Torrance Unified School District

1Hamilton Meeting Notes from Community Conversation #2 held on Apr 17, 2024

Overview:
On April 17, 2024, Torrance Unified Chief Business Officer, Dr. Keith Butler, and Director of Communications, Sara Myers, met for a second time at Hamilton with 16 community leaders for 1.5 hours on the topic of the future of the Hamilton school site. Of the 16 leaders, 6 had been present at the previous meeting. The additional 10 were primarily homeowners with properties adjacent to Hamilton, with one of those neighbors also serving on our Torrance Council of PTA board.

Meeting Goals:
The goals of this meeting included:

- A review of the previous meeting for new attendees including the "Why" (Why is the Torrance Unified Board looking at this issue again, now?)
- An update on what the Torrance Unified team has done with the input and requests from the last meeting
- An opportunity for another check-in and more listening
- An overview of next steps and ongoing opportunities for broader input

Reflection:
Like the previous meeting, this meeting was also productive and attendees said they thought it was conducted in good faith. Dr. Butler and Ms. Myers were able to collect additional valuable input and feedback which we will use in the continued development of drawings outlining possible plans, the development of an RFP, and ultimately the final decisions of the Board of Education.

The group shared that there are two majority opinions that currently exist in the community: (1) those who are staunchly opposed to the results of the 7/11 committee and want to save Hamilton at all costs, and (2) those who considered Torrance Unified's position, and recognized the reality that a change to the current uses at Hamilton is more likely at this point then in the past, and thus they are working to make sure the solution minimizes impacts to the sports leagues and homeowners. A concern was raised by some in the second group that they don't yet trust the district and developers, and fear being lied to, so they need to see promises in writing.

MEETING SUMMARY

Update on Torrance Unified Progress Since Last Meeting:

- **FINANCIALS:** At the group's request, Dr. Butler revisited the numbers and financial projections to see if there is an opportunity to keep just the fields, and/or seek out a sponsor or state assistance.

    - **Conclusion:** An exchange of the Hamilton property would be in the magnitude of tens of millions of dollars, and hundreds of thousands of dollars each year in ongoing revenue from new students. It is probably too large a sum for an outside company, as the largest past corporate donations to Torrance Unified are under $1 million, and donations of over $100,000 have been rare.
- **TRANSITION STUDENTS:** Based on a request at the last meeting, we looked at changing the transition students to Levy School instead of North High. There are some upsides and downsides, but we will continue to explore this since student safety is a top priority.
- **TORRANCE ADULT SCHOOL (TAS):** Our adult school is funded separately from the school district, and they are committed to renting new space in North Torrance to serve adult learners. TAS can afford to do so and has begun exploring locations that will keep day and evening classes in North Torrance.
- **MAINTENANCE:** We are exploring some joint solutions and potential donations to help repair the immediate issues with the asphalt and parking lot.
- **PARK SPACE:** We are exploring park space options with the City for at least one of the sports fields.
    - **Current Conclusions: Guenser Park-** Not a possibility because of the size and tough parking, but **El Nido and McMaster Parks** might be possibilities. The group did express concerns about taking away park space if Little League were to move to City park space.
    - We have also spoken to the City about the possibility of using other fields located at other City Parks temporarily, to ensure that there are no season interruptions, as promised since the teams explained there are year-round baseball/softball activities.
- **SCHOOL PROPERTIES:** Dr. Butler presented the list of priorities and needs to an expert ball field designer to explore options on Torrance Unified properties.
    - **Current Conclusions:** We explored five Torrance Unified sites for moving the ball fields. **Yukon and Carr** were ruled out as too small. **Lincoln** has the most space, followed by **Magruder and Casimi**r. The next step will be to bring back actual drawings to see what the options look like.
- **CONTINUED COMMITMENT:** Dr. Butler shared the District's continued commitment to the groups by listening, and working to find mutually beneficial solutions that take care of community needs and do not negatively impact property values.

Questions from the Community Leaders:

Q: Could an elected official find state or federal money to maintain Hamilton?
A: This was something explored through the 7/11 Committee process, and the reality is that the contributions would be one-time and not enough to add lasting, sustainable income to assist Torrance Unified's ongoing needs.

Q: Why didn't any money from the previous bonds go into investing in the Adult Schools?
A: School Bond funding is subject to voter interests and opinions. Typically, voters want to see bonds that prioritize investing in K-12 learning environments, safety upgrades, sports facilities,

etc. There is far less interest in investing in district offices and other buildings, so our previous bonds did not include options for us to use bond funds in these ways.

Q: How many units are in the property to the West and how many acres is it?
A: Approximately 30-40 units.

ACTION: ***Torrance Unified confirmed the development next door was 46 units on 2.8 acres.***

Q: Were any other uses explored besides housing such as a rentable Sports complex?
A: Yes, other ideas have been brainstormed, such as public storage units, and other mixed-uses, but the City is under tremendous pressure from the state to address housing needs and thus the zoning changes will more likely follow the development next door. In addition, the ongoing revenue from adding potential students is important. Other business models do not provide the same value for helping the District on a sustainable, ongoing basis.

Q: How is the current property zoned, and how will the zoning need to change?
A: It is currently zoned for Public Use, and it will likely need to change to an R3 zoning, similar to the development next door.

Q: How will homeowner's issues be addressed?
A: Since Torrance Unified is not planning to do an outright sale, but rather an exchange, there is an opportunity to build conditions into the Request for Proposals (RFP) that a Developer would then need to make sure their plans meet. In addition, when the Torrance City Council votes to rezone the property, there is also an opportunity for homeowners to provide input.

