

Liberati and Associates

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT OF INVESTIGATION

Southern California Regional Occupational Center

To: Dr. Margaret Chidester, Attorney, Margaret A. Chidester and Associates

From: Susan Liberati, Ed.D and Mario Liberati, Ed.D
Private Investigator License #28264

Date: December 11, 2024

RE: Investigation of Uniform Complaint submitted by Ms. Marie Puterbaugh

On October 19, 2024, Marie Puterbaugh submitted a written complaint on the Southern California Regional Occupational Center (SoCal ROC) Uniform Procedure Form (Attachment A) stating “potential violation of Brown Act” on October 17, 2024. Ms. Puterbaugh noted in her complaint, in part, “I went to make a public comment at the Board meeting. I was under the impression that the Brown Act allowed me to speak publicly as I wished. Rolf Strutzenberg has heard me present at the RBUSD as I have spoken out against his actions of accusing other RBUSD board members of illegal activities. I strongly believe I was shut down by Mr. Strutzenberg because he knew exactly why I was there, and he didn’t want to deal with it, but is that fair to other board members?”

Dr. Margaret Chidester, Legal Counsel for SoCal ROC, retained Liberati and Associates, an independent consulting firm licensed in California, to investigate the allegations.

INVESTIGATOR CREDENTIALS

Dr. Susan Liberati holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in English from the University of California, Los Angeles, a Master of Science degree in Educational Administration, and an Educational Doctoral degree in Institutional Management from Pepperdine University. Dr. Liberati is the founder of Liberati & Associates, licensed by the California Department of Consumer Affairs – Bureau of Security and Investigative Services (BSIS). Dr. Liberati has over 7,000 hours of school-based complaint investigation experience in California. Dr. Liberati's experience spans 26 years as a classified and certified educator. Dr. Liberati's experience combines substantive expertise and keen insight into the daily coordination of a public school, as well as expectations for its operation. During her time in district office positions, Dr. Liberati worked closely with principals and assistant principals, providing training, direct supervision, and evaluation of site

administrators in 22 public schools in all areas of operations, including handling staff and student misconduct. Dr. Liberati has operated as the designated Uniform Complaint Officer in two school districts. She was responsible for investigating over 200 parent and employee complaints.

Dr. Mario Liberati holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology from California State University at Long Beach, a Master of Science degree in Educational Administration from La Verne University, and an Educational Doctoral degree in Organizational Change and Leadership from the University of Southern California. Dr. Liberati's experience includes 30 years in public education, having served as a Teacher, Counselor, Assistant Principal, and Principal and, as the Chief Personnel Officer of a large district in Southern California for fifteen years. Dr. Liberati has directed and conducted many investigations, including complaints of misconduct, poor performance, Title IX, and Uniform Complaint Procedures. Dr. Liberati joined Liberati and Associates over three years ago, where he continues consulting, training, and conducting full and independent investigations.

SCOPE OF INVESTIGATION

Liberati and Associates conducted an independent investigation. The allegations dictated the scope of the investigation, which entailed gathering and analyzing information from various sources to determine the merits of the allegations. Specifically, the investigation process includes the following:

- compiled and reviewed all documents and materials received from the school and other documents available or requested as relevant to this investigation;
- identified potential witnesses and additional evidence related to this investigation; and
- interviewed witnesses.

Four (4) witnesses were interviewed. All interviewees were educated about the confidentiality of the investigation and informed about the Center's policy against retaliation for participating in this investigation. No restrictions were placed on any interview regarding the scope of questioning or time allotted for each interview. The Center provided access to all documentation and records without limits. The Center did not attempt to direct the investigation efforts or Procedures or influence my findings of fact or conclusions.

ALLEGATIONS

Allegation 1: SoCal ROC Board President Rolf Strutzenberg interrupted and stopped Ms. Marie Puterbaugh from speaking at the regularly scheduled Board meeting of October 17, 2024, during the public comment section of the Board agenda.

- a. Mr. Strutzenberg acted like a bully when he shut down Ms. Puterbaugh from speaking.
- b. Mr. Strutzenberg is a Board Member in the Redondo Beach Unified School District, where Ms. Puterbaugh is a resident, and he did not want to hear Ms. Puterbaugh speak out against him at the SoCal ROC Board Meeting.

DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

In connection with this investigation, Liberati and Associates reviewed the following documents:

Written Complaint by Marie Puterbaugh
Relevant Board Policies and Administrative Rules
October 17, 2024, Board of Education Meeting audio recording
October 17, 2024, Transcript of Audio Recording (22:48 - 24:57)
October 17, 2024, Board of Education Agenda

WITNESSES

Marie Puterbaugh, Complainant
Witness #1
Witness #2
Rolf Strutzenberg, Current Board President, SoCal ROC, Respondent

WITNESS INTERVIEWS

Marie Puterbaugh

Ms. Puterbaugh was interviewed on November 12, 2024, at the Southern California Regional Occupational Center (SoCal ROC) Administrative Offices. She stated that she has lived in the city of Redondo Beach since 2001 and originally moved to the South Bay in the late nineties. Ms. Puterbaugh stated that her daughter graduated Redondo Beach High School last year and is currently taking fashion classes at Santa Monica College. She noted that she was never involved in politics, “but once I saw School Boards getting attacked and bullied, somewhere around 2020, COVID, I got more involved.” Ms. Puterbaugh continued, “My goal is to protect people if they’re getting bullied or intimidated. I know some people who are on the Board, and it becomes increasingly exhausting when they are under attack. I want them to know that I have their back. I don’t want them to quit doing the great work they are doing for schools.”

