



Matthew Weingart <weingartma@gmail.com>

LVCP Site Council meeting, 3/8

Matthew Weingart <weingartma@gmail.com>

Tue, Mar 8, 2016 at 8:10 AM

To: Phillip Weiss <phillipweiss@lvcp.org>, Linda Ransom <lindaransom@lvcp.org>, Gary Falcon <gfalcon@lvcp.org>, Brian Scharmann <bscharmann@lvcp.org>, Mary Wyosnick <mwyosnick@lvcs.org>, Scott Lessard <scottlessard@lvcp.org>, Eric Dillie <eldillie@lvcp.org>, Louann Tung <ltung@lvcp.org>, Brett Banducci <bbanducci@lvcp.org>, Julie Weingart <julieweingart@lvcp.org>, Tea Stephenson <tstephenson17@lvcp.org>, Shawn Cox <scox17@lvcp.org>

LVCP Site Council,

I am very disappointed that you took no action last night to censure or rebuke TVLC for their arrogant and dismissive behavior in response to your letter of 10 February, at the farcical TVLC Special Meeting on 3 March.

You need to be moving to regain control of your Board; you cannot be acting as though time were on your side.

Since last Thursday's meeting the root of the problem has been undeniably clear; it was confirmed when TVLC answered your question "To whom are you accountable?" with: "We are accountable to the BYLAWS".

Really?? That statement might be true in some narrow, picayune, legalistic sense. But as it concerns the point at hand: it is both logically absurd and morally outrageous.

Their failure to make reference to the authorizers, the parents, the students, or even the Mission, Vision, and Core Values – reinforced by obfuscating responses to your important, necessary questions – betrays that they have completely placed themselves above all external obligations, accountability, or control.

Continuing inaction on your part will make clear that you intend to tolerate it.

Further, their denial that a state of "crisis" currently exists – with the very existence of TVLC and perhaps our schools threatened – amounts to culpable self-deception at best. If you do not rebut their characterization, then you condone and abet it – along with any ensuing pattern of insufficient action.

You are at grave risk of PROVING – to supporters as well as to skeptics – that our "parent-governed school" cannot, in fact, be trusted to run itself responsibly.

If you remain passive and ineffectual much longer, you will leave our District authorizers (and perhaps State officials) no alternative but to step in, and in some fashion direct the necessary reforms that are not occurring from within. They would be derelict if they did not, given that our putative governance processes have so clearly failed. They have a legal mandate and a moral responsibility – and your abdication would force their hand. Although I have no doubt they would act in the best interests of the students, make no mistake: if it comes to that, we will have lost control.

In the event there is any doubt about what I, as a parent, expect from your role in the governance process, I have attached some emails below in which I responded to a Council member who was kind enough to ask before for that clarification.

I am imploring, for the sake of our schools: Get control of your child. As should be clear from the imminent return of Superintendent Torlakson, time is running out fast.

Sincerely,

Matt Weingart

LVCS/LVCP Parent

From: Matthew Weingart [mailto:weingartma@gmail.com]

Sent: Wednesday, February 24, 2016 9:35 AM

Subject: RE: FW: Site Council meeting, 2/22

I'm going to run with the Wagon metaphor is little more. Hope you'll indulge me....

LVCP is the Wagon; TVLC is the Horses.

Are the horses in charge? Is it "about" the horses? No!

The horses exist only to get the wagon where it's going.

If they're a good team, they will find the barn every time. The driver may not even need to tickle the reins. In fact, this is how it should be – when everything is right.

But whether you have that kind of self-guiding team or not, the driver is a fool if he drops the reins. He is the master and can never forget it.

If his family is in the wagon and he just lets the team run free, though, then he's actually worse than a fool: he is, in fact, a negligent, bad person.

If the Site Council, sitting in the driver's box, throws away the reins.... That forces us parents to climb out on the crosstrees and try to grab them.

Since I'm in a metaphor mood, here's a different one:

Several years ago, parents fought a battle to open a Charter School and gain independence from the Crown.

