

# Agenda Report

**TO:** City Council

**DATE:** December 17, 2007

**FROM:** City Manager

**SUBJECT: RECOMMENDATION TO RE-ESTABLISH A PASADENA YOUTH COUNCIL**

## **RECOMMENDATION:**

It is recommended that the City Council approve the reestablishment of the Pasadena Youth Council to serve as an advisory body to identify, discuss, prioritize and address local youth issues. In summary, the Pasadena Youth Council will:

- A. be an advisory committee available to address youth issues citywide (working as a resource group with various City projects and commissions, as needed);
- B. be a subcommittee of the Human Services Commission;
- C. be structured to include a Core Advisory group of 20 youth from local middle and high schools who meet bimonthly to develop and implement annual work plans, as well as a Youth Network open to all local youth to participate on a non-regular basis via special events, forums and youth-oriented internet opportunities (e.g. web pages)
- D. be designed to reflect the diversity of Pasadena middle and high school age youth.

## **RECOMMENDATION OF THE HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION:**

At their meeting on September 12, 2007 the Human Services Commission reviewed the pilot study findings and recommended that City Council approve the proposed reestablishment of the Pasadena Youth Council.

## **BACKGROUND**

The original Pasadena Youth Council was established in 1989 as an advisory group to the Pasadena Commission on Children and Youth consisting of 15 high school and junior college students that acted as advisors to the City on matters that affected youth in the City. The Youth Council provided a key opportunity for participating students to develop and practice leadership skills, learn about City government and advisory bodies, and provide a youth perspective and input to City leaders. Due to diminishing youth interest and problems with sustainability as members "aged out", the group was sunset in 2002.

In an effort to try other options for youth participation and input to City government, in March 2004 a new "Student Interns on Commissions" program was approved allow students to participate on the commission of their choice from September through June of their junior or senior year in high school. While this program offered student interns hands on experience in City government as they learned how commissions work and how public meetings are conducted, after two years it was ended in 2006 due to limited youth participation and logistical challenges (e.g. time to review lengthy commission materials, meeting times conflicting with school hours or activities, sense of isolation and lack of impact as one youth on otherwise all-adult advisory body).

In 2005 the City Council directed staff to investigate the need to reestablish a City youth advisory body. The investigation process included a six-month pilot study, review of data, survey and focus group activities with youth, interviews with adult providers of local youth services and related efforts. Details of this process are included in Attachment A. In summary, key findings included:

- youth indicated a desire to participate in local public decision-making that affects their lives but felt they had no real way to participate, and did not feel understood or valued by adult decision makers in the community
- youth believe a council or advisory body would allow them the opportunity to participate in a meaningful way
- design of a youth council or advisory body should include a formal structure, with an ongoing leadership group selected through an application and interview process, as well as an informal structure that allows any interested youth to participate on a more occasional basis
- elements for a successful youth council include a committed adult leader, an ongoing recruitment strategy, financial sustainability, meaningful participation (vs. symbolic gestures) that keeps youth engaged, and the opportunity for youth to see direct results from their involvement.

## **RECOMMENDATION FOR REESTABLISHMENT - MISSION AND GOALS**

Based on finding from the above review, it is recommended that the City reestablish the Pasadena Youth Council. While more specific annual goals and structures would be finalized with youth participation during the process of implementing the Pasadena Youth Council, the following summarizes the basic mission statement and goals.

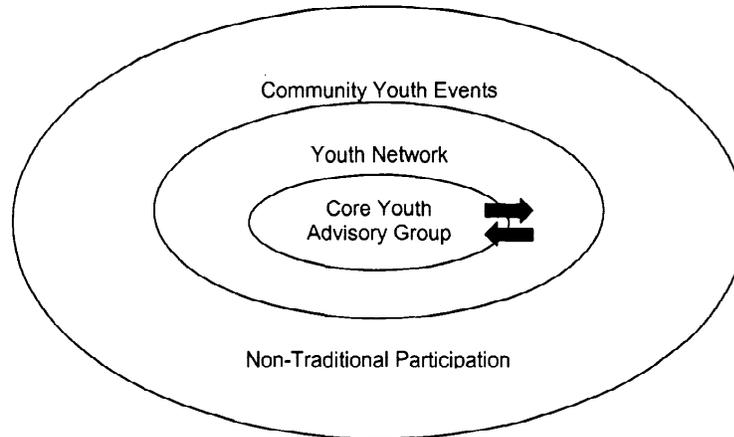
**MISSION OF THE PASADENA YOUTH COUNCIL:** to provide Pasadena youth with the opportunity to participate in City governance and share in the decision-making process, through participation in a Core Youth Advisory Group and a Youth Network, intended to identify, discuss, prioritize and address youth issues.