Ms. Puterbaugh stated that she “got to know Mr. Strutzenberg when the past Redondo Beach Unified School District Superintendent, Dr. Keller, stated he was retiring and Dr. Wesley was “nominated” to replace him as the new superintendent. An email circulated inviting people to go to a Saturday meeting against Dr. Wesley, who is an African American woman.” Ms. Puterbaugh noted that Mr. Strutzenberg sent out emails, and people got hurt. She felt compelled to get involved and help people who felt helpless against Mr. Strutzenberg. Ms. Puterbaugh stated that sometimes she attends Board meetings and sits quietly, and sometimes she speaks at the podium to show support. She stated that she has never been stopped from speaking at a school Board meeting during the public comment section even if she is speaking of something or someone she disagrees with. Ms. Puterbaugh noted that Mr. Strutzenberg filed criminal reports with the local police

against his fellow Board members for receiving stipends when he claimed, “the stipends should be paid back.”

Ms. Puterbaugh continued stating that she has asked Mr. Strutzenberg about various lawsuits where his name “shows up and he does not answer me. He has sued Continental Airlines, somebody with his last name.” Ms. Puterbaugh repeated her purpose for attending the Board meetings is to support other Board members and “to share information which is power. He’s inviting people to scream at other people and is suing people. I want to tell Board members to watch out and be careful. Mr. Strutzenberg attacks; he was the only Board member that went against Dr. Wesley, a black woman. He has teamed with people that are just angry and want to fight. There is some danger in that.”

Ms. Puterbaugh stated, “All I wanted on October 17, 2024, during the SoCal ROC Board meeting, Comments from the Public section, is my three minutes to warn other Board members. Not a lot of people are listening, but he’s getting a little dangerous and a little untethered.” Ms. Puterbaugh stated that, due to her concerns about Mr. Strutzenberg, she got up to speak at the SoCal ROC Board meeting. She recalled, “The minute I started to speak, Mr. Strutzenberg said ‘no, no, it’s not about SoCal ROC business. It’s not about business. Is this about business?’ And I’m like, well, what do you mean? I go, you’re the Board. You’re in charge. You’re the President of the Board. This does impact business. ‘No, no, that’s not SoCal ROC Business.’ And I go, when can I talk? And he’s like, ‘Nope, nope. Only SoCal ROC business. Only SoCal ROC business.’ He did not give me any other option or opportunity to speak. He just shut me down. Ms. Puterbaugh stated she filed a complaint with SoCal ROC on the SoCal ROC Uniform Complaint Procedure Form (Attachment A). Ms. Puterbaugh noted, “I would like to know exactly how my speaking about the President of the Board was a violation of the Brown Act when I can come to speak without being shut down. I know that he’s invited people to yell at the school board in Redondo when they’re not doing what he wants.” Ms. Puterbaugh continued, “But then I vetted this. So I got the recording from the SoCal ROC meeting (Attachment - B, Transcript of audio recording) and I did talk to some people. I was like, well, am I wrong, if I’m wrong, if the Brown Act works this way? I mean, I was at a city council meeting, and somebody called the mayor an “a-hole”, and some guy cursed at the mayor. He was not shut down. I just wanted my three minutes. I wasn’t going to go on and on or do anything weird.” Ms. Puterbaugh noted, “I did not start by saying you better watch out or, I wasn’t attacking. He is the President of the Board and the decisions he, and the other Board members make, impacts the business of SoCal ROC.”

Ms. Puterbaugh stated, “I personally believe he knew exactly what I was going to say. I didn’t say much, and he stopped me and said he was going to turn off the microphone that I was speaking at. Ms. Puterbaugh stated, “he put me in an illegal category when he said, ‘turn her mic off.’” She continued stating, “Mr. Strutzenberg knows me. He has heard me speak at the Board meetings. I felt bullied; my legs were shaking as I started to walk out of the room. We talked to law firm after

law firm. We go to training, and the answer is, no, we have to let people talk for three minutes.” Ms. Puterbaugh asked, “why is it that way for every other elected Board, including Redondo when people are screaming at them, and the President at SoCal ROC is able to shut down a speaker during their time?” Ms. Puterbaugh noted, “I know I can’t threaten someone; there are laws and consequences against that type of speech or behavior. I was not going to threaten anyone. All I want is what’s fair by the law.”

Ms. Puterbaugh stated that she has “spoken twice at the Redondo Beach Unified School District Board meetings where I presented against Board Member Strutzenberg. I started with objections when he sent emails saying they (the Redondo Beach Unified School District Board) does not want you to know they are having a meeting; which made people in the community angry. I went to a Google website and pulled Mr. Strutzenberg’s old job reviews from his previous employment, which stated, ‘impediment to growth, makes everything a battle. Isn’t that important to the school Board that is at the top of the organization making business decisions; and then, who suffers, the students, the staff? I can do something to help.” Ms. Puterbaugh noted that she has also had several pleasant conversations with Mr. Strutzenberg, “but I will also speak up against him if I feel it is needed.”

Ms. Puterbaugh stated, “If I am not allowed to speak and can be shut down, that is fine. Let other Boards know as well. If I am allowed to speak during the designated time on the Board agenda, then I would like a public apology, on the record, from Mr. Strutzenberg. Others need to know. Did I violate the Brown Act or not?” Ms. Puterbaugh referred to the SoCal ROC Board of Education meeting agenda, Comments From the Public section (Attachment C), stating, “There is always a part in every meeting that’s designated for public comment.”

Witness #1

Witness #1 was interviewed on November 12, 2024, at the Southern California Regional Occupational Center (SoCal ROC) Administrative Offices. Witness #1 noted that they are currently employed at SoCal ROC.

Witness #1 recalled the SoCal ROC October 17, 2024, Board of Education meeting and reviewed the regular agenda. They noted that each month SoCal ROC invites a “star student” to attend the Board meeting and the teacher, who talks about the student and the class. The Board members are allowed to respond and ask questions of the student and or the teacher. “It is a great opportunity for the teachers and the students to meet the Board and share information about the SoCal ROC program.”

