

## Hanford Sentinel, The (CA)

December 18, 2008

### New Delta View board faces multiple problems

*Shannon Milliken*

Less than four years ago, Kings County Board of Education members stepped in when **Delta View** Joint Union School District simultaneously fell subject to multiple board vacancies and a tight budget. History seems to be repeating itself.

When county Board of Education members stepped onto the **Delta View** campus in April 2005, then-board President Jerry Helm said it was "the first step of healing the community" after months of controversy.

On Wednesday, county Board of Education members Joe Hammond, Mickey Thayer and John Boogaard began their roles filling vacancies on the **Delta View** board. Thayer was unable to attend the board meeting, but she will be at future meetings on the second Wednesday of each month. After months of mounting tension between members of **Delta View's** previous board, Wednesday's new faces were met with a welcome from district Superintendent Carmen Barnhart.

"I'm really excited to have a full and functioning board," Barnhart said. "Without it, it makes business very difficult. With it, I feel like we can move forward."

With board issues at least temporarily resolved, it was time to focus on some business. Controversy and board turnover are now the least of the district's worries. Instead, district trustees and Barnhart discussed on Wednesday three much bigger concerns: a tight budget that mid-year cuts from the state could make even tighter, expected costly adjustments to the **Delta View** cafeteria fund and an uncertain charter renewal application process.

On Sept. 23, **Delta View** Trustee Sabrina Rios resigned. The remaining trustees spent a month "from Oct. 22 to Nov. 22" meeting frequently in an attempt to appoint people to fill Rios's seat and the two other seats that would become vacant Dec. 5. But attempts failed "because of the lack of a quorum or of a majority vote on candidates" and time ran out.

The other two vacancies came about because Trustee Jeannine Brasil was the only person to file for candidacy for the Nov. 4 election to fill one of three spots opening because terms were set to expire. Trustees Shawna Bernardo and Tennesa Popejoy did not file to run again and no one else filed for their seats either. The board attempted multiple times to fill the seats by appointment in lieu of an election, but the deadline to fill the seats of Bernardo and Popejoy passed on Nov. 4.

Last week, Kings County Board of Education President William Gundacker nominated three of his board members "Thayer, Boogaard and Hammond" to fill vacancies at **Delta View**, beginning with the meeting on Wednesday.

On Wednesday, county Office of Education Director of Business Services Jamie Dial reported to **Delta View's** new and continuing trustees on the first interim budget. With the state proposing mid-year funding cuts, **Delta View's** finances "like most California schools" look grim. As is the case for many schools, student enrollment is declining. Last year, **Delta View** had more than 100 students. Now, it has 77. Declining enrollment is directly related to declining revenue, Dial said.

Included in Delta's year-end projections was a \$10,000 deficit for the **Delta View** cafeteria fund.

But, as Barnhart reported later in the meeting, that deficit will likely increase to a much larger cut in the district's general fund, depending on the state's decision to potentially rescind part or all of the school's cafeteria funds. The decision would be based on a Dec. 4 unannounced cafeteria visit made by two representatives from the state Department of Education. Barnhart said the visitors expressed concerns about the nutritional value of some of the items offered on the menu. She expects there will be some sort of fiscal consequence.

Worst-case scenario, the decision from the state could mean a \$65,000 hit to **Delta View's** general fund, Barnhart said. She added after the meeting that she was expecting the state's decision last week, but it has not arrived yet.

"Any kind of fiscal hit to me" is painful," Barnhart said after Wednesday's meeting. "It's big. It's definitely a fiscal concern. But the biggest concern is the charter renewal."

Barnhart reported to **Delta View's** former board in November that the district's charter is set to expire at the end of the school year. She is working on the renewal application, which she will submit during winter break. If the district's charter is not renewed, **Delta View** could lose students that are enrolled because of its charter status "30 of its 77 total students. A November site visit from a representative at the California Department of Education didn't bode well for the charter renewal.

If the charter is not renewed, Barnhart assumed that students who attend **Delta View** because of the charter would be absorbed by the districts they reside in. But Barnhart does not believe it to be beneficial to run the school with just 44 students.

