

**LA CAÑADA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT GOVERNING BOARD
MINUTES OF THE WORKSHOP ON TEEN ALCOHOL AND DRUG ABUSE
HELD IN CONJUNCTION WITH
THE COMMUNITY PREVENTION COUNCIL**

Saturday, April 29, 2006

The workshop of the Governing Board of La Cañada Unified School District was called to order at 9:07am by President Scott Tracy on Saturday, April 29, 2006, at the City Council Chambers, 1327 Foothill Blvd., La Cañada Flintridge, California. The following people attended the meeting:

School Board:

Scott Tracy, President

Jinny Dalbeck

Susan Boyd

Cindy Wilcox

(Joel Peterson was absent.)

City Council:

Greg Brown, Mayor

Laura Olhasso

Steve del Guercio

Community Prevention Council

Will Moffitt, Chair

Paula Denny

(Other CPC members are listed with their group affiliations.)

Mental Health Professional:

Paul Royer

Student participant: anonymous for the purpose of these minutes

Sheriff's Department:

Captain Tim Peters

Deputy Chris Deacon

Deputy Jim Rodela

District Attorney's Office

Sandra Harris, Deputy-In-Charge, Bureau of Specialized Prosecutions, Pasadena Juvenile Division

Public Safety Commission

Faye Therrien, Chair

La Cañada High School Administrator: Joanne Davidson, Assistant Principal

9-12 PTSA President: Karen Mathison

7/8 PTA: Kathy Hernandez

Elementary PTA Representative: Sharon Otsuka

Private School Representative:
Brenda Franklin, Sacred Heart

Korean-American Outreach Representatives:
Sharon Otsuka
Lucy Park

YMCA:
Ken Gorvetzian, Chair
Gregory Yu, MD, Past Chair

Roger Barkley Community Center:
Diane Moldowsky

Parents and Community Members:
Frances Black
Bob Burlison, Attorney
Linda Burlison, Nurse
Tina Cooper
Teresa Deutsch
Tom Hurlbutt
Suzanne MacDonald, Glendale Schools, works with at-risk Students
Janice MacGlashan
Ed Mateus

Press:
Robert Perkins, Outlook
Bianca Gallegos, Valley Sun
Vince Lovato, Foothill Leader

Cindy Wilcox took minutes for the meeting. The group recited the Pledge of Allegiance. Mr. Tracy handed the meeting over to Will Moffitt, Chairman of the Community Prevention Council.

Mr. Moffitt explained that the meeting was called to address underage drinking and substance abuse. He added that La Cañada Flintridge is no different from any other town; however, we are willing to discuss the issues confronting our young people. Mr. Moffitt said that we need to address the culture of acceptance in this community and decide where we go from here. He opened with several important statistics on drug and alcohol abuse by teens and reviewed the agenda.

- *Underage drinkers account for 1/5 of the nation's alcohol consumption.*
- *More than 5 million high schoolers binge drink at least once a month.*
- *Teens say that other people's houses are the most common setting for drinking.*
- *65% of the kids say they get alcohol from their friends and family.*

Gregg Brown, Mayor, said that he was interested in concrete information, understanding the resources available, and an open exchange of ideas.

1. Introductions: Everyone introduced themselves.
2. Is there a problem with Teen Alcohol and Substance Abuse in La Cañada Flintridge?
- 2a. Paul Royer, a mental health professional's perspective

Mr. Royer discussed some of the main reasons that teens use alcohol and illegal drugs.

- peer acceptance
- increased availability, primarily alcohol, marijuana, students starting at younger ages, 13-14
- two parenting styles
 - dominant parents, struggling students feeling extreme pressure, increased stress/anxiety, leading to rebellion and poor choices by the child
 - very permissive parenting, child tries things, tests limits

Mr. Royer talked about the importance of monitoring and helping kids handle both freedom and responsibility. He noted that the cell phone gives a false sense of security to parents since the parents think they know where the child is, who they are with, and what they are doing. Parents need to know where the kids are and who is supervising. Kids need parents to be the "bad guy" and give them an out, so the kids don't have to stand up to their peers.

The increased availability of alcohol, marijuana and drugs was attributed to several factors:

- more and more 18-22 year olds are living at home, going to school locally, working, finding themselves, staying in touch with high school friends. They may buy alcohol for underage kids, or may work in liquor stores where they allow underage kids to purchase.
- some local liquor stores are selling to underage kids.
- some local kids are obtaining fake id cards and purchasing for themselves
- some parents give passive permission with various reasons
 - if the kids drink at home they will be safe.
 - the parents drank while in school and they turned out fine
 - underage drinking is a right of passage
 - it's inevitable that kids will experiment

2b. Student, what is really going on

A student told her experience to the group. Before starting regular alcohol use, she was a good kid who never got into trouble, carried a 4.0 grade point average and didn't see herself as someone who would drink or do drugs. She said that 8th and 9th grades were the hardest to fit in and drinking was a way to find acceptance with a group of kids. She talked about social drinking starting at age 12 or 13. Her parents allowed her to drink at home, reasoning that she was safe there. Eventually she was getting very drunk. She started smoking marijuana, and was soon using it everyday. Later she also used cocaine. By tenth grade her GPA was 1.8. The school caught her in possession in May of her sophomore year. She was treated with tremendous concern by Ms. Davidson and Deputy Deacon. She was given a stipulated expulsion. Their care and concern helped her and her mother recognize the need for professional help. She commented that of all the things she used, for her, alcohol was the worst. At the time, coke and heroin were easy to get. She had friends that went on to try heroin. She said that she doesn't think the drugs are as easy to get now as they were two or three years ago.

