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Pasadena Unified Board Divided Over Transformation Process



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EDITORIALS

Resolution 2894 Promised PUSD a Public Process. Tina Fredericks Delivered a Shortcut



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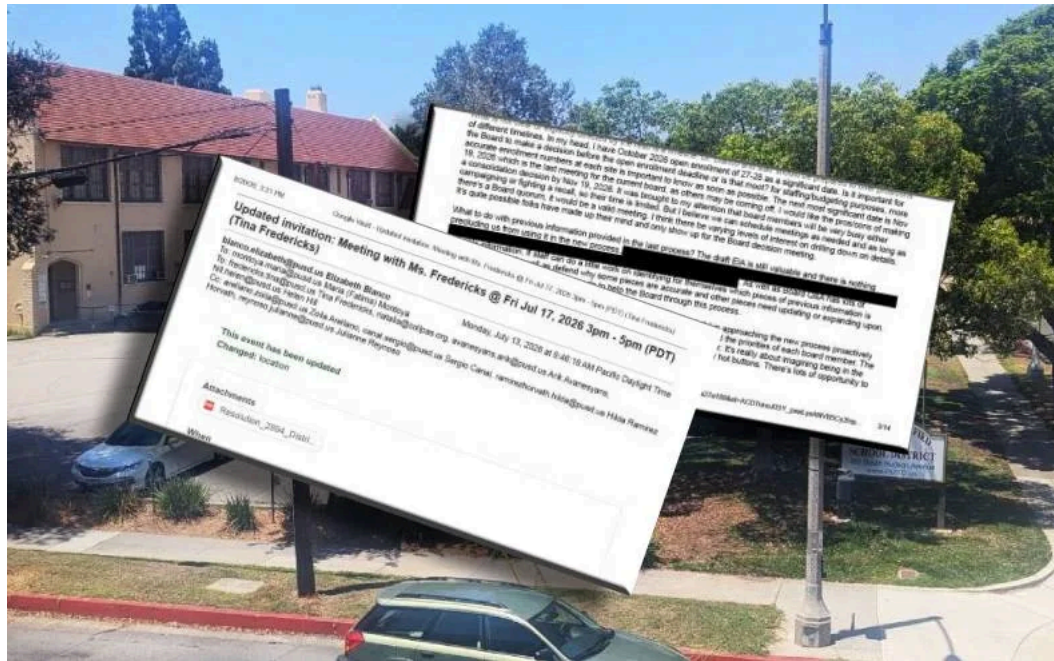
GUEST OPINION

SEPT. 2026 PRINT



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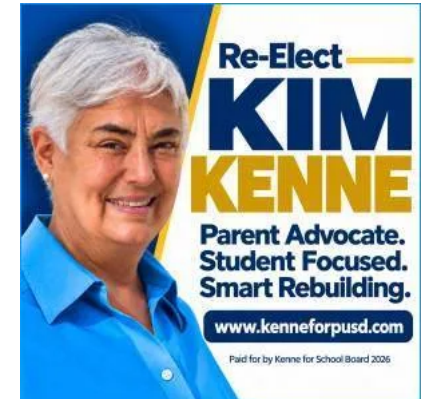
(Photo – Graphics Dept.)

Calling for the resignation of a sitting school board president is not something I take lightly. But after decades of service to Pasadena Unified School District students, families, and workers, I believe the public record now warrants that call. President Tina Fredericks has treated a resolution requiring a broad district-transformation process as a mandate for rapid school consolidation, while dismissing student input, community visioning, and meaningful public engagement. For that failure of leadership, she should resign.

By Michael Leon

A Rush to Close Schools—and Nothing Else

When the Board of Education adopted Resolution 2894 on June 25, 2026, it represented a promise to this community. That resolution was titled “Resolution to Initiate a District Transformation Process”—not a resolution to rubber-stamp school closures. It directed the Superintendent to present enrollment data, demographic projections, capacity reports, and staffing levels. It called on the Board to determine the structure of the transformation process, including committee formation, student input, and community engagement. And, critically, it resolved that the Board would “discuss scheduling community engagement



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sessions, in conjunction with community partners, to gather community values and vision for PUSD in the next five to ten years,” with student input prioritized.

