

CITY OF PASADENA
City Council Minutes
May 12, 2025 – 6:15 P.M.
City Hall Council Chamber

SPECIAL JOINT MEETING WITH
PASADENA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

OPENING:

Mayor Gordo and Board President Hall Lee called the Special Joint meeting of the City Council and Pasadena Unified School District ("PUSD") Board of Education ("Board") to order at 6:42 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Board President Hall Lee.

ROLL CALL:

Councilmembers:

Mayor Victor M. Gordo
Vice Mayor Jessica Rivas
Councilmember Rick Cole
Councilmember Tyron Hampton
Councilmember Justin Jones
Councilmember Jason Lyon
Councilmember Steve Madison
Councilmember Gene Masuda

Staff:

City Manager Miguel Márquez
City Attorney/Prosecutor Michele Bagneris
City Clerk Mark Jomsky

Pasadena Unified School
District, Board of Education

President Jennifer Hall Lee
Vice President Tina Fredericks
Board Member Michelle Richardson Bailey
Board Member Scott Harden
Board Member Patrice Marshall McKenzie (arrived at 6:44 p.m.)
Board Member Dr. Yarma Velázquez (absent)
Board Member Kimberly Kenne

Staff:

Dr. Elizabeth J. Blanco, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools
Saman Bravo-Karimi, Chief Business Officer
Dr. Helen Hill, Chief Academic Officer

Board President Hall Lee thanked the City Council for hosting the joint meeting and expressed the importance of collaboration between the two local legislative bodies in the Pasadena area.

Mayor Gordo requested that the meeting be adjourned in memory of Nate Holden, former Los Angeles City Councilmember, former State Senator, and father of Chris Holden (former Pasadena City Councilmember). The City Council spoke on Nate Holden's impactful career as a politician, his continuous efforts advocating for civil rights and urban development throughout the region and the state of California.

CITY AND SCHOOL DISTRICT PARTNERSHIP, COORDINATED RESPONSE, AND RECOVERY EFFORTS RELATED TO THE EATON FIRE

City Manager Marquez provided introductory remarks and presented a PowerPoint presentation on the item. He described the joint efforts and sharing of information between the City and School District during the windstorm and Eaton Fire event in early January, as well as post-fire recovery efforts to assist the School District and students. Dr. Elizabeth Blanco, PUSD Superintendent, spoke on the District's coordinated efforts with the City's Public Health Department to ensure the health and safety of students following the Eaton Fire.

In response to Councilmember Masuda inquiry regarding the return of displaced students to PUSD schools, Superintendent Blanco noted that many parents and caregivers have kept their children enrolled in PUSD schools, allowing them to finish the school year with their friends and familiar surroundings. She noted that the District will conduct a survey to identify how many students intend to remain at PUSD.

Councilmember Madison expressed condolences for PUSD faculty, staff, and students who lost their homes in the Eaton Fire and reaffirmed the City's support to assist those who were impacted.

Superintendent Blanco requested for the City Council advocate to state congressional representatives to maintain the "hold harmless" provisions for PUSD for more than one year to resolve pre-fire financial challenges in addition to the post-fire challenges. Mayor Gordo suggested that the Board submit a formal letter of request to the City Council, Sierra Madre, and the LA County Board of Supervisors, to be passed along to the State.

In response to Councilmember Jones' inquiry regarding opportunities for counseling or creative outlets for students to process and reflect on the Eaton Fire, Superintendent Blanco reported that the faculty and staff were trained and directed on how to respond to this crisis prior to returning to classrooms and will receive additional emotional wellness training to help students navigate through the difficult recovery process. She added that the district has requested mental health services from federal resources and is partnering with local social workers to help students and adults cope with the loss and impacts of the fire.

Rene Gonzalez, Pasadena resident, advocated for the City Council and the PUSD Board of Education to meet more frequently and collaborate on projects.

Allen Shay, Pasadena resident, suggested that the City Council and the PUSD Board of Trustees create an investment fund to help Eaton Fire recovery efforts.

Mandi Moss Holmes, Pasadena resident, spoke on Aveson Charter School and their efforts to teach and support students with disabilities.

