



SANTA MONICA-MALIBU UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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NEWS RELEASE**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
March 22, 2018

**SMMUSD School Board Approves Framework for Malibu Unification**  
***Fifty-year revenue-sharing plan recommended***

The Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District Board of Education approved a framework for Malibu unification, with a 50-year revenue-sharing plan, at a special board meeting held on March 20, 2018 in the district's boardroom in Santa Monica.

After a three-hour presentation and discussion, the school board voted 6-1 to approve a unification plan that will be pursued provided that the City of Malibu withdraws or temporarily halts consideration of the petition by Los Angeles County Committee on School District Organization while additional details of this concept are worked out.

Representatives appointed by Superintendent Dr. Ben Drati and by the City of Malibu will convene to discuss what the board hopes will be a unified effort to achieve Malibu unification in the most expeditious manner possible.

Unification is the term used to describe the reorganization of the SMMUSD into two separate school districts. The board's decision is intended to achieve the community of Malibu's interest in having local control to serve the near 1,700 students in the four Malibu schools within SMMUSD at this time, while also achieving Santa Monica community's interest in ensuring that the revenue base that supports its ability to educate its students remains stable and unharmed.

The board decision follows two-and-a-half years of review and analysis, along with several opportunities for public comment and public board discussions held in Malibu and Santa Monica.

The motion passed by the board approves the concept of a 50-year revenue-sharing framework for Malibu unification. The board directed its leadership, along with the superintendent, to reach out to the City of Malibu and present this concept for unification. In presenting this concept, the board asks the Malibu City Council to withdraw or put on hold its current petition for unification until a time when the groups can collaboratively come to an agreement regarding the details of the concept the board adopted.

Among other topics, the board motion states that it would like to have the following points addressed during the conversations/deliberations:

- The framework for an equitable sharing of property taxes between both districts;

- The potential sharing of discretionary or local revenues for a limited period of time or a series of off-sets to create an equitable revenue stream;
- A structured mechanism for evaluating, rebalancing, and/or adjusting the formula at certain intervals;
- A performance objective/standards that any adjustments or rebalancing must continue to meet;
- A guiding principle that stability and equity for all students in both districts is essential; and
- The possibility that a charter configuration be utilized as an interim mechanism to unification, if desired by the City of Malibu.

The item was passed with the motion by Board Member Laurie Lieberman and a second by Board Member Oscar de la Torre, who voted yes, along with Board President Dr. Richard Tahvildaran-Jesswein, Board Vice President Jon Kean and members Craig Foster and Ralph Mechur. The only no vote was from Maria Leon-Vazquez, who voiced her concern that all students be equitably served, while expressing willingness to support her colleagues in moving forward with this framework.

“I’m pleased with the direction of this framework as it clearly acknowledges and supports the importance of local control for both our communities,” commented Craig Foster, school board member and Malibu resident. “I have faith that impartial experts, working with leadership from both communities, will craft equitable, workable mechanisms fair to both Santa Monica and Malibu.”

The unification process is complex, with nine criteria needing to be met before approval by the LA County committee and the State Department of Education. The financial consideration focuses on one of the nine criteria that is considered to be a critical part of the process.

“The district supports Malibu’s interest in the local control it desires, while ensuring that the remaining Santa Monica USD remains whole,” Dr. Tahvildaran-Jesswein said. “This board action is the first step toward Malibu’s goal of unification in the most expeditious and conciliatory manner possible.”

For background information, please visit the [Malibu Unification](#) website.

Visit the online School Services of California [presentation](#) and [report](#) to the school board, March 20, 2018.

The video of the [March 20, 2018 school board meeting](#) can be viewed online. This item starts at 1:47 into the recording.

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