Witness #1 noted that after the teacher and student presentation, the Board President, Mr. Strutzenberg, “begins the statement of reviewing the Brown Act and for the Comments from the Public to open at that point in the agenda.” They recalled that individual speakers are allowed to

speaking for three minutes with the total time on each item to be 20 minutes. Witness #1 recalled one member of the public to be in attendance. They stated that they recognized the speaker as Marie Puterbaugh, whom they were familiar with from Redondo Beach. They stated to know Ms. Puterbaugh as a reasonable individual.

Witness #1 recalled that Ms. Puterbaugh stood up and walked to the podium to speak to the Board of Education; they said, "She initially began by complementing our Fashion class and thanked us for the opportunity to hear about it. She wished her daughter, who is pursuing Fashion Design, had the opportunity to take the class at SoCal ROC. Then, as she continued speaking, Ms. Puterbaugh stated that she was here to address Mr. Strutzenberg and the concerns she had with his actions as a bully and not working cooperatively with other members of the Redondo Beach Unified School District Board of Education. She stated she wanted to bring those concerns to our attention."

Witness #1 recounted, "As Ms. Puterbaugh began to explain when she was interrupted by Mr. Strutzenberg, who questioned if she had anything related to any business at SoCal ROC. At that point, she began to question if he was a Board member at SoCal ROC and doesn't that give her the opportunity to speak about it at the Board meeting during the public comments time. Mr. Strutzenberg engaged with Ms. Puterbaugh and just kept telling her, if it doesn't have to do with anything directly at SoCal ROC, she should not be speaking at the meeting. Again, she tried speaking to share her concerns and Mr. Strutzenberg didn't want her to speak. He said it had nothing to do with what's on the agenda and asked for the microphone to be unplugged."

Witness #1 was not aware of a method to turn off the microphone without potentially turning off the whole system by "unplugging" from the power source. They noted that the microphone was not turned off but saw that Ms. Puterbaugh appeared very frustrated and, "I assume felt defeated and, at that point, nobody else in the room engaged or responded to assist. She mentioned something about the Brown Act violation. After Mr. Strutzenberg asked for the microphone to be turned off, she was frustrated and left the room." Witness #1 stated that it was their turn to lock the buildings and recalled the Board meeting ending at approximately 9:45 p.m. with the closed session. They stated they did not attend the closed session because they were securing the buildings.

Witness #1 reflected on the interaction between Mr. Strutzenberg and Ms. Puterbaugh "I will say I was very shocked by the interaction, and I think his response of not allowing her to speak and being very quick to cut her off in what she wanted to share and talk about, as well as asking for a microphone to be turned off. I felt very bad for her. She wanted to have her time, and not being allowed to be heard was very difficult. The way she was treated, regardless of agreement or disagreement, was very uncomfortable to sit through."

Witness #2

Witness #2 was interviewed on November 12, 2024, at the Southern California Regional Occupational Center (SoCal ROC) Administrative Offices. They noted that they currently serve at SoCal ROC.

Witness #2 noted that, in general, there is one Board meeting per month at SoCal ROC. They stated that they attend each Board meeting as part of their role and responsibility.

Witness #2 recalled the SoCal ROC regular Board meeting of October 17, 2024. They noted that the meeting started at approximately 6:30 p.m., and the Board President, Mr. Strutzenberg, was guiding the Board meeting through the sections of the Board Agenda. They recalled, “After President Strutzenberg announced if there were any comments from the community, there was a lady who stood up, and she walked to the podium. At that point, I think she was talking about something that happened at her school District, Redondo Beach. The Board President responded, ‘This is not Redondo Beach; this is SoCal ROC. If you want to address anything, it has to be related to SoCal ROC.’ The lady appeared upset and said ‘No, this is public comment’ and she referred to the Brown Act.”

Witness #2 continued, noting, “The President responded and said, no. If it's an issue that has to do with SoCal ROC, then this is the right place. But if you need to address an issue that has nothing to do with SoCal ROC, it has something to do with Redondo Beach. You have to come to that board meeting and address that. The speaker asked about a time when she could speak. At some point, the president was pointing to the superintendent and the other cabinet members telling them to shut this thing down, meaning the microphone.” Mr. Roberts noted that subsequent to President Strutzenberg’s request to turn the microphone off, Ms. Puterbaugh “appeared upset, turned around and walked away.”

Witness #2 stated, “When I watched and heard the interaction between President Strutzenberg and the community member, I felt a bit terrified. It was a terrifying moment coming from the Board President. It was terrifying the way President Strutzenberg interrupted the speaker at the podium. Witness #2 reported feeling uncomfortable. Mr. Strutzenberg told the speaker, ‘If you’re not saying anything related to SoCal ROC, I have the authority to shut you down.’ He asked us to shut down the mic.” Witness #2 stated that the mic was never turned off.

Witness #2 stated that the speaker appeared respectful and she was trying to address an issue during the comments from the public section of the Board agenda. Witness #2 stated, “that there was an invitation to the public in attendance at the Board meeting to speak and, I think, that was in line with the Brown Act.” Witness #2 stated he did not get a sense of what Ms. Puterbaugh wanted to say because she was stopped initially after commencing her comments.

Rolf Strutzenberg

Mr. Strutzenberg was interviewed at the Southern California Regional Occupational Center (SoCal ROC), Administrative Offices, on November 14, 2024 at 11:00 a.m. Mr. Strutzenberg was initially contacted on November 12, 2024, to schedule the interview mentioned above. Mr. Strutzenberg stated he was skeptical about his in-person attendance at the interview, stating, “What is the complaint, and who are you working for?” He continued stating, “I have lots of questions that have not been answered; this is a mishmash, and I have no answers to my questions.”

During the November 12, 2024, phone conversation, the investigator informed Mr. Strutzenberg that Liberati and Associates was retained by SoCal ROC legal counsel Margaret A. Chidester, and Associates. He was also informed that his attendance at the interview was voluntary. He was informed that if he agreed to meet, he was not required to remain and could leave the interview at any point in time and at his choosing. The investigator informed Mr. Strutzenberg that the interview was his opportunity to provide his witness account of what took place during the October 17, 2024, SoCal ROC Board of Education meeting, specifically during the Comments from the Public section of the Board agenda. Additional information regarding who filed the complaint and the allegations noted in the complaint would be provided during the interview for which he would have an opportunity to respond.

