

**CITY OF PARAMOUNT  
MINUTES  
CITY COUNCIL/SCHOOL BOARD AD HOC COMMITTEE  
February 13, 2025**

Clearwater Building Auditorium  
16401 Paramount Blvd, Paramount, CA 90723

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CALL TO ORDER: City Manager John Moreno called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL

PUSD Board Members Present:  
Diane J. Martinez, Board Member

City Council Members Present:  
Isabel Aguayo, Councilmember  
Vilma Cuellar Stallings, Councilmember

PUSD Staff Members Present:  
Johua Lightle, Superintendent  
Isela Preciado, Senior Executive Assistant

City Staff Present:  
John Moreno, City Manager  
Grissel Chavez, Assistant City Manager  
Yecenia Guillen, Community Services Director  
Gaby Paredes, Executive Assistant

Absent:  
Alicia Anderson, President

Public Present:  
Daisy Macedo, PTA Vice President

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

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There were none.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

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It was moved by Board Member Martinez and seconded by Councilmember Cuellar Stallings to approve the City Council/School Board Ad Hoc Committee minutes of November 21, 2024.

### **ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION**

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1. Youth Workforce Program

City Manager Moreno introduced the item and Sandra Michel, Corina Cornel, and David Cardenas from SELACO gave the report.

The SELACO Workforce Development Board representatives gave a comprehensive presentation on their Youth Services Program. Serving eight cities and five school districts in LA County, the Youth Services Program helps empower youth through career counseling, support services, and work experience with local businesses. Funded by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), soon to be renamed the Stronger Workforce for America Act (ASWA), the program includes both in-school and out-of-school youth initiatives. The in-school program focuses on dropout prevention, career counseling, and work experience with local businesses. In contrast, the out-of-school program supports youth in post-secondary education or career exploration, such as a social work program for foster youth. SELACO highlighted successful initiatives like the Youth at Work program, which provides 160 hours of paid work experience and support services, and the "Boots on the Ground" approach, placing staff directly in schools and community organizations for improved accessibility and offering resources like financial support for uniforms and training. The committee expressed strong interest in exploring opportunities to collaborate with SELACO to bring these youth programs to Paramount, focusing on how to best connect SELACO's services with the needs of Paramount students and leverage the existing partnerships between the City, School District, and local businesses.

2. Update on STAR After School Program

City Manager Moreno introduced the item and gave the report.

City Manager Moreno provided an update on the STAR after-school program, indicating that the City received an unexpected letter from the California Department of Education stating that the City will no longer receive funding for the program starting July

1, ending the City's involvement in providing after-school programming. This decision was surprising, as the City was in the second year of a three-year grant and was transitioning to a contract with Think Together, the provider for the School District's ELOP program. Now, the responsibility for the \$2.4 million grant falls on the School District as the Local Education Agency (LEA), and the City will no longer be involved in classroom operations. The City will return to the Committee with a revised Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the City and School District regarding the joint use agreement. Additionally, the City will seek clarification from the State regarding the future of the grant, with the possibility of formal action being required from the City Council to dissolve the agreement with the State. The Committee agreed that ongoing communication and collaboration between the City and School District is crucial while navigating this change to the STAR after-school program and the shift of responsibility to the School District while maintaining seamless services for students and ensuring a smooth transition.

3. Paramount Education  
Partnership (PEP)  
Scholarship Applications

City Manager Moreno introduced the item and Community Services Director Guillen gave the report.

Community Services Director Guillen announced that applications for the PEP Scholarship are now being accepted through the Kaleidoscope online platform. The City has already received over 40 applications from students this year, which represents a significant increase compared to previous years when binders filled with applications had to be reviewed by the committee. This is the second year of using the online system, which not only simplifies the PEP Scholarship application process but also allows students to explore and apply for other scholarship opportunities, such as those offered by Coca-Cola and Pepsi. The announcement is being shared with the District to ensure that students and families are aware of this valuable scholarship opportunity.

4. Paramount Education Partnership (PEP) Fundraiser Timeline

City Manager Moreno introduced the item, and Community Services Director Guillen gave the report.

Community Services Director Guillen highlighted that fundraising efforts for the PEP scholarship program are currently in effect. The City has been actively engaging with the community by sending formal letters to previous donors and collaborating closely with the School District on various fundraising initiatives to support the program. One strategy the District has been encouraging is for its employees to enroll in voluntary payroll deductions to contribute to the PEP Scholarship fund. This approach provides a consistent stream of funding, which has raised approximately \$15,000 as of November. Additionally, the District plans to reach out to employees to request one-time donations, particularly during tax season when many individuals consider charitable giving opportunities. Overall, the ongoing partnership between the City and the School District in securing funding for the PEP Scholarships aims to provide financial assistance and support for Paramount students. The City is also open to sharing marketing materials and stories about how the funds benefit students.

