

April 7, 2021 Board Meeting PUBLIC COMMENTS

1) Tue, Apr 6, 2021 at 3:00 PM
Jill Zapata

Dear Superintendent Chief Learning Officer Ghysles and esteemed members of our School Board

My name is Jill Parmeter Zapata and I have been a public school teacher in California for 23 years, over 15 of which have been here in TTUSD. In the time that I have worked for TTUSD, I have taught at 3 high schools, received the Linda Brown Fellowship Award and been recognized as one of TTUSD's Teachers of the Year. Additionally, I have been a lead facilitator for West Ed's Reading Apprenticeship Literacy program for over 10 years. I am not writing to list my accolades in hopes of receiving praise, but more importantly to show that it is not hyperbole when I say that teaching this year and last have been some of the most challenging experiences in my career.

When I walked out of my classroom last March 13th, 2020, I thought I was leaving for a couple weeks. I don't think any of us could have foreseen how drastically our teaching and learning lives would change. Regardless of the challenges I faced, I met them head on. I continued to work on how I could best support the learning environment for my students; I learned new interfaces and ways of connecting with learners; I upheld the tenets of collaborative conversations, metacognitive thinking and disciplinary literacies across all classes. And above all, I was flexible. When we went to purely distance learning, I crafted my lessons to meet students in their online learning environments. When we returned to classrooms, I moved my lessons back into the world of hardcover books and papers and pencils. When we transitioned to hybrid classes, I put my materials back online and planned for direct instruction classes too. Sometimes the schedule of hybrid classes required me to manage 16 different sections of courses and students weekly. I did all of this to the best of my ability because I love being a teacher. I love my students, I love my school and I love the community that I live and work in. But to be honest, right now, I am not feeling the love from my employer.

Imagine my dismay, after bringing my best game to one of the most difficult years in my teaching profession, to be told by my union that we were denied a cost of living raise this year. The Tahoe Basin is an expensive, desirable location to live in. We have all seen the huge influx of residents in our community in the last year and it has impacted us immensely (Truckee grapples with urban flight influx | SierraSun.com). From the lack of housing to the traffic increases, wherever you turn in our community there are more people. Inevitably, this increase in residents leads to an increase in the cost of living. The district itself has acknowledged that cost implicitly in its ongoing work to find housing for its employees. The action of the district informing its employees about affordable housing opportunities reflects the district's understanding of the challenges we all face affording to live here. Additionally, the district's

ongoing work to make housing accessible to its employees also reflects the reality of the real estate market. The desire to live in our community has created a hugely expensive, competitive real estate market. And as those homes sell, the houses are reassessed and those reassessments contribute to a higher taxation rate which in turn helps fund our basic aid district.

What about Tahoe makes it such a desirable place to live? Well we know the obvious physicality of the region is one reason. But we've been told by TTUSD numerous times that an additional contributing factor is the greatness of our schools. Yet, at a time when the district could be honoring its employees with a recognition of the hard work and dedication that has maintained our district's greatness this year with a cost of living adjustment, the district has chosen not to.

We are your greatest asset. Your classrooms would not be full of lively, happy engaged students if not for the teachers building those learning communities. Your brand new schools would not be thriving learning environments if not for the teachers in those buildings. Your buses would not be full of chatter and excitement as students go back and forth to school if not for the teachers who foster that excitement daily.

If you truly believe that we do amazing work, then show us that through your actions, not just through your words. I urge all of you to revisit the offers that TTEA has made in negotiations. I believe my union has made multiple fair offers to meet the district where it stands and to avoid setting the budget into deficit spending for next year. I believe my union has worked tirelessly to represent my best interests at the negotiating table and I stand behind the work and offers they have made. It is my hope that TTUSD can rise to the occasion and honestly support the amazing work we do, rather than giving lip service through emails and social media posts. It's one thing to say you understand the difficulties and stresses of this year. It's another thing to show it through your actions.

On behalf of my voice and the voices of teachers behind me who are not speaking up, please reconsider your negotiations with TTEA and do the right thing by us. A cost of living raise and an opportunity to offset the cost of the expense of living and working in this community does not seem like too much to ask after all we have given.

Thank you for your time,

Sincerely

Jill Parmeter Zapata

2) On Wed, Apr 7, 2021 at 12:53 PM
Liz Bowling

Hello -- please see below for public comment at this evening's meeting:

Good evening, I am submitting public comment to the TTUSD Board of Directors as a parent and community member. I want to thank the TTUSD Board, Superintendent and District Staff for working so diligently to reopen schools 5 days a week. Your efforts over the past year have truly been exemplary and I want to acknowledge how grateful we are. My children look forward to going to school everyday -- to engage in person with their friends and teachers. Thank you so much for working tirelessly for the students in the Truckee-Tahoe community.

Liz Bowling
Parent of two TTUSD students (Kindergarten & 4th Grade)

3) Wed, Apr 7, 2021 at 2:22 PM
Erin LeFevers

April 7, 2021

Dear School Board Members, Superintendent, and Community listening to tonight's meeting.