"The charter determines our viability," Barnhart said. "We're very worried about our charter renewal."

John Stankovich, county superintendent of schools, said at Wednesday's meeting that he and Barnhart would soon speak with state education officials to assess the likelihood of the district's charter renewal. Lack of student achievement on state standardized tests as well as continual administrative turnover at **Delta View** will not look favorable to the renewal panel.

"We're experiencing the manifestation of a lot of things bottoming out," Barnhart said.

New Trustee Hammond added his point of view.

"I almost wonder if the viability of this district is sustainable. But I'm not saying it isn't."

The reporter can be reached at 583-2424.

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## Hanford Sentinel, The (CA)

January 15, 2009

### **Troubles mount for Delta View district** **County superintendent says merging with another district could be 'inevitable'** *Shannon Milliken*

New faces at the **Delta View** Joint Union School District board meeting Wednesday did not bring new hope for the district's future. New costs -- necessary playground equipment repairs and returning all state and federal cafeteria funds for August through September -- continue to hit a budget already strained by the state's financial situation.

Amid discussion of those costs, as well as of the district's uncertain charter renewal, the atmosphere at the **Delta View** board meeting was not encouraging. The varied points of concern began to run together as the magnitude of the situation made itself impossible to ignore.

John Stankovich, county superintendent of schools, mentioned the district's declining enrollment and test scores, the economic recession, the state budget and the Highway 198 expansion. He hesitated briefly, and then voiced an opinion on the future of the district.

"I hate to say this, but I think delaying a unification with a neighboring school district would be delaying the inevitable," Stankovich said.

He said this after he had begun to discuss the process for replacing Kings County Board of Education members -- who stepped in in December, after the **Delta View** board had fewer members than necessary for a quorum -- with district residents.

But, Stankovich said, filling even one of the three seats to be replaced would fulfill the education code criteria for a quorum, and revoke the county Board of Education's right to sit in.

Joe Hammond, a county Board of Education member who is filling a spot on the **Delta View** board, said it would be "premature to leave at this point."

"I think we have to be careful," Hammond said. "I don't want to have to come back again in six to eight months."

This is Hammond's second time filling in on the **Delta View** board.

Less than four years ago, Kings County Board of Education members stepped in when **Delta View** Joint Union School District simultaneously fell subject to multiple board vacancies and a tight budget. In December, Kings County Board of Education President William Gundacker nominated three of his board members -- Mickey Thayer, John Boogaard and Joe Hammond -- to fill vacancies at **Delta View**.

But, coming back in six to eight months -- or at all -- would be contingent on the district's sustainability. The district is in the midst of applying to have its charter renewed -- it is set to expire at the end of the school year.

If the district's charter is not renewed, **Delta View** could stand to lose the students that are enrolled because of the charter status, which is 30 of its 77 total students. A November site visit from a representative at the California Department of Education didn't bode well for charter renewal.

If the charter is not renewed, district Superintendent Carmen Barnhart assumed that students who attend **Delta View** because of the charter would be absorbed by the districts they live in. Barnhart said in December she does not believe it to be beneficial to run the school with just 44 students.

But, putting aside the district's main concern of charter renewal, Barnhart asked district trustees to wait some time before even beginning the process of replacing county Board of Education members with district residents on the **Delta View** board.

"We need some time to recover," Barnhart said. "Our election process has dominated our business. Or, you could move in that direction now, and then it's our mess to clean up or our garden to grow. Please be deliberate and careful, because our community is wounded."

Returning to the foremost concern, Barnhart added that she is not ready to give up. She admitted that the new hits -- the necessary but unexpected playground equipment repairs that will take \$2,000 from the district's general fund and the as yet unknown fiscal hit spurred by a Dec. 4 unannounced cafeteria visit from the California Department of Education -- were adding to her anxiety.

"One little thing will push us literally over the edge," Barnhart said. "We must proceed as a team. It feels like a sieve right now. It is literally poking holes in something that's bleeding out. There is no pretty picture to paint."

