

ON December 05 2023

UNTIL January 04 2024

Print Form

Notice of Exemption

Appendix E

REGISTRAR - RECORDER/COUNTY CLERK

To: *Office of Planning and Research
P.O. Box 3044, Room 113
Sacramento, CA 95812-3044

From: (Public Agency): Saugus Union School District
24930 Avenue Stanford
Santa Clarita, CA 91355

County Clerk
County of: Los Angeles
12400 Imperial Highway
Norwalk, CA 90650

(Address)



Project Title: Santa Clarita Elementary School Closure and Consolidation Project

Project Applicant: Not Applicable

Project Location - Specific:

27177 Seco Canyon Rd, 27300 Grandview Dr, 22500 Pamplico Dr, 27332 Catala Ave

Project Location - City: Saugus & Santa Clarita Project Location - County: Los Angeles

Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:

Closure of Santa Clarita Elementary School and transfer of 169 students to Charles Helmers Elementary School, James Foster Elementary School, and/or Highlands Elementary School. See attached resolution for further details.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: Not Applicable

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: Saugus Union School District

Exempt Status: (check one):

- Ministerial (Sec. 21080(b)(1); 15268);
- Declared Emergency (Sec. 21080(b)(3); 15269(a));
- Emergency Project (Sec. 21080(b)(4); 15269(b)(c));
- Categorical Exemption. State type and section number: Class 14-§15314
- Statutory Exemptions. State code number: 21080.18

Reasons why project is exempt:

The transfer of Santa Clarita Elementary School's 169 students is statutorily exempt under PRC section 21080.18. The indirect effects of the closure are categorically exempt under CEQA guidelines, section 15314. Helmers available capacity is 388, James Foster available capacity is 263, and Highlands available capacity is 179. See attached resolution for further details.

Lead Agency

Contact Person: _____ Area Code/Telephone/Extension: _____

If filed by applicant:

1. Attach certified document of exemption finding.
2. Has a Notice of Exemption been filed by the public agency approving the project? Yes No

Signature: *Walter* Date: 11/21/2023 Title: Asst. Supt. of Business

Signed by Lead Agency Signed by Applicant

Authority cited: Sections 21083 and 21110, Public Resources Code.
Reference: Sections 21108, 21152, and 21152.1, Public Resources Code.

Date Received for filing at OPR: _____

2023 260333



FILED
Dec 05 2023

Dean C. Logan, Registrar - Recorder/County Clerk

Electronically signed by RICKENA MCDLAIN

RESOLUTION 2023-24 # 36

**OF THE GOVERNING BOARD OF THE SAUGUS UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT
DETERMINING THAT THE SANTA CLARITA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CLOSURE
AND CONSOLIDATION PROJECT IS EXEMPT FROM THE CALIFORNIA
ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT, DECIDING TO CARRY OUT THE PROJECT,
AND DIRECTING THE FILING OF A NOTICE OF EXEMPTION**

WHEREAS, the Saugus Union School District (“District”) has developed the Santa Clarita Elementary School Closure and Consolidation Project (“Project”) for the closure and consolidation of Santa Clarita Elementary School (“SCES”) with Charles Helmers Elementary School (“Helmers”), James Foster Elementary School (“Foster”), and Highlands Elementary School (“Highlands”). Helmers, Foster, and Highlands are collectively referred to as the “Receiving Schools”; and

WHEREAS, SCES is located at 27177 Seco Canyon Rd, Saugus, CA 91350. Helmers is located at 27300 Grandview Dr, Santa Clarita, CA 91354. Foster is located at 22500 Pamplico Dr, Santa Clarita, CA 91350, and Highlands is located at 27332 Catala Ave, Santa Clarita, CA 91350; and

WHEREAS, in September 2022, the California Governor signed into law Assembly Bill (“AB”) 1912, codified in Education Code section 41329, which requires a school district under financial distress (as defined in Ed. Code §41329 (b)) to conduct an equity impact analysis utilizing a developed set of metrics (“AB 1912 Metrics”) when considering school closures or consolidations, and to seek public input on those metrics prior to adopting a final recommendation; and