Now are we being told that our People's Body, our Continental Congress, has decided they didn't want the burdens of keeping a republic after all, and are handing the scepter back over to a new, even more unaccountable tyrant?

That is not why we fought a revolution.

(Understand that I'm not making a judgment about the current TVLC specifically, or any of its members. I don't need to. It is axiomatic that Constitutional safeguards need to be in effect ALWAYS – regardless of whether we happen to like the people currently running the show or not.)

Matt

From: Matthew Weingart [<mailto:weingartma@gmail.com>]

Sent: Tuesday, February 23, 2016 11:19 PM

Subject: RE: FW: Site Council meeting, 2/22

I really, sincerely, appreciate you asking [what it is that I expect from the Site Council]. Because I am not just “expressing frustration”: I absolutely am calling for something real and concrete.

“Concrete”, but very deliberately not specific. I am trying to refrain from prescribing my personal plan or script, “Do this, this, and this...”. I have my own thoughts, and am happy to share them if asked (as you have), but I don’t think they’re a uniquely special recipe – and it really makes no sense for me to offer my idea of a prescription to a patient who hasn’t even acknowledged he’s sick yet.

My current concern is with the more fundamental phase of Site Council maturation and development (“forming”) that needs to happen first.

In a word, the Site Council needs to OWN IT.

I strongly, deeply disagree with your premise that the Council can only make “non-binding requests” of TVLC. It may be that this is the underlying, critical point of disagreement that is feeding the variation of viewpoints on this matter, between some members of the Council and many of us parents.

My view of the governance model is: TVLC works for the parents; it is a creature of our creation; we define its goals, purpose, and foundational principles; we are the source of its legitimacy. It exists to serve our ends. It derives all its powers from the consent of the governed.

There could be different models. TVLC could be for-profit, and answer to investors. TVLC could be a non-profit under a larger corporation or foundation, who would be its director. But those are not the model we have.

So how does this “the schools/corporation belongs to the parents” thing work, really? How do “the people” exercise control over their organ, TVLC?

All of us who have studied representative governance know the drill: We elect representatives who we think are honest, competent, and reflect the principles that we, the electorate, want to see reflected in the organization. When things go well, we check in periodically, and generally sleep well at night – knowing that

we can turn our back for a while and the whole thing won't instantly run off the rails. But when it doesn't go well.... We begin by turning our backs a lot less, and calling on our representatives to give a more frequent accounting of themselves; if things deteriorate more, we turn to our option of voting the bums out; in extremis, we use the processes in place to recall them from their terms in office. In the final eventuality, we hold a revolution.

I don't want to take the Constitutional analogy too far, or get into varying viewpoints about States' rights. But TVLC really is a Federation of substantially independent States (schools), which in the purist construct the "federal government" exists only to enable and serve. That which may look like "Master" (purely by virtue of sitting at the apex of the pyramid) is in fact, very much, the ultimate Servant.

The Site Council is the mechanism through which we govern our corporation. You are both the "Upper House", representing the school LVCP as an entity, and the "Lower House", representing "We the People" as parents. You are the audit, check, counsel, and conscience for the TVLC Executive.

So, straight up: If the Site Council doesn't believe their FIRST OBLIGATION is to oversee TVLC, and ensure it is operating in the best interest of our school and in accordance with the principles we have ratified by accepting its stated Mission, Vision, and Core Values, then I, as a parent, have a major problem. My steering wheel has just come off in my hands.

I really am startled when you say requests from the Council for TVLC action (much less, for "information") are "non-binding". Requests from individual parents, maybe, could be dismissed as non-binding on occasion, if they were shown to be frivolous. But when the Site Council, in its legitimacy as the school's governing body and through its deliberative public processes, has formal questions... You think it's OK for TVLC to refuse?? If that's really the case, is TVLC accountable to anybody at all?