Mr. Royer commented that alcohol and marijuana are still easy to get and in wide use.

Joanne Davidson said that La Cañada High School (LCHS) has a culture of notifying parents and that most parents are receptive. A few parents are in denial, and refuse referrals and help. Ms. Davidson works to maintain positive relationships with the students on campus so that kids know they can come to her for help, or recommend that their friends get help. The goal at the High School is rehabilitation. 90% of the students busted for possession have already been counseled in the past including discussions with parents. One problem that Ms. Davidson can't solve is the drinking at home or at weekend parties.

Deputy Chris Deacon said that the deputies enforce the laws, but usually do not take the students to jail. They normally work one-on-one with the students and parents, and strongly encourage the kids to get counseling and follow-up.

Mrs. Wilcox asked if students are returning from lunch under the influence, and expressed concern.

It was reported that some LCHS students leave campus at lunch, drink and come back to school. A parent mentioned that she believed that a ninth grade girl had arrived at a Spanish Class after lunch drunk and she passed out on her desk. Ms. Davidson provided information on how the school responds when kids are found on campus under the influence. The process includes working with the parents.

Karen Mathison said that she was concerned about the open campus at LCHS. In particular she was concerned that students were returning drunk or under the influence after lunch. She urged the District to close the campus to all but Seniors.

Ms. Davidson reported that the possibility of closing the campus was under discussion but that no proposal was ready to be presented to the School Board.

Parents reported the 7/8 PTA and 9-12 PTSA had issued proclamations two years ago urging the administration to close the campus.

A parent commented that parents have to give permission for their students to leave LCHS during lunch. The problem is that there is no pragmatic way for all the kids to be checked as they leave campus, so kids are leaving even if the parent didn't give permission.

2c. Parents and community members asked questions and weighed in

One question was, don't parents smell marijuana on their kids when they come home? The student answered that cigarette smoke stays on clothes a long time, but marijuana smoke does not. Also, it is easy to cover marijuana by chewing gum or a mint.

Someone asked about the source. Deputy Deacon responded that alcohol/drugs are available locally and in nearby communities. A parent said she reported to the Briggs Station a liquor store in La Crescenta selling alcohol to minors and as far as she knew, the report wasn't acted on. Another parent mentioned the problem with fake IDs and expecting clerks to know the difference. Also, there is a high turnover in liquor store clerks, making it difficult to train them and hold them accountable. Captain Peters asked for specifics and said that he would deal with any deputy who didn't act on community information.

A parent stated that kids need consistency. Right now kids observe different results for similar problems. Sometimes there are no consequences. At other time the consequences are too much. Kids need strong, consistent response and strong rules, such as no sleepovers. When kids get away with using, they rationalize that it is OK.

There were a few comments on the pros and cons of the concept of the designated driver. The good part is that kids with designated drivers are not driving drunk and the cops are letting sober drivers take inebriated kids home. The problem is that the concept gives some kids "permission" to get drunk, since they point to the designated driver as if that makes it OK.

A question was raised about how kids can help other kids. Some students do talk to Ms. Davidson directly when they are concerned about a friend who is using. A parent suggested that the parent call Ms. Davidson rather than ask their student to go to her office. This would avoid pressure from other students.

The student was asked if she could have been helped earlier. Mr. Moffitt said that using alcohol before age 14 can often lead to alcoholism in later life.

Paul Royer confirmed that the gateway drug is not alcohol; the gateway drug is cigarettes (tobacco).

Mrs. Harris said that the goal of the District Attorney's Office is rehabilitation for minors. Once the student turns eighteen, the goal of the system is to protect society, and not rehabilitation. La Cañada is relatively crime free, but she does see kids with drug and alcohol problems. When adults are involved in supervising minors who are abusing, or when adults are providing alcohol or other substances, there are a number of misdemeanor charges that can be brought against the adults. Mrs. Harris further stated that her office takes a very serious position regarding adults who are "contributing to the delinquency of minors." If the problem is serious enough, the Department of Child Services may get involved.

Mrs. Boyd said that we need to find a way to enable the sheriff's department to bust big parties, send a clear message that as a community we do not condone or permit substance use/abuse by minors, make it so that abuse is not easy to get away with, and there must be consequences.

Mr. del Guercio stated that the parents/adults of the community need to be strong enough to stand up to the parents that are serving alcohol or permitting alcohol/drugs at parties in their homes. He suggested forming a parent group to do so and possibly send a letter to parents whose homes are the site of those parties stating that the group is aware of the unsupervised parties and that the home would be put on a list of homes to which students should not be allowed to attend future parties.