WHEREAS, on April 11, 2023, the California Attorney General issued “Guidance Regarding Laws Governing School Closures and Best Practices for Implementation in California” (“AG Guidance”), which advises all school districts, not just those that meet the definition of “under financial distress,” to assess the AB 1912 Metrics when considering school closures or consolidations; and

WHEREAS, AG Guidance provides, “[f]or districts that are considering closures but do not fall under AB 1912’s mandate, following AB 1912 and the best practices identified in this guidance will reduce a district’s legal risk, improve community trust, and parent engagement, and begin to remedy the continuing harms of segregation”; and

WHEREAS, the District is experiencing a decline in enrollment District-wide and at SCES, and with its current enrollment of 169 students as of August 2023, SCES is not of sufficient enrollment to provide optimal educational services and is also financially inefficient; and

WHEREAS, moreover, under AB 300, which requires the Department of General Services (DGS) to survey the State’s public school buildings for earthquake safety and to submit



a report of its findings to the State Legislature, SCES's buildings were identified as needing seismic retrofitting and upgrades; and

WHEREAS, the District was required to address these concerns by developing a plan 1) regarding needed modernization work/replacement, and 2) to fund repairs or seek funding for repairs; and

WHEREAS, the District does not meet the definition of a district "under financial distress" under Education Code section 41329(b), but seeks to follow AG Guidance in developing a consolidation plan; and

WHEREAS, on March 3, 2022, at a Governing Board ("Board") study session, the facility challenges at SCES and the options to address seismic concerns were discussed. At that time, SCES was projected to need \$24 million in improvements to ensure that it would meet state safety standards for earthquakes. SCES's declining enrollment was also discussed; and

WHEREAS, based on the meeting, the District decided to "phase out" new enrollment and to consider the closure of SCES when enrollment was too low for the school to reasonably operate and best meet student needs. SCES has not accepted any transfer students nor enrolled a kindergarten or transitional kindergarten class since the 2022-2023 school year; and

WHEREAS, the District has conducted community input sessions to receive input from the community regarding AB 300 concerns and the potential closure of SCES; and

WHEREAS, the District considered certain criteria in its school closure and consolidation analysis and recommendations to the Board, which align with the AB 1912 metrics and are as follows: enrollment, capacity at school sites, intermediate repair needs, long-term repair needs and operating cost per student ("Closure Criteria"). The Closure Criteria align with the AB 1912 Metrics; and

WHEREAS, prior to the regularly scheduled Board meeting on October 10, 2023, the public was provided with a draft Equity Impact Analysis Report ("Report") that analyzes and presents information in compliance with AB 1912, including the Closure Criteria and AB 1912 Metrics; and

WHEREAS, at the October 10, 2023 meeting, an open session presentation was given regarding the Report and a public hearing was held to receive public input from the community regarding the draft Report and the AB 1912 Metrics analyzed in the Report, pursuant to the requirements of AB 1912; and

WHEREAS, on October 17, 2023, a community outreach meeting was held, and at the October 24, 2023 Board meeting a further public hearing was held to solicit further input and comments from the community; and

WHEREAS, prior to this regularly scheduled November 14, 2023 Board meeting, the District published a final Report and a Report on Incorporation of Public Input in Final School



Closure Recommendation (“Public Input Report”), which discusses the public input that was received and the District’s plan for addressing the concerns raised; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to Education Code section 41329(a)(2)(C), the Board hereby declares that the community engagement process as required by AB 1912 has been completed; and

WHEREAS, based on the information presented to the Board, the AB 1912 Metrics, the Closure Criteria, the Report, the Public Input Report, prior Board items and resolutions, including this Board Item and resolution and reference documents, and community input on the AB 1912 Metrics and Report, the District’s recommendation is to close SCES and consolidate it with Helmers, Foster, and Highlands; and

WHEREAS, prior to commencement of the Project, the District must ensure the Project complies with the California Environmental Quality Act (“CEQA”); and

WHEREAS, categorical exemptions to CEQA are set forth in Article 19 of Chapter 3 of Division 6 of Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations (“CEQA Guidelines”); and

WHEREAS, the Class 14 Categorical Exemption, set forth in CEQA Guidelines section 15314, exempts a project that consists of minor additions to existing schools within existing school grounds where the addition does not increase original student capacity by more than 25% or ten classrooms, whichever is less; and

