

Unified board to choose name of district, superintendent

By **David Richards**

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The process begins Monday.

The first meeting of the newly elected unified school district governing board is planned for Dec. 12 at 7 p.m. in Rooms 3 and 4 of the State Center Community College District in Oakhurst.

The board was formed during the Nov. 8 special election when local voters approved Measure P by nearly two thirds, resulting in the unification of the Yosemite Joint Union High School District with the Coarsegold Union School District.

"It appears that this is a pretty significant vote in support of this action," said Madera County Superintendent of Schools Dr. Sally L. Frazier. "Clearly the message was sent that the people are ready for this unification."

Voters also elected five Mountain Area residents from a pool of 11 to be the district's first governing board.

Over the next seven months, all three school boards, including the current Yosemite and Coarsegold district boards and the unified board, will meet separately before the unification becomes official July 1, 2006.

At that time, the unified district will then be represented by the unified board only, leaving the other two remnant boards to disband.

The items on Monday's agenda include the selection of meeting times and places, the selection of a name for the new district and a superintendent, and the swearing in of board members Priscilla Pike, Greg Schoonard, Christine Wilder, John Reynolds and Monika Moulin.

Bill McCabe, superintendent for both the Yosemite and Coarsegold districts, said Wednesday that Madera County Sheriff John Anderson will lead the swearing-in ceremonies.

Pike, Schoonard and Wilder received the three highest vote totals to secure three-year terms, while Reynolds and Moulin were elected to one-year terms.

Pike is a board member of the Yosemite Joint Union High School District, while Schoonard, Wilder and Reynolds are board members for the Coarsegold Union School District. Moulin is a local church music director.

"I think the main thing the board has facing it besides all of the preliminary planning is they do have the setting of their meeting times and locations," Frazier said. "They do have the selection of the name of the district and foremost is the selection of a superintendent."

Frazier, who is scheduled to call Monday's meeting to order, said the Madera County Office of Education is available to the new board until the board has its staff in place, particularly a superintendent.

The selection of a new superintendent is listed as a closed session agenda item and Frazier said that board members basically have three options in the process.

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One option is to keep the same superintendent, McCabe, who currently resides over both districts and has been the superintendent for the Yosemite school district for roughly 10 years. Another option is to name a new superintendent and a third would be to open the position for outside applications.

If the board makes a decision in closed session regarding a superintendent, Frazier said, that decision will then be made to the public once the closed session has ended.

"As long as they made some sort of decision that evening, they would be subject to make an announcement," Frazier said.

Also scheduled on Monday's agenda is the establishing of an operating budget and the election of a board president and clerk, who will both serve until the following annual organizational meeting.

Frazier added that while it is not on the agenda, she believed board members were planning on having some students participate in the meeting.

She also encouraged the public to attend.

"I know the newly appointed board members will certainly welcome the encouragement and support of the community," Frazier said.

The December meeting of the Yosemite Joint Union High School District was held Dec. 5 in the board room at Yosemite High School.

Among actions taken by the board, McCabe confirmed, included keeping last year's elected officers as is for the next six months before unification becomes official.

Linda Olson will remain as board president, while Pike will continue as board clerk.

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