

Measure J Citizens Bond Oversight Committee (CBOC) Report to the Public

Summary:

In accordance with our mandated oversight responsibility, the Mt. Diablo Unified School District Measure J citizens bond oversight committee reports on the 2019-2020 fiscal year bond program to the trustees and to the public that the district has not managed its Measure J school bond program in a responsible manner:

- The district has not completed a “needs assessment” of facility shortcomings or modernization opportunities to be addressed by the bond program;
- The district has not approved a specific project list to drive construction plans, and
- The district has not published a priority list to guide funding and timing of the bond program work plan and schedule.

Background:

Californians have always supported high quality public education, and have traditionally approved school bond proposals to build and/or refurbish public school facilities. Prior to the passage of Prop39, such bond ballot measures required 2/3 voter approval. Toward the end of the 1990s, voter approval for school bonds dropped significantly, and in 2000 a state-wide ballot proposition (Prop 39) was passed, lowering the voter approval level from 2/3 to 55%. Prop 39 requires that school districts opting for Prop 39 bonds must establish an “independent citizens bond oversight committee” to monitor district bond program performance, and report its findings to the general public at least once per year.

In 2018, the Mt. Diablo Unified School District (MDUSD) placed a \$150 million school bond Measure J on the ballot, which passed. The ballot measure proposed to construct or improve district facilities with emphasis on enhanced air-conditioning, safety and security features, information technology updates and improved campus access under ADA requirements. The district has sold \$20 million in bonds, and has expended about \$2 million in the bond program to-date. The district has earned about \$.5 million in interest on unused bond funds.

After the election results were verified, the district formed the Measure J CBOC as required by Prop 39. The committee is composed of a cross section of community members, including district residents, parents, business people, seniors and taxpayer advocates, all volunteers serving without compensation. The committee meets regularly, and hears reports from district staff on progress in achieving what the voters were promised.

Findings:

The committee has never been given a list of specific projects on which bond money will be spent, nor a set of priorities by which staff should manage the bond program. Although several millions of bond money has been expended, no significant facility improvements have been completed to-date. However, district property owners are already paying the bond’s costs on their property tax bills.

It should be noted that the district has undergone major personnel changes at high levels, and that the COVID pandemic presents serious challenges to the district’s ability to meet its educational and facilities management mission. However, other local school districts with Prop 39 bond programs (John Swett, Moraga and the Community College districts) have succeeded in identifying and constructing promised improvements during the pandemic.

Conclusion:

The committee is compelled to report to the public that the district is not fulfilling its promises to voters, and is not managing the bond program responsibly.

Submitted by: Gina Haynes, Jack Weir - Annual Report Subcommittee

Presented by: John Ferrante, CBOC Chair