

CITY OF PASADENA
City Council Minutes
March 1, 2021 – 3:00 P.M.
City Hall Council Chamber

SPECIAL JOINT MEETING

The virtual meeting was convened pursuant to Executive Order N-29-20 issued by Governor Gavin Newsom on March 17, 2020, and was held solely by videoconference/teleconference

OPENING: Mayor Gordo and President Phelps called the Special Joint meeting of the City Council and Pasadena Unified School District (PUSD) Board of Education to order at 3:08 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by PUSD Member Fredericks. (Absent: None)

ROLL CALL:

Councilmembers:

Mayor Victor M. Gordo
Vice Mayor Andy Wilson
Councilmember Tyron Hampton
Councilmember John J. Kennedy
Councilmember Steve Madison
Councilmember Gene Masuda
Councilmember Jessica Rivas
Councilmember Felicia Williams

Staff:

City Manager Steve Mermell
City Attorney/City Prosecutor Michele Beal Bagneris
City Clerk Mark Jomsky

Pasadena Unified School
District, Board of Education

President Scott Phelps
Vice President Elizabeth Pomeroy
Member Michelle Richardson Bailey
Member Kimberly Kenne
Member Jennifer Hall Lee
Member Patrick Cahalan
Member Tina Fredericks

Staff:

Dr. Brian McDonald, Superintendent of Schools
Elizabeth J. Blanco, Ed.D., Assistant Superintendent of Special
Education
Leslie Barnes, Ed.D., Chief Business Officer
Ana Maria Apodaca, Health Director
Steven Miller, Ed.D., Chief Human Resources Officer

5 MINUTE UPDATE ON COLLABORATE PASADENA

Steve Mermell, City Manager, provided introductory comments, Donald E. Grant Jr., Executive Director and Geoff Albert,

Councilmember Kennedy connected to the meeting at 3:21 p.m.

Community Engagement Specialist, representing Pacific Oaks/Collaborate Pasadena, presented a PowerPoint presentation on the organization's programs, including Healthy Families, Caregiver Engagement, Student Engagement, Early Learning and Supportive Communities. They also provided information on their new advocacy efforts related to the reduction of structural racism and systemic inequities; and addressing impacts caused by the COVID-19 pandemic; and responded to questions.

In response to Member Kenne's request, Mark Jomsky, City Clerk, stated that PowerPoints presented at today's joint meeting will be posted online on the City's agenda website.

Member Kenne spoke on the need for the PUSD Board Members, City Council, and community partners to come together on a regular basis to discuss issues in the community.

Following discussion, on order of the President and Mayor, and by consensus, the information was received and filed.

5 MINUTE UPDATE ON YOUTH MASTER PLAN

President Phelps provided introductory comments, and Christy Zamani, Executive Director of Day One, presented a PowerPoint presentation and video (with various PUSD/Pasadena City College students) on the Youth Master Plan, summarizing the group's progress on various priority areas and next steps; and responded to questions.

In response to Mayor Gordo's inquiry related to how the City Council can move the Youth Master Plan forward and provide support for this work, Ms. Zamani responded that a representative from both the PUSD and City attending partnership meetings and collaborating with Day One to support youth in Pasadena would be a great help.

President Phelps and Mayor Gordo asked PUSD and City staff to coordinate with Ms. Zamani and ensure that staff from both agencies attend the next partnership meeting.

City Clerk Jomsky reported that a letter providing comments/suggestions on the matter, including the need to address the needs of the children in PUSD Schools, from Lisa J. Cavalier, representing Boys & Girls Club of Pasadena, was received and distributed to the City Council and School Board, posted on-line, and made part of the public record.

He also read aloud comments and suggestions on the matter from the following individuals:

Allen B. Shay, Pasadena resident
Nancy, Pasadena resident
Daniel Fong, Pasadena resident
Claudia Hathcock, Pasadena resident

Vice Mayor Wilson spoke on the importance of staff to be mindful of transitioning back to in-class instruction for the students, which he believes will lead to some behavioral changes.

In response to Councilmember Kennedy's request related to information on the City's Summer Rose Program funds, City Manager Mermell responded that he will confirm the fund balance with staff and distribute the information in the weekly letter; and responded to questions.

Councilmember Kennedy stated that he would like to see additional diversity in the outward looking faces of the videos. He spoke on the need for the City Council to determine, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, how to provide resources, stipends, etc., to support those young individuals who are disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, such as those that can perform jobs needed by non-profit organizations or the City of Pasadena to provide students with nominal resources.

President Phelps requested that Elizabeth Blanco, Assistant Superintendent of Special Education, determine why the students are having difficulty signing up for life-skill/Home Economics and Financial Literacy courses, and provide assistance to the students that would like to schedule such courses.

Following discussion, on order of the President and Mayor, and by consensus, the information was received and filed.

5 MINUTE UPDATE ON THE OFFICE OF THE YOUNG CHILD

City Manager Mermell provided introductory comments, and Carla Hegwood, Office of the Young Child Coordinator, presented a PowerPoint presentation on the City's Master Plan for the Young Child; and responded to questions.

