

**LETTERS | Opinion** *This piece expresses the views of its author(s), separate from those of this publication.*

## School board meetings are meant to include the public

**Jeff Daily** Your turn

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As we move toward preparing for the new school year, the topic of whether to open the schools or start in a remote venue was a difficult choice for all of us. The advent of “Zoom” has opened up the board meetings to virtually everyone and this is a very good thing. In previous years, board meetings were poorly attended but now meetings are available to everyone on items of interest to them and to see how your school board works.

As you know, school board meetings are public meetings and subject to the open meeting laws of our state. What this means is that your directors cannot talk with each other in any forum where a quorum of directors (in our case three) are present. This is a very important protection so that no business is conducted without the public being able to view the proceedings. This applies to telephone conversations, email between directors, and meeting at a coffee house. So, anytime three directors are present, it is a public meeting and must be disclosed as such.

The only time directors are allowed to discuss business is at publicly announced meetings such as our board meetings. Therefore, that is the only time the directors have to discuss topics of interest and issues facing the district. Our current board is more vocal than previous boards, and, again, that is a very good thing since issues can be discussed with a variety of input to help insure that district issues are discussed versus just being rubber stamped. Sometimes, the discussion is “messy” as each director does their own research and each uses a variety of resources which are not usually the same. Therefore, the directors are meeting for the first time on any variety of subjects on the agenda.

As a director, I can ask the superintendent questions should I choose prior to the meeting. I do not do this since it deprives you, the public, of what the question was and what the answer is. Many times, directors ask questions they know the answer to but the purpose is to let the public hear the question and the response. Some people see this as “messy” and verbose but this is an effort to include the public in the discussion since they are spending their time to learn about a particular issue. As I said, Zoom has made the meetings much more interactive than ever before.

The current composition of the board pretty much assures that items on the agenda will be discussed, not just dismissed as routine and rubber stamped to move the meeting along. While sometimes painful, discussion of the issues and the sharing a variety of views usually yields the best decision. The policy of “majority vote” on the board usually assures that most decisions reflect an outcome supported by a majority of our community.

Please contact myself, or any board member with your questions, concerns, or issues with the SKSD.

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