

Opinion - Friday, February 4, 2011

City willing to 'revisit' sharing Shoreline revenue

by Kevin C. Duggan

I am writing to supplement the opinion piece regarding the Shoreline Community District by Jim Pollart published on Jan. 28. It was titled "Parents seek share of taxes for schools."

We have appreciated the opportunity to meet with Mr. Pollart and other parents who have worked very hard in support of the schools in the Mountain View Whisman School District and have helped raise funds for important programs in those schools. We know that quality schools are a critical part of a quality city. We also know that our schools have been hard-hit by the ongoing state budget crisis and the effects of the recession, as has the city of Mountain View.

The city has a long history of working collaboratively with both the Mountain View Whisman School District and the Mountain View Los Altos Union High School District. We work together and share resources, including services and facilities, to a degree that is not typical among cities and school districts in this state. Examples include the Whisman Sports Center and Mountain View Sports Pavilion, the Graham Sports Complex and many "school/park" facilities throughout the community. The city provides the site for Alta Vista High School to the high school district. Additionally, the city provides school resource officers, a portion of music and art education program funding, and extensive after-school programs on many campuses.

Of note is that the current Joint Powers Authority (JPA) which dedicates funds from the Shoreline Community District to Mountain View public schools to supplement education funding was suggested and initiated by the City/Shoreline Community in 2006.

While the city has suffered budget reductions as a result of the recession and the state's fiscal crises, we fully appreciate that these impacts also are being felt significantly in our local schools. We also recognize and appreciate the impact of the elementary district changing from a district that receives revenue based on average daily attendance to one based on local property tax. The city staff concurs that it is appropriate to revisit the revenue sharing formula in the current JPA and will be recommending that to the City Council/Shoreline Community Board of Directors. City staff and school district representatives have already been meeting to discuss this issue.

Such a review must be undertaken carefully, fully understanding the impacts to other important community services and obligations. While sometimes incorrectly referenced as a "redevelopment agency", the Shoreline Community serves critical purposes far beyond the scope of redevelopment agencies. In addition to funding municipal services in the area, it provides operating funds for Shoreline Regional Park, helps assure that the closed landfills are properly maintained in perpetuity, funds environmental requirements relating to wildlife (including species at risk) and wetland restoration and management, as well as supporting economic development of the area. The Shoreline Community District is integral to our community's long term fiscal viability and it is important that it remain a successful segment of our local economy.

All of these activities benefit the Mountain View community as a whole, and reflect other vital components of a quality city. Without the funding provided through the Shoreline Community, these activities would overwhelm the city's already-strapped general fund.

We believe there are opportunities to increase school funding without sacrificing essential city services. We look forward to continuing to work collaboratively with our local school districts for the benefit of all Mountain View residents.

Kevin Duggan is Mountain View's city manager.

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