Meeting Minutes – August 26, 2015

1. **Members Present**: Michele Cooley-Strickland (Chair), Grace Yao (Co-Chair), Andrew Kamm, Denny Schneider, Matthew Tecle, John David Webster, and Bryan Williams

2. The meeting was called to order by Dr. Michele Cooley-Strickland at 6:38pm.

3. The Committee unanimously approved the Minutes from the July 22 and July 31, 2015 meetings.

4. The Committee welcomed guests attending today’s special meeting, including:

   Gayle Braun, Flora Braun, Marty Radonovich, Gloria Zee, Kamaron Harper, Theresa Burnett, Dorothy Strong, Jane Mayer, Randy Kwan, Janet TerVeen, Suzann Rogers, Jamie Gutierrez, Martha Moran, Leo Wainschol, Michael Morrison, Maggie Beceran, Gwen Vuchsas, Mark Karamangoogian, Diane Kaiser, Raj Makwana, Philip Dudge, Stephen Brown, Daphne Bishop, Chelsie Murphy, Helen Ly, Ann Wexler, Suzanne Madison Goldstein, Eileen Burrell, Steve Burrell, Aaron Slotnick, Brenda Arnold, Dr. Shawna Draxton.

5. **New Business - Action Item One**: Updates and Discussion on **Westchester Innovative School House (WISH) Charter Middle School Community Relations**

   **Background**: Concerns were expressed in August 2015 via email by several homeowners residing near Cowan Elementary School (7615 Cowan Avenue, 90045) regarding the newly co-located WISH Charter Middle School (previously co-located 0.3 mile away at Wright Middle School STEAM Magnet, 6550 W. 80th Street, 90045). Residents’ concerns may generally be grouped into two types: 1) **Operations** (e.g., traffic/speeding, valet system, parking, trash, noise); and 2) **Policy** (e.g., Proposition 39; LAUSD Board’s compliance with Community Outreach/Support requirements, CEQA environmental clearance requirements met prior to co-location approval).

   The neighbors requested NCWP assistance in obtaining responses to their concerns from appropriate sources. Initial steps by the NCWP Education Committee to aid in improving school/community relations began through email dialogs and school tours of WISH Charter Middle and Cowan Elementary. Attending the August 20, 2015 tour were four residents, Cowan Principal DaSylveira, Cowan Custodian Raoul, WISH Director Dr. Draxton, WISH Principal Murphy, WISH Financial Officer Ter Veen, and NCWP Education Committee members (Cooley Strickland, Yao, Webster, Williams). The next step logical step was for the disaffected community members to share their concerns regarding WISH Charter Middle School. Fifteen residents spoke during the Public Comment session. Please find a summary of their comments on pages 4-6 of these Minutes.

   The WISH Charter Middle School Director, Dr. Draxton, spoke following the community members, sharing measures her school has taken thus far to mitigate the neighbors’ concerns. She also stated that a member of her Board of Directors (who was present) would work with her and other school
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administrators to propose additional solutions. The NCWP Education Committee invited the community members, Dr. Draxton, and her school administrators (Daphne Bishop, President of the WISH Charter Middle School Board; Chelsea Murphy, Principal) to return to the next NCWP Education Committee meeting in September to provide updates on the plans and progress on favorable school/community relations. Although a LAUSD representative was invited to attend today’s meeting, regrets were sent and a representative from the Operations Administrator’s office will attend the September meeting to help address issues of policy.

The Committee further proposed and unanimously approved the following Motion:

The NCWP Education Committee will invite representatives from Wright Middle School STEAM Magnet, Cowan Elementary School, WISH Charter Middle School, Councilman Mike Bonin’s office, and LA DOT to attend the September NCWP Education Meeting [to help improve the school-Kentwood community relations].

