

# KERN VALLEY SUN

---

## SFUSD picks board members

October 16, 2018

By: Ashley Loza

The South Fork Union School District held its monthly meeting on Thursday, October 11.

The board touched on new board members, standardized state testing scores, and a potential grant to address drinking water upgrades on the middle school campus.

The board voted in two new trustees, Mike Morgan and Tony Cain to fill the two positions left open by former board member Karrie Bunting and current Board Clerk Sherry Nichols, who will finish her term.

Morgan was initially appointed in Bunting's place after her resignation in June.

The decision took some time, as Morgan was both the sitting fifth member of the board and one of the candidates and, therefore, unable to vote, leaving four voting members and the possibility of a tied vote.

Voting members were split between Cain and Michelle Hill, with Board Member Eric Hafenfeld and Board President Dale Creighton in favor of Cain, and Nichols and Board Member Daures Stephens in favor of Hill.

After some tied votes, the board opened a discussion in the interest of breaking their tie. Stephens and Nichols stated their favor for Hill's ability to bring fresh ideas to the district, especially given that her own young children will be attending school there.

Hafenfeld stated that he had known Cain for some time and believed in his ability to think outside the box, while Creighton was concerned with the appearance of a conflict of interest. Creighton felt that because Hill is related to him via his cousin, it would be difficult to navigate a potential conflict of interest.

Ultimately, Stephens broke the tie, saying that he put great faith in the advice of Creighton and Hafenfeld. Nichols abstained from the roll call vote to approve both candidates.

Villani noted that the scores received for state testing were preliminary, but that final scores would be received in November. Currently, Villani said the schools are scoring just below the state average, although they are scoring at or above other schools in the same geographical region.

Villani pointed out that some of the lower scores are attributable to the state now requiring all standardized testing to be done on the computer. In a time when touch screens are more commonplace, many young children are accustomed to phones and tablets but have no practice using a mouse and keyboard.

Villani also pointed out that while testing on tablets is possible, the schools' current access to a reliable internet connection makes tablets a less reliable option. With the hard-wired computers, Villani says a consistent connection is more dependable.

Second and third grade teacher Crystal Carver confirmed that her students are more comfortable with written tests than those administered on the computer. She has been encouraging students to write down work before transferring it to the computer in an effort to give them the training needed to feel comfortable with the new testing standards.

"The way I look at it, if I get them to do this now, it'll be way easier down the road," said Carver.

The board also discussed the first steps toward a grant for a Drinking Water Access Improvement Project through Self-Help Enterprises.

The project would involve two parts – replacement drinking fountains and filling stations and a water holding tank that meets state capacity standards.

The board addressed that currently, about 60 percent of the water fountains are shut off in the winter so that they do not freeze. In addition, not all fountains are adequately placed for all activities.

Carver confirmed that trying to supervise both children at play and those who have gone to the drinking fountains is a challenge.

The current water holding tank at the middle school is also out of compliance with state standards. While the current tank holds 5,000 gallons, the state requires a capacity closer to 50,000.

While an initial correspondence with Administrative Assistant Debbie Kennedy stated that Self-Help Enterprises could not guarantee that the district would not have to pay beyond the money granted, a representative of Self-Help at the meeting informed the board that all costs would be covered by the state.

The board authorized Villani to approve the application process, and further action may be taken at November's board meeting.

The board's next regularly scheduled meeting is on Thursday, November 8, at the South Fork Middle School cafeteria.