Mr. Strutzenberg requested a copy of the written complaint. He was informed that the investigator would not provide a copy of the written complaint as the investigation was open and ongoing at that time. He was also informed that he would be provided an opportunity to recount what he saw and heard as a witness and provide his thoughts and beliefs about what happened during the October 17, 2024, Board meeting, Comments from the Public section of the Board agenda.

Mr. Strutzenberg repeated, “I am skeptical about meeting with you as I do not know who you work for.” He was informed that he could verify who Liberati and Associates is by speaking with Superintendent Rodriguez.

On November 12, 2024, Dr. Chidester emailed Mr. Strutzenberg with the following information regarding the task of Liberati and Associates to conduct the investigation at SoCal ROC.:

Good evening, President Strutzenberg.

I hope this finds you well. I write to confirm that Dr. Mario Liberati of Liberati & Associates has been tasked by my office, counsel to the ROC, to investigate the complaint of a speaker at the October 17, 2024, Board meeting concerning the manner in which the public comment section of the meeting was conducted.

Mr. Strutzenberg contacted the investigator via phone on November 13, 2024, at 2:48 p.m., stating that he had received confirmation from legal counsel Chidester and agreed to meet on November 14, 2024, at SoCal ROC, Administrative Offices, for the purpose of conducting his interview.

Mr. Strutzenberg was interviewed at the Southern California Regional Occupational Center (SoCal ROC), Administrative Offices, on November 14, 2024 at 11:00 a.m. Mr. Strutzenberg was informed that SoCal ROC legal counsel, Dr. Margaret Chidester, retained Liberati and Associates to conduct a third-party investigation by an outside independent and impartial firm due to a complaint that SoCal ROC received on the SoCal ROC Uniform Complaint Procedure Form regarding the October 17, 2024, regular Board of Education meeting, specifically, the Comments from the Public section. Mr. Strutzenberg was informed that Liberati and Associates will complete a factual investigation with a confidential investigation report that will be provided to legal counsel. Legal counsel will conduct the legal analysis and provide an opinion regarding the Brown Act as it relates to the Comments from the Public section of the agenda.

Mr. Strutzenberg was informed about the SoCal ROC Board Policy against retaliation and the importance of confidentiality regarding the investigation.

Mr. Strutzenberg was informed that all witnesses are informed about legal protections against retaliation. He was also informed that he is considered a witness and a respondent. Mr. Strutzenberg questioned whether he was a witness or a respondent. He was informed that, for the investigation at hand, he was both a witness to what he saw and heard at the October 14, 2024, SoCal ROC Board of Education meeting and named as the respondent to the complaint filed with SoCal ROC.

Mr. Strutzenberg requested a copy of the complaint that SoCal ROC received on the Uniform Complaint Procedure Form. He was informed that, as a matter of best practice, the written complaint is not provided during an open and ongoing investigation. Mr. Strutzenberg insisted that he was promised a copy of the written complaint.

Mr. Strutzenberg stated that he has served on the SoCal ROC Board of Education for almost four years and is currently in his second year as its President. When asked about his role as the current President, he noted that it is determined by the SoCal ROC by-laws. He stated that the Board meetings are scheduled and approved once per year.

Mr. Strutzenberg initially stated he did not recall if he was in attendance at the October 17, 2024, Board meeting. He noted he would check the calendar on his phone and subsequently stated that he was in attendance. Mr. Strutzenberg was asked if he, as the Board President, opened the Board agenda and, specifically, if he informed community members in attendance that they could speak under Comments from the Public section. He stated, "The president usually opens the Comments from the Public section of the agenda, but I do not recall specifically that occurring."

Mr. Strutzenberg recalled a member of the public who was in attendance at the October 17, 2024, Board of Education meeting coming to the podium to speak during the Comments from the Public section of the Board agenda. He stated, "I do not recall who spoke." Mr. Strutzenberg was asked if he knew Ms. Marie Puterbaugh, and he replied, "I do not know her." Mr. Strutzenberg stated he did not recall what the community member said while she was standing at the podium. He noted that there is an audio recording of the October 17, 2024, Board meeting which he stated to have in his possession.

Mr. Strutzenberg noted that he did stop the community member from speaking during the Comments from the Public section of the agenda while she was speaking. He noted that he did not recall when he asked the community member to stop speaking. Mr. Strutzenberg noted that he stopped the community member "in accordance with California Law and Board by-laws." Mr. Strutzenberg was asked about the reason or reasons within the California Law of Board by-laws in which he asked the community member to stop speaking, and he replied, "In accordance with California Law and Board by-laws." Mr. Strutzenberg did not know the section or name of the California law of SoCal ROC by-law he referenced in order to stop a member of the public from speaking during the Comments from the Public section of the SoCa ROC Board agenda.

CREDIBILITY

There are several disputed facts in the investigation and inconsistent recitation of factual allegations. Thus, it is necessary to make credibility determinations. In making such determinations, certain factors are relevant to the factfinder: 1) the inherent plausibility of each person's story; 2) corroborating evidence that would tend to support or contradict each person's story; 3) each person's motive to lie, and 4) each person's demeanor; that is, whether the person appears to be telling the truth when interviewed. In general, I found the witnesses to be credible, except for Rolf Strutzenberg.

The inherent plausibility of Mr. Strutzenberg's story and responses to several questions is questionable. For instance, Mr. Strutzenberg stated he did not recall if he attended the October 17, 2024, SoCal ROC Board of Education meeting until he checked the calendar on his phone. He also stated that the Board President usually opens the Comments from the Public section of the agenda and then noted, "but I do not recall specifically that occurring" at the October 17, 2024, Board meeting. Mr. Strutzenberg stated that he is in his second year serving as the SoCal ROC President of the Board, which would lead a reasonable individual to have sufficient knowledge regarding the processes and procedures of such meetings. In addition, the interview of Mr. Strutzenberg took place on November 14, 2024, less than one month from the actual date of the Board meeting in question, October 17, 2024. It should be noted that SoCal Roc generally holds one Board meeting per month. It does not seem plausible that Mr. Strutzenberg, the current Board President, would not recall attending the Board meeting without checking his calendar.