6. Announcements from Local Education Group and City Representatives were made, including:
   a. Loyola Marymount University Community Relations – Grace Yao announced that on:
      i. September 12, 2015 – 11:30am-1:30pm – LMU’s 2nd Annual Community Open House – LMU Regent’s Grass (across from Sacred Heart Chapel). Free lunch, other food, music, bounce houses, fun for the kids, and campus tours. Learn about the many LMU resources available to its Westchester neighbors. RSVP to community@lmu.edu.
      ii. Saturday, August 29, 2015 – 3:30-5:30pm Ice Cream Social on Altavan Avenue.
   b. LAX Coastal Chamber of Commerce’s Education Committee – Gwen Vuchsas stated that:
      i. Monthly meetings of their Education Committee will resume September 4th at 8am.
      ii. October 20, 2015 – 5-7pm - LAX Coastal Chamber of Commerce and NCWP Co-Host the 2nd Annual Neighborhood School Expo with numerous public, private, and parochial schools participating in this event designed to inform attendees about the types of schools locally available. School administrators will be present at this event which will be held at the Westchester Senior Center. It is free and open to the public. [http://www.laxCoastal.com/]
   c. Local Schools
      i. Westchester Secondary Charter School’s progress update was provided by Jane Mayer. The beginning of school year has begun well. WSCS is hoping that their new location may be a long-term space.
      ii. Westport Heights Elementary School – Diane Kaiser (area resident) stated that she has not had the opportunity to work on school-community relations (i.e., trash) over the past month, but would keep us posted.

7. Action Item Two: Update the Westchester/Playa Schools FAQ for 2015-2016

The Committee discussed the need to update the schools listed in the Westchester/Playa del Rey/Playa Vista Schools Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) for Neighborhood Stakeholders for the 2015-2016 academic year (see FAQ on the [www.ncwpdr.org/Education] webpage). Michele Cooley-Strickland made initial updates. Bryan Williams said that he and the LMU Family of Schools
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NCWP Education Committee Members
Michele Cooley Strickland, M.Ed., Ph.D. – Chair
Grace Yao – Co-Chair
Andrew Kamm
Matthew Tecle
John-David Webster
Denny Schneider
Bryan Williams
www.ncwpdr.org/Education

would complete the updates after Michele sent them the revised draft. Thereafter, the 2015-2016 version would be posted on the NCWP Education Committee webpage.

8. Action Item Three: Co-Host Local Education Summit

A discussion was held regarding the next steps for the NCWP to Co-host a Westside Public School Education Event featuring Elected Officials and School Representatives in the Fall of 2015 for Westchester, Playa del Rey, and Playa Vista parents and local stakeholders -- ideally including neighboring Westside communities -- to have Q&A with their local education elected officials to understand their plans for strengthening the quality of our local publicly-funded schools. The Motion our Committee proposed on this issue was unanimously approved by the NCWP Board on August 4, 2015. Dr. Cooley-Strickland committed to acting on behalf of the Committee to invite the key participants identified in this month’s August 4th motion and work with the Committee to identify a date and location for the event. Further updates will be provided at next month's meeting.

9. Action Item Four: Meetings and Education Related Community Opportunities – neighboring Neighborhood Council meetings were announced and Committee members were encouraged to attend:

1) Del Rey Neighborhood Council Education Committee Meetings - September 3 and October 1, 2015 at 7pm at Del Rey Square. Meetings are the first Thursdays of the month (Co-chairs: Wes Farrow, Mariana Aguilar);
http://www.delreync.org/education#sthash.aSGqA7zu.dpuf

2) Mar Vista Neighborhood Education, Culture and Arts Committee Meetings - August 31 and September 28, 2015 at 6:30pm at Mar Vista Library Community Room (Learn more at: http://MarVista.org/Committees/EdCultArts (Co-chairs: Sara Roos and Brad Wilhite).