That picture did not get any prettier as a representative from the California Department of Education, Jeri Wheaton, took the floor at the meeting. Wheaton said her visit to the cafeteria in December necessitated investigation into the district's cafeteria operations. The investigation revealed the school had no documentation of meals served to students, during the months of August through December.

The district will be required to prove that it has since documented all cafeteria operations for January, in order to just continue receiving funding for the rest of the school year.

But all of the state and federally funded cafeteria money for August through December will have to be paid back. The district's general fund will be hit again -- a much larger hit than the \$2,000 for the playground repairs. Barnhart said she didn't yet know the amount that refund of cafeteria monies would be, but that she would be working as early as Thursday to figure that out.

The reporter can be reached at 583-2424.

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## Hanford Sentinel, The (CA)

February 13, 2009

### Meeting paints murky picture for Delta View district

*Shannon Milliken*

Possibilities for the future of **Delta View** Joint Union School District became more distinct at the district board meeting on Wednesday. District Superintendent Carmen Barnhart told trustees it was time to start talking about options for moving toward consolidation with another district or other means of ceasing operations, in order to act in the most responsible way for students.

Barnhart said that with the district still losing about \$277 per day just in cafeteria expenditures, along with other financial hits and the state's anticipated mid-year budget cuts -- especially if the district's charter is not renewed -- "**Delta View** is in serious, serious trouble."

"I can't see a future past next year," Barnhart said of **Delta View**. "I really think it's time we start thinking about the possibilities if we're talking about a quality education for our students."

"We can't sit back and let the train roll over us. It's really not a surprise. It's an elephant in the room."

It's nothing new that school districts across the state are facing financial troubles. And the state's recent investigation into **Delta View**'s cafeteria that resulted in the district having to pay back all state and federally funded cafeteria money since August made things more difficult.

"We do have a couple of big financial hills that we're trying to climb," Barnhart said.

Documentation of just how tough times are for **Delta View** was clear in the first interim budget report that Jamie Dial, county education external business director, presented at Wednesday's meeting. The interim budget report projects how the district will finish out the current school year and looks into the subsequent two years.

Dial said while the current year is fiscally sound, the district may not be able to meet its financial obligations for the next two years, especially if the district's charter status is not renewed. That possible inability to meet financial obligations has moved the district to a "qualified" status, Dial said.

The district is in the midst of applying to have its charter renewed -- the charter is set to expire at the end of the school year.

If the district's charter is not renewed, **Delta View** could stand to lose the students that are enrolled because of the charter status, which is 30 of its 77 total students. A November site visit from a representative at the California Department of Education didn't bode well for the charter renewal.

Barnhart said in December she does not believe it to be beneficial to run the school with just 44 students -- such a school would only have two or three classrooms, containing kindergarten through eighth grade. Barnhart said combining so many grade levels would not be best for students nor feasible for teachers.

John Stankovich, county superintendent of schools, said in January that "delaying unification with a neighboring school district would be delaying the inevitable."

At Wednesday's meeting, Stankovich explained two options for consolidation with another school

district that he recommended trustees look into. He also recommended conducting a survey among district residents to see how they would prefer to proceed. The first option, transferring of territory, would require action at county and state levels, as well as a potential vote by district residents. If not contested, the move would transfer the territory (and its children) to a neighboring school district, but would not take effect until July 2010.

The second option would be "lapsation" or "lapsing into nonexistence," which could take effect immediately upon approval, Stankovich said. Lapsation is generally for districts whose enrollment has fallen below six students, but the state would likely grant a waiver allowing lapsation if **Delta View's** charter was not renewed, Stankovich said.

Whether or not the district will exist in 2009-2010, district officials only have until the state deadline of March 15 to notify teachers that they might not have a job next year. If no notifications are made, the district is required to employ its teachers in 2009-2010, even if it is no longer serving -- as many or any - - students.

Joe Hammond, county board of education member who is filling a trustee seat at **Delta View**, said "it would be foolish not to recognize that we're in dire straits."

"We can't wait until the last minute if we're going to be responsible," Hammond said.

The reporter can be reached at 583-2424.