Mr. Strutzenberg stated he did not recall, nor does he know, Marie Puterbaugh, who spoke during the Comments from the Public time of the Board agenda. Ms. Puterbaugh stated that she regularly attends Board meetings in Redondo Beach USD and has spoken on at least two occasions. Ms. Puterbaugh noted that she has had conversations with Mr. Strutzenberg and stated that he is familiar with who she is.

Mr. Strutzenberg stated that he did stop the community member from speaking during the Comments from the Public section of the agenda but he did not recall when or why, other than to state he was following SoCal ROC by-laws. Mr. Strutzenberg did not clarify his thoughts about why he felt he needed to stop Ms. Puterbaugh from speaking. It does not stand to reason that a Board President would stop a community member from speaking if he or she did not know the person or have, at a minimum, an idea of what the community member said or was going to say. Per the transcript of the October 17, 2024, SoCal ROC Board of Education meeting, at 23:03, Ms. Puterbaugh stated, “But unfortunately, there has been some bullying, and I do think Rolf has um-not treated his fellow school board members nicely and you can just simply...” At this point, Mr. Strutzenberg interrupted and stopped Ms. Puterbaugh from speaking as it appears he did not want Ms. Puterbaugh to speak further after he heard his name used by Ms. Puterbaugh.

FINDINGS

Allegation 1: SoCal ROC Board President Rolf Strutzenberg interrupted and stopped Ms. Marie Puterbaugh from speaking at the regularly scheduled Board meeting of October 17, 2024, during the public comment section of the Board agenda.

- a. Mr. Strutzenberg acted like a bully when he shut down Ms. Puterbaugh from speaking.
- b. Mr. Strutzenberg is a Board Member in the Redondo Beach Unified School District, where Ms. Puterbaugh is a resident, and he did not want to hear Ms. Puterbaugh speak out against him at the SoCal ROC Board Meeting.

Finding 1: SUSTAINED

Mr. Strutzenberg, as the Board President and per the transcript, opened the Comments from the Public section by stating the following on October 17, 2024, “Individual speakers shall be allowed three (3) minutes on each agenda or non-agenda item. Total time for each item is twenty (20) minutes. Anyone wishing to speak to the Board this evening? Okay, one person.” Ms. Puterbaugh stood and walked to the podium to speak, as per the agenda and instructions from President Strutzenberg. President Strutzenberg did not mention any limitations to public speakers.

Per SoCal ROC by-law 9121: President, “The President shall preside at all Board meetings. He/she shall:

1. Call the meeting to order at the appointed time
2. Announce the business to come before the Board in its proper order
3. Enforce the Board’s policies relating to the conduct of meetings and help ensure compliance with applicable requirements of the Brown Act

4. Recognize persons who desire to speak, and protect the speaker who has the floor from disturbance or interference.

Ms. Puterbaugh stated, “All I wanted on October 17, 2024, during the SoCal ROC Board meeting, Comments from the Public section, is my three minutes to warn other Board members.” She recalled, “The minute I started to speak, Mr. Strutzenberg said, ‘No, no, it's not about SoCal ROC business. It's not about business. Is this about business?’ And I'm like, well, what do you mean? I go, you're the Board. You're in charge. You're the President of the Board. This does impact business. Ms. Puterbaugh recalled being frustrated as Mr. Strutzenberg interrupted her several times and noted, “he did not give me any other option or opportunity to speak. He just shut me down. He is the President of the Board and the decisions he, and the other Board members make, impacts the business of SoCal ROC.” She continued stating, “Mr. Strutzenberg knows me. He has heard me speak at the Board meetings. I felt bullied; my legs were shaking as I started to walk out of the room.” Ms. Puterbaugh noted, “I want to warn SoCal Roc and inform them about Mr. Strutzenberg's treatment of other Board Members that he works with on the Redondo Beach Unified School District Board.”

Witness #1 recalled that Ms. Puterbaugh stood up and walked to the podium to speak to the Board of Education, “She initially began by complementing our Fashion class and thanked us for the opportunity to hear about it. She wished her daughter, who is pursuing Fashion Design, had the opportunity to take the class at SoCal ROC. Then, as she continued speaking, Ms. Puterbaugh stated that she was there to address Mr. Strutzenberg and the concerns she had with his actions as a bully and not working cooperatively with other members of the Redondo Beach Unified School District Board of Education. She stated she wanted to bring those concerns to our attention.”

Witness #1 recounted that “as Ms. Puterbaugh began to explain her purpose for attending the SoCal Roc Board meeting, she was abruptly interrupted by Mr. Strutzenberg, who questioned if she had anything related to any business at SoCal ROC. Mr. Strutzenberg engaged with Ms. Puterbaugh and just kept telling her, if it doesn't have to do with anything directly at SoCal ROC, she should not be speaking at the meeting. Again, she tried speaking to share her concerns and Mr. Strutzenberg didn't want her to speak, and interrupted. He said it had nothing to do with what's on the agenda and asked for the microphone to be unplugged.” After Mr. Strutzenberg asked for the microphone to be turned off, Ms. Puterbaugh appeared frustrated and left the room.”

Witness #1 reflected on the interaction they witnessed between Mr. Strutzenberg and Ms. Puterbaugh: “I will say I was very shocked by the interaction, and I think his response of not allowing her to speak and being very quick to cut her off in what she wanted to share and talk about, as well as asking for a microphone to be turned off was disrespectful. I felt very bad for her. She wanted her to have her time, and not being allowed to be heard was very difficult. The

way she was treated, regardless of agreement or disagreement, was very uncomfortable to sit through.”