Councilmember Kennedy spoke on the importance of the position of the Office of the Young Child Coordinator, and asked Ms. Hegwood to commit to three years of service in the position to establish a work plan and ensure continuity for the position.

Councilmember Rivas suggested that the Office of the Young Child work with local healthcare providers to connect with families with young children throughout the community.

Member Frederick spoke on her hope that PUSD provides free daycare and preschool to the community, and believes a strong partnership with the Office of the Young Child is a good starting point to achieve such a goal.

Michelle Perera, Director of Libraries and Information Services, provided information on the City libraries that were selected to participate in creating and cultivating a race equity and inclusion initiative, with staff to analyze the City's library programs to determine how the City can better serve the community through an equity viewpoint; and responded to questions.

President Phelps suggested a collaboration effort with PUSD and City staff to analyze the future of preschools in PUSD.

Elizabeth Blanco, Assistant Superintendent of Special Education, provided information on PUSD's partnerships with many of the City coordinators and programs; and stated she looks forward to working with Ms. Hegwood.

Vice Mayor Wilson spoke on the need to constantly reinvent the City's libraries, and redefine important roles in the community to involve critical infrastructures.

Mayor Gordo requested an update on the Early Development Instrument (EDI) and Early Childhood Hubs (i.e. the number of participants, outreach, etc.) data reports. He spoke on the need for staff to address the City's policies on COVID-19 and social equity impacts to young children in the community, which he believes is a developmental issue. He reported to the City Council and public his plans to appoint an advisory body to provide a better understanding of the various COVID-19 and social equity impact issues, including mental health, and requested that staff and PUSD Board Members suggest appointees to serve on the advisory body.

Following discussion, on order of the President and Mayor, and by consensus, the information was received and filed.

PRESENTATION ON THE PASADENA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT MAGNET

President Phelps provided introductory comments, and Helen Hill, Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Professional Development, and Shannon Mumolo, Signature Programs

Coordinator, both representing PUSD, presented a PowerPoint presentation on the item; and responded to questions.

Councilmember Masuda requested data on the number of high school students that are participating in college courses and the length of the courses.

Member Hall Lee reported that Dr. Ying Ying Goh is the keynote speaker at the Women's History Month Assembly, hosted by Lori Touloumian, Principal of Eliot Arts Magnet Academy, and PUSD Board Member Hall Lee, to be held virtually on March 24, 2021.

Member Pomeroy stated that all schools in Altadena and Sierra Madre, including Magnet Schools, are open and available to all Pasadena residents.

Mayor Gordo spoke on the need to determine what action can be taken to encourage the extension of the Magnet Programs throughout the City's public school system. He asked Councilmember Madison to agendaize for discussion, at a future Legislative Policy Committee meeting, an action that the City Council can take to support legislation related to schools applying for additional Magnet Program funding. Mayor Gordo spoke on the need to better coordinate legislative efforts between the City, PUSD, and Pasadena City College.

President Phelps spoke on the need for additional internship opportunities in the City, which is a possible career establishing prospect for students attending PUSD schools.

Following discussion, on order of the President and Mayor, and by consensus, the information was received and filed.

PRESENTATION ON THE REOPENING OF SCHOOLS IN THE PASADENA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Dr. Brian McDonald, Superintendent of Schools provided introductory comments and thanked Dr. Goh, City staff, and community partners for all their efforts to serve and support PUSD; and Elizabeth J. Blanco, Ed.D., Assistant Superintendent of Special Education, and Ana Maria Apodaca, Health Director, and Leslie Barnes, Ed.D., Chief Business Officer, all with PUSD, presented a PowerPoint presentation on the item, and responded to questions.

Dr. McDonald reported that in light of the announcement by Governor Newsom announcing plans to reopen grades K-6 in mid-March, PUSD Board of Education will schedule a special meeting on Thursday, March 4, 2021, so that he may offer a

recommendation for PUSD students to return to in-person learning; and responded to questions.

Councilmember Hampton recommended that PUSD staff contact the Rose Bowl Operating Company and Pasadena City College to determine if PUSD high school senior athletes can use available sports fields in the area to enable them to play sports, display and record their athletic capabilities, and allow them to apply/earn college scholarship offers. He asked staff to work collaboratively with PUSD to determine if the Rose Bowl Stadium or the Jackie Robinson fields may be offered to PUSD high school sport teams. He encouraged PUSD to offer summer school for students who would like to earn extra school credit. In addition, he asked PUSD staff to share information on lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic.

City Manager Mermell stated that the City is in communication with Darryl Dunn, Chief Executive Officer at the Rose Bowl Stadium, and that the City is eager to assist wherever possible to locate available sports playing fields for PUSD students.

Steven Miller, Ed.D., Chief Human Resources Officer, provided information on the number of substitute teachers working for PUSD.

Dr. Ying Ying Goh, Director of Public Health, provided information on Los Angeles County's guidance on school grades that will be permitted to participate in in-person learning (based on the percentage of case rates, trajectory of new positive cases, etc.); information on school requirements to open for in-person learning; and responded to questions.

Councilmember Williams requested information on the number of private schools in Pasadena.

President Phelps was excused and disconnected from the meeting at 5:52 p.m.

