



Minutes

Lakewood City Council

Adjourned Regular Meeting held
September 17, 2003

MEETING WAS CALLED TO ORDER at 3:32 p.m. by Mayor Esquivel in the Executive Board Room at the Civic Center, 5000 Clark Avenue, Lakewood, California.

ROLL CALL: PRESENT: Mayor Joseph Esquivel
Vice Mayor Todd Rogers
Council Member Wayne Piercy
Council Member Larry Van Nostran
Council Member Robert Wagner

PRESENTATION BY MANAGEMENT, ANALYSIS & PLANNING, INC. OF DRAFT ORAL REPORT ON STATUS OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

Gerald C. Hayward, Management, Analysis & Planning, reviewed the project and study objectives including recommendations to address strategies to achieve unification of the schools in Lakewood; to enhance neighborhood schools and improve the quality of education; and to mitigate any observed inequality in educational opportunity and ensure the adequacy of Lakewood schools compared to schools in similar communities and to State standards. He also reviewed the sources of data used in the study and advised that additional data had been collected from administrators, teachers and parents within each of the four school districts. He displayed tables comparing student achievement in English Language Arts in all Lakewood schools, as compared with the Statewide average, at the third, fifth, ninth and eleventh grade levels. He reviewed enrollment statistics which demonstrated significant growth in the numbers of students in three of the four districts and indicated that growth had slowed considerably in 2002-03. He advised that there was considerable research to indicate that school size had a direct impact on educational effectiveness and noted that schools in all four Lakewood districts were much too large. He also noted that Lakewood schools had a higher percentage of low-income students than both the State- and County-wide averages, and that there were large numbers of English learners, both important factors in student performance.

William Furry, M.A.P., displayed tables and reviewed by elementary, middle and high school levels, the makeup of a potential Lakewood District. He reviewed statistics on the numbers of Lakewood students attending schools both inside and outside the City, and the numbers of non-residents attending Lakewood schools.

Mr. Hayward reviewed the Student Mobility section of the report, noting that Long Beach Unified was bussing over 16,000 students since their schools in the southwest and northwest parts of the District were way below capacity for attendance needs. He showed tables indicating the numbers of non-residents for elementary, middle and high school students at each school and where they were coming from. He also discussed School Facilities, concluding that compared to other schools in their respective districts, Lakewood schools were better or equal in terms of population density and use of portable classrooms.

PRESENTATION BY MANAGEMENT, ANALYSIS & PLANNING, INC. OF DRAFT ORAL REPORT ON STATUS OF PUBLIC EDUCATION - Continued

Council Member Van Nostran inquired about school sites with two-story portables. Mr. Furry responded by stating that the data was calculated by classroom, not by building. He also advised that schools were rated by pupil-per-acre and that all Long Beach Unified high schools, including Lakewood High School, were on the State of California critically overcrowded list.

Responding to a question from Council Member Piercy, Mr. Furry stated that the pupil-per-acre ratio was calculated strictly by land acreage and did not take into consideration two-story classrooms.

Council Member Wagner pointed out that the pure data displayed on the charts show how each district dealt with attendance at each school and although they appear to be equal, Lakewood school sites were designed as much larger sites than those in other areas. He stated that the original design of the Lakewood sites was intended to accommodate controlled growth and that the Lakewood schools should show a much lower density, like that of ABC Unified. He stated he felt some districts were 'dumping' their growth into the Lakewood schools, a fact which was not apparent through data comparison.

Janine McManigal-Ball, Long Beach, stated that the figures for economic disadvantaged and language learner students did not compare with the City's population demographics.

Mr. Hayward displayed material on School Resources and Programs stating that although the distribution of resources and programs appears to be equitable overall, there was a need for more credentialed teachers. In the area of Advanced Learning, he noted that there were significantly fewer advanced learning opportunities for high achieving students in Lakewood.

In summarizing the status of Lakewood schools and recommendations for improvement, Mr. Hayward stated that while statistical data showed that Lakewood schools were being equitably treated in comparison with other schools in the four districts, that did not mean the level of educational service was acceptable. He noted that although there were some high performing schools in Lakewood, others were among the lowest performing in the State. He stated that the City Council had indicated that its goal was to raise the bar and not to settle for basic skills as the standard for Lakewood students. He reported that smaller schools have been proven to be better, that long-distance bussing impacts education negatively, and more opportunities were needed for advanced students.