Witness #2 recalled, “After President Strutzenberg announced if there were any comments from the community, there was a lady who stood up, and she walked to the podium. The Board President responded after the community member started to speak, ‘This is not Redondo Beach; this is SoCal ROC. If you want to address anything, it has to be related to SoCal ROC.’ The lady appeared upset and said, ‘No, this is a public comment,’ and she referred to the Brown Act.”

Witness #2 continued noting, “The President responded and said, no. If it's an issue that has to do with SoCal ROC, then this is the right place. But if you need to address an issue that has nothing to do with SoCal ROC, it has something to do with Redondo Beach. You have to come to that board meeting and address that. The speaker asked about a time when she could speak. At some point, the President was pointing to the Superintendent and the other cabinet members, telling them to shut this thing down, meaning the microphone.”

Witness #2 stated, “When I watched and heard the interaction between President Strutzenberg and the community member, I felt a bit terrified. It was a terrifying moment coming from the Board President. It was terrifying the way President Strutzenberg interrupted the speaker at the podium.” Witness #2 reported feeling uncomfortable.

Mr. Strutzenberg initially stated he did not recall if he was in attendance at the October 17, 2024, Board meeting. He noted he would check the calendar on his phone and subsequently found that he was in attendance. Mr. Strutzenberg was asked if he, as the Board President, opened the Board agenda and, specifically, if he informed community members in attendance that they could speak under Comments from the Public section. He stated, “The president usually opens the Comments from the Public section of the agenda, but I do not recall specifically that occurring.”

Mr. Strutzenberg later stated he recalled a member of the public who was in attendance at the October 17, 2024, Board of Education meeting coming to the podium to speak during the Comments from the Public section of the Board agenda. He stated, “I do not recall who spoke.” Mr. Strutzenberg was asked if he knew Ms. Marie Puterbaugh and he replied, “I do not know her.” Mr. Strutzenberg stated he did not recall what the community member said while she was speaking at the podium. He noted that there is an audio recording of the October 17, 2024, Board meeting which he stated to have in his possession.

Mr. Strutzenberg noted that he indeed did stop the community member from speaking during the Comments from the Public section of the agenda while Ms. Puterbaugh was speaking. He noted that he did not recall when he asked the community member to stop speaking. Mr. Strutzenberg noted that he stopped the community member “in accordance with California Law and Board by-

laws.” Mr. Strutzenberg was asked about the reason or reasons he asked the community member to stop speaking, and he replied, “in accordance with California Law and Board by-laws.”

Mr. Strutzenberg stated he did not know the section or name of the law or Board by-laws he referenced giving him the authority to stop the member of the public from speaking during the Comments from the Public section of the agenda.

Witness #1 and Witness #2 both noted that Ms. Puterbaugh was interrupted and stopped from speaking during the Comments from the Public section of the agenda by Mr. Strutzenberg. Both witnesses further noted that, as Ms. Puterbaugh tried to speak, Mr. Strutzenberg continued to interrupt and then, as a final action, asked for the microphone to be turned off.

This investigation found via a preponderance of the evidence and Mr. Strutzenberg's admission that he stopped Ms. Puterbaugh from speaking during the October 17, 2024, Board meeting in trge Comments from the Public section of the Board agenda. Mr. Strutzenberg claimed he did not know when or the reasons why he stopped Ms. Puterbaugh from speaking other than to note he was following California law and SoCal Roc by-laws.

In his interview, Mr. Strutzenberg refused to explain the reason he asked the community member to stop speaking; instead, he explained his reason to be “In accordance with California Law and Board by-laws.” His comment to Ms. Puterbaugh, “Do you have anything that’s within the jurisdiction of SoCal ROC” indicates that he believed as Board President, he had the authority to limit comments made by a member of the public. Mr. Strutzenberg, witnesses #1 and #2, and the audio recording verify that, in fact, Ms. Puterbaugh was stopped from speaking. Therefore Allegation 1 is **Sustained**.

Ms. Puterbaugh and witnesses #1 and #2 noted discomfort and disrespect by the manner in which President Strutzenberg addressed Ms. Puterbaugh while she was standing at the podium. Ms. Puterbaugh noted she was “shut down with no other option to speak.” She said, “I felt bullied; my legs were shaking as I started to walk out of the room.” Witness #1 noted, “I was very shocked by the interaction, and I think his response of not allowing her to speak and being very quick to cut her off in what she wanted to share and talk about, as well as asking for a microphone to be turned off was disrespectful.” Witness #2 said, “It was terrifying the way President Strutzenberg interrupted the speaker at the podium.” Witness #2 reported feeling uncomfortable.

As it relates to allegations of bullying, although Mr. Strutzenberg’s interruption of Ms. Puterbaugh may be defined as inappropriate, it does not rise to the level of bullying as defined by the California Government Code section 12950.1(h)(2): that defines bullying as “Conduct of an employer or employee in the workplace with malice that a reasonable person would find hostile, offensive, and unrelated to an employer’s legitimate business interests. Abusive conduct may include repeated infliction of verbal abuse, such as the use of derogatory remarks, insults, and epithets; verbal or physical conduct that a reasonable person would find threatening, intimidating, or humiliating; or the gratuitous sabotage or undermining of a person’s work performance. A single act shall not

constitute abusive conduct, unless especially severe and egregious.” Therefore, Allegation 1(a) is **Not Sustained**

As it relates to Ms. Puterbaugh's intent for attending the SoCalROC Board of Education meeting on October 17, 2024, she was clear when she stated that she attended to warn the other SoCal Roc Board members due to the behavior Mr. Strutzenberg exhibited during the Redondo Beach Unified School District Board meetings. Ms. Puterbaugh stated, and wrote in her complaint, “I have spoken out against his (Strutzenberg) actions of accusing other RBUSD board members of illegal activities. This has resulted in some current school board members thinking of not running again, despite terrific results at RBUSD.” Ms. Puterbaugh felt it important to speak at the SoCal ROC Board meeting to inform the other Board members of behavior she believed to be contrary to the mission of the Board of Education. She further states, “Mr. Strutzenberg is untethered from reality; doesn’t that impact the business of the school?” Per the transcript, Ms. Puterbaugh was stopped from speaking by President Strutzenberg after Ms. Puterbaugh stated, “I do think Rolf has not treated his fellow board members nicely, and you can just simply...”