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

STATUS UPDATE ON PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN CITY AND PASADENA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT REGARDING THE JOINT USE OF JEFFERSON CAMPUS

Tim McDonald, Director of Library and Information Services, presented a PowerPoint presentation on the City and PUSD's joint use agreement of Jefferson Elementary School, including City departments that currently operate out of the Jefferson campus, and dedicated spaces used for relocated PUSD classes. Dr. Helen Hill, PUSD Chief Academic Officer, reported on the District's collaboration with the City's libraries, initiatives to improve literacy, summer learning programs, and utilization of Jefferson campus to ensure continuity of learning. Library and Info Services Director McDonald also reported on Career Technical Education Programs, teen engagement, family programs, and at the Jefferson campus.

In response to Board Member McKenzie's inquiry regarding the City's commitment to early learning, Director McDonald reported that the City plans to celebrate the 10-year anniversary of the City's first adoption of the early childhood development policy later this year, in partnership with stakeholders from PUSD, nonprofit organizations, and local early childhood education centers. Councilmember Cole advocated for the Office of the Young Child to report on achievements and accomplishments over the past 10 years, depicting how the City has committed to early childhood education.

In response to Board Member Kenne's inquiry regarding the various programs at Jefferson campus once the joint agreement expires in 2027, Director McDonald reported that the City plans to transition programming to alternative sites before finally transitioning back to Central Library.

Discussion ensued regarding the benefits of the Pasadena Police Activities League (“PAL”) program, the Fire Academy programs at Jefferson campus, having PUSD and the City Council meet more than once per year, and the possible creation of a task force to discuss future use of the Jefferson campus.

Jackie Brown, Pasadena resident, expressed concerns regarding the lease of Jefferson Elementary to the City and advocated for the school to be used for full-time students instead of programming.

Brian Biery, DBK Group, spoke on the Group’s collaboration with the City and PUSD to provide work-based learning support for students.

Rene Gonzalez, PADRES Parent Advocacy Group, advocated for the District to prepare a new facilities master plan.

Mandi Moss Holmes, Pasadena resident, expressed concerns regarding the lack of available classrooms and advocated for PUSD to utilize available spaces to ensure that students have a better learning environment.

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

UPDATE ON AFFORDABLE HOUSING PLANS FOR PASADENA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT FACULTY AND STAFF, AS WELL AS DISCUSSION OF AB 2295 AND SB 35

Saman Bravo-Karimi, PUSD Chief Business Officer, provided a PowerPoint presentation on the Workforce Housing Project and shared details on the key changes to the plan based on feedback from partners. He reported on the goals and objectives of the project, community engagement efforts, and the next steps of the project timeline.

Councilmember Hampton advocated for a community benefit aspect to be included in the project and suggested that PUSD host a broader community meeting to gather input from neighboring residents, not just homeowners’ associations.

In response to Councilmember Lyon’s inquiry regarding why the units are for lease instead of for sale, Chief Business Officer Bravo-Karimi reported that the project is being developed under AB 2295 provisions, which only permits housing development projects where all units are rental units.

Discussion ensued regarding the project requirement to comply with the City's RM32 City of Garden standards and the locations of entrances to the property.

Councilmember Cole expressed concerns regarding the gated-community element of the project and advocated for PUSD to create publicly accessible space within the project (i.e. garden space, dog park, etc.).

In response to Councilmember Madison's inquiry regarding preferential leasing available to City employees, Joanna Julian, PUSD Project Consultant from Education Housing Partners, reported that AB 2295 defines the order of leasing preferences for school district employees and employees from other public agencies.

Councilmember Lyon left the meeting at 9:31 p.m.

Board Member Bailey stated that the project will bring a community benefit by boosting local economy. She also noted the importance of ensuring the project creates a safe environment for students and teachers as they reside in a school district project.

Discussion ensued regarding incorporation of sustainable features into the housing project, affordable rates for the units, the long-term benefits of renting the units instead of selling, and the anticipated costs for upkeep and maintenance, as well as revenue from the project.

Rene Gonzalez, Pasadena resident, advocated for increased pay for teachers to retain them and be able to afford high costs of living, rather than provide District provided housing.

Alexandra Annala, Pasadena resident, advocated for a long-term plan for maintenance and the ability of the School District to retain ownership of the property.

Lynne Sullivan, Pasadena resident, expressed concerns regarding the financial aspect of the project and advocated for the bond monies to be used to increase pay for teachers and staff.

Dennis McNamara, Pasadena resident, expressed opposition to the workforce housing project and advocated for PUSD to focus on education for students.

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

ADJOURNMENT

On the order of the Board President and Mayor, the special joint meeting of the City Council and PUSD Board of Education adjourned at 10:21 p.m. in memory of Nate Holden.

Victor M. Gordo, Mayor
City of Pasadena

ATTEST:

City Clerk