(Feb. 13, 2009)

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## Hanford Sentinel, The (CA)

March 10, 2009

### **Delta View may 'lapse' into nonexistence**

*Shannon Milliken*

**Delta View** Joint Union School District officials will consider Wednesday asking state education officials to allow the district the option of "lapsation" -- lapsing into nonexistence -- after the close of the current school year.

Prior to the decision by district trustees, **Delta View** will hold a public hearing at 1:40 p.m. on Wednesday, during which anyone may appear to make comments regarding steps trustees would follow if they decided to file the request with the state Board of Education.

Carmen Barnhart, district superintendent, said Wednesday's trustee decision would not initiate the process of lapsation; but is pre-planning "in the event [the district] has to move in that direction."

"We wanted to have all our ducks in a row," Barnhart said Monday.

If trustees move forward, the request to the state Board of Education will be to waive part of the education code that stipulates a district's enrollment must fall below six students in order to qualify for lapsation. The reason to submit a request to the state now is to make sure the district's request is on the agenda of the state Board of Education meeting. After that, the final decision on lapsation would be a local issue, Barnhart said.

John Stankovich, Kings County's superintendent of schools, said at **Delta View's** February board meeting he expected state officials to grant the waiver.

The district is in the midst of applying to have its charter renewed -- the charter is set to expire at the end of the school year.

If the district's charter is not renewed, **Delta View** could stand to lose the students who are enrolled because of the charter status, which is 30 of its 77 total students. A November site visit from a representative at the California Department of Education didn't bode well for the charter renewal.

Barnhart said in December she does not believe it to be beneficial to run the school with just 44 students -- such a school would only have two or three classrooms, containing kindergarten through eighth grade. Barnhart said combining so many grade levels would not be best for students or feasible for teachers.

Barnhart said if the state approves the waiver, the final decision would not have to be made until after the end of the current school year. She expects to have a sense of whether or not the district's charter will be renewed within the next month.

Consideration of lapsation is being prompted by discussion at the district board's February meeting where Barnhart told trustees it was time to start talking about options for moving toward consolidation with another district or other means of ceasing operations. She said changes were in order to act in the most responsible way for students.

**Delta View's** meeting will be held on Wednesday at 1:30 p.m. in the school's library at 1201 Lacey Blvd. For more information contact the school at 582-3122.

The reporter can be reached at 583-2424.

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## Hanford Sentinel, The (CA)

March 12, 2009

### **Delta View creeps closer to possible closure**

*Shannon Milliken*

**Delta View** Joint Union School District officials took the first steps on Wednesday toward potentially lapsing into nonexistence after the close of the current school year.

District trustees voted 4-1 to ask the state to waive a portion of the state education code that would allow the option of lapsation. The decision does not initiate the process of lapsation, nor does it lock the district into a future of nonexistence. It is one of many steps in a required process for lapsation to be considered.

Because district trustees approved asking the state for the waiver, the state's Board of Education will consider the waiver at its May meeting. If the state grants the waiver -- necessary because lapsation is generally for school districts with six or fewer students -- the district can then decide whether to ask the Kings County Committee on School District Re-organization to allow lapsation. If lapsation occurred, all **Delta View** students would likely be absorbed by the nearest neighboring school district to their residence.

**Delta View** is in the midst of applying to have its charter renewed -- the charter is set to expire at the end of the school year.

If the district's charter is not renewed, **Delta View** could stand to lose the students who are enrolled because of its charter status, which is 30 of its 77 total students. A November site visit from a representative at the California Department of Education didn't bode well for the charter renewal.

District Superintendent Carmen Barnhart said in December she does not believe it to be beneficial to run the school with just 44 students -- such a school would only have two or three classrooms, containing kindergarten through eighth grade.

Barnhart said if the state approves the waiver, the final decision would not have to be made until after the end of this school year. She expects to have a sense of whether or not the district's charter will be renewed within the next month.

John Stankovich, Kings County superintendent of schools, emphasized at Wednesday's meeting that the trustee decision did not move the district in the direction of lapsation.

"That consideration would also require at least one public hearing in June when this is actually considered," Stankovich said.

