

Neighborhood Council of Westchester/Playa Education Committee



NCWP Education Committee Members

Michele Cooley Strickland, M.Ed., Ph.D. – Chair
Grace Yao – Co-Chair Matthew Tecle
Andrew Kamm John-David Webster
Denny Schneider Bryan Williams

www.ncwpdr.org/Education



Meeting Minutes – September 30, 2015

Westchester Municipal Building Community Rm, 7166 W. Manchester Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90045

Members Present: Michele Cooley-Strickland (Chair), Grace Yao (Co-Chair), Andy Kamm, Denny Schneider, Matthew Tecle, and Bryan Williams

Members Absent: John David Webster

The meeting was called to order by Dr. Michele Cooley-Strickland at 6:30pm.

Minutes from the August 26, 2015 meeting were unanimously approved.

The Committee welcomed guests attending today's special meeting, including:

President Daphne Bishop (WISH Charter Board of Directors), Flora Braun, Gayle Braun, Principal Richard Da Sylveira (Cowan Elementary School), Dr. Shawna Draxton (Director, WISH Charter), Libby Farello, Rocco Farello, Danelle Fisher, Helene Ly, Raj Makwana, Martha Moran, Principal Chelsie Murphy (WISH Charter), Marc Paez (LAUSD Local District West Lead Operations Coordinator), Cynthia Reznik, Maura Reznik, Luis Riemer, Fred Sutton (Councilmember Bonin's Field Deputy), Principal Christina Wantz (Wright Middle School STEAM Magnet), and Rory Wright.

Announcements from Local Education Group Representatives were made by the following:

- a. Councilmember Mike Bonin's Office – Fred Sutton, Field Deputy, announced that on October 24th from 10am-1pm Councilmember Bonin was sponsoring a **community cleaning**; all schools in the District 11 network are welcome; participating students earn community service hours.
- b. LMU Community Relations – Grace Yao announced that in partnership with LAWA, LMU would co-host a **Day of Discovery** – A free community aviation and aerospace event to educate, inspire, and explore on November 7th from 11-2pm at University Hall www.LAWA.org/DayofDiscovery
- c. Otis College of Art and Design – Matt Tecele announced that there is a new 90+ piece ceramics exhibit that is free and open to the public featuring renowned artist **Ralph Bacerra's collection, "Exquisite Beauty"** (from now until December 6th; the gallery is open every day except Mondays). Bacerra was a Los Angeles-based artist known for his innovative approach to surface embellishment. Learn more at: <http://www.otis.edu/ben-maltz-gallery#sthash.gWymfshC.dpuf>

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

Background: Concerns were expressed in August 2015 first via email and then in person by numerous Kentwood homeowners residing proximal to Cowan Elementary School (7615 Cowan Avenue, 90045) regarding the then 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). Over 30 guests attended the

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meeting; 15 residents expressed their concerns as public comments at the August 26, 2015 NCWP Education Committee meeting.

Community 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). Representatives from WISH Charter Middle School were present at the August 26 NCWP Education Committee meeting to facilitate their ability to prepare solutions to the residents' Operations concerns. LAUSD and City Council representatives were invited to today's meeting to learn about the Policy level concerns in the hopes that solutions to community concerns may be achieved.

Kentwood residents were given the opportunity to express their concerns via Public Comment to the NCWP Education Committee and our guests. To address the Policy issues, Marc Paez (LAUSD Local District West Lead Operations Coordinator) was present. To address the Operations issues, Fred Sutton (Councilmember Bonin's Field Deputy), as well as Dr. Shawna Draxton (Executive Director of WISH Charter Schools), Chelsea Murphy (Principal, WISH Charter Middle School), Christina Wantz (Principal Wright Middle School STEAM Magnet), and Richard Da Sylveira (Principal Cowan Elementary School).

There were two "official" Public Comments representing four Kentwood residents, although other community members spoke up during the discussion:

1) Martha Muran (Resident on Emerson Avenue) who provided several recommendations for improving the operations challenges presented by WISH Charter Elementary School's co-location at Cowan Elementary, including: Changing the signage around the school to be permitted parking for teachers/volunteers; Converting the field into faculty/parent parking; Identify [honk-free] drop-off areas; Organize student/parent trash clean-up events; and Hold parents accountable for their children's behavior. The teachers parking on residential streets remains problematic; they park on Emerson Avenue for 6 continuous hours. Parking is worse on 77th Avenue (photos were provided indicating bumper-to-bumper parking on both sides of the residential street).

