

Menlo Park City School District Council

Meeting Minutes

November 7, 2025

Location: MPCSD TERC, 181 Encinal Ave.

Attendees: Jen Baskin, Andrew Fong, Sarah Sobel, Lennard Hachmann, Eleanor deJong, Meredith Nonnenberg, Jessica Endlich, Kristen Gracia, Flor Espinal, Parke Treadway, Sharon Burns, Linda Creighton, Danielle O'Brien, Carrie Chen, Sally Lovero, Laura Low Ah Kee, Lindsey Sykes, Francesca Baraggioli, Melitta Stevens, Meredith Bergin Bailey, Francie Maletis, Janet Light, Jed Scolnick, Sherwin Chen, Alicia Payton, Anand Gupta, Christa Peterson

8:45 to 9:10 — District Council Business

Call to Order: Jen Baskin called the meeting to order at 8:50 am.

Approval of September 12 Meeting Minutes: Danielle O'Brien and Lennard Hachmann made first and second motions to approve; minutes were approved.

Treasurer's Update: Andrew Fong gave an update. All of the PTOs have been invoiced for yearly dues. We will hit total expected income for the year. \$2500 in the bank.

Audit Update: Anand Gupta - all numbers look good thank you to Andrew.

Speaker Series Update: Jessica Winkler - first speaker series in person last week at HV. Excellent panel from the district regarding building children's resilience in a nurturing way. Best feedback was that parents feel that they have the green light/it's okay that kids forgot their band instrument for example. Good to hear that parents are not on the hook to provide things that were forgotten at school. Next one in January - Amazing Generation, by Katherine Price, which is meant for kids and parents to read together. Meeting will be on Zoom at 6PM. Author has another book, How to Break Up with Your Phone.

OCC: Sarah Sobel - feeling positive about the campaign. Some orgs have hit goals already and there is money coming in from Benevity. Philanthropic donor event happened a couple weeks ago as a Thank You rather than an ask so that was nice and different from the past.

Lennard Hachmann - End of campaign we are at 59% participation, \$3.22M. We should come out at \$3.85M if this trend continues. We could certainly have less money than

expected but \$3.74M is realistic. We are likely going to be at 64% participation at end of school year. BTSN and Elementary Match were successful. Messaging for two separate match weekends was confusing (elem first and HV second). Makes sense to do it at the same time next year. No messaging in Week 3 so there was a lull in money coming in. Successful textathon that engaged community more than previously so good last week of campaign. PTO money looks to be steady year over year. Donor population: Decrease in donating households, slowly creeping down which is a little disappointing. We are relying on fewer households to give more money to generate the same total number. We will look at more data in January to see how we can change our messaging. 95-97% of pledges do get fulfilled by EOY. We don't have a comprehensive story about why fewer households are donating but it does seem to be across the board with philanthropy. We polled people about donating and only 11% of people who did not donate gave feedback so it's hard to know why we are seeing changes.

9:10 to 10:10 — Updates

Superintendent Update and Q&A - Kristen Gracia

Study Session with School Board last night: MPCSD Funding Our Priorities.

Revisioning 2 years ago. Then came up with strategic directions that fell into three buckets. Always trying to cover the deficit in our budget. Board made it clear we need a balanced budget. Need a financial exercise so we can think forward. Phase 1 was information to educate the community on how we are funded. Easier for parents to understand public school funding. Phase 2 is the financial survey. Objective last night was gaining insight around the data and having meaningful discussion. Trying to balance budget three years out. Want to identify cost savings targets. We need a target so that we can have direction so we know how much to cut. Key budget assumptions: Prop Tax Revenue, Enrollment, Personnel cost. All of this is based on assumptions. We obviously don't know exactly how many kinders will be enrolling but we have had 2 fewer classes each year so that trend may continue but by 2027, it is expected that it will plateau. Targets are conservative and as we get closer, will make more informed decisions on where we need to cut. Good opportunity to see where we are spending money and how we are going to hit our goals. Target of \$4.1M over three years. Predicting Special Ed costs are the hardest because if we can't accommodate the student, we need to pay for the services. Special Ed's growth can go beyond what we budget. Survey results are on website. The district went out for a parcel tax a couple years ago, then TK mandate came in which costs \$1.1M per year. So even though we got the parcel tax, we had to make cuts because the state mandated TK and did not give us any money for it. Generally cuts are equitable across the district.