### **GOALS OF THE PASADENA YOUTH COUNCIL:**

- Provide youth with a forum for civic engagement in Pasadena
- Advance the vision for youth in accordance with the City's *Policy on Children, Youth and Families*
- Create opportunities for youth involvement in decision-making in the community on matters affecting youth.

## PASADENA YOUTH COUNCIL PROGRAM DESIGN

Based on youth input the recommended structure accommodates youth who want to be more intensely involved and make an ongoing commitment as well as those wanting to participate on a less frequent basis, so that all youth have the opportunity to have their voices heard. The design includes three levels of involvement: a Core Youth Advisory Group; a Youth Network; and, a series of youth special events, blogs and related opportunities.



The roles and responsibilities of the respective Youth Council parts are as follows.

### **Core Youth Advisory Group:**

1. consists of approximately 20 youth representing the diversity of the various middle and high schools (both public and private).
2. selected through an application and interview process of eligible candidates (i.e. youth of middle and high school age who live in Pasadena or attend PUSD schools); the initial selection will be completed with City staff and the Human Services Commission, and thereafter selection will be based on recommendations from the existing Core Youth Advisory Group with concurrence by the Human Services Commission
3. meets twice per month, with annual development and implementation of work plan; sets the agenda for the Youth Network Meeting, takes input and ideas from the Youth Network and then formulates and implements next steps/recommendations; recommendations on issues that impact youth in the Pasadena community will be forwarded or otherwise presented to the Human Services Commission or, as appropriate, to other City advisory or decision-making bodies.
4. recruited through and in collaboration with schools and community based organizations that serve middle and high school youth in Pasadena.
5. initial recruitment will be conducted by City staff, with subsequent recruitments conducted by the Core Youth Advisory Group (with staff guidance).
6. responsible for recruiting participation in the larger Youth Network.

**Youth Network:**

1. consists of any middle and high school youth residing in Pasadena or in PUSD that want to participate.
2. meets monthly to discuss the agenda as set by the Core Youth Advisory Group; ideas and recommendations from Network meetings go to the Core Youth Advisory Group for further action.
3. will be recruited by the Core Youth Advisory Group in collaboration with schools, community based organizations and others serving youth.
4. will assist the Core Youth Advisory Group in accomplishing their mission and goals.

**Community Youth Events:**

Both the Core Youth Advisory Group and the Youth Network would have roles in planning various larger community wide youth events (i.e. Youth Month, career day, community clean up day etc.)

**Non-Traditional Youth Participation:**

Non-traditional opportunities for participation would include a web page, blogs or other message systems. Youth recommended that City Council have a MySpace page where youth can communicate with Council via blogs or messages, with ideas reviewed and discussed by the Core Youth Advisory Group. The Youth Council may also have a MySpace page (maintained and regulated by the staff Coordinator) to exchange information and ideas.

**YOUTH COUNCIL SUSTAINABILITY PLAN**

Financial stability and membership continuity are two key components to sustainability of the Pasadena Youth Council. Lack of funding to plan and carry out events and activities in the past has caused many youth to feel as if their input and ideas did not matter and, as a result, they have disengaged. Addressing this concern, \$20,000 will be requested from the FY 2009 City budget to support the advertising, recruitment, meetings and events of the Core Youth Advisory Group and the Youth Network. The annual work plan will assure that projects and activities are within available resources; support for additional special projects may be pursued through grants and community partnerships. The current City Program Coordinator for Children, Youth and Senior issues will staff the Pasadena Youth Council, so no additional personnel is required.

Ongoing recruitment is also essential to the Youth Council's sustainability. Those selected for the Core Youth Advisory Group will serve an initial one-year term with options for renewal, and thereafter one- and two-year terms will be staggered to allow both continuity as well as development of new leadership. Term renewals will consider member availability, interest by other eligible applicants, and the goal of securing a diverse representation of Pasadena youth attending both public and private schools. Once a student is no longer eligible to be a part of the Core Youth Advisory Group he or she could still continue participation through the Youth Network.

