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FUESD SETTLES END OF SUPERINTENDENT'S CONTRACT

Following a closed session at the Fallbrook Union Elementary School District Board of Trustees meeting on Monday, Nov. 7, the Board reported that it has successfully negotiated a settlement and exit plan with District Superintendent Dr. Candace Singh, ending what would have been a protracted and expensive legal battle. The Board voted to approve the settlement agreement.

The lawsuit that the Board prevented centered around the Superintendent's recent allegations of harassment, intimidation, bullying and retaliation, and allegations of a hostile work environment, which stemmed from the comments and behavior of a current Board member, Caron Lieber.

This is not the first time such a situation has occurred. In January 2021, a formal complaint was filed against Mrs. Lieber, when Dr. Singh alleged Mrs. Lieber's creation of a hostile work environment through harassment, bullying and intimidation. That situation took nine months to resolve, and the September 2021 settlement agreement included, in part, the entire Board's commitment that these behaviors would end.

In September 2022, new allegations of harassment and retaliation by Mrs. Lieber were made by Dr. Singh, which created the potential for litigation.

Today's settlement, a total one-time payment of \$387,000, meets the requirements mandated by the Superintendent's employment contract, which includes 12 months'

salary and unused vacation time. Dr. Singh's last day with the District will be November 30.

"This is unquestionably the best possible financial outcome for the FUESD because it is far less than the cost of litigation and damages, which have run into the millions in school districts and other government entities," commented Board President Suzanne Lundin.

Lundin went on to clarify that Dr. Singh did not resign in early October. The Board's October 3 announcement indicated that the Superintendent expressed her interest in moving on to the next phase in her career and that negotiations were in the very earliest stages.

Additionally, Lundin noted that the Superintendent's decision to leave was based on her complaint of ongoing harassment and retaliatory behavior by a single Board member – Caron Lieber. For example, while Mrs. Lieber has recently argued against the Superintendent's 5% salary increase: (1) Mrs. Lieber personally approved this increase in the Superintendent's four-year contract, which Mrs. Lieber signed in 2020; and (2) it is not within the Board's authority to unilaterally make changes to an employment contract, especially after the terms have been agreed to by the parties.

"Today's settlement ends a sad chapter for the FUESD. While our amazing staff work tirelessly to support the educational and social-emotional needs of our students, our District has been forced to deal with this distraction, the upheaval of leadership, and a financial settlement. We are losing a veteran and skilled educator and leader due to actions by a member of the very Board that is charged with protecting the District's interests," said Lundin. "With this matter settled, we look forward to refocusing our efforts on supporting and directing the District to provide the very best education possible to our students."

Lundin added, "We also look forward to working closely with our school's leadership team, that includes teachers and staff, and the community to select a new superintendent who will lead the District with the excellence expected of the FUESD."

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The Fallbrook Union Elementary School District provides a kindergarten through eighth-grade education to students across nine school sites, including two schools located aboard Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton. Located in the northernmost part of San Diego County, FUESD provides a wide-ranging set of educational opportunities to a culturally diverse population of students.