Menlo Park City School District Council Meeting Minutes

January 9, 2026
Location: MPCSD TERC, 181 Encinal Ave.
Time: 8:45 am

Attendees

Jennifer Baskin, Laura Wiggs, Andrew Fong, Sarah Sobel, Lennard Hachmann, Eleanor de Jong, Meredith Nonnenberg, Jessica Endlich, Kristen Gracia, Jammie Behrendt, Parke Treadway, Sharon Burns, Linda Creighton, Alicia Heneghan, Alicia Payton-Miyazaki, Danielle O'Brien, Carrie Chen, Laura Low Ah Kee, Lindsey Sikes, Francesca Baraggioli, Melitta Stevens, Michelle Fong, Tosin Falasinnu, Meredith Bergin Bailey, Francie Maletis, Janet Light, Jed Scolnick

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8:45–9:30 AM | Welcome, Musicals, and School Updates

Welcome & Approval of Minutes

- *Jennifer Baskin* welcomed attendees.
- *Laura Wiggs* called for approval of the November 7 meeting minutes.
- Motions to approve were made by *Lennard Hachmann* and *Danielle O'Brien*.
- Minutes approved unanimously with no changes.

Treasurer's Report

- *Andrew Fong* reported:
    - Current bank balance: $6,400
    - All PTO dues have been received
    - Upcoming expenses include Speaker Series and Service Awards fees

School & District Service Awards

- *Meredith Nonnenberg* asked schools to begin planning for School and District Service Awards, which will resume in late February / early March.

Musicals & Theater Program Update

Presenter: Jammie Behrendt

- Prop 28 funds are being used to grow musical and theater programs across all sites.
- Current productions
    - All 3rd graders participating in The Lion King Jr.
    - Oliver Jr. will begin soon at all schools
- *Sharon Burns* noted increased participation by 4th graders, attributing it to positive experiences with Lion King Jr.
- Oliver Jr. discussion
    - Age appropriateness, bias, and challenging themes were addressed
    - The production offers opportunities to discuss difficult topics and resilience
    - Request raised to broaden the vetting process for selecting productions

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Prop 28 Funding Overview

- **Allocation requirements**
    - 80% must be used for new staffing; 20% may be used for structures, systems, and materials
- **Annual funding**
    - Based on enrollment; MPCSD receives approximately $300–350K per year
- **20% expenditures**
    - Considering new sound and lighting system at Hillview
    - Considering curtain replacements at Hillview and other schools
- **Staffing**
    - *Ingham* is leading the tech crew at Hillview
    - Choreographer and heavy volunteer roles can be paid
- **Choir discussion**
    - *Michelle Fong* asked about reinstating choir as its seen as a lower-pressure entry point to theater for students who prefer singing; conversations ongoing

Clarifications on Use of Prop 28 Funds

- Some theatre programs previously funded by PTOs may now be funded through Prop 28
- Summer theater camps are not eligible for Prop 28 funding

Musical Theater Concerns (Lion King Jr.)

- *Meredith Bergin Bailey* raised concerns:
    - Some students are under-engaged or inactive but are required
    - Heavy parent volunteer requirements

    - Mixed reviews of Lion King Jr.
- Families were encouraged to contact school principals with concerns.
- Clarification:
    - Musical theater is currently required in 3rd grade so all students can try it
    - Participation becomes optional after this year

9:30–10:10 AM | District Council Business & Organization Updates

Speaker Series Update

Presenter: Jessica Winkler

- Jan 21, 6:00 PM, Zoom: Speaker is *Catherine Price*, author of *The Amazing Generation*
- “Take It Personally” series will return in the spring (6 weeks)

One Community Campaign (OCC) Update

Presenters: Sarah Sobel, Lennard Hachmann, Eleanor de Jong

- Fundraising status:
    - Goal: $3.74M; Current: $3.7M with approximately ⅔ of pledges collected
- MOU discussions for next year have begun
- *Kristen Gracia* thanked OCC leadership for strong organization, leadership, and tone

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Superintendent Update & Q&A

Presenter: Kristen Gracia

Funding Our Priorities

- Presentation scheduled for upcoming Board meeting
- Target: $4.1M in budget reductions over 3 years
- Approximately 700 survey responses received
- Phase 3 of the process underway; Community engagement emphasized as critical
- Cost-savings considerations presented next week

Budget Context

- Need to maintain competitive compensation
- Unfunded TK mandate
- Goals aligned with district priorities: Belonging, Strengthening academics, Creating inspiring environments
- Budget alignment begins next year, not this year

Key Dates

- **Jan 15 & Feb 12:** Identify cost-savings options and present at Board meetings
- **March 5:** Board action on staffing adjustments
- **March 15:** Layoff deadline

Guiding Principles for Budget Reductions

1. Begin with Administration / District Office
2. Prioritize classroom instruction
3. Prioritize student well-being

Areas Impacted

- **Educational Services** (largest reduction)
    - Ed Services Tech
    - ELC Director
    - Instructional Coaches
    - Coordinator of World Language
    - DEI
- **Enrichment Programming** (second largest)
    - World Language
    - 5th Grade Music Program
    - Library Program
- **District & Site Support**
    - Science materials aide
    - Long-term daily substitute
    - Workroom aides
    - Assistant Office Manager at Hillview (reduction)
    - District Office receptionist
    - Campus monitors
- **Academic Support**
    - Math aides
    - Amity intern program
    - Reading/math intervention (restructured, not eliminated)
- **Technology**

    - Devices, apps, and several positions
- **Impact**
    - Approximately 50 staff members affected
    - Union positions may only be eliminated if the work itself is eliminated
    - Volunteers cannot replace eliminated positions

School Board Update

- *Board President Jed Scolnick* thanked Kristen Gracia for thoughtful and careful communication with impacted staff and acknowledged the difficulty and necessity of the work
- Kristen Gracia was named Superintendent of the Year (Region 5)

Legal Update

- Legal matter at Laurel (PTO) has been settled
- *Michelle Fong* provided an update and noted a press release is expected next week

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MPAEF Update

(provided by email)

Presenters: Sally Loverro, Laura Low Ah Kee

- Auction tickets go on sale next week
- Hosted parties needed; attendees encouraged to spread the word

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Adjournment

- *Kristen Gracia* acknowledged Sharon's retirement at the end of the year
- Meeting adjourned at 10:27 AM