1) Helene Ly (Resident/Property Owner on Beland Avenue) spoke for 6 minutes, as she also represented Flora and Gayle Braun (Residents/Property Owners on Beland Avenue). Ms. Ly stated that she was retired from 25 years in the City Planning Department and addressed her comments to Mr. Paez from LAUSD regarding the Charter School approval process. She questioned compliance with CEQA. As part of the LA City Planning Department, we have due process: Environmental impact on the neighborhood, which was lacking in the charter schools. There is no citizen participation process or public hearing for approval of LAUSD projects. Citizens feel deprived of due process. A forum is needed other than that which is closed doors. It is frustrating. She has written "Steve Zimmer and everyone" and received no response. In light of the charter schools development, she requests regulations that consider the impacted communities. She commended Dr. Draxton and Principal Murphy for responding to the Kentwood Community's concerns, although stated that at Cowan, the cafeteria lady and custodian still park on the street all day.

Marc Paez spoke in response to the community comments as a representative of Jan Davis who had a conflict. Mr. Paez shared that he grew up in Westchester. He drove to Cowan Elementary this afternoon

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and observed the traffic flow at dismissal (2:20-3:15pm), and drove down Emerson to Wright Middle School. He agreed the communicating with the community in advance is important. He explained that:

- a) Decisions on co-location are made through the District/Beaudry through a transparent process between the charter applicants. Enrollments and projected enrollments are a major factor in co-location decisions.
- b) CEQA would have been required if there was additional building or an increase enrollment from the charter. Because neither was the case with WISH Charter, CEQA was not necessary.
- c) Because of the approval process, generally there are community meetings when a charter is co-located at an existing school. Proposition 39 is the state law. District level – Charter co-location decisions are made at Beaudry in November for the upcoming year co-location. When there are brand new locations (i.e., no prior co-location), leafletting efforts are made by the District within ½ mile radius. *Committee member Denny Schneider asked "Who is making the co-location decision?"* Mr. Paez responded that he is not in charge of the schools in the Kentwood area.
- d) Regarding parking, to Mr. Paez' understanding, the school cannot require an employee to park in the school parking lot.

Principal Richard Da Sylveira (Cowan Elementary School) responded to the parking issue and stated that the Cowan parking lot is now full with teacher and parent parking. It represents a significant improvement from earlier in the school year so that 90% of their faculty/staff park on the school's lot. Principal Da Sylveira will continue to speak with the one employee who prefers to park on the street.

Committee member Grace Yao echoed the concern that there is a lack of information being shared with communities about changes in campuses near them. It is important to convey changes to parents and the communities.

Helene Ly (Kentwood Resident) asked more questions about California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requirements, stating that Cowan Elementary was empty for 1 year so there could be a cumulative environmental impact. She provided the Pacific Charter School – Pico Union was subject to City Planning Department Review with 59 conditions of approval for school operation impacts.

Fred Sutton (Councilmember Bonin's Field Deputy) responded that Pacific Charter was not co-located in a school but was also a non-inventory property. He said that the State Board of Education trumps municipal regulations.

Dr. Shawna Draxton (Director, WISH Charter) shared WISH's [valet] parking procedures that have been modified to increase their efficiency and working with the four nearby schools. She appreciated the four emails she has received from community members with photographs of parking problems. Because each of the four schools has special events that impact the community, they will work to be more mindful of the impact because they want to be good neighbors. The school continues to work with the students to be respectful citizens regarding trash/disrespect.

Marc Paez recommended that parents/staff are encouraged to park on the blacktop [for special events]. In response to community members' concerns with traffic (e.g., U-turns at 4-way stops, especially at

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Emerson @ 77th and in the morning), Mr. Paez said that LAUSD has their own school traffic police; he will send them to the WISH/Cowan community to assist with the challenges.

Fred Sutton stated that his office could assist with the traffic/parking challenges. Although there is a moratorium on issuing handicapped parking spaces, a moratorium on permit parking since 2009, and no restricted parking on side streets, he would explore “preferential parking” as an option as well as 2 hour parking limits. He will go to LA DOT to put in a request. He also said the community could go directly to www.MyLADOT.com to request a response. Mr. Sutton will also explore the possibility of a crossing guard at Emerson & 80th Streets, a major safety concern for the community.