He added that he is not optimistic that the charter will be renewed and that keeping the district open if the charter is not renewed would "have a catastrophic impact on the district's future financial status as well as learning for the students."

Stankovich explained that future would have the school running with two or three total classrooms, each spanning three to five grades. Continuance of the district without a charter renewal would result in a deficit between about \$131,000 and \$139,000.

"I'm really disappointed that things have gotten the way they are," Stankovich said.

About a dozen local residents beyond board members and school staff attended Wednesday's meeting. Former district trustee Sabrina Rios was the first to speak. Rios said she was not against requesting a waiver but was complaining that notification of Wednesday's hearing was not sent home to parents or translated into Spanish. Rios cited portions of the California Education Code that she perceived to have been breached in not notifying each individual who would be interested in the district's potential lapsation.

Dwaine Chambers, school legal counsel for Kings County Office of Education, said the named portions of the education code were not applicable to this circumstance and that general notification of the public hearing had been made.

Judy Rhoades, a **Delta View** parent who said she was a longtime resident, said she would be in favor of requesting the waiver because it wouldn't be possible to put several grade levels in one classroom.

"That's a huge span," Rhoades said.

Before voting, Trustee Amanda Rogers asked whether the district board would have the option to go forward with lapsation -- if the state approved the waiver -- in the event the charter is renewed. Superintendent Barnhart said the district trustees would have the option to proceed as they wished, whether or not the charter was renewed.

Rogers added she would rather wait to ask the state for a waiver until more was known about the district's charter renewal. But Stankovich said since the state Board of Education meets every other month, waiting would push consideration of **Delta View's** waiver to the state's July meeting, technically into the next fiscal year. Rogers was the lone opposing vote in the board's approval.

Trustee Joe Hammond said later in the meeting that even if the district's charter is renewed he is uncertain about its future.

The reporter can be reached at 583-2424.

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## Hanford Sentinel, The (CA)

April 2, 2009

### Kit Carson may take on Delta View students

*Shannon Milliken*

Students of **Delta View** Joint Union School District -- who reside within the district's boundaries -- may be attending Kit Carson Union School District in the fall.

Kit Carson officials met Wednesday to discuss the potential merger of districts if the **Delta View** district "lapsed" into non-existence.

Kings County Superintendent of Schools John Stankovich explained the concept to Kit Carson trustees, just before they unanimously approved contracting with School Services of California for advice regarding the process of absorbing another school district.

Stankovich also offered to "hold the district harmless" for seeking professional advice, with the Kings County Office of Education covering up to \$5,000 of the cost of the services provided if **Delta View** remains in operation. Through the board's approval of this agreement with the Office of Education, Kit Carson will not have to pay a bill it would have otherwise not incurred.

Stankovich announced on Wednesday that the California Advisory Committee on Charter Schools -- which reviews charter school renewal applications and recommends to the state Board of Education whether to approve or deny renewal applications -- met Wednesday morning and voted to recommend denial of **Delta View's** charter renewal application.

"I would be surprised," Stankovich said of if the state Board of Education voted differently than recommended by the Advisory Committee.

Though Stankovich admitted he had never heard the term "lapsation" before this case, he explained to Kit Carson trustees it was no short list of issues that led to **Delta View** exploring the option. Among those issues, he listed past problems with administration, a "dysfunctional board" that led to interference by the county Board of Education in December, declining student enrollment, inadequate performance on state standardized tests and the Highway 198 expansion.

This spring marks the expiration date for the district's charter. The charter allows the school to include in its enrollment students who live outside district boundaries. Without the charter, the district would lose 30 of its 77 total students and be made to run a two-classroom school -- each classroom spanning three to five grades.

Every school that operates on a charter must renew that charter every five years. Renewal must be approved by the state. For approval by the state, a charter school must meet certain qualifications.

Foreseeing a slim chance of renewal, **Delta View** trustees voted March 11 to ask the state to waive a portion of the state education code that would allow the option of lapsation.

In that application to the state, Kit Carson officials included a letter stating the school would support the decision and absorb students from the neighboring district if **Delta View** ceased to exist.

