grand Jury regarding the overall action taken and progress achieved through the mediation.
- R4. As a minimum, institute a paper timesheet reporting process for all non-management employees in the Facilities and Maintenance Department to work in conjunction with the leave request notification process already implemented.

### **Request For Responses**

WPUSD Board of Trustees / # R1, R3  
600 Sixth Street  
Lincoln, CA 95648

**Due by June 12, 2011**

Scott Leaman, Superintendent WPUSD /  
# R1, R2, R3, R4  
District Office  
600 Sixth Street  
Lincoln, CA 95648

**Due by July 12, 2011**