Therefore, Allegation 1(b) is **Sustained**.

This investigation is complete and is respectfully submitted to Dr. Margaret Chidester, legal counsel, for review.

Susan Liberati

Susan A. Liberati, Ed.D.

Mario Liberati

Mario A. Liberati, Ed.D.

Attachment A

11/6/24, 12:21 PM ShareFile - Where Companies Connect

<  2024.10.19 Complaint of Marie Puterbaugh (Attachment #1).pdf

SoCal ROC Uniform Complaint Procedure Form

A complaint under the Uniform Complaint Procedures (UCP) is a written and signed statement alleging a violation of federal or state laws governing certain educational programs. Southern California Regional Occupational Center has the primary responsibility to ensure compliance with applicable state and federal laws and regulations governing these educational programs. As always, the Center's Governing Board encourages early resolution of complaints whenever possible. However, to resolve complaints which may require a more formal process, the Board adopted the uniform system of complaint processes specified Title 5 of the California Code of Regulations sections 4600-4694, as applicable, and [Board Policy \(BP\) 1312.3](#) and [Administrative Regulation \(AR\) 1312.3](#).

The Center designates the following UCP Compliance Officer who receives and coordinates the investigation of complaints and ensures Center compliance with the law. UCP should be submitted via the form, by mail, or by email to:

Assistant Superintendent
Southern California Regional Occupational Center
2300 Crenshaw Blvd.
Torrance, CA 90501
(310) 224-4200, Ext. 216
adavis@scroc.k12.ca.us

If you are unable to put your complaint in writing, due to conditions such as a disability or illiteracy, the District will assist you with filing the complaint. Complaints may be filed anonymously, and will be investigated if sufficient information is provided.

The respondent's email (marieputerbaugh@gmail.com) was recorded on submission of this form.

1 of 5 **COMPLAINANT INFORMATION**

 - 100% +

Items in "All Downloads" ^

<https://lomac.sharefile.com/share/view/s1c66bc1e38ed49a2bf997dbbcb93e96c> 1/1

11/6/24, 12:22 PM ShareFile - Where Companies Connect

  2024.10.19 Complaint of Marie Puterbaugh (Attachment #1).pdf 

Role: *

Other ▼

COMPLAINT

Date(s) of Alleged Violation(s): *

10/17/2024

School/Department of Alleged Violation(s): *

Potential Violation of Brown Act

Basis of Complaint (select all that apply): *

School Safety Plans

Sexual Harassment (BP 5147.7)

2 of 5

 - 100% +

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11/6/24, 12:23 PM ShareFile - Where Companies Connect

<  2024.10.19 Complaint of Marie Puterbaugh (Attachment #1).pdf ⋮

- School Safety Plans
- Sexual Harassment (BP 5147.7)
- Pregnant or parenting student
- Classroom
- Discrimination, including harassment, intimidation, or bullying, on the basis of the following (select all that apply):
 - Race
 - Ethnicity
 - Ethnic Group Identification
 - National Origin
 - Color
 - Ancestry
 - Age
 - Sex
 - Gender
 - Gender Identity
 - Gender Expression
 - Sexual orientation
 - Marital Status
 - Parental Status
 - Genes
 - Physical or mental disability

3 of 5

 - 100% +

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11/6/24, 12:23 PM

ShareFile - Where Companies Connect



2024.10.19 Complaint of Marie Puterbaugh (Attachment #1).pdf



regarding the complaint.

I went to make public comment at the Board meeting. I was under the impression that the Brown Act allowed me to speak publicly as I wished. Rolf Struzenberg has heard me present at RBUSD as I have spoken out against his actions of accusing other RBUSD board members of illegal activities. This has resulted in some current school board members thinking of not running again, despite terrific results at RBUSD. I believe Mr. Struzenberg has a track record of making everything a battle and his fellow board members need to know his history. I have a list of lawsuits associated with the name "Rolf Struzenberg" that I have asked him if they are him, and he never answers. Additionally an Easy Reader article states Mr. Struzenberg filed a police report regarding what he believes are "illegal" payments due to an outdated charter. It is my understanding that Mr. Struzenberg protested the promotion of Dr. Nicole Wesley (a woman of color with excellent credentials and highly recommended), protested hiring a man who won a discrimination lawsuit against Beverly Hills, and possibly was the only one against promoting Marvin Brow (a black male also beloved by Redondo and extremely qualified). If Mr. Struzenberg is biased against women and minorities, it should be discussed. I strongly believe I was shut down by Mr. Struzenberg because he knew exactly why I was there and he didn't want to deal with it, but is that fair to other board members? Don't you want to know about your board president, who not only filed a police report (according to the Easy Reader), but writes accusatory letters in the Easy Reader against fellow RBUSD board members. Finally, Mr. Struzenberg seems to earnestly believe he is a client of the same law firm RBUSD uses, even though the firm put in writing he was not. If Mr. Struzenberg appears untethered from reality, doesn't that impact the business of your school? The BOD is the boss, and who is higher than the President of the Board. I request to have the recording sent to me and I would like to know exactly how my speaking about the President of the Board was a violation of the Brown Act and when I can come to speak without being shut down.

I understand that the site administrator, Superintendent or designee, or Board may request from me further information about this complaint and, if such information is available, I shall present it upon request.

I hereby certify that the above statements are true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

By typing my name below, I am agreeing that this may act as my electronic signature of acknowledgement.