Additional community events were announced which were also posted on the NCWP Education Committee webpage:

b. August 29, 2015 – 10am-3pm - Annual Back to School Health and Wellness Fair (Oakwood Park, 767 California Street, Venice, CA 90291). State Assemblywoman Autumn Burke and others will discuss current legislation, District happenings and provide free school supplies, along with health screenings for the entire family, children’s activities, refreshments and more! For more information: (310) 412-6400;
c. September 12, 2015 –11:30am-1:30pm - LMU 2nd Annual Community Open House – LMU Regent’s Grass (across from Sacred Heart Chapel). Free lunch, other food, music, bounce
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d. October 1, 2015 (NOTE: Revised date) - Metro Naming and Illustration Contest for the new Tunnel Boring Machine (TBM) for students from Kindergarten through 12th Grade. The TBM will be used to dig the twin tunnels for the Crenshaw/LAX Line. There will be a ceremony and 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place prizes in both the naming and illustration categories. Deadline to enter is September 1, 2015. For details, see http://www.metro.net/projects/tunnel-boring-machine-tbm/

e. October 7, 2015 – 3rd Annual Walk to School Day – City of Los Angeles and LDOT are organizing citywide Walk to School Day as part of international “Walktober” that encourages physical activity among children and youth. LA’s goal? Surpass 2014’s participation of 18,000 students and 67 schools. For event planning support and to register: info@walktoschoolday-la.org; (323) 942-9873; www.walktoschoolday-la.org


The next regularly scheduled NCWP Education Committee meeting is Wednesday, September 23, 2015,

The meeting was adjourned at 7:58pm.

Summary of Kentwood Neighbors’ Public Speakers’ Comments on
Neighborhood Council of Westchester/Playa Education Committee Meeting on August 26, 2015

Agenda Action Item 1: Updates and Discussion on

Westchester Innovative School House (WISH) Charter Middle School Community Relations

1) Suzanne Rogers (Kentwood Home Guardians) has expressed concerns to Cowan Elementary School regarding the trash, traffic, and parking in the past, but nothing has been done. Regarding WISH: Please tell your families to be a good neighbor to our Kentwood community. Trash and litter are a big issue.

2) Helene Ly (Resident/Property Owner on Beland Avenue) stated that community outreach and compliance with CEQA is needed; LAUSD’s approval process for every Charter school should involve standardized school operations procedures. She asks that the Committee look for school mitigation measures; for example, create a contract between the NCWP and co-located schools that increases citizen participation and environmental impact mitigation.

3) Leo Wainschol (Westchester Resident on Emerson Avenue) said that he survived a stroke and has health challenges. Parking is a major issue. There is often no available street parking; driveways are often blocked; and there are 25-30 cars parked on the Vons grocery store parking lot. “Westchester was a nice, beautiful community.” Twice he’s seen parents leave dirty diapers on the ground of residents’ homes. There should be coordination between Wright STEAM Magnet Middle and WISH Charter Schools.
4) Philip Dodge (Neighbor; resides on Anise Avenue) stated that there were problems previously with Animo Westside Charter Middle School because their teachers parked on the residential streets. Traffic is the major problem this year with WISH Middle School, particularly on Anise and 77th. For example, parents will make 3-point turns which are extremely dangerous for students and other cars; students and parents are not crossing at corners; Wright STEAM Middle has a tremendous amount of traffic at Anise Avenue and on Beland. The possibility that WISH may add another four classes would result in about 100 more students thereby would further increase the traffic burden.

5) Stephen Brown (Anise resident) expressed that WISH has done a better job than its predecessor (e.g., regarding trash). His biggest concern is safety. Parents frequently make 3-point turns on Anise; they drop children off across the street from the school; and use unsafe driving practices. He raised two questions: What is the catchment area for WISH? and Why wasn’t this meeting held before WISH moved in?

6) Martha Muran (Resident on Emerson Avenue) who stated that her street was not designed with driveways. When there is a school event (Wright, WISH, or Cowan) there is absolutely NO parking for residents. On a daily basis, school traffic is bad at drop off and pick up; parents honk; parents and students use residents’ grass “like a park.” Ms. Muran is reticent to talk to parents because they are “aggressive.” There is a crossing guard at 80th and Emerson and things are getting better. However, Ms. Muran wants the “community restored.”