President Fredericks has again betrayed that promise. From the moment Resolution 2894 was adopted, she has treated “district transformation” as a euphemism for one thing: school consolidation. When Superintendent Blanco and her Senior Leadership Team urged the Board to incorporate visioning—a process to develop common ground and allow the community to articulate what it wants PUSD to become—Fredericks shut them down. In her own words to the Superintendent:

“

No thank you on visioning. You have repeatedly asked about this and I have repeatedly said no. ... Please don't ask me about visioning again. ... Put away that tool for later after consolidation is complete.”

Fredericks scolded Dr. Blanco for even suggesting visioning, claiming that this caused Fredericks to “lose confidence” in Dr. Blanco—a thinly veiled threat to retaliate against Dr. Blanco if she does not embrace Fredericks’ closure plans.

That is not leadership. That is autocracy. A Board president who orders her Superintendent to stop raising options that the resolution itself contemplates is not serving the public interest—she is serving her own.

Abuse of Special Meetings

Rather than allow the deliberative process envisioned by Resolution 2894 to unfold through regular Board meetings and genuine community engagement, President Fredericks has weaponized the special-meeting power available to her as Board president. She has called or scheduled multiple special Board meetings in rapid succession—she has already called twelve special meetings, with many more to follow—cramming what should be months of careful, community-driven deliberation into a frantic sprint.

Why the rush? The answer is as transparent as it is cynical. President Fredericks wants these decisions locked in before her term as Board president ends and before the November election potentially changes the Board’s composition. She has publicly acknowledged that Board members are busy “either campaigning or fighting a recall”—yet she presses forward with special meeting after special meeting, demanding votes on school closures at a pace that makes meaningful public participation impossible.

According to PUSD’s website, “[s]pecial meetings may be called when a vote on a specific issue is needed before a regular meeting is scheduled.” An upcoming election is not a proper justification for scheduling special meetings.



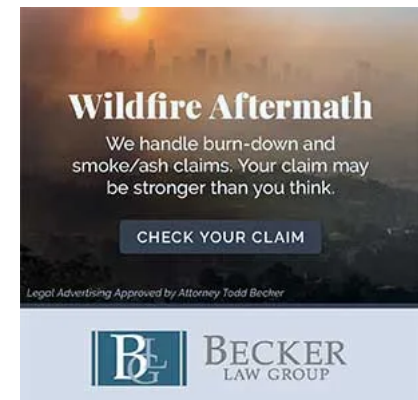
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The Brown Act grants a Board president the authority to call special meetings. It does not grant the authority to abuse that power to circumvent the democratic process, suppress dissenting voices, or stampede a community into harmful decisions about closing neighborhood schools.

She Already Knows How the Votes Will Fall

Perhaps most alarming is the strong evidence that President Fredericks has already determined the outcome of votes that have not yet taken place in open session. She has scheduled action items, pre-drafted resolutions, and arranged agendas with a confidence that suggests she already knows how every Board member will vote.

Fredericks already admitted in a recent email to Superintendent Blanco that it is “quite possible” that Board members have already “made up their mind.” Fredericks asserts that the Board does not need to deliberate public but instead can simply “show up for the Board decision meeting.”

Under California’s Brown Act, a majority of Board members may not, outside of a noticed public meeting, use a series of communications—directly or through intermediaries—to develop a collective concurrence on an action to be taken.

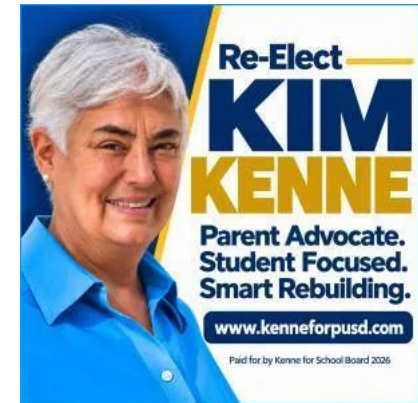
We know that President Fredericks has been conducting private conversations with individual Board members to discuss her consolidation plans. In response to a demand to cease and desist, the Board agreed to stop violating the Brown Act. The available communications nevertheless raise serious questions about whether commitments are being sought outside public meetings. If so, that would raise grave Brown Act concerns.

