

Statement to TVLC Board meeting, January 28 2016

My name is Matt Weingart. I am a parent of LVCP and LVCS students.

I want to begin by commending everyone here who has had a role in bringing forth two fantastic schools. My wife and I were immensely happy to find the alternative that they offered, and we are grateful for the education our children are receiving there. The educators and administrators are a credit to their profession; they are passionate and conscientious stewards of the sacred trust we parents place in them.

Our charter schools do our community proud. They are sources of civic boasts and civic pride. Their many friends have ample ammunition to defend them against their few and fringe enemies.

Yet with the Tri-Valley Learning Corporation, unfortunately, the story is different. You are in the process of driving away any true “friends”, and are left with a shrinking number of mere “defenders” – parents with a dwindling conviction that administration by this corporation is the least-worst alternative for keeping those schools alive. Now you are depriving even those few defenders of any credible ammunition with which to stick up for you and argue your case.

There are many concerns I could bring up, but in respect of time I will focus only on the last 60 days; 60 days that began with a flurry of aggressive disinformation and antagonism toward our City leadership, and have closed – once these shenanigans were exposed – with 6 weeks of silence and inaction.

Those last 6 weeks, which should have been consumed with recovery, self-examination, and bridge-rebuilding, have instead produced only silence and stonewalling. They have seen parental open-mindedness to hearing the “TVLC side of the story”; and trust that some “process” would produce illumination, action, and accountability; completely dissipate.

The actions we all expected from you after the December 14th City Council meeting were the ones that should have been essentially instinctive and spontaneous, and certainly needed to be immediate:

1. To take stock of all the incorrect information that had been put out (regardless of intentionality), and move immediately to correct the record – making the retraction at least as loud and widely distributed as the original errors.
2. To apologize to all who had been misused and those who had been maligned.
3. To make immediately clear where responsibility for the original misinformation lay. Remove all undeserved taint from anyone whose only real failing was to be insufficiently

guarded in accepting assurances from sources they should have been able to – in fact, were obligated to – trust.

4. To conduct remediation with the entire LVCP student body for the awful ‘civics’ lesson that had been conveyed, by advocating the approach of trying to bully the civic process with passion and intimidation, in order to make up for being on the wrong side of the facts.
5. Finally: Where there were any factors extenuating to TVLC’s position, to bring those to light too, in a clear, objective, documented way (as the City has done with their side of the story) – so that your claim to the support of your parents could be grounded in the merits of your case, rather than solely on cajoling about “hanging together as a team”, “not airing dirty laundry”, and “not rocking the boat”.

And then, perhaps most importantly to what we are here to discuss tonight: There needed to be a thorough, probing fact-finding; to examine the entire situation end-to-end; to understand all the facts and all the problem areas, and to prescribe – in a transparent and traceable way – the corresponding corrective actions. Such a probing forensic examination is entirely, centrally, your responsibility as an oversight Board; and the fact that we are not here tonight, 6 weeks on, in a position to review that plan of corrective action – evaluating what you concluded are the organizational, process, and individual shortcomings, and how you plan to fix them – amounts to an extreme dereliction of the trust we placed in you when we constituted you as a Board to work for US, the parents, and to hold this corporation accountable.

Your primary trust as a Board is to ensure this corporation and our schools are unimpeachable in their reputation for competence, integrity, stewardship, and accountability – both the reality and the perceptions of that are in your care. Tonight is when you should be in a position to request from us, coming out of this embarrassing debacle, our vote of Confidence that you GET THAT, and that in the future we can count on you to meet that trust.

We have schools here that we love, and Principals’ who we know we are incredibly fortunate for. But, as parents, we are gravely worried that their future is at risk from this corporation’s active mismanagement and questionable ethical compass. Far from providing the foundation for our schools’ success, TVLC is undermining their ability to focus on the education of our kids and tarnishing their reputation for integrity in our community.

Before we close tonight, I ask you to tell us if you acknowledge this is a Corporation in Crisis – and how you intend to reform to begin meeting your responsibilities.