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Please type the topic or subject of your message: Comments on Agenda Item #14 (Pima Vocational) for the Board of Supervisors Meeting March 19, 2024

Your Message Honorable Chair and Board of Supervisors Members,
My comments relate to Item #14 on the Meeting Agenda for March 19, 2024, Pima Vocational High School:

We have all been familiar with, in greater or less degree, the beneficiaries of the Pima Vocational High School (PVHS) program through these 20 plus years. They are the young Mom at the bus stop or transit center that we drive/ride past on our morning commute to work or daily errands. She is dropping her child off to "grandma" as she hurries to her high school class. They are also our work colleague's grandson, neighbor, goddaughter, tribal member, or our own son's classmate in high school history class until he or she eventually dropped out. She is also the 17 year old waiting in the One Stop or CAA lobby area to see if she met the qualifications to join one of the employment training programs, only to be notified that she did not meet the basic academic level of the TABE or equivalent test. or the 18 year old with less than 5 credits toward graduation who is referred to PVHS by the TUSD, Marana or Catalina school counselors, or the PC juvenile court judges, or the foster care workers. A few years later they are also the office manager at your doctor's office, the mechanic at the local car repair, the graduate from U of A political science program, or the US marine veteran returning from overseas. (a small sample of true PVHS graduates!) They are all paying into the County tax base, raising families (the next generation transitioned out of poverty.) I don't envy you the position of making a permanent decision on a program within a relatively short study period and admittedly incomplete information, as opposed to having, for example, a lengthier, in depth study (similar to the Prosperity Initiative Working Group) with representatives of community members, graduates, partner agencies, and referring dropout counselors and non profit partners who have worked closely with PVHS over the years. Also time to access more complete financial, and demographic information from existing historical and pre-pandemic State and County sources. The planning to open PVHS took two years 1998-2000, and was comprised of professional educators and program directors from TUSD, Amphi, and others, with input from County and City programs serving the homeless/CAA, teen parents, WIC, special needs, and juvenile justice clients. All agreed that a school-to-work program within the County Community and Workforce departments, would provide the opportunity to leverage the newly legislated charter school resources (for school student attendance), to provide vulnerable youth with much needed support services, ideal academic student-teacher

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ratios, and in-place workplace skills training. The program would also be eligible for annual and special state and federal grant funds obtained by the school staff experienced in grant writing. Staff members were co-writers on the Youth Opportunities 5-year grant which paid for Youth Specialists (i.e. PVHS school counselors); PVHS was awarded an EPA federal grant for waste water student intern training; Special Education (IDEA) grants were received each year for special needs students; 21st Century awarded a 3-year federal grant, and so on. No one believed that a school whose mission was to welcome high school dropouts with multiple attendance barriers could or should rely solely on State school aid based on student attendance. From the beginning, PVHS' best practices centered on excellent teachers and experienced education leaders who needed time to establish new patterns of attendance and success and connection with the students before the students would reach and maintain the desired 80-90% attendance.

There is much more information that the preparers of the initial report to the Board of Supervisors did not have the time to research or produce regarding the following: reports made to the CWD directors on monthly, and annual bases, graduate follow-up, accreditation credentials (two 5-year accreditation awards from NCA, Cognia), annual determination of good standing within the AZ Charter School Board authority, the Annual Auditor General (County) reports, total number of youth served annually not shown in any of the graphs presented to the County Administrator or Board of Supervisors in recent CWD memos), sampling of parent surveys, and other data that would give the BOS decision-makers a better frame of reference with which to make the difficult decision of closure or non closure of PVHS, and the surrender of the remaining 11 years of the 20-year contract awarded to Pima County.

Thank you for your attention and diligence in this matter important to so many of our young County residents in need of a pathway to employment and a sustainable quality of life.

Would you like a response?

No
