

Carey Casciola

From: Alyssa Hicks [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, May 6, 2024 1:04 PM
To: Carey Casciola
Subject: For board attention and board agenda.
Attachments: OCSD Board.docx

Hello Carey,
Can you please forward this to all board members as well as include it in the board packets for the meeting on May 9,2024. Thank you and have a wonderful day.

Alyssa Hicks

As a longtime resident and current resident of Oceano, I feel that I need to speak on a few concerns I have regarding the OCSD and the Board of Directors. I recently read the agenda for the OCSD board meeting for May 9, 2024 like many others and I was glad to see that the district is placing together a media policy for the district employees and the board of directors. I do believe that this will be beneficial to have ground rules for all parties on what can and cannot be talked about to media outlets and who should be the designated person to do so. I do not agree that the staff should be punished for talking to the media because I feel that it would violate their first amendment rights and I hope that the local union that represents the staff has been notified of these potential changes. I believe that if the Board of Directors goes ahead with that part of the policy, the Board of Directors need to be held accountable as well any time they should speak to the media as well. I am urging that it be written into the policy in regards to some form of action that the Board can be held to if they are the ones who are not designated to speak but do it anyway. Staff shouldn't be the only ones held accountable when it has consistently been two or three board members constantly quoted in the media, not staff. I also do not agree with the reasoning behind what the legal counsel has stated as the reasoning behind this item being brought forward. It was stated that this was placed on the agenda due to recent media communications with regards to the interim general manager's abrupt and immediate resignation and the fact that the media knew before the directors and the legal counsel. To an outside person reading this, it seems that the Board of Directors and legal staff are trying to point fingers without directly pointing fingers at the OCSD staff as the media leaks. Also, it is common knowledge that the legal counsel works for the board and takes direction from the board. So, for this item be on the agenda they would have had to be asked by the Board President who is Charles Varni, to work on this since the OCSD now has not GM until the point of a new one being onboarded. This leaves me to believe that Board President Varni is the main person trying to point fingers at our wonderful OCSD staff. I believe very whole heartedly that it was not a member of the staff but that it was a board member or President Varni that notified the media at CalCoastNews and the NewTimes SLO regarding this matter. Why would I think this? Well because in the Cal Coast News article, it was said by staff that the GM notified the staff of his departure for a personal commitment at around 10am but I find it hard to believe that from when he left the office to attend to his personal matter and to whatever time he sent in his resignation, that not a single board member knew of his resignation until the point of the media finding out. Why do I think this? Because less than two hours after it was said that the GM left his office for his personal matter, Board President Varni had drafted and posted a press release regarding the matter that he posted on his personal next-door account which in itself is another issue. So, it makes you think who is really leaking any information out to the press? I hope the staff has notified their local union representation regarding this and I hope to see and hear their thoughts about this at the meeting this Thursday.

Another concern I have is that Board President Varni releasing the "Press Release" from the OCSD on his personal social media. This should never have been done. If there was an official press notification that the public needed to know about, it should have been posted through the official pages of the OCSD not his personal accounts. It also should have been discussed with all directors in an open meeting, which it was not. He specifically says it is a press release from the OCSD and attached his title of Board President to it, along with his district email and phone number. But there was not an official press release ever voted on by the whole board or ever released on the official

pages. I believe he has violated the bylaws and potentially the Brown Act by doing this and I hope that this is being addressed and he is held accountable by the other members of the board.

Thank you for your time and I hope to hear back regarding this matter whether it is via email or a verbal response during the board meeting on Thursday.

Sincerely,

Alyssa Hicks