

District name could change

By [David Richards](#)

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Board of trustees for the Yosemite Joint Unified School District discuss removing the word "joint"

The board of trustees for the Yosemite Joint Unified School District gave direction to Superintendent Bill McCabe Tuesday to begin the process of a district name change.

The district's new name would be the Yosemite Unified School District.

The decision was made during the board's regular monthly meeting held at Yosemite High School.

The newly unified board was formed as a result of the Nov. 8 special election when voters approved Measure P, unifying the Yosemite Joint Union High School District with the Coarsegold Union School District.

At the board's first meeting Dec. 12, after hearing from officials of the Madera County Office of Education and feedback from educators and residents, board members unanimously approved the current name.

McCabe said Tuesday the board's initial decision was based on information that the new district would need to have the word "joint" in the title because the district includes two different counties, Madera and Mariposa.

While the majority of the Yosemite Joint Unified School District encompasses Madera County, students in the Mariposa County areas of Fish Camp and Wawona are also in the district.

McCabe added that after consulting with the district's legal counsel and with educators from the Turlock Unified School District, who underwent a similar unification process and a similar name change, it was determined that "joint" did not have to be in the title.

Since the board's decision to name the district in December, the board has already begun the process of establishing itself as the Yosemite Joint Unified School District.

Geri Cox, director of business and administrative services for the Madera County Office of Education, said the decision for a name change now could cause some confusion.

For instance, Cox said, the board has already been identified as the Yosemite Joint Unified School District under the California State Board of Equalization, an agency which sends information to the county assessors for tax purposes.

The board has also already applied for and received a County District Code by the state for purposes of an administrative numbering system for the California Department of Education.

"It's not impossible to overcome administratively, but it could create some confusion," Cox said.

Cox added the current name follows the definition as defined in the state education code.

"It clarifies they have territory in more than one county," Cox said.

Education Code Section 83 states, "a unified district may comprise territory in more than one county," while Section 87 states, "a school district lying in more than one county is a joint school district."

McCabe said Section 83 is the one that would be most appropriate for the district's situation and added combining the two codes isn't necessary.

Board chair Christine Wilder expressed concern on the name change, stating that such an act

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now may make the district seem a little disorganized.

"We had a meeting; we discussed a name and we chose a name," she said. "I'm not hearing a big reason why we should change it, but if we decide to, we need to follow the ed. code."

To complete a district name change, the education code requires signatures of 15 registered voters and a public hearing process.

In section 35001, the code states that once a petition has been presented to the board, board members have no less than 10 days and no more than 40 days to act upon the petition.

It also states that notice be given to all parties interested in the hearing by publishing it in the newspaper within the school district.

Board member Greg Schoonard said he felt the name should be changed and added that if the board had received the information it knows now to begin with, the name would be the Yosemite Unified School District instead of the Yosemite Joint Unified School District.

"I think the name is cumbersome," he said of the current title.

Board members Monika Moulin, John Reynolds and Priscilla Pike agreed with Schoonard and the board as a whole then gave direction to McCabe to draw up the papers to begin the name change process.

The next board meeting is March 14 at Yosemite High School at 6:30 p.m.



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