WHEREAS, as of September 2023, SCES’s enrollment is 169 students for the 2023-24 school year; and

WHEREAS, Helmers has a total capacity of 840 students, but only 452 students are enrolled for the 2023-24 school year. Therefore, Helmers has an available capacity of 388 students; and

WHEREAS, Foster has a total capacity of 750 students, but only 487 enrolled for the 2023-24 school year. Therefore, Foster has an available capacity of 263 students; and

WHEREAS, Highlands has a total capacity of 800 students, but only 621 students are enrolled for the 2023-24 school year. Therefore, Highlands has an available capacity of 179 students; and

WHEREAS, considering the 169 students from SCES will be distributed to the Receiving Schools within their existing available capacity and by consolidating the SCES students to the Receiving Schools, the Project will not increase original school capacity of the Receiving Schools by 10 classrooms or 25%; and

WHEREAS, CEQA Guidelines section 15300.2 provides five exceptions that would disqualify a project from being categorically exempt. These are: (1) where the cumulative impact of successive projects of the same type in the same place would be significant over time;

(2) a significant environmental impact would occur due to unusual circumstances; (3) a project that would cause damage to scenic elements within a designated state scenic highway; (4) a project that is on a site designated as a Hazardous Waste Site; or (5) a project that causes a substantial adverse change to a historical resource; and

WHEREAS, none of the exceptions apply because 1) the Project is the only project of the same type at the same place; 2) there are no known unusual circumstances that would be caused by the consolidation of SCES with the Receiving Schools, because the Receiving Schools have available capacity to absorb all of the SCES students within their existing capacities, and these schools were designed for the maximum capacity; 3) according to the Caltrans Scenic Highway System Map website, SCES and the Receiving Schools are not adjacent to or visible from any officially designated State of California scenic highways. Therefore, no scenic highways or scenic resources would be affected as a result of the Project; 4) neither SCES, nor the Receiving Schools are located on a site designated as a Hazardous Waste Site; and 5) the Project does not include any changes to existing buildings. Therefore, the Project would not cause a change in the significance of a historical resource.

NOW, THEREFORE, the Governing Board (“Board”) hereby finds, determines, and resolves as follows:

Section 1. The above recitals are true and correct.

Section 2. The District has completed the community engagement process pursuant to Education Code section 41329(a)(2)(c).

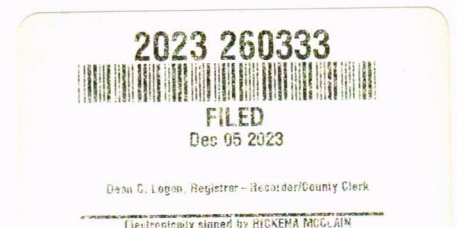
Section 3. Based on the information presented to the Board, the AB 1912 Metrics, the Closure Criteria, the Report, the Public Input Report, prior Board items and resolutions, including this Board Item and resolution and reference documents, and community input on the AB 1912 Metrics and Report, the District’s final recommendation is to close SCES and consolidate it with Helmers, Foster, and Highlands.

Section 4. The Project meets the definition of the Class 14 Categorical Exemption (CEQA Guidelines § 15314) because the Receiving Schools each have available capacity to absorb SCES’s enrollment without exceeding their available capacity and without the need to make facilities changes or additions.

Section 5. There are no unusual circumstances that would cause this Project to create a potentially significant environmental impact and none of the exceptions are applicable.

Section 6. The applicable requirements of CEQA have been fulfilled for the Project.

Section 7. The District decides to carry out the Project.



Section 8. The Superintendent or designee is directed to carry out all necessary actions to implement the Resolution, including the filing of a Notice of Exemption with the County Clerk.

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was duly adopted at a meeting of the Governing Board of the Saugus Union School District, at a meeting thereof duly held on the 14th day of 14th day of November, 2023 by a majority vote of all of its members.

ADOPTED by the following vote:

AYES, and in favor of, Members: Ms. Cooper, Mrs. Garibay, Mr. Trunkey, and Mr. Watson

NOES, Members: Mrs. Griese

ABSTAIN, Members: None

SAUGUS UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT



Matthew Watson, Clerk
Governing Board

