



Matthew Weingart <weingartma@gmail.com>

LVCP Joint Site Council meeting, 4/20

Matthew Weingart <weingartma@gmail.com>

Wed, Apr 20, 2016 at 10:10 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>, Tea Stephenson <tstephenson17@lvcp.org>, Shawn Cox <scox17@lvcp.org>
Cc: council@lvcs.org

LVCP Council Members,

I was deeply disappointed by remarks made from your table last night, seeking – yet again – to minimize your role as our Council for the stewardship of our school, and the part you have played in the unnecessary magnification of our present crisis.

I had no desire to write a letter this morning, but once again find that I have no choice – not for recriminations, but because of how critical it is that we not remain in a situation where you still don't "get it":

It is your disengagement that has permitted things to deteriorate to their present state. For months if not years, most of the issues have been present; since at least late last year, they have gone from being "present" to being blindingly obvious; over the past several months, they have tipped past being "obvious" and teetered on, if not fallen over, the edge of being a raging catastrophe.

Weekly newspaper articles; a mound of letters, public comments, and "free" research from your constituents; NOC's and NOV's from all quarters; brazen evasions and lies from the corporation. Through it all, what can you point to in your record as a Council that shows you took effective action to intervene? Even to make clear you disapproved of it all? Just to sound the public alarm?

We have never sought heroics or special expertise from you. We have only asked that you stand for what's right, and against what's wrong. When the corporation openly lied to and deceived the parents, we turned to our Council who is supposed to be looking out for us and asked, "Are you just going to let them get away with that?". Your answer has been "Yes". Is it any wonder the corporation was emboldened to push its abuse of our school farther?

Parents who would have eagerly answered your call and followed your leadership to put together solutions, have instead had to be consumed with the non-constructive work of simply trying to get you to get out of the way.

We were not and are not looking for you to do the job of the paid staff. We are not even asking that you spend more time. Speaking for myself at least, I have never sought any more than that you simply stand up for basic principles of accountability and good governance. We do not need you to become experts in the California Education Code or generally accepted accounting principles; simply bringing to bear your own personal ethics and pushing for good-faith conformity to the published "TVLC Core Values", and decisions putting the interests of our children first, would (until recently) have sufficed. When choices need to be made, we need you to be the ones who ensure they are for the harder right, not (as will always be the case in an ungoverned system) the easier wrong.

If you sensed anger in the room last night, I will put a word to the feeling that motivates it: Betrayal. You had the job, so in the past we tried – not because of indifference, but because of trust – to stand back and let you do it. Far from abdicating from supporting the school themselves, many parents simply, in teamwork and fair division of labor, focused their volunteer energies elsewhere. We mostly stayed strapped in our seats in the back of the plane, alongside our kids, white-knuckled but trusting that the pilots up in the cockpit, with the benefit of a windshield and all the instruments, didn't need passengers coming forward to tell them not to fly into the ground. But even when those of us back in coach started yelling months ago "pull up, pull up!", you have continued the descent.

It is ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL that you cease denial of your responsibilities and begin, wholly, to own them. We cannot muster a roomful of parents and put you in the hot seat alongside your LVCS counterparts every time there is a need to take action. You need to stand up and take ownership of your trust. YOU need to make the plan and sell it to the parent community; YOU need to find out the facts and inform us; YOU, not the disparate individual families you represent, need to Lead. This is not supposed to be, and cannot remain, the other way around. (Honestly, I doubt you will ever be able to accomplish anything if at every meeting you have as much unsolicited "help" as you brought upon yourselves last night.)

As one concrete, essential first action (which I have recommended before, to no effect): You need to secure quality, qualified training and consulting resources on the Brown Act – from an independent impartial resource outside TVLC. Perhaps you should even retain "your guy" (we will find the money someplace) who will sit in the room at every meeting to help you find the way to DO, rather than not-do. You have let yourselves be conditioned to see the Brown Act, not as the vehicle to ensure transparency it is intended to be, but as a byword for always having a reason to do and communicate nothing; it has rendered you nearly paralyzed. (Note that your LVCS counterparts seem to be greatly less encumbered in their ability to communicate and act; although they could benefit from sharing the same consulting resource too.)

This is not a game, folks. Volunteers or not, your job is real. As you heard from a broad number of your trustees last night: The lives and futures of students, the welfare of whole families, the professional livelihood of teachers, and a multi-million dollar corporation spending taxpayer funds are all in your care.

If not you, Who?

Matt Weingart

LVCS/LVCP Parent

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

Sent: Tuesday, March 8, 2016 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>

Subject: LVCP Site Council meeting, 3/8

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 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>
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