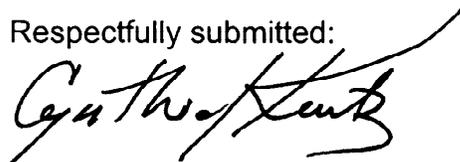
**YOUTH COUNCIL TIMELINE FOR IMPLEMENTATION**

| <b>TASK</b>   | <b>TARGET DATE</b>    |
|---|-----------------------|
| Review by the Human Services Commission   | September 2007        |
| City Council Action   | December 2007         |
| Development of the Core Youth Advisory Group application and recruitment strategy and materials | January-February 2008 |
| Recruitment and Selection of Pasadena Youth Council Core Advisory Group                         | February-March 2008   |
| First meeting of the Core Youth Advisory Group  | March 2008            |
| Advertisement and recruitment for the first Youth Network meeting                               | March – April 2008    |
| First meeting of the Youth Network  | May 2008              |

**FISCAL IMPACT**

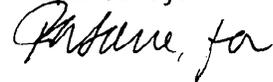
Since the program will be operational for only six months of FY 2008, start-up funds of \$10,000 for the Youth Council can be absorbed through cost savings in the current budget of the Human Services and Recreation Department. Annual funding in the amount of \$20,000 will be requested through the City FY2009 budget process.

Respectfully submitted:



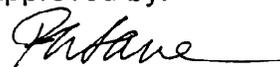
Cynthia J. Kurtz  
City Manager

Prepared by:



Valerie Babinski-Manlic  
Program Coordinator II

Approved by:



Patricia A. Lane, Department Director  
Human Services and Recreation

Attachment A

**ATTACHMENT A**  
**BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**  
**RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF PASADENA YOUTH COUNCIL**

**BACKGROUND**

The original Pasadena Youth Council was established in 1989 as an advisory group to the Pasadena Commission on Children and Youth. The Youth Council consisted of 15 high school and junior college students that acted as advisors to the City on matters that affected youth in the City. The Youth Council provided a key opportunity for participating students to develop and practice leadership skills, learn about City government and advisory bodies, and provide a youth perspective and input to City leaders. Due to diminishing youth interest and problems with sustainability as members “aged out”, the group was sunset in 2002.

In an effort to try other options for youth participation and input to City government, in March 2004 a new “Student Interns on Commissions” program was approved. This program was designed to allow students to participate on the commission of their choice from September through June of their junior or senior year in high school. This program offered student interns hands on experience in City government as they learned how commissions work and how public meetings are conducted. The student interns were encouraged to participate in commission discussions and offer a youth perspective on issues in the community, though as non-voting members. The “Student Interns on Commissions” program operated for two years but was ended in 2006 due to limited youth participation and logistical challenges (such as the requirement to regularly review lengthy commission materials and attend meetings which sometimes conflicted with school hours or activities). Further, the participants reported they felt isolated as the only youth on an otherwise all-adult advisory body, and indicated they felt unable to make a difference by just offering a “youth perspective” to commission discussions.

The City Council directed staff to investigate the need to reestablish the Pasadena Youth Council as a youth advisory body to the City. After discussions with youth, community organizations and the Human Services Commission, City Council approved staff proceeding with a six-month pilot study to assess youth interest in revitalizing the Pasadena Youth Council and, if so, identify key elements to effective design of such a body. Following a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) process, a representative of a local youth-focused non-profit organization was retained and worked with youth interns and City staff to complete a six-month study, conducted from February through July 2007.

## **DATA COLLECTION AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

Since 2003 several activities have pointed to the design and reestablishment of a citywide youth advisory body to advise decision makers on actions that will affect Pasadena youth. In 2003 and 2004 the City Public Health Department's MAP Campaign held conversations with 500 youth, during which the youth indicated a desire to participate in public-decision making that affects their lives. In 2004 the Human Services and Recreation Department conducted a needs assessment of 402 Pasadena youth. Results of this assessment indicated that a majority of youth felt that they had no way to participate in any kind of local decision making and that they felt that a council or advisory body would allow them the opportunity to participate in a meaningful way. This assessment also found that youth did not feel understood or valued by adult decision makers in the community.

In February 2007 the City began the Youth Council Pilot Study Project. During February through April 2007, a total of 3500 surveys were distributed to local middle and high school students, of which 784 (22%) surveys were completed and returned. Youth from public schools, private schools, community based organizations, churches and City park programs participated in the survey. Additionally, more than 100 youth attended focus groups held throughout the community. Results of the survey and focus groups indicated that a majority of youth felt that they have no real way to participate in decision making that impacts their lives. Some 74% of participants felt that a youth council would be a place for youth to voice their concerns and participate in decisions that affect their lives. When asked to respond to a design structure for the youth council the respondents were divided between having a formal structure, chosen through applications and interviews, and an informal structure where any youth could participate.

Additional research, including interviews with adult leaders working with youth, revealed that essential elements to a successful youth council include a committed adult leader, ongoing recruitment strategy, and financial sustainability. Further, youth look for meaningful participation (vs. symbolic gestures) to remain engaged, and want to see direct results from their involvement.