Please type your full name, or 'Anonymous', below:

4 of 5



100%

Items in "All Downloads" ^

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1/1

Attachment B

Rolf Strutzenberg: 22:48 Alright, section 6, public comments. Individual speakers shall be allowed three (3) minutes on each agenda or non-agenda item. Total time for each item is twenty (20) minutes. Anyone wishing to speak to the Board this evening? Okay, one person.

Marie Puterbaugh: 23:03 Hi, my name is Marie Puterbaugh, and I feel like tonight was a perfect night. My daughter is a Sein – was a Senior at Redondo. She wanted to go to F.I.T. She had a 4.2 G.P.A. Uh- but they didn't care because she didn't understand fashion because they didn't have fashion classes at Redondo. So, fortunately she is at Santa Monica, but we were up for a month trying to get her application done. So, if she had had this I think she would have gotten in. Um, and I'm here today because um I do think you are doing important work. Um- Rolf Strutzenberg is on the Redondo Beach School Board [inaudible 23:36]... board. And we have an excellent school district in Redondo Beach. It's award winning and the school board does a great job. But unfortunately, there has been some bullying, and I do think Rolf has um- not treated his fellow school board members nicely and you can just simply...

Rolf Strutzenberg: 23:53 Ma'am--

Marie Puterbaugh: 23:53 [inaudible 23:53]

Rolf Strutzenberg: 23:54 Do you have anything that's within the jurisdiction of SoCal ROC?

Marie Puterbaugh: 23:56 You.

Rolf Strutzenberg: 23:57 No, that- I'm not under the jurisdiction of SoCal ROC. I'm sorry. You need to stick to your things that are under the jurisdiction of -

Marie Puterbaugh: 24:03 Well what would that be?

Rolf Strutzenberg: 24:05 I'm sorry?

Marie Puterbaugh: 24:06 Like what? Like working together to make things happen? I kinda feel like... is there a time that I can talk about this ...?

Rolf Strutzenberg: 24:13 [Inaudible 24:13] have something to talk about that's in the jurisdiction of SoCal ROC we are happy to hear it. If you have something...

Marie Puterbaugh: 24:17 I don't know what that would be.

Rolf Strutzenberg: 24:18 Okay. Then, I thank you for your time.

Marie Puterbaugh: 24:22 I don't un- So will I get a chance to talk? Or do you not want people to go ...

Rolf Strutzenberg: 24:26 [Inaudible 24:25] It's a basic...

Marie Puterbaugh: 24:27 But you're on the board. This is important. I mean I can email them your lawsuits ...

Rolf Strutzenberg: 24:32 [Inaudible 24:32]

Marie Puterbaugh: 24:32 That you never answered if they're yours or not.

Rolf Strutzenberg: 24:36 Speaking, I'm not agenda. Still needs-

Marie Puterbaugh: 24:37 But you let Monique talk at Redondo Beach...

Rolf Strutzenberg: 24:40 [Inaudible 24:40] I'm not going to argue with you.

Marie Puterbaugh: 24:41 I know, but this is exactly the point... So anyway, I will email you what Rolf has done. Like this. And if you have any questions there's a bunch of lawsuits that his name is attached to. He tends to bully the board...

Rolf Strutzenberg: 24:53 - 24:55 Ma'am—Thank you. Ma'am, Ma'am.

Marie Puterbaugh: 24:54 If he does it to you, please contact me.

Rolf Strutzenberg: 24:56 We need to turn her off.

Marie Puterbaugh: 24:57 Thank you.

Attachment C

**SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA REGIONAL OCCUPATIONAL CENTER
BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING
2300 Crenshaw Boulevard, Torrance, CA 90501
Board Room**

**October 17, 2024
6:30 p.m. Board of Education Meeting**

CALL MEETING TO ORDER:

Time: _____

BOARD MEMBERS:

Rolf Strutzenberg, President, Redondo Beach Unified School District _____

Bill Fournell, Vice-President, Board Member-at-Large _____

Linda Kurt, Clerk, Palos Verdes Peninsula Unified School District _____

Meredith Beachly, El Segundo Unified School District _____

Nancy Cobb, Board Member-at-Large _____

Jen Fenton, Manhattan Beach Unified School District _____

James Han, Torrance Unified School District _____

TBD., Inglewood Unified School District _____

SUPERINTENDENT:

Julian A. Rodriguez, Ed.D. _____

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Approve the October 17, 2024 agenda.

Move: _____ Second: _____ Vote: _____

MB _____ NC _____ JF _____ BF _____ JH _____ LK _____ RS _____ IUSD _____

Individuals who require disability-related accommodations or modifications, including auxiliary aids and services in order to participate in the Board Meeting, should contact the Superintendent or designee in writing at 2300 Crenshaw Boulevard, Torrance, CA 90501

Board Agenda Index
October 17, 2024

COMMENDATIONS/RECOGNITION:

None

STUDENT VOICES:

Makayla Boarts, Redondo Union High School
Fashion Design

A. Briseno

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT:

Fashion Design
Gitana Brazlauskas

B. Nakayama

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

Individual speakers shall be allowed three (3) minutes to address the Board on each agenda or non-agenda item. The Board shall limit the total time for public input on each item to 20 minutes.

1. Board Agenda Items: Any member of the audience may speak to any agenda item by submitting a yellow card (located on back table). Please hand the completed card to the administrative assistant at the Board table. When the item is considered by the Board, individuals submitting yellow cards will be called upon prior to Board action.
2. Topics Not on Agenda: Anyone in attendance may address any issue by following the same procedure process listed above. Since the Board cannot take action on items which are not on the agenda, such items may be referred to the Superintendent for handling. Individuals interested in speaking to items which are not on the agenda will be called upon at this time.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF CORRESPONDENCE TO THE BOARD

SUPERINTENDENT'S REMARKS

STAFF REPORTS

Satellite Course Cost Analysis

J. Rodriguez

Facilities Master Plan Update

J. Rodriguez

HopSkipDrive Update

B. Nakayama