5. PUP Card Program

City Manager Moreno introduced the item, and Community Services Director Guillen gave the report.

Community Services Director Guillen provided an overview of the Paramount University Pass (PUP) program, which offers free public transportation to PUSD graduates attending local community colleges and universities. The program, which has been in place for nearly a decade, originally began as the College Bound Bus and has transitioned to the PUP program following a partnership with Long Beach Transit five years ago. Administered by the City's Community Services Department, the program aims to support Paramount students in pursuing their educational and career goals by providing transportation assistance. Efforts to raise awareness of this valuable benefit continue through

collaboration with school counselors and the distribution of new marketing materials, ensuring students and families are informed.

6. Top Student Street Banners

City Manager Moreno introduced the item and gave the report.

City Manager Moreno discussed the final details regarding the placement of the Top Student Banners. During the previous meeting in November, the Committee discussed the display of these vinyl banners year-round along Rosecrans Avenue and Downey Avenue, near the high school. However, City staff proposed an alternative idea to relocate the existing Military Banners from Paramount Boulevard (between Rosecrans Avenue and Somerset Boulevard) and replace them with the Top Student Banners. This new location would offer better visibility and reach a wider audience, including younger students who might be inspired by seeing their peers' achievements on their way to school. Overall, the Committee appeared receptive to the proposal for Paramount Boulevard and acknowledged the need to obtain approval from the full City Council to move the Military Banners. If the City Council approves this plan, the costs associated with the hardware and rods needed for the banners, as well as establishing a reimbursement agreement between the City and the School District to share these expenses, would be considered.

7. Safe and Civil Schools

City Manager Moreno introduced the item and Superintendent Lightle gave the report.

Superintendent Lightle provided an update on the Safe and Civil Schools initiative, which originated from questions about the previous GRIP program. The Safe and Civil program aims to address anti-bullying and gang prevention efforts within the District. Each school will establish a Climate and Culture Leadership Team, and starting next month, they will undergo a year-and-a-half-long training with Safe and Civil Foundations. At the elementary level, school counselors already offer social-emotional learning and anti-bullying lessons twice a month. The next phase involves middle and high school counselors integrating guidance lessons into English

classes, ensuring that these important topics are addressed throughout a student's educational journey. The District will continue to implement these initiatives and provide updates on progress.

8. Comments from  
Committee Members

Board Member Martinez expressed gratitude to the City for the ongoing recognition of students and teachers and looks forward to continuing the strong partnership between the City and the School District.

Councilmember Aguayo voiced concerns about the gate at the intersection of Contreras Street and Downey Avenue being locked on days with significant student foot traffic. She added that this may cause some students to arrive late if they cannot access the gate. Superintendent Lightle explained that schools typically maintain a single entry point for safety reasons, which is a common practice nationwide. However, the District will investigate whether the issue is related to staffing or other factors, especially since many students walk along Downey Avenue, which may be contributing to the delays.

Councilmember Cuellar Stallings commended both the City and School District for positively collaborating in response to the recent student protests and keeping students safe while allowing them the space to express themselves. This peaceful outcome was especially noteworthy when compared to the unrest observed in downtown Los Angeles.

9. Comments from Staff

Community Services Director Guillen shared a flyer about the ongoing search for local artists for the Paramount Arts in the Community project and extended an invitation to the upcoming Community Art event in May. The focus is on finding new artists and artwork for district buildings. Further details will be shared as the event approaches.

Assistant City Manager Chavez announced that the City hosted its first-ever small business video promotion contest in November, receiving 13 submissions, including one from a group of high school students. The video, created in partnership with a local business, was showcased at the State of the City event. The winning students received a prize

of \$500, and the City also purchased \$500 worth of gift cards from the business. The City hopes for greater participation next year and will continue to market the program.

Comments from the  
Public

PTA Vice President Macedo shared that the community has reached out to her, requesting another community roundtable event similar to the successful one held at Jefferson. The previous roundtable was highly appreciated, and the community is eager to know when the next event will take place. Both organizations have committed to exploring the possibility of organizing another roundtable by the end of the school year. Additionally, Macedo expressed her gratitude for the safety measures that were implemented during the recent protest, ensuring the well-being of the students.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

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City Manager John Moreno adjourned the meeting at 5:06 p.m.