



district spokesman Marcus Walton stated. "As private employers, these companies can move their employees to accommodate the work flow."

SGI, a Pasadena-based construction-management firm also known as The Seville Group, has overseen the district's bond-funded school building program since 2001. It has pumped about \$250,000 into a campaign committee that supported

bond and parcel tax election campaigns, according to election finance records. WLC Architects, based in Rancho Cucamonga, has contributed more than \$361,000 to the committee. WLC has also worked extensively on the district's bond-financed projects since the program began.

Both SGI and WLC have also made political contributions to election campaigns of board member Madeline Kronenberg and to former board President Charles Ramsey's unsuccessful runs for city and state offices. Ramsey and Kronenberg ran the district's facilities construction subcommittee, which has recommended numerous construction cost increases to the full board.

Growing criticism about the district's management of the program -- which has saddled taxpayers with some of the highest property tax rates in the Bay Area -- led voters in June to reject the district's effort to pass its seventh bond measure since 1998.

Despite a voter revolt that also impacted November's school board election, publicly elected trustees continue to approve hundreds of thousands of dollars each month in change orders and budget increases, such as \$635,925 for SGI on Jan. 21 for managing the Gompers and Leadership campus replacement projects through October, along with overall design management services from January through March.

A June 2013 audit of the bond program concluded that the percentage of bond money being spent on actual construction was "considerably lower than has been experienced by other districts." About 59 percent of the \$945.3 million spent at that time was construction-related, with the rest devoted to architects, program and construction management, engineers, consultants and other costs, district records show.

The audit also concluded that the number of amendments to architectural agreements related to "unforeseen conditions or changes in scope warranting additional services" seemed "excessive." Yet, the district does not appear to have taken the warnings to heart.

WLC recently requested and was granted a \$7.5 million increase in design fees for the company's work on Pinole Valley High -- its sixth contract amendment for the school -- without any independent written staff report or analysis. The bump pushed the design

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Trustees have routinely approved hundreds of thousands of dollars in fees for the company on the consent calendar at board meetings, with no discussion and without substantial backup materials explaining the need for the added costs.

"This type of agreement lacks the controls necessary to ensure that the time spent ... and charged to the district is appropriate," the 2013 performance audit by Total School Solutions reported. Districts are legally required to hire independent auditors to review their bond construction programs each year.

SGI program manager Juan Garrahan said that billing fees on an hourly basis allows for greater scrutiny and accountability throughout construction. Of the tea bags, office supplies and storage units rented or purchased by his company and charged to the district with a 10 percent markup, he said they support both district and SG

expenditures last month, saying she needed