

Local Officials Join Call for CUSD Trustees to Step Down

New Investigative TV Reports Released

Michael Winsten

A new televised investigative news report features officials from across South Orange County calling for the immediate resignation of the four remaining Capistrano Unified "Fleming-Era Trustees" – Sheila Benecke, Marlene Draper, Mike Darnold and Duane Stiff.

Over the past two years, the Capistrano Unified School District has been rocked by numerous scandals and allegations of government corruption and mismanagement. As part of an on-going criminal investigation of the CUSD leaders, Orange County District Attorney Tony Rackauckas recently announced the indictment of former Superintendent James Fleming on three felony counts.

Fleming is charged with misappropriation of public funds, use of school funds to defeat a recall of his political allies, and conspiracy. If convicted, Fleming could serve up to four years in prison.

Former Assistant Susan McGill has been charged with two felony counts: conspiracy and perjury. If convicted, she faces up to five years in prison.

The indictments relate primarily to Fleming's creation of multiple versions of a political "enemies" list – lists that included the names of children. These lists were allegedly created during school district work hours, using district resources and district employees and accessing confidential district information.

Rackauckas confirmed they have also investigated allegations against the Fleming-era Trustees for engaging in conflicts of interest, holding non-public meetings and conducting election and political activities using taxpayer funds and taking away resources from the students at Capistrano Unified.

In response to the indictments and continuing problems in the beleaguered school district, local officials from across South Orange County are now speaking out and demanding change.

Full Disclosure -- an Emmy Award winning, nationally recognized, independent news program has released two new installments in its critically

acclaimed series of television investigative reports on the corruption and mismanagement that has plagued CUSD for years.

The latest programs feature three members of the RSM City Council, Mayor Tony Beall, Mayor Pro Tem Gary Thompson and Council Member Neil Blais.

Also featured are Aliso Viejo Mayor Carmen Cave, Mission Viejo Mayor Gail Reavis, San Clemente Council Member Steve Knoblock, and San Juan Capistrano Council Members Mark Neilson and Lon Uso.

The four Fleming-Era Trustees, who remain under a criminal investigation by the District Attorney and Grand Jury, again refused to be interviewed or to respond to the allegations of corruption and mismanagement.

However, Ellen Addonizio and Anna Bryson, two of the newly-elected members of the CUSD Board of Trustees agreed to be interviewed. Addonizio and Bryson both called for the remaining Fleming-era trustees to be held accountable.

Trustee Addonizio stated, "It is reprehensible the Fleming-era Trustees failed to hold the Superintendent accountable."

Trustee Bryson agreed, "Accountability is something you accept when you go on any board."

RSM Councilman Blais stated the four remaining Fleming-era trustees "are complicit in this whole affair and they need to step down."

RSM Mayor Pro Tem Gary Thompson concluded, "Good public servants would recognize that when you get to the point where you no longer have the support of the people, for the good of the community and best interests of the organization you represent, it is time to step aside."

The new investigative reports will be aired on 45 cable systems during the first two weeks of September throughout California and excerpts are available for viewing on the internet from www.fulldisclosure.net website.

Cox Communications airs *Full Disclosure* investigative reports locally on Channel 31 every Wednesday at 6:00 PM as a public service to our community. **The two new blockbuster reports focusing upon the Capistrano Unified School District will air on September 5th and September 12th.**

You can watch a free eight minute Internet video preview of these two reports, as well as all the previous reports relating to the corruption and mismanagement in CUSD, by visiting the Full Disclosure Network's website at: <http://www.fulldisclosure.net>

WATCH: Full Disclosure Investigative Reports

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Wednesday September 5th 6:00 p.m. Channel 31

Wednesday September 12th 6:00 p.m. Channel 31