A parent asked if people know it is illegal to serve minors? The response was that it is definitely illegal (except for some religious observances) and that most people do know it is illegal.

Mrs. Olhasso asked, if a neighbor complains about a party, is the complaint anonymous? Captain Peters said the complaint remains anonymous.

A parent told about holding a graduation party at her private home with eight adults as chaperones. The adults were pro-active and expected to have been able to monitor the party adequately. She said that the party was very difficult to control and that uninvited kids arrived with alcohol. When they cleaned up, they found all kinds of things, and would never hold a party of that type again.

3. How do we address the problem?

A parent asked if we can get more deputies on Fridays and Saturdays when large parties are expected.

Mrs. Harris said that Monrovia had formed a group of concerned parents who patrolled parks and other sites known to be drinking and drug dealing locations, and they called the police when they saw suspicious activity. There were many more people helping. She said the program was successful in reducing crime.

Mrs. Dalbeck said that a number of comments had been very helpful and we needed to heighten awareness. One suggestion was to start educating kids in elementary to embed awareness. The High

School has one psychologist who mostly deals with Special Education issues. A second psychologist at LCHS would be helpful, but would cost more money at the district level.

Several people made suggestions for a multi-pronged approach to include:

- more counseling at the High School
- an intervention counselor at the High School
- additional officers on patrol on weekends

4. Next Steps -- Where do we go from here?

Mr. Tracy noted that the average counseling load in California is about 900+ to 1. Due to the generosity of the Educational Foundation and the contributors, LCHS has a counseling ration of 300+ to 1. The Foundation contributes approximately \$250,000 to counseling every year. Mr. Tracy asked if we could do a better job of character education at the middle school level?

Mrs. Olhasso commented that we have many schools in our community, and several root issues. She said that she would like the City Council to have an agenda item to hear more about issues and options surrounding weekend parties, and whether the City needs to commit more resources to weekend enforcement.

Mr. Brown said he would like to know at what level a party becomes an enforceable issue? Also, he would like to know if La Cañada liquor stores are contributing to the problem. He said that, because we are a small town, some of the problems can be cured by one-on-one contact. The City has options for enforcement.

Brenda Franklin asked that the private schools be included in the follow up to this meeting and noted that one of the private schools had a problem related to abuse recently.

Mrs. Dalbeck suggested creating a campaign, perhaps something similar to Drive 25. She suggested the group put together a steering committee and consider the Santa Clarita model (The Santa Clarita Youth Project). The steering committee would need to include private schools, and orchestrate activities.

Mrs. Wilcox said that she appreciated Mrs. Olhasso's interest in bringing the discussion back to a City Council Meeting. Mrs. Wilcox would like the School Board to also bring back an agenda item to make sure that the High School is not inadvertently enabling abuse during the school day.

Another parent felt that people-to-people connections truly matter and that an intervention counselor is needed at the High School, similar to the college counseling program.

Faye Therrien, Chairman of the Public Safety Commission, mentioned that the Public Safety Commission is holding a televised forum on June 12th. Sandra Harris will be there to discuss kids and the law. Public Safety, the High School and several agencies are staging "Every 15 Minutes" during the school day on May 12th, prior to Prom. The program involves the aftermath of a car accident where a student dies due to a drunk driver. The program continues over two days and has a tremendous impact on the student and parent participants, and the spectators.

Mr. Moffitt suggested that everyone take back a report on this meeting to their respective groups and boards.

Mrs. Mathison said that all schools and organizations need to participate. We need a multi-pronged approach for dealing with the parties, liquor stores, stressed kids, how to make Safe Homes (an existing program) more comprehensive. She agreed with setting up a steering committee.

Kathy Hernandez said that we need to work on the Jr. High perspective which had not been discussed yet. Parents are the biggest and hardest nut to crack. Some parents are too accepting of a certain level of use of illegal substances even before the kids start using. This reflects a permissive attitude. We need a campaign that stresses that the problem is not inevitable.

Steve del Guercio made the comment that we owe it to the kids to break the cycle and change the community culture.

Mr. Brown said that drinking among young women has increased, leading to poor choices, date rape and other serious problems.

Ms. MacDonald said that Glendale schools have instituted a program that talks about forty different things a student needs in order to become successful. She said this program would be relatively easy to implement in La Cañada.

Mr. Moffitt thanked everyone for commitment, energy and caring.

Mr. Tracy thanked Mr. Moffitt for organizing the event and everyone for attending.

OPPORTUNITY TO ADDRESS BOARD

The following audience members addressed the Board:

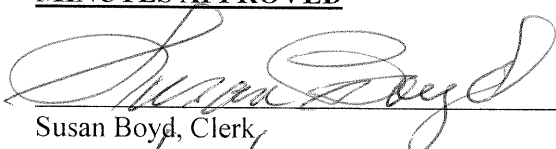
None

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 11:10am.


James E. Stratton
Secretary to the Governing Board

MINUTES APPROVED


Susan Boyd, Clerk


Date