7) Gayle Braun (Long Beach resident) said her family has owned the same Kentwood home since 1953 and they were one of the original families. These were young families full of respect and pride. However, the schools are not good neighbors. They disregard the community bringing problems of traffic, long-term parking, speed, and there is a large yellow 54-passenger bus that uses Beland as a thoroughfare. The street was not designed for two-way traffic with a bus. She has an 89-year old mother who has had to be dropped off a distance from her home because of too much school parking on her street.

8) Kamaron Harper (Beland Avenue resident) spoke about being a long-term resident who is now disabled and has a handicap placard, but because of the schools has no place to park. His house is on the corner directly across from the school. He has missed doctors’ appointments because of school parking. He said he has been cursed at by parents and teachers. Trash has clogged his drains. The school’s public announcement system is too loud. However, Mr. Harper stated that “issues could become opportunities. Everybody wants to contribute to support our students.” He expressed interest in coming up with solutions.

9) Martha Radonovich (Beland Avenue resident) is a teacher and parent who has lived in Westchester for 26 years. She reports that there are 8 academic institutions within a 1-mile radius. Efforts need to be made to sustain and improve upon the impacts these schools make on the community, especially traffic congestion because the community was not designed for the volume it is experiencing because of the schools.

10) Diane Kaiser (Westport Heights Resident) reports that she is a 30-year resident of Westchester who retired from teaching two years ago. She reported that Culver City is spotless, but Westport Heights has a significant trash problem stemming in large part from the elementary school. She has tried multiple times to gain the cooperation and assistance of Westport Heights Elementary School, writing and speaking with its principal, Jacqueline Hughes. Principal Hughes reportedly stated that she is understaffed and the PTA would not get involved. Ms. Kaiser has
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founded the “Neighborhood Beautification Program” and would like help in addressing the trash problem that affects the Westport Heights community.

11) Aaron Slotnick (Beland resident) stated that safety is the biggest priority. There are now a lot of neighborhood children [residents]. A mechanism needs to be established for the community to be able to provide feedback to and work with the school, discuss issues, and come up with solutions. The students need regular education about respecting the community and beautification (i.e., trash).

12) Maggie (Emerson resident) lives 2 houses away from Vons grocery store. She has adjusted her schedule because of difficulties with parking. She says that traffic, unsupervised students, and graffiti are problematic. She reports there have been thefts by students at Vons. She has been confronted by parents.

13) Theresa Burnett (Beland & 77th resident) said that she has been a 42-year resident of Kentwood. Her father is over 90 years old and now has a feeding tube. There are 3 handicapped households on her street and asked why won’t the City paint handicapped spaces in front of their houses to reserve street parking for the disabled. She reported that the principal of Cowan Elementary School has made a “little bit” of changes. “Westchester is a clean, lovely, wonderful community.”

14) Dorothy Stone (Emerson near 77th Street resident) said that she knew the schools were there when their family moved in. The community needs to work together to address the issues with the schools.

15) Bill Cooper stated that, “These problems are unsolvable.” When we bought our homes, these neighborhoods were made for walking to school. These neighborhoods were not built for commuter students at the elementary and middle schools and LMU. He recommended that Emerson Manor school be used for co-location; it is vacant and unutilized.

*The public is requested to fill out a SPEAKER CARD to address the Board on any item of the agenda prior to the Board taking action on an item. Comments from the public on Agenda items will be heard only when the respective item is being considered. Comments from the public on other matters not appearing on the Agenda that is within the Board’s subject matter jurisdiction will be heard during the Public Comment period. Public comment is limited to 2 minutes per speaker, unless waived by the presiding officer of the Board.

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In compliance with Government Code section 54957.5, non-exempt writings that are distributed to a majority or all of the Board in advance of a meeting may be viewed at our website by clicking on the following link: www.ncwpdr.org or at the scheduled meeting. In addition, if you would like a copy of any record related to an item on the agenda, please contact the NCWP Education Committee Chairperson, Dr. Michele Cooley Strickland at mcoolstrick@gmail.com.