

ORANGE COUNTY COMMITTEE ON SCHOOL DISTRICT ORGANIZATION
MINUTES
Annual Organizational Meeting and Special Meeting
November 2, 2023

1. CALL TO ORDER ORANGE COUNTY COMMITTEE ON SCHOOL DISTRICT ORGANIZATION

The meeting of the Orange County Committee on School District Organization was called to order by Chairperson Sheila Benecke at 6.05 p.m., November 2, 2023 in the Board Room of the Huntington Beach Union High School District, 5832 Bolsa Avenue, Huntington Beach, California, 92649.
2. FLAG SALUTE Pledge of Allegiance was led by Marilyn Buchi.
3. ROLL CALL Chairperson Benecke asked Laurie Weiss to take roll.

Present:

Sheila Benecke, Chairperson	Marilyn Buchi
Karin Freeman	Kathleen Heard
David Johnson	Kathy Moffatt
Randy Reta	Francine Scinto

Absent:

Lauren Brooks	Paulette Chaffee
Jackie Filbeck	
4. ADOPTION OF AGENDA Motion by Marilyn Buchi, seconded by Karin Freeman, and carried by unanimous vote to adopt the agenda as presented.
5. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES Motion by Karin Freeman, seconded by Kathleen Heard, and carried by a vote of 7 – 0 with Marilyn Buchi abstaining, to approve the County Committee minutes of the October 5, 2023 meeting.
6. PUBLIC COMMENTS OF PERSONS DESIRING TO ADDRESS THE COUNTY COMMITTEE ON AGENDA ITEMS

Chairperson Benecke explained the opportunities available for members of the public who wish to address the County Committee.

One public comment card was received for Agenda Item 7B.
7. NEW BUSINESS
 - A. Annual Organizational Meeting
 1. Nominating Committee results and welcome of elected members:
 - a. 2nd Supervisorial District – Randy Reta
 - b. 3rd Supervisorial District – Karin Freeman
 - c. 5th Supervisorial District – Lauren Brooks

Chairperson Benecke asked Mr. Howard Marinier, Secretary to the County Committee, to provide the election results from the Nominating Committee.

Mr. Marinier reported that elections were held for the 2nd, 3rd, and 5th Supervisorial District member seats. The Nominating Committee was given the option to vote via absentee ballot or in-person paper ballot. In total, 18 ballots were cast. 11 ballots were cast using absentee ballots and 7 ballots were cast in person.

Mr. Marinier congratulated re-elected member Karin Freeman representing the 3rd Supervisorial District and newly elected members, Randy Reta representing the 2nd Supervisorial District, and Lauren Brooks representing the 5th Supervisorial District.

2. Administer Oath of Office for elected members

Chairperson Benecke asked the newly elected members to please stand to take their oath of office.

Marilyn Buchi read the oath of office to the newly elected County Committee members, Randy Reta and Karin Freeman.

3. Election of Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson

Chairperson Benecke asked Mr. Marinier to conduct the election of Chairperson.

Mr. Marinier asked for Nominations for the position of Chairperson.

Francine Scinto nominated Sheila Benecke, the nomination was seconded by Karin Freeman. It was voted on and carried by a unanimous vote to elect Sheila Benecke as the County Committee Chairperson.

Chairperson Benecke then asked for nominations for the position of Vice Chairperson. Marilyn Buchi moved to nominate Karin Freeman for the position of Vice Chairperson. It was seconded by Francine Scinto and carried by a unanimous vote of all members present to elect Karin Freeman as the Vice Chairperson of the County Committee.

B. Huntington Beach Union High School District's Resolution No. 2-2023/24 regarding Resolution Recommending a Map of Trustee Areas for the Orange County Committee on School District Organization Review and Approval to Establish Trustee Areas from which Board Members will be Elected

1. Staff Report on the Huntington Beach Union High School District's Resolution

Mr. Marinier reported that the purpose of the meeting is to conduct a public hearing within the Huntington Beach Union High School District regarding the proposal to establish trustee areas and change the method of election to a by-trustee area election process. At the conclusion of the public hearing, the County Committee must either approve or disapprove the District's proposal.

Mr. Marinier indicated that the Education Code does not provide specific criteria to apply in determining whether to approve or disapprove the District's proposal to establish trustee areas, resulting in broad discretion by the County Committee. The role of the County Committee is to approve or disapprove the District's proposed by-trustee area map and the change to a by-trustee area election process. The County Committee cannot make changes to the District's proposed plan.

