

## Nomination of the San Ramon Valley Unified School District Board of Education and Superintendent

On May 25, 2010, the San Ramon Valley Unified School District (SRVUSD) Board of Education, (Bill Clarkson, Paul Gardner, Rachel Hurd, President, Greg Marvel, and Ken Mintz) supported by Superintendent Steven Enoch, unanimously approved a 3.5MW solar panel installation on six campuses in the district: California High School, Dougherty Valley High School, Monte Vista High School, San Ramon Valley High School, Diablo Vista Middle School, and Gale Ranch Middle School. These installations, which will go up in the summer of 2011, will generate 6.2 million kWh of electricity per year, reducing the district's carbon footprint by about 1,400 metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub> annually. This switch to renewable energy not only carries profound environmental benefits from reduced energy usage and fewer carbon emissions, but will also generate income for the district: money from electricity savings will go into the general fund, where it can be used for programs and teacher salaries. The solar panels are estimated to generate between \$40 and \$51 million in energy savings over a 25 year period (based on conservative to modest future PG&E rate increases), \$11-\$24 million of which will benefit the district's General Fund. The District will create a sinking fund of the energy savings so that the solar installations can be replaced at the end of their useable life, approximately 25 years.

Solar panels on schools will bring other community benefits as well, both for the environment and the economy. The installation of solar panels will generate the equivalent of 60 jobs in construction and design, injecting \$4 million in wages into the local economy. The promise of energy savings has motivated the District to pursue further environmentally-friendly endeavors: current energy benchmarking projects will be used to identify the district's total energy use, leading to opportunities to further reduce its energy expenditures and shrink its carbon footprint. Carport solar panels will shade parking lots, reducing engine idling and air conditioning use on hot days, and monitoring systems will allow students and teachers to observe how much energy the panels are producing, creating an educational opportunity for schools wishing to teach their students more about climate change, renewable energy, and methods for building a sustainable future.

The SRVUSD Board of Education and Superintendent demonstrated remarkable diligence in their approach to the solar project, running extensive financial models and carefully checking references to ensure that the district received the best possible contract and wouldn't risk incurring more debt in these difficult economic times. As a result, the district entered into a rock-solid contract with SunPower Corp. for the solar project that will pay for itself within 16 years and generate income even when using the most conservative assumptions about future energy costs. In these times of school budget cuts and rising electricity prices, solar panels allow the District to be self-sufficient rather than subject to PG&E rate increases, so it can spend taxpayers' money on better education for the children in our district.

In addition, the Board and Superintendent made certain that the community was involved in their vision for an economically and environmentally sustainable school district. Public forums, mailings, and information on the district website encouraged public feedback. One board meeting involved a public vote on the aesthetics of various panel layouts. Only when the Board was satisfied that the community had the opportunity to raise its voice, and certain that the risks of remaining under the current system outweighed those of going forward, did the Board and Superintendent approve the project. The solar panels will be a visible tribute to the District's commitment to sustainability for years to come, providing inspiration to the community, other school districts, and the county as a whole. The Board and Superintendent's foresight and vision in recognizing that the environmentally-friendly option was also the most economically viable will have a tremendous impact on the community and create future generations of environmentally-aware students: a commendable example of sustainable education.