Member Cahalan encouraged the community to continue abiding by the COVID-19 safety guidelines and to get vaccinated.

Mayor Gordo spoke on the importance of completing upgrades to PUSD sport fields to enable high school athletics activities/games; and expressed concerns with "club" groups and sports activities from outside of Pasadena using PUSD fields. He asked PUSD staff to provide information on the number of hours that have been dedicated to non-Pasadena club teams and the impacts these activities have had on the fields, including cost recovery information; and stated that he does not believe PUSD should allow organizations outside of Pasadena to use PUSD sports fields.

City Clerk Jomsky reported that a number of letters and emails expressing concerns with opening of schools; advocating for an immediate reopening of schools or a phase-in approach to the reopening of schools in Pasadena; and/or advocating for the reopening of public pools in the City; were received, distributed to the City Council and Board of Education, posted on-line, and made part of the public record from the following individuals:

PUSD employee and Pasadena resident
Katina Mandavia, residence not stated
Linda Chan, residence not stated
Mary Shimazaki, residence not stated
David Berk, Teacher at Hamilton Elementary School
Cassandra Williams, residence not stated
Tarah Kenedy, PUSD parent
Erika Foy, on behalf of Save California Students Now
Barrett Snider, residence not stated
Mary Forrest, Pasadena resident

In addition, the City Clerk, read aloud comments expressing concerns with opening of schools; advocating for an immediate opening of schools or a phase-in approach to the reopening of schools in Pasadena; advocating for PUSD teacher pay raises, and providing comments/suggestions from the following individuals:

Cynthia Lake, Pasadena resident
Denise R. Johnson, Altadena resident
Mary, Pasadena resident
Edward Magalong, Pasadena resident
Linda Chan, Pasadena resident
Tarah Kennedy, Pasadena resident
Neil and Shaina Tyler, Altadena resident
Kathleen Bergman, Covina resident
Beth A. Strehl, Pasadena resident
Kai Venable, Pasadena resident
David Berk, Pasadena resident
Hayley Boaz, residence not stated
Erika Foy, Pasadena resident
Ryan Forrest, Pasadena resident
Mary Forrest, Pasadena resident
Angela Buchanan, Pasadena resident
Sylvia Salas, Pasadena resident
Jennifer Vane, Pasadena resident
David Chavez, Pasadena resident
John Michelena, Pasadena resident
Diana Morrison, Pasadena resident
Diana Arnold, Pasadena resident

Member Bailey voiced safety concerns for teachers who do not yet feel comfortable in returning to in-person learning; and expressed concerns with the PUSD Board and the City Council in taking sides on the reopening of schools at this moment; and stated her preference that the Board and City Council concentrate on school safety and ensuring that teachers are safe and can be vaccinated.

Vice Mayor Wilson spoke on the need to develop an informational/educational campaign to provide updated data to the community, students, parents and teachers on the facts related to COVID-19.

Councilmember Kennedy recommended children of a certain age group return to in-class learning, and advocated that teaching staff receive access to be vaccinated, so everyone is comfortable returning to in-person learning.

Member Fredericks advocated for teachers and their family members to be vaccinated in order to ease the fears of teachers and staff of the possibility of spreading COVID-19 to their family members; and echoed comments made by Member Bailey related to COVID-19 transmission fears from PUSD teachers and staff. She also spoke on the need to include PUSD teachers and staff in the discussions regarding the reopening of schools, including conducting walkthroughs focused on COVID-19 safety protocols and preparations for the classrooms.

Mayor Gordo stated that he believes that part of the fear factor of COVID-19 is the lack of information from school districts; and spoke on the need for the planning on the reopening of schools to be distributed to the community. He encouraged PUSD staff to put a plan together on the reopening of schools for students in grades K through 12 with an opportunity for the public to provide input. Mayor Gordo also encouraged PUSD staff to provide a written recommendation related to the reopening of schools to the PUSD Board Members, prior to the Thursday, March 4, 2021 meeting so that the community may be informed in advance of the meeting. He asked staff to work with independent schools to ensure they provide return to school safety plans for grades K through 12.

The City Council and PUSD Board members discussed issues related to the safe reopening of schools; how best to ensure the safety of students and teachers; what preconditions should be established prior to the reopening of PUSD schools; mental health support services that should be in place for children affected by COVID-19; and issues related to the fears and concerns of reopening schools too soon.

Councilmember Williams encouraged the PUSD Board to open the schools as soon as they can safely be opened.

Following discussion, on order of the President and Mayor, and by consensus, the information was received and filed.

Member Bailey announced that on Saturday, March 20, 2021 a virtual STEAM symposium will be held online, and encouraged those needing additional information to please contact PUSD; and reported that the NAACP - Pasadena Chapter, working along with Huntington Hospital, will be providing vaccinations to eligible members of the public and teachers who are interested.

ADJOURNMENT

On the order of the President and Mayor, the special joint meeting of the City Council and Pasadena Board of Education adjourned at 8:28 p.m. in memory of all those that are ill and have lost their lives during the COVID-19 pandemic

Victor M. Gordo, Mayor
City of Pasadena

ATTEST:

City Clerk