Mr. Marinier introduced Ms. Ruth Brewda, Legal Counsel for the County Committee, who presented a PowerPoint overview explaining the County Committee's role in approving or disapproving proposals to establish areas under current law.

Ms. Brewda answered questions regarding establishing majority minority areas, avoiding racially polarized voting, and what constitutes communities of interest.

2. Public Hearing on Huntington Beach Union High School District's Resolution

a. Open Public Hearing

Chairperson Benecke explained the format of the hearing as set forth in the County Committee Bylaws. Chairperson Benecke asked Ms. Weiss if there were any public comment cards. One public comment card was submitted. Chairperson Benecke opened the public hearing at 6:29 p.m.

b. Presentation from representative(s) of the Huntington Beach Union High School District

Chairperson Benecke asked the representatives of the Huntington Beach Union High School District to come forward to introduce themselves and begin their presentation.

District representatives present for the public hearing included: Ronald D. Wenkart, Partner at Atkinson, Andelson, Loya, Ruud & Romo and David Lopez, Executive Director at Cooperative Strategies, LLC, and David Soldani, Partner at Atkinson, Andelson, Loya, Ruud & Romo.

Mr. Lopez explained the demographics of the school district based on the 2020 Census data. Mr. Lopez explained the timeline for the public hearings. He explained the considerations used in creating trustee areas, the several draft maps that were created, and the various tools utilized for community outreach. Lastly, he explained the Scenario A map that was adopted by the Huntington Beach Union High School District's Board, and the election sequencing for each trustee area.

c. Public Comments

One member of the public spoke against the map that was adopted by the Huntington Beach Union High School District Governing Board. He spoke in regards to a letter he sent to the County Committee prior to the public hearing.

d. Rebuttal from representatives of the Huntington Beach Union High School District

Mr. Wenkart spoke in rebuttal of the public comment and explained that the map does not split the Hispanic community. He further explained the demographics of each trustee area. Mr. Soldani explained that this is currently a case pending in the courts.

e. Rebuttal – Public Comment

One member of the public spoke in rebuttal against the district’s adopted map

f. Close the Public Hearing

Chairperson Benecke closed the public hearing at 7:00 p.m.

3. Questions from the County Committee Members

County Committee members asked questions regarding the election sequence, staggered elections, and the Community map which was the plaintiff’s map. Additionally, a question was asked regarding how in the Education Code, the County Committees role in establishing trustee areas in school districts differ from the establishing trustee areas for the Orange County Board of Education., Mrs. Karin Freeman asked however, scenario one was preferred at a subsequent meeting.

Ms. stated that every high school was represented by at least two board members and at least every city had at least two board members.

Ms. asked for clarification that since the intent of the law was to create areas where minority populations could exert influence, how did the District improve minority population’s influence when there was a majority of white in each trustee area.

4. Discussion and Vote on the Resolution to Approve/Disapprove the Proposal of the Huntington Beach Union High School District to Establish Trustee Areas from which Board Members will be elected

Chairperson Benecke asked for a motion. David Johnson moved to adopt a resolution approving the proposal of the Huntington Beach Union High School District establishing trustee areas and changing the method of election to a by-trustee area election process. The motion was seconded by Marilyn Buchi. There was a roll call vote and the motion was approved 8-0.

C. Legislative Update – AB 764 regarding Local Redistricting

Chairperson Benecke asked Ms. Brewda to provide the County Committee with a legislative update on Assembly Bill 764 regarding Local Redistricting.

Ms. Brewda provided a quick summary of new legislation, Assembly Bill 764, that takes effect January 1, 2024.

8. Old Business

- A. Update on the Orange County Board of Education’s Petition to Transfer the Duties and Powers of the County Committee

Chairperson Benecke asked Mr. Marinier to provide the committee with an update on the Orange County Board of Education’s Petition to Transfer the Duties and Powers of the County Committee.

Mr. Marinier gave information to the County Committee regarding the State Board of Education meeting and the options that they are providing comments.

9. PUBLIC COMMENT OF PERSONS DESIRING TO ADDRESS THE COUNTY COMMITTEE ON ANY PROPER MATTER NOT ON THE AGENDA

None.

10. NEXT MEETING

Mr. Marinier reported that at this time no meetings are scheduled for the County Committee.

11. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business Chairperson Benecke requested a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was moved by Karin Freeman, seconded by Marilyn Buchi, and unanimously approved. The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 p.m.