Mr. Hayward stated that although, based upon the study, they would not recommend a reorganization effort to form a Lakewood district at this time, Lakewood residents should not entirely lose sight of that goal, as circumstances could change with improvements to the economy. He presented other options for consideration such as the formation of a Commission on Educational Excellence, which would be made up of prominent leaders in the community who would formalize relations with each of the school district boards for the purpose of enhancing educational opportunities for Lakewood students and creating a point of access to the districts for Lakewood residents. Such a commission could be charged with monitoring the quality of education in Lakewood schools and act as an agenda to apply for available grant funding for specific school enhancement programs.

PRESENTATION BY MANAGEMENT, ANALYSIS & PLANNING, INC. OF DRAFT ORAL REPORT ON STATUS OF PUBLIC EDUCATION - Continued

Council Member Van Nostran questioned the recommendation for preschool education for low income students, noting that while some Lakewood schools currently have a large number of low income students, they are not all Lakewood residents and that could impact the ability to qualify for grant funding.

Council Member Piercy noted that since preschools were not usually affiliated with a district, establishment of a preschool program would require a major investigation to determine resources. Mr. Hayward responded by stating that partnerships, such as a city and school district, tended to draw the attention of government and foundation grant programs. He referenced a successful partnership between the City and school district in West Sacramento.

Mr. Hayward also reviewed other options such as charter schools, vocational education and ways to provide more opportunities for high achieving students at Lakewood High School, such as the school-within-a-school concept.

Responding to a question from Council Member Van Nostran, Mr. Hayward advised that although once a common feature of educational programming, vocational and technical education programs had been driven out by increased emphasis on academics and budget constraints. Such programming could be re-instituted through public-private partnerships with businesses and corporations.

Council Member Van Nostran asked about the LBUSD bond issue and its impact on Lakewood High School. Mr. Hayward responded by stating the issue should be monitored. He noted that since overcrowding conditions across the district for LBUSD were so bad, it would move them to a high position on the State priority list for funding of facility construction.

Council Member Piercy asked Mr. Hayward to provide more input on how an educational commission might be started in Lakewood. Mr. Hayward stated that it would be necessary to rally the community around the issue, attract top leadership and business partnerships, and seek out those people with stature in the community who were passionate about education. He noted that once formed, a commission could hold a series of meetings to develop a list of priorities and begin to search for available funding.

Responding to a question from Council Member Piercy, Mr. Hayward stated that the best course would be to start with the community, and then get each of the school boards to join.

Vice Mayor Rogers inquired about the preschool funding issue and whether grant funding sources would look at the school population or City population demographics. Mr. Hayward responded by stating that unfortunately, they would look at the City's demographics even though the schools had a much higher percentage of low-income students in need of assistance.

PRESENTATION BY MANAGEMENT, ANALYSIS & PLANNING, INC. OF DRAFT ORAL REPORT ON STATUS OF PUBLIC EDUCATION - Continued

Responding to a question from Council Member Piercy, Mr. Hayward stated his recommendation would be to meet individually with the superintendent of each district, personally present them with the study and offer them the opportunity to schedule a presentation to their governing board.

Vice Mayor Rogers stated that the focus of the district meetings should not be on merely sharing information, but rather to solicit suggestions from the districts in consideration of the City's stated priorities and to determine what the districts would propose to improve education and their willingness to work cooperatively.

Mayor Esquivel stated that there was an obvious need for further consideration on this issue. He recommended an additional meeting be held so that the City Council could prioritize recommendations and solidify plans to move forward.

Vice Mayor Rogers stated he also felt an opportunity to digest the extensive materials presented and then meet to set priorities was needed.

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ORAL COMMUNICATIONS:

Michaelene Wagner suggested that when looking at preschool programs, the Council may want to consider statistics for State Head Start programs which showed that although student progress was improved initially, students tended to fall behind again by middle school.

Mr. Hayward noted that care was needed in establishing such programs, since the level of quality of the program would determine its success rate.

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ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to be brought before the City Council, Mayor Esquivel adjourned the meeting at 5:13 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Denise R. Hayward, CMC
City Clerk