Q: Would this be a gated community?
A: The current understanding is that it would not be a gated community.

Q: Which schools will the students living in this development attend and how will they likely walk to school?
A: The team thinks Arlington, but needs to check.

ACTION: ***Torrance Unified confirmed it is Arlington Elementary.***

Q: What is the current timeline the School District is working with?
A: The district is planning to hold at least two additional public meetings in early May. After those meetings, an RFP will be developed and the public will be invited to 1-2 Board meetings to provide input. The whole process, with developer selection, environmental review, zoning, etc. will take at least two years before groundbreaking occurs.

Q: What about specific locations for added park space exchanges and other options?
A: The group asked about specific properties in Torrance, and Dr. Butler and the group explained the known status for some and promised to double-check others.

ACTION: ***Torrance Unified to check plans for a few vacant properties the group identified***

Input from the Community Leaders:

- **EDUCATION ADVOCATES:**
    - **New Input:**
        - **FACILITIES FOR TRANSITION STUDENTS:** The group wanted to ensure and hear more about how the District was planning to invest and incorporate laundry, kitchen, and changing facilities into Levy.

- **SPORTS TEAMS: Did our memo accurately represent your needs and feedback?**
    - **New Input:**
        - **LOSS OF PUBLIC PARK SPACE:** The team leadership does not want to lose more of the already scarce public park space in North Torrance. Their priority for the location of the ball fields is Torrance Unified properties. Also, a concern is that McMaster parking is too limited.
        - **PARKING CONCERNS:** The reality of the parking constraints set in more at this meeting. While Torrance Unified has offered to open up all the spots at the schools and look for additional parking solutions at the parks, there is a concern that the parking luxury of Hamilton will be lost.

    - **Revisions to List of Needs Since Last Meeting:**
        - **BATHROOMS**: Bathrooms need to have real plumbing, be safe and well-lit for night games, be as close as possible to fields, and be free of issues of transient use or interference. Dr. Butler outlined the bathroom facilities at each potential school site including some new ones planned for an early learning center at Lincoln Elementary.
        - **INFIELD SET UP:** We need Modular Base and fence distances for the infields to meet regulations and the needs of various player age groups.
        - **CONTINUED SENSE OF LOSS:** While the leadership understands this change is inevitable, they continue to express loss over the history of the site, and the pride they have in the volunteer time and engagement with generations of families over the decades.

- **HOMEOWNER NEIGHBORS:** *(Concerns are not in any prioritized order)*
    - **DENSITY:** Homeowners are ***very concerned*** about how many units will be included in the future Hamilton development. When estimated ranges were discussed showing a development likely three to four times larger than the current development next door, it raised concerns.
    - **GREENSPACE:** Greenspace is a priority for the group, and they are interested in the RFP including conditions that the new development have as much public greenspace as possible.
    - **BUILDING HEIGHT:** There is a ***growing concern*** about the height of the homes. The neighbors who live with their backyards along the East wall of the Hamilton property are adamant that they do not want second and third stories looking down into their yards. They purchased their property because of the location next to the school. They want the yards of single-family homes to back up to their yards. Two of the residents brought photos of another development elsewhere in

Torrance in which neighboring homeowners were lied to, and now new residents have a direct view into their backyards.

- **TRAFFIC:** Homeowners are ***very concerned*** about the additional traffic impact on 182nd during the morning and evening rush hour commutes. They shared stories of the sound of slamming breaks, close calls, and accidents, and they are worried about the additional traffic. They don't feel enough is known about the impacts of the construction and new freeway on/off ramps to traffic in the area.
- **PARKING:** Homeowners want to ensure that this development will have its own parking, and asked if Permit Parking would be considered. Dr. Butler assured them that the City would call for designated spaces for the units and that he was unaware of any plans for permits outside the development.
- **UTILITIES:** One neighbor had heard of instances where existing homeowners had to pay to hook up to the new development's utility lines. Dr. Butler assured the group that adding new utilities which are now required to be underground would be the responsibility of the developer.
- **ENTRANCE/EGRESS:** The group asked about specific concerns around whether or not a back gate on Purche/185th would be opened to traffic, Dr. Butler assured them that it would not be allowed per the City.

MOVING FORWARD
Torrance Unified is committed to the following steps:

- Share the notes from this meeting and a copy of the last notes, with the group
- Continue to meet with the ball field experts to bring back drawings of potential configurations and locations for the ball fields.
- Bring back drawings of the configurations of a potential housing development including unit locations, single-family homes, green space, and entrances into traffic.
- Host and widely publicize a **North Community Meeting** to be held twice, once on **Wednesday**, **May 1,** and then again on **Thursday, May 9 at 6:30 p.m. at North High**. At these meetings, Dr. Butler will present the drawings and the District will ask for input and feedback. **Participants should bring cell phones to this meeting, as we will use interactive technology to gather lots of input from many people at the same time.**

As was also discussed, these May 1st and May 9th meetings are intended to present actual concepts and receive input about those concepts to best reflect community considerations. These will not be Torrance Unified Board meetings with a Board agenda, thus they are not the right forum to discuss the potential decision to move ahead with new purposes for the Hamilton property, but rather to **refine concepts to present to the Board for their future decision-making.**

The community leaders asked that the District consider inviting a North Torrance trustee area school board member and the North Torrance City Council member to the upcoming meetings. They understand that this would not be a time to lobby them, but they just want to be assured that these representatives care and are interested in listening to the community. Dr. Butler stated that he would contact the School Board and that citizens should ask a City Council member to attend. In addition, the Community asked the District to explore ways to include residents who could not attend either meeting.