

Newly elected unified board goes to work

By **David Richards**

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The governing board of the new school district unifying the Yosemite Joint Union School District with the Coarsegold Union School District met Monday night at the State Center Community College District in Oakhurst.

Over the course of the one hour and 15 minute board meeting, the five-member board made decisions involving the election of officers and the selection of both a district name and superintendent.

"I think it went extremely well," said Dr. Sally L. Frazier, Madera County Superintendent of Schools, who called the meeting to order. "They were very professional. They expressed themselves and they listened to the community. I thought it was exciting. This is going to be a strong board."

The unification, which was approved during the Nov. 8 special election when voters approved Measure P by a margin of two thirds, becomes official July 1, 2006. The current Yosemite and Coarsegold school boards will continue to meet independently from the unified board until the unification is finalized.

At Monday's meeting, the unified board unanimously named Christine Wilder its first president and Priscilla Pike its first clerk.

Wilder is also a board member of the Coarsegold Union School District along with fellow unified board members John Reynolds and Greg Schoonard. Pike is the lone unified member who is also a board member of the Yosemite Joint Union High School District, where she was recently reelected as the board's clerk. Board member Monika Moulin is a local church music director.

Also unanimously, the board approved a new name for the district, the Yosemite Joint Unified School District, a title encouraged by a handful of those in attendance, including local school officials who spoke during the public comment portion.

Randy Haggard, principal of Coarsegold Elementary School, said in an informal poll, that 23 employees stated they preferred the name Yosemite Joint Unified School District, while one preferred Yosemite Gold Unified School District.

The poll was one of several announced, with the majority voting in favor of the Yosemite Joint Unified School District title.

Members of the board agreed unanimously to meet through June at the current district office located at Yosemite High School. The meetings will be held on the fourth Tuesday of the month at 6:30 p.m., with the first meeting planned for Jan. 24.

Board members also agreed to revisit the item of board meeting location within the next six months to discuss the possibility of rotating meetings in Oakhurst and Coarsegold.



The new governing board of the district unifying the Yosemite Joint Union High School District with the Coarsegold Union School District met for the first time Monday in Oakhurst. Above: Madera County Sheriff John Anderson swears in new board members (from left to right): Christine Wilder, Greg Schoonard, John Reynolds, Monika Moulin and Priscilla Pike.
Photos by David Richards

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The board unanimously offered Bill McCabe the position of interim superintendent of the unified school district. The announcement was made by President Wilder after the board finished a 15-minute closed session.

McCabe is the current superintendent for both the Yosemite and Coarsegold districts.

Frazier confirmed that since the board offered McCabe the position as the interim superintendent, it will be expected to name a permanent superintendent, either McCabe or a different choice, within the next six months.

"I'm just real proud to have the opportunity to serve the new school district and move a progressive vision forward that serves all of our children and mountain areas," McCabe said.

Geri Kendall Cox, director of business and administrative services for Madera County, spoke to the board and said county staff is available to help in putting together a short-term budget for use between now and June 30 before a final budget is adopted prior to July 1.

Cox added that a start-up loan is available to the new district at an amount of no more than \$60,000.

Cox confirmed Tuesday that the loan is an interest-free loan and would be repayable in two installments, one each at the end of the next two years.

The board did not make any budget decisions at Monday's meeting.

Also at the meeting, Judy Durr, the district's web designer, said she is in the process of selecting a color scheme for the new district, a combination of Yosemite's blue and Coarsegold's gold, as well as securing an Internet domain name.

In the final portion of the meeting, the board voted unanimously to hold a special public meeting with Superintendent McCabe scheduled for Jan. 5 at 6:30 p.m. at Yosemite High School.



Bill McCabe, superintendent for the current Yosemite and Coarsegold school districts and offered the interim position for the unified district, stands with Dr. Sally L. Frazier, Madera County Superintendent of Schools, Monday at the State Center Community College District Oakhurst Center.

Photo by David Richards



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