Several years ago--in 2007, I stood before the school board as a newly single mom and explained how my paycheck was not getting me through the month. That by the 20th of the month, I hoped I had enough food to get me to the first and that my kids didn't need anything for school. Those were very scary and nerve-wracking times for me.

Now 14 years later, I am having the same issue. This time it is myself and my husband, who is also a teacher. We are veteran teachers close to and at the top of our pay scale. We do not have children at home, yet we are struggling to make ends meet.

All of our utilities have gone up over the course of the last several years--while we have not been compensated enough to cover those increases.

Our fire insurance is up over 300% since 2018 going from \$1500 a year to now over \$4500. The little increases that have come over the last 3 years since that time have not even put a dent in that enormous increase.

Our health insurance costs have increased BUT our services covered have decreased and now I have to find a new dentist since the only one in Tahoe City covered by our insurance is no longer taking our insurance.

I try to shop locally to support my community, even though my grocery bill and gas costs are more expensive doing so because these local businesses are owned and operated by my students and their parents.

Every year employees working in this district have to fight for a raise--What company does not anticipate giving its employees a raise every year???? Why do we have to fight and have our names dragged through the mud just to be able to afford the cost increases that surround us???

It is incredibly short-sighted that TTUSD does not have a set plan for increases each year. Every year they come to the table offering 0% (except this year but a 2% after record revenues and pandemic money is laughable). When the union asked for another 1% increase to the 2%--we get the deficit spending threat. Our reserves are at an all-time high--the highest that I have seen in the last 22 years that I have been working at TTUSD.

Teachers and support staff work in the trenches every day to provide the best possible experience for our students. Most teachers work well into the night grading and planning--what other profession sees its people working after hours with no pay? Our schools are award-winning because of all the extra time we put in. Yet we are treated like vermin by the district--brushed aside and stomped upon.

I am proud to work at North Tahoe High School and I am damn proud to be part of TTEA. BUT I am not proud to be a part of TTUSD.

Erin LeFevers

4) Wed, Apr 7, 2021 at 2:30 PM
Michele Hood

Dear Board Members,

My husband and I have been a part of the Tahoe community for over twenty years and are now fortunate enough to have young children in the Tahoe Truckee Unified School District. Words can not describe the appreciation we have for my children's teachers, past and present. The support and devotion shown to them are immeasurable. During the past year, in the midst of a pandemic, this same care was amplified to fill my children's fear with hope and reassurance that they were loved and important. These teachers, who are our friends, neighbors, and family put their fears aside and made it their goal to make the children in this district feel safe. They consistently went with the flow, changing their teaching style to match the needs and restrictions of the pandemic. The teachers stepped up to the challenges that were put in front of them with courage in a very uncertain time. As an extremely grateful parent, I stand behind my children's teachers. I feel they should be compensated appropriately.

Sincerely,
Michele Hood

5) Wed, Apr 7, 2021 at 4:17 PM

Brandy DiFiore

Dear TTUSD Board,

I write this email as a parent of a second grader and kindergartener in our wonderful district. I wanted to let you know that we are so proud of our teachers. They have truly gone above and beyond in these tumultuous times that we have been living in. Over the course of the entire year, I have seen my children's teachers create wonderful lessons, finding creative ways to reach students digitally, and working countless and painstaking hours to ensure that the students in their classrooms are getting everything they possibly can when it comes to their learning. All of this, while districts across the country have struggled to even connect with their students remotely. While many districts continue to teach remotely, our teachers have risen to every challenge thrown their way, shifting back and forth through multiple learning models with very little time to transition.

The reality is, since March of 2020, school never closed. The building did. And it was because of the amazing work of our teachers who reimagined the classroom and kept the magic of kindergarten alive for our daughter or continued to foster the love of learning for our son. What TTUSD families were offered during this past year was something that MANY other districts across the country could not offer their own families.

Yet through all of this, many of our teachers have worked with little to no recognition from their families or little more than just scattered words of praise at a Board meeting or two. In fact, the attitude of the Board towards teachers has come off quite negative at times. I am confident that our district can do more to reward the hard work of our teachers and staff over this past year.

It is no secret that the financial position of the District is in a very good place. Property tax revenue is high, reserve funds for the district are higher than ever, new construction is continuing to grow Measure AA funding at an astonishing rate, home sales and prices are at new highs. Yet, we have teachers in our district losing housing, unable to have enough purchasing power to own a home in the area. This will be a growing problem, where we risk losing great teachers in our district that are forced to live out of the area or unable to attract new teachers to the area.

Our teachers did not get a raise last year and the District is in a position to not only honor all of their hard work, but to show them they are committed to their long term sustainability in our growing community.

I am ultimately confident that you, the Board, will do the right thing for our teachers and our community who thrives under their care. I am so proud and lucky to have my children in this wonderful district.

Sincerely,

Parent of a Kindergarten and Second grade TTUSD scholars

