

Closing Statement by Andrea Swenson

League of Women Voters Parcel Tax Panel

May 29, 2009

- We have heard a lot of numbers bandied about tonight but Measures B & E are ultimately about far more than numbers. They are about our community and our collective investment in this community we call home.
- Whenever I am asked where I live and I say Piedmont, the response is always along the lines of “**oh yes, good schools**”. Some communities are defined by their location, or their landmarks, or even their restaurants, but Piedmont is defined in its most essential and enduring sense **by its schools-** by the children who attend them, by the teachers who instill in these children a love of learning, and by the parents who contribute their time and resources to make the classroom experience extraordinary. In a small town like Piedmont, our schools are the heart of the community. Events like the Beach School Revue, Halloween parades, Fall Football, Spring Baseball, musicals, plays, and our truly unique Bird-Calling contest define us. It’s no exaggeration to say that Piedmont isn’t the Piedmont we know and love without our schools.

- And tonight we are asking the Piedmont community to support these schools.
- Times are tough. Even with the passage of both Parcel Tax measures there will be reductions in the Piedmont Educational experience. This is an acknowledgment by parents that we cannot ask our community to fully bridge the state funding deficit and that we must “share the pain” in these unsettling economic times. Please help us assure that these cuts will be kept to the minimum. We all know how cataclysmic not passing Measure B would be. But I would also point out that without the passage of Measure E, the temporary emergency funding measure, we will also have to make deep cuts to our Piedmont Educational experience. (Wildwood, Beach and Havens Elementary School students may not have classroom aides, or library aides, or even libraries. Without the passage of measure E we would lose an additional 10-12 teachers, and that means we lose programs.
- Over the years Piedmont parents have made significant private donations to the schools. Last year the average donor gift was \$1359. But the parent

community cannot bridge this funding gap on their own. **We need the help of our greater Piedmont community.**

- **This community support of education** has a long history in Piedmont. Piedmont voters first approved a local school parcel tax in 1985, 24 years ago. Piedmont voters reauthorized the parcel tax measure in 1989, 1993, 1997, 2001, and 2005. Over 88% of Piedmont voters supported the most recent renewal in 2005. This **stable, local funding** source provides 27% of the school district's budget. Local funding is important because we control it. It can't be taken away by the state and it goes directly to our Piedmont schools. The money is raised here and it stays here.
- To borrow some fine words from one of our most respected community members Sue Smegal, Piedmont has an excellent reputation, directly linked to our outstanding schools, built over decades with thousands of volunteer hours and a financial commitment on the part of parents and community members. With the defeat of B&E we could lose this reputation in the blink of an eye. The comment then might be when asked where I live... "Oh yes Piedmont, they used to have good schools."

- I am sure I am speaking not only for the four of us but for most parents and community members when I say that I am proud to be part of a Piedmont community that values education, that values our teachers and wants to assure that they are fairly paid, that values offering our students an educational experience that allows them to get into the finest colleges and universities in this country. Piedmont is a community that has for years had a high expectation of excellence in education and we hope that you will continue to support this. On June 2 please vote YES for B&E.