*NEW PLYMOUTH SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 372*

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 BOARD OF TRUSTEES Kevin Barker

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Statement from the entire New Plymouth School Board of Trustees

During the past few months there has been a great deal of disruption in the District. Employees were accused of impropriates and employees have resigned from their positions with the District. Recently the Board had the opportunity to meet with a number of District staff and some patrons in an effort to allow all who requested an opportunity to express their thoughts concerning issues within the District that they feel need to be resolved. Statements made related to Superintendent Barker, showed an equal amount of support versus nonsupport.

Mr. Barker’s distractors have been unable to provide specific facts to support their complaints. They have never filed a grievance against Mr. Barker or in any alternative manner identified to the Board with any definitive act or omission on the part of Mr. Barker which supports the general allegations and gossip discussed in the meeting with the Board. Many of the allegations against Mr. Barker involve decisions made by the Board and not Mr. Barker. The Board policy manual contains a grievance policy which provides the procedure for resolving a dispute between staff, including the Superintendent. Utilization of that procedure is the proper course of action when a staff member has a dispute or issue with another staff member. Posting unfounded allegations on social media or doing surveys that do not provide the factual basis for the questions being asked is not a proper procedure to resolve problems. It only makes us all more divided and increases the level of rhetoric and decrease the opportunity to communicate and resolve problems.

In addition to staff who complained about Mr. Barker, the Board heard concerns from staff who presented information which related to the actions of Mr. Barkers distractors. A number of parental complaints and staff grievances, utilizing the applicable Board policy, have been presented to the District. It is the Boards understanding that those complaints and grievances are being resolved within the confines of the proper procedure and are based upon definitive facts and not mere allegations. The Board has not been advised as to who is involved or the facts of each complaint or grievance to insure that in the event the Board is called upon under the procedure to decide the issues presented it can do so in a fair and unbiased manner.

After hearing the issues and concerns of everyone who provided information to the Board, it is clear to the Board that everyone needs to get back to the focus of what their jobs are, educating the children of the District. If there is a staff member who violates state law, board policy or the code of ethics those actions must be dealt with utilizing the District grievance policy which requires facts not assumptions and opinions. When unsupported opinions, misstatements and assumptions bleed over into the operation of the District and effect the ability of staff to educate children, everyone must ask themselves whether or not they are attempting to do their job of educating children or are they more concerned about seeking retribution for a perceived wrong which is not based upon facts and truth.

This is a good community and the focus of the Board is on moving forward and providing the best education possible to the children in the District. The privacy interests of all involved make it impossible for the administration and the Board to fully and completely disclose all of the facts which are involved in the many rumors and allegations floating around in the community discussions. Each member of the public must reach their own conclusions. The Board hopes that the conclusions reached by each individual staff member or patron are based upon facts and the truth and not innuendo, rumors or gossip.

The Board has considered all of the facts presented to it and remains in full support of Mr. Barker. The Board urges anyone who has a factual basis for claiming that any staff member has done something wrong to bring it to the District utilizing the applicable Board policy. We should all be examples to the students and to one another by utilizing the available process to obtain resolution of our issues and concerns instead of relying upon unfounded allegations and rumors to demand action.

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