

Letter from Board of Education Member Ray Gadbois to Board of Education Chairman Roy Tolles, read into the record on October 27th, 2010:

Roy,

I am sorry that I will not be able to make it to tonight's meeting. But I wanted to send you my thoughts and comments on the Parcel Tax Citizen's Advisory Committee (sic), especially since I was one of the Board members who asked for this agenda item. I hope you would be willing to read my comments into the record at the appropriate time during the meeting:

First of all, I want to say that all the members of the Parcel Tax Citizens Advisory Committee have been working very hard over the past year to provide detailed information and recommendations to the Board to be used in our budget development process. I want to thank them for their dedication and their time. I know they have all been working very hard.

I believe the Committee has struggled at times to agree on the scope and purpose of their work. And they have found it difficult to decide on the process, approach, and content of their work. This is to be expected in the first year of the committee, especially in the middle of a deep budget crisis. But I think the Board can help them to be more productive in the future by providing clear direction and expectations.

I think we should ask the committee to focus on the original goals we had in mind when we formed the committee. In my opinion, the primary purpose of the committee was to provide the Board, and the community of Piedmont, with a clear and comprehensive analysis of the School District budget, including important metrics, historical trends, and comparisons with other high performing school districts. And they should provide the Board with a high level analysis of the impact of the Parcel Tax on the District budget. Based on this analysis, the Committee should make a recommendation to the Board regarding the amount of tax which should be levied in the coming year. The high level budget impact of their recommendation should also be presented (e.g. in dollars, employees, or other high level metrics).

I do not think the Committee should expand its scope beyond this financial analysis and tax recommendation without clear direction from the full Board. I do not expect the committee to research, analyze and make recommendations with regard to the educational program, curriculum, contract negotiations, etc. In my opinion, this is outside the purpose, scope and expertise of the committee. It duplicates the work already being done by other groups, including the administration, curriculum committee, budget advisory committee, negotiating team and the Board itself. It turns the Parcel Tax Advisory Committee into an open-ended, policy-making body that was never proposed or anticipated. And it makes the committee's decision-making process less analytical and much more political. As such, I believe the scope of the committee should not be expanded without a majority vote of the Board.

My vision for this committee is like the Office of Management and Budget which provides the decision-makers in Congress with objective analysis and information regarding budget and tax policy. In the same way, the Citizens Advisory Committee should provide us with objective analysis and information about our budget and the Parcel tax. We should recruit and select community members with the desire and skills necessary to understand and analyze the budget over time and communicate that information in a clear straightforward manner. With this vision in mind, I believe the Parcel Tax Committee will become a valuable asset to the Board and Community for many years to come.

Thanks,

Ray Gadbois