Sherwin Chen - looked at two board policies. One was e-bikes and we will vote on it next week. Ebikes are a huge safety issue. We are trying to hold student safety high but also want kids to preserve their independence. Vast majority of ebikes on campuses that

are likely in bike lanes are illegal and go 35 mph. We might eliminate those ebikes on campus but allow the pedal assist ebikes. Draft is up on the website. Lots of parent input.

Second policy - standards based grading. How to motivate kids if homework does not count toward anything. How to get kids to study for tests if you can retake a test. We are going to preserve all these concepts but if you as a student haven't finished your work before the test, you cannot do the work after the test.

Also discussed CAASP scores - district was disappointed with CAASP scores from spring. Math stayed the same at 78% (78% of students met or exceeded target). Relative to the state, we do very well. Even though we are doing well, it's just not where we want to be. English went from 79 to 80%. We should invest in areas where we will move the needle. Need to reallocate dollars from the less good programs to the ones that will benefit the kids more.

MPAEF Update - we have volunteers hosting pop ups during the wine walk. We just need to get people to go. We will have a foundation rep every 30 minutes. Working on the marketing to get more tickets sold. Goal is 350 tickets sold.

Sports Basement shopping days coming up. Messaging in newsletters and sending flyers home with kids.

Giving Tuesday coming up. We have a \$5k match from a family. Goal to reach \$10k. Auction coming up in March so we are accepting donations and thinking about parties.

Caring and Sharing - Flor Espinal works with counselors, families to make sure everyone has what they need. SNAP eligible students in district - HV, 24, OK 15, Laurel 29, Encinal 27 families. Some overlap between the schools (same household). Low SES: HV 100, OK 41, Laurel 90, Encinal 100 - some overlapping families. Flor helps with enrollment, family cafe (share about experiences with their children, come participate and eat breakfast on Saturdays), free market (bring whatever you have and families take bags of stuff - children's clothes, furniture). During COVID, Facebook started giving weekly donations of food. Flor would load up a van and deliver to each household. Safeway started donating boxes so people would come to Encinal to pick up. Safeway stopped so Fish and Loaves started to help. Fish and Loaves gets donations from many different stores and restaurants. Never know what they are going to get but people can pick up on Fridays.

Encinal PTO President, Lindsey Sykes - it would be nice for Flor to share with families what she does so people are better educated about Caring and Sharing so families are more inclined to donate. There is a line in the budget for Caring and Sharing. They host a

Thanksgiving dinner with bingo and prizes. PTO funds that. Encinal collects donations at one time for both Thanksgiving and Christmas. They prefer gift cards or direct donations so that families can pick out the gifts for their children and gifts are therefore more equitable. \$50 - \$100 per family but as prices have gone up, it does not cover as much.

Oak Knoll - generated ~\$5k from the community. Sometimes will give gift cards with a pumpkin pie. Principal will write thank you notes to the families who donate since they don't get to see the families who receive. Oak Knoll collects the money but the PTO can't buy the gift cards so Flor buys the gift cards and PTO reimburses her. It cannot go through the district.

Laurel - two separate drives. One for thanksgiving to get donations. Principals and counselors meet with families who opt in. Feed them dinner and distribute cards (try for \$100 gift cards) for Thanksgiving. For Christmas there is a giving tree with specific gifts. Families often have their children help purchase gifts for other families which helps children learn to be philanthropic. Behind the scenes, administration balances it out to make sure it is fairly equitable. Ask for feedback from the families in the program. Laurel has a Caring and Sharing fund which helps if there is an emergency and then there is also money to fall back on if holiday donations are not enough.

More education for the community around the "closet" that Flor started. Families likely have many things to donate but just are not aware.

Hillview - donations at Thanksgiving requested but donations were very low (\$10/person). PTO could subsidize that but this year there isn't enough money to subsidize so we will need to rely on donations.

Market is likely going to happen first week in December so we could include this in newsletters and make suggestions about what is most needed, then people could donate right before. It might help to share the number of people impacted in our community just to educate.

Could create a ParentSquare group so that people can opt in and be made aware of events like the Market. Or if there is an emergency, Flor/Principals can reach out to the list of people for help.

Adjournment - Meeting was adjourned at 10:20 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Christa Peterson in place of Laura Wiggs, Secretary