

Who approved the superintendent's contract?

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Four out of the five current Centinela Valley board members voted to approve Superintendent Jose Fernandez's lucrative contract in 2009. Only Lorena Gonzalez had not yet joined the panel. However, all five were in office when his contract was extended for four years in 2012.

Here's a look at the background of each board member:

Maritza Molina

Maritza Molina was elected to the Centinela Valley Union High School District board in November 2009 and currently serves as president. The Lawndale resident graduated from Lawndale High School and UC Santa Barbara, where she majored in cultural anthropology. Molina was 23 when she was elected narrowly, with 50.6 percent of the vote. She currently provides family mediation and conflict resolution services to families at the nonprofit Centinela Youth Services Inc. in Hawthorne.

Rocio Pizano

Rocio Pizano was elected to the board in 2005. A longtime resident of Inglewood and a Hawthorne High alum, she obtained her bachelor's degree in finance from Cal State Long Beach in 1996. Pizano is a longtime employee of American Honda Motor Co. in Torrance, where she works in the treasury department. She also manages an in-house bank account for many of Honda's subsidiaries.

Gloria Ramos

Gloria Ramos was elected to the board in November 2007. A lifelong resident of Hawthorne and Lawndale, she graduated from Hawthorne High in 1990. Since then she has held several school jobs, starting as a cafeteria worker in 1990 at Leuzinger High in Lawndale and later as an instructional aide at her alma mater. She graduated from Cal State Northridge in 2006 with a degree in business administration, becoming the first member of her family to earn a college degree.

In early 2012, Ramos got into a fistfight with her niece in a dispute involving Ramos' father. The niece pressed charges and a felony assault case went to court, but a judge dismissed it. Ramos was working for the Los Angeles Unified School District as a special education teacher at the time of the altercation, but no longer works for the district.

Ramos has occasionally been a voice of dissent on a board known for voting as a bloc. Although she voted in favor of the employment contract of Jose Fernandez in 2009, she says she didn't have a thorough understanding of it and refused to sign the document. She did, however, sign his contract extension in 2012.

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Hugo Rojas

Hugo Rojas was elected to the board in 2009 after a fierce contest that ousted two incumbents. Even then, Rojas was aligned with the two other candidates who won that election, fellow board members Maritza Molina and Rocio Pizano. Prior to 2009, Rojas, a karate instructor, was a school board member in the neighboring Hawthorne School District, whose students feed into Centinela Valley.

Rojas comes from a long line of law enforcement officers and holds them in high regard. In late 2010, while driving to a school board meeting, he spotted a young man running from a police officer and decided to intervene, wrestling the 17-year-old boy to the ground and holding him until police arrived.

Lorena Gonzalez

Lorena Gonzalez was elected to the board in November 2011. Gonzalez ousted the most outspoken board member with the help of a little-known group called Citizens for Better Schools, which received much of its funding from out of state. Gonzalez, a 44-year-old banking executive at the time of her election, defeated incumbent Sandra Suarez, a vocal critic of the board's leadership. Gonzalez said she felt compelled to run after hearing complaints from her daughter and friends about changes underway at Lawndale High.

Sources: Daily Breeze research and Centinela Valley Union High School District website.