If you believe the Bylaws say this is so, then please point it out to me, because clearly we have something to fix. But unless the Bylaws state "ignore the parents and avoid communicating with them; break with their wishes if you want because you answer to no one", then I don't believe they get in the way of any of what I'm saying. In any case we parents expect the Corporation to find ways to work within the rules to carry out the trust we've given it WELL - not hide behind those rules to keep open the option of doing it poorly.

From my perspective as a parent, the Site Council has been stunningly inactive in their role as Overseers, of late. Up until December, there might (might) have been room for varying opinions on whether the Council needed to act forcefully in its oversight role. But since December, there is no escaping that extensive action (internal talk doesn't count) has been demanded. And the Council has taken precisely none (except for the bizarre, ineffectual "Why, Why, Why" letter, aimed at the CEO personally, not the Corporation), up until the reluctant, divided sending of last night's letter.

This is far, far short of my standard of OWN IT.

In my email this weekend, I described the situation as like a locomotive headed over a cliff. Maybe a better image is of a horse-drawn wagon – and the Site Council has dropped the reins.

There are some very critical, concerning questions that are currently still begging for answers. Until we KNOW (not just wish, or conveniently assume) those answers are satisfactory, we with corporate governance responsibilities – parents and Council – are in an active state of moral failure. Public education is a public trust: we fought for the right to “govern” our own school, and we got it. We wear this duty now whether we like it or not. We don’t get to punt.

I really do appreciate that you asked me to clarify myself, because last thing I want if for anything I’ve been saying to seem enigmatic. I am happy to discuss this more, anytime – I would really like to, to get more of your perspectives and inputs as well.

You are welcome to share this email with the other Council members (or anyone else) if you like, and you think it could clarify where I (and I believe, many other parents) are coming from.

Matt

C: [925-667-7794](tel:925-667-7794)

From: Matthew Weingart [mailto:weingartma@gmail.com]
Sent: Sunday, February 21, 2016 10:13 PM
To: 'Phillip Weiss' <phillipweiss@lvcp.org>; 'Linda Ransom' <lindaransom@lvcp.org>; 'Gary Falcon' <gfalcon@lvcp.org>; 'Brian Scharmman' <bscharmman@lvcp.org>; 'Mary Wyosnick' <mwyosnick@lvcs.org>; 'Scott Lessard' <scottlessard@lvcp.org>; 'Eric Dillie' <eldillie@lvcp.org>; 'Louann Tung' <ltung@lvcp.org>; 'Brett Banducci' <bbanducci@lvcp.org>; 'Julie Weingart' <julieweingart@lvcp.org>
Subject: Site Council meeting, 2/22

Dear Site Council Members,

Like many other parents, I am looking to your Monday meeting hopeful for a sign.

The sign I’m looking for is that you will acknowledge the crisis with TVLC and the threat it poses to our school, and show that you intend to rise to the occasion: that you intend to act with the vigor, tempo, and principles that the situation demands.

This is not just about sending one letter (necessary as that might be): It is about a commitment to drive the long-term reform that our corporation requires, but has shown no prospect of imposing on itself.

TVLC can no longer carry on ungoverned by the parents and unresponsive to their interests. But, we as parents have only one legitimate body that speaks for us and for our school – and that puts you in the hot seat.

I firmly believe the only thing that will save the current framework of our school is if it is operated under good, responsible, ethical, transparent governance. Today we do not have that; and frankly, the blame rests on us as parents... because we, through our Site Council, have systematically tolerated less.

There seems to be an undercurrent of feeling: "If we ask the hard questions, we could lose our school". I am telling you now: If you DON'T begin asking the hard questions, we assuredly will.

It may be that you feel the TVLC locomotive is already over the cliff, and there's nothing you can do now to save the train; that the time has come to simply jump off and watch. You may be right. A lot of opportunity has already gone by with nobody laying a finger on the brake, so the momentum is not in your favor.

But that one car on the train called LVCP is YOUR responsibility. We parents are looking for you to do everything in your power to save it.

Sincerely,

Matt Weingart

Parent