Because **Delta View** district trustees approved asking the state for the waiver, the state's Board of

Education will consider the waiver at its May meeting. If the state grants the waiver -- necessary because lapsation is generally for school districts with six or fewer students -- the district can then decide whether to ask the Kings County Committee on School District Re-organization the process to go forward.

But Kit Carson officials until Wednesday held off on further planning, so as not to intrude upon or offend **Delta View** students, staff or parents, said Kit Carson Superintendent John Sousa.

"We are about three months away," Sousa said, referencing that the potential district merger would become effective July 1. "It's not a whole lot of time to join two school districts. We're not going to be able to sit around until the final decision to start planning."

To that end, Sousa asked for the Kit Carson board's support in beginning to recruit to fill teaching vacancies and look into costs and conditions for securing two portables that would be needed on campus if Kit Carson had about 44 additional students in the fall. The district would not yet incur any obligations if **Delta View** remains open.

Sousa said in the event the merger happens, he wants to host summer activities at Kit Carson for **Delta View** students and parents.

"We want a smooth transition," Sousa said after the meeting. "If this goes through, we're going to do everything we can to make students and parents comfortable."

The reporter can be reached at 583-2424

(April 2, 2009)

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## Hanford Sentinel, The (CA)

April 16, 2009

### Delta View's future may be clear within a month

*Shannon Milliken  
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No news may not be good news for the future of Delta View Joint Union School District -- that is, if you define good news as the continuing operation of the district's school.

But some Kings County Board of Education members filling vacancies on the Delta View board say closing the school might be the most practical option.

At Wednesday's board meeting, Carmen Barnhart, Delta View superintendent, led a discussion about the school's future and potential "**lapsation**" into nonexistence at the end of the school year. The California Advisory Committee on Charter Schools -- which reviews charter school renewal applications and recommends to the state Board of Education whether to approve or deny renewal applications -- met April 1 and voted to recommend denial of Delta View's charter renewal application. Since then, Barnhart said she has heard no "definitive new news."

The next news to come may be from the state Board of Education meeting on May 6 and 7.

At that meeting, the state board will vote on the district's charter renewal application, as well as a request for a waiver from a portion of the education code regarding **lapsation**.

Every school that operates on a charter must have a renewal approved by the state every five years, and this spring marks the expiration date for Delta View's charter. The charter allows the school to include in its enrollment students who live outside district boundaries. Without the charter, the district would lose 30 of its 77 total students.

Seeing renewal as unlikely, Delta View trustees voted March 11 to ask the state to waive a portion of the state education code allowing a district to lapse or cease to exist. If the state grants the waiver -- necessary because generally only school districts with six or fewer students are allowed to lapse -- the district can then decide whether to ask the Kings County Committee on School District Reorganization to allow the district to close. Whether or not the state approves the charter renewal, the decision to close is up to Delta View trustees.

"I believe common sense will prevail," said Joe Hammond, one of three county Board of Education members filling a vacancy on the Delta View board.

Hammond said at the March meeting that even if the state renewed the charter, he was uncertain about the future of Delta View. John Stankovich, county superintendent of schools, said in January that "delaying unification with a neighboring school district would be delaying the inevitable." To that end, nearby Kit Carson Union School District officials have begun plans to incorporate Delta View students into the Kit Carson campus in the fall in case the district ceases.

Trustee John Boogaard asked Barnhart Wednesday if the state approved the charter, "what would make this school operation practical?"

Barnhart said schools have to be about teaching and learning so much so that there is a product to sell, in

order to increase or even maintain student enrollment.

"It's been impossible to build a product this year," Barnhart said.

She added that she was not surprised with the advisory committee's decision to recommend denial, because Delta View did not meet requirements for renewal. To top off a decline in student performance on state standardized tests and annual administrative turnover, the district has not been able to hold onto a solid board, which led to infiltration by the county Board of Education in December.

"The adult situation here is in disarray," Barnhart said. "But we hope to know where we stand by mid-May. It's very distracting and demoralizing to our staff. Though I feel like a lot of the drama has died down, there is a grief that resonates."

Barnhart said if Delta View lapses, she does not want to end the year in silence and negativity.

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(April 16, 2009)

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