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FAQ on Ross Valley Charter School (RVCS)

Q. What is a charter school?

- A. *Charter schools are public schools operating independently of the school district in which they are physically located. The laws and regulations governing charter schools are generally more broad than for other public schools and school districts.*

Q. What is RVCS and how do I obtain a copy of their petition?

- A. *“RVCS” (Ross Valley Charter School), is being proposed by teachers, parents and others within our multi-age program (MAP). The group filed a petition with the Board of Trustees to approve creation of an independent educational entity, a charter school, effective July 1, 2015. Details of RVCS are outlined in their charter petition document. A copy of the charter petition can be found on the District website:*

<http://www.rossvalleyschools.org/index.php/topics-of-interest>

Q. If MAP becomes a charter school, will they still be part of our district?

- A. *No. RVCS, is applying to be independent from the Ross Valley School District. This means they are a completely separate entity responsible for their own academic program and fiscal viability. RVCS would have its own Board, administration and staff.*

Q. How are charter schools funded?

- A. *Like all public schools, charters receive a portion of local property taxes, state funds, and (if eligible) federal funds. This funding is essentially “attached” to each student, so school districts and charters receive funding for the students enrolled. When a student moves from one educational entity to another, such as from Ross Valley School District to RVCS, the funding for that student moves with him/her.*

Q. Who can attend a charter school like RVCS?

- A. *By definition a charter is a public school, so it must be open to the public. Also like any other public school, the process for enrollment must be nonsectarian and non-discriminatory. Laws governing charter schools do allow for admission preferences based on certain criterion. See Element 8 (Admission Requirements) of the RVCS petition for further information on the charter petitioners’ proposed admission policies.*

Q. What is the impact to the District if MAP becomes a Charter School?

A. *RVCS projects it will open next fall (2015-16) with 172 students enrolled. The District estimates the net revenue loss to the District for 2015-16 will be approximately \$250,000 to \$300,000, assuming all enrolled students come from the Ross Valley School District. The revenue loss will be less if a portion of the students enrolled come from outside the District. This is a possibility since RVCS must be open to all students from inside and outside District boundaries. Other impacts to the District are unknown or difficult to calculate at this time but would depend upon arrangements ultimately agreed-upon between the District and RVCS. For example, the District would be required to provide classroom and office space to the charter at rates that are far below market.*

Q. Is the charter school's impact on the Ross Valley School District taken into consideration with regard to approval or denial of the charter petition?

A. *No. The analysis of the required elements of the petition and subsequent recommendation for approval or denial must be made independently of any real or perceived impact to the school district.*

Q. Where will the new Charter be housed and how many classrooms will it need?

A. *The District's current MAP is housed in six classrooms at Manor Elementary School in Fairfax. For its first year of operation (2015-16), RVCS is proposing to convert the existing MAP program to charter status at Manor and plans to grow to seven classrooms plus office space. Beginning 2016-17, RVCS is requesting to be housed at the closed Red Hill site, located at the end of Shaw Drive in San Anselmo (behind Red Hill shopping center). As a conversion charter school program, the new charter would be tied to the Manor Elementary School site. RVCS requests two additional classrooms to accommodate projected growth over the next few years. Ultimately RVCS projects a need for nine classrooms plus office space, to house three multi-age strands (K/1, 2/3 and 4/5).*

Q. Will the Charter be housed at Red Hill starting in 2016-17?

A. *The allocation of Red Hill's facilities is a separate consideration from the process for approving or denying the charter petition.*

Q. Will Measure "A" Bond funds be used to modernize the Red Hill site?

A. *Exhibit "B" of Bond Measure "A" reads in part,*

"Goal and Purpose: Since we are growing out of our schools, new and expanded facilities are needed to accommodate enrollment growth, to restore dedicated art, music, before school and after school care and multipurpose rooms, and to ensure that all students have access to comparable schools throughout the District:

- Increase the number of classrooms, including science labs, at existing operating school sites.*
- Repair or replace old equipment and facilities at the middle school.*
- Upgrade aging restrooms and unsafe play surfaces and fencing.*
- Meet handicap accessibility requirements, as needed.*
- Renovate classrooms on all campuses. "*

In 2013-14, the Board of Trustees publicly stated that Measure A Bond funds would not be used to modernize/remodel the Red Hill site.

Q. What is the process for reviewing the RVCS petition?

B. The District must independently and objectively review the petition to determine if it meets the requirements of the law including all of the sixteen required elements of the charter petition, as presented, and a comprehensive budget analysis to be sure the entity is financially viable.

Q. What are the process timelines?

A. The Board of Trustees is required by statute to hold a public hearing within 30 days of receipt of the Charter petition. This meeting occurred on October 7, 2014. Within 60 days of petition receipt, the Board of Trustees must vote on whether or not to approve the charter petition. This meeting will occur on November 4, 2014.

Q. What are the possible outcomes of the process?

A. The Board of Trustees will vote to either approve or deny the charter petition.

Q. What happens if the RVCS petition is approved?

A. If approved, RVCS will move forward with the work involved in opening its doors to students effective with the start of the 2015-16 school year. An important part of that work will involve establishing a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the school district, which clearly defines the district/charter relationship relative to a number of operational issues. It will also be the responsibility of the Ross Valley School District to provide fiscal oversight of the new charter, including ensuring it complies with the charter, meets the pupil outcomes identified in the charter, complies with law and is fiscally responsible.

Q. What happens if the RVCS petition is denied?

A. If denied, RVCS has the option of continuing pursuit of the charter by appealing the Board's decision to the Marin County Office of Education and ultimately the State Board of Education.