Principal Richard Da Sylveira said that he would continue to work on improving Cowan Elementary’s relationship with the community. He personally visited the home of a resident on Denmark who said the volume of the school’s loudspeakers was too loud. Principal Da Sylveira had the master volume turned down. He said that WISH/Cowan would embark on joint clean-up projects for trash collecting along the fences. And that he will institute an open-door policy with the community to respond to concerns in real time.

Action Item Two: NCWP Westside Public School Education Event featuring Elected Officials and School Representatives – October 26, 2015 from 6:30-8pm at Wright Middle School STEAM Magnet (6550 W. 80th Street, Westchester). Our community education event is less than one month away. It was acknowledged that work continues on obtaining confirmed participants and co-hosts, and that decisions on format and advertising need to be made. However, due to the lateness of the evening, the event was only generally discussed.

Date/Time: Monday, October 26, 2015 from 6:30-8pm

Location: Wright Middle School STEAM Magnet auditorium (6550 W. 80th Street, Westchester 90045)

Working Title: **Westside Public Education Community Meeting featuring Elected Officials and Education Representatives**

Presenters: LAUSD School Board President Steven Zimmer (confirmed) and other elected officials and education representatives. Letters of invitation have been emailed to (follow-up invitations will continue):

- Senator Benjamin Allen – District 26
- City Councilmember Mike Bonin – District 11
- Cheryl Hildreth – Instructional Area Superintendent for LAUSD Educational Service Center – West
- LAUSD Deputy Superintendent Michelle King
- Dr. Magaly Lavandez - LMU's Center for Equity for English Learners
- Assemblymember Patrick O'Donnell, Chair of the Assembly Education Committee

Purpose: A free community-wide event in which some of our governing leaders would speak with parents and stakeholders about their plans and vision for strengthening our local publicly-funded schools. There will be Q&A.

Attendees: Parents with and without school-aged children and other concerned stakeholders (e.g., residents, realtors, business owners) to rally to assist our elected and governing officials in improving our local schools.

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Neighborhoods Covered: Westchester, Playa del Rey, Playa Vista; Invited*: Venice, Mar Vista, Del Rey

Action Item Four: Meetings and Education Related Community Opportunities. NCWP Education Committee members were identified to attend other local Neighborhood Council Education Committee meetings to be able to invite them in-person to co-host our Oct 26th Education Event:

- 1) Matt Teclé: Del Rey Neighborhood Council Education Committee - Meetings are the first Thursdays of the month (Co-chairs: Wes Farrow, Mariana Aguilar);
<http://www.delreync.org/education#sthash.aSGqA7zu.dpuf>
- 2) Michele Cooley-Strickland: Mar Vista Neighborhood Education, Culture and Arts Committee Meetings - September 28 at 6:30pm at Mar Vista Library Community Room (<http://MarVista.org/Committees/EdCultArts>) (Co-chairs: Sara Roos and Brad Wilhite).
- 3) Michele Cooley-Strickland: Venice Neighborhood Council (VNC) Education Committee. October 14, 2015 at 6:15pm at Coeur D'Alene Elementary School, 810 Coeur D'Alene Avenue.
<http://www.venicenc.org/committees/education-committee/> (Chair: Bud Jacobs).

Relevant local education meetings/opportunities were announced (these are posted on the NCWP Education Committee **webpage**):

- d. October 1, 2015 - 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 2, 2015 – LAX Coastal Chamber of Commerce Teacher Mini-Grant applications distributed. Applications are due March 4. For more information: <http://www.laxCoastal.com/>
- f. 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
- g. October 17, 2015 – Mar Vista Fall Festival at Mar Vista Park. For more information: <http://MarVista.org/Committees/EdCultArts>
- h. October 18, 2015 – 5th Annual Tri-Mathlon – A fun-filled math event for 2-5th grade children. Register by September 30th to receive a free downloadable Math Quiz game show from Lakeshore. More information and registration: www.MathnasiumTrimathlon.com
- i. 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/>
- j. November 7, 2015 - LMU and LAWA will co-host a free community event, "Day of Discovery: Aviation & Aerospace Expo." For more information: <http://www.lawa.org/dayofdiscovery/>

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Next meeting – The standing meeting time and location of the NCWP Education Committee is the fourth Wednesday of each month at 6:30pm in the Westchester Community Room. However, because of the holidays, the next NCWP Education Committee meetings will be on irregular dates, specifically: November 30 and December 16, 2015 at 6:30pm. October 26, 2015 is the NCWP Westside Education Event at Wright Middle entitled, “Westside Public Education Community Meeting.”

The meeting was adjourned at 8:15pm.