Disregarding Board Resolution 2894

Resolution 2894 envisioned a structured, phased process: data review, community engagement, visioning, and then—and only then—a Board decision. It reads: “Student input will be prioritized.” What we have instead is a Board president who skipped straight to the decision phase, rejected PUSD student voices altogether, ignored the community engagement mandate, rejected the visioning component, and is now scheduling meeting after meeting to force consolidation votes before anyone can stop her.

The Community Deserves Better

I understand that leadership requires trust and transparency. As I write this, ICE is surveilling our neighborhoods and kidnapping our residents. Many families are still recovering from the fires. Now is not the time for the undemocratic, heavy-handed school-closure process in which Tina Fredericks is attempting to shutter public schools with no community or student input.

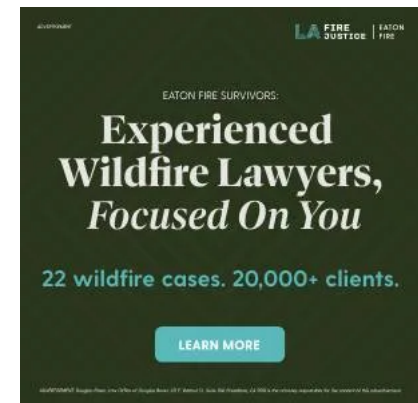


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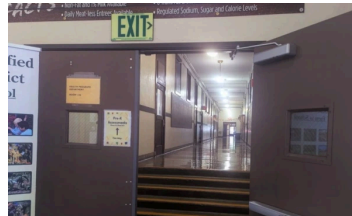
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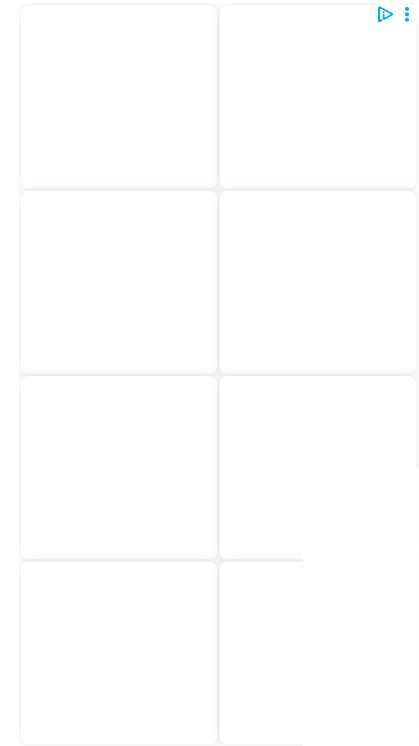
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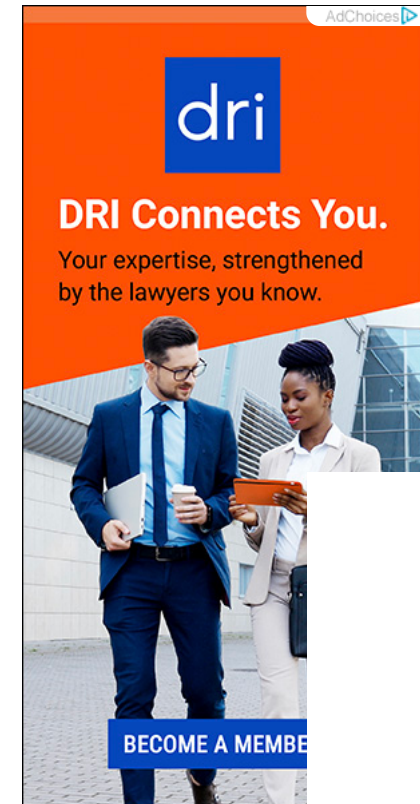
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