

**CITY OF PARAMOUNT
MINUTES
CITY COUNCIL/SCHOOL BOARD AD HOC COMMITTEE
April 2, 2026**

Clearwater Building Auditorium
16401 Paramount Blvd, Paramount, CA 90723

CALL TO ORDER: City Manager John Moreno called the meeting to order at 4:08 p.m.

ROLL CALL

PUSD Board Members Present:
Alicia Anderson, Board Member
Yesenia Cuarenta, Board Member

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

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

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

Absent:
Grissel Chavez, Assistant City Manager

Public Present:
Daisy Macedo, PTA President

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were none.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Councilmember Cuellar Stallings moved to approve the minutes from the City Council/School Board Ad Hoc Committee meeting held on February 5, 2026, and Board Member Anderson seconded the motion.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Safe Routes to Schools City Manager Moreno introduced the item, and Superintendent Lightle gave the report.

Superintendent Lightle introduced the District's interest in forming a formal partnership with the National Center for Safe Routes to School to enhance student safety during their travel to and from school. A draft resolution was presented for consideration, which includes language addressing the need for safe sidewalks and streets—an area that directly involves the City. Committee Members also requested additional crossing guards in front of Mark Keppel Elementary School and proposed distributing a questionnaire to parents at schools with existing crossing guards to gather input on safety concerns and potential improvements. The City noted that while several traffic safety enhancements have already been implemented, any expansion of crossing guard services would need to be funded by the District under the current agreement. In support of the District's efforts, the City committed to providing the Traffic Study for the San Jose corridor near Mark Keppel, conducted by Willdan and Associates, as well as the Bike Master Plan and a list of current crossing guard locations. These resources aim to help the District identify service gaps and determine where additional coverage may be needed. Ultimately, the Committee agreed to table the item for now, pending a more detailed review of the Safe Routes to School and the City's existing initiatives. This approach allows for more informed decision-making in the future.

2. PUSD STAR Awards City Manager Moreno introduced the item, and Superintendent Lightle gave the report.

Superintendent Lightle announced the District's 2026 Star Awards celebration, scheduled for Thursday, May 7, with dinner at 5:00 p.m. in the gymnasium at Paramount High School's West Campus, followed by the awards ceremony at 6:00 p.m. in the auditorium. Flyers and additional details will be shared with the City Council. This event will again serve as the venue for recognizing the

District's Teachers of the Year, a shift from prior years when they were honored at City Council meetings due to low attendance and scheduling challenges. The District expressed hope that a Council Member can attend the ceremony, though staff participation will be appreciated if scheduling conflicts—such as the Children's Benefit Dinner—prevent attendance.

3. PEP Application
Scholarship Status

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

Community Services Director Guillen provided an update on the Paramount Education Partnership (PEP) scholarship program, which saw a strong increase in participation this year with 259 applications submitted, up from 248 last year. While many applications remained incomplete until just days before the deadline, submissions surged by the cutoff. Applications are submitted through the Kaleidoscope online portal and evaluated anonymously by a community-based committee of about 13 graders, with each application reviewed by two individuals using a standardized rubric. The process emphasizes students' personal stories, financial need, and academic information while redacting personal information to ensure impartiality, with final selections approved by the PEP Board. This year, Kaleidoscope also introduced an AI disclosure requirement to help ensure originality in student essays and maintain the integrity of student submissions. Scholarship recipients are expected to be notified in mid-May, with formal recognition anticipated at the May 26 City Council meeting.

4. PEP Sponsorship Event

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

Community Services Director Guillen presented plans for the upcoming PEP sponsorship event, which has transitioned from a traditional donor appreciation party to a more strategic outreach initiative aimed at both thanking long-term contributors and attracting new donors. The PEP Spring Mixer is scheduled for April 16 from 4:00 to

6:00 p.m. and has been shifted from a Friday evening to a weekday format to improve attendance and accessibility for local businesses. This year's approach will focus less on elaborate entertainment and more on meaningful engagement, including inviting current donors to bring potential new supporters, sharing student success stories, and highlighting the impact of contributions through testimonials and video presentations. While light activities and refreshments will still be available, the primary goal is to increase the year-to-date donation total, which currently stands at about \$27,000, as we work toward a \$100,000 fundraising target. This effort is particularly important given the reduced revenue from the annual 5K fundraiser scheduled for May 31, which is critical to the PEP fund. The importance of having elected officials and school leaders present at the event to personally thank donors and reinforce the program's value was emphasized to show appreciation and encourage continued community investment, noting that current fundraising supports future scholarship cycles. An electronic flyer with QR codes and RSVP information will be shared broadly by the City to help spread the word and encourage attendance.

5. Spring & Summer Events

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

Community Services Director Yecenia Guillen announced an exciting lineup of spring and summer recreation programs designed to be affordable and accessible for families in Paramount. While some spring activities have already concluded, there are still opportunities available, including swim lessons, open gym sessions, and the City's annual Race for Education 5K/1K. The summer schedule is particularly extensive, featuring movie nights, Day Camp, youth sports, concerts, swim programs, and the annual Heritage Festival. Most activities are free or low-cost to encourage wide participation, with swim lessons being one of the few options that require a fee. Additionally, open gym sessions will offer organized activities like basketball, volleyball, and pickleball for participants aged 16 and older, with all necessary equipment provided. Schedules for

these activities will be shared via social media. The City will also continue its partnership with the District’s Food Services Department at Paramount Park, which supports community access while helping maintain consistent staffing. Residents are encouraged to use the QR code on the flyer for easy registration and access to information. Overall, the programming aims to keep youth and families active, engaged, and connected throughout the summer, and officials were asked to help promote these programs to families.

6. Comments from Committee Members Board Member Cuarenta shared a flyer for a Trout Unlimited “Every River Meets the Champion” community meeting on April 11 from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. at Spane Park, encouraging attendance.

7. Comments from Staff Superintendent Lightle wished everyone a Happy Easter and communicated that although students, teachers, and staff will be on spring break next week, he will be in the office working on the Local Control Accountability Plan.

Comments from the Public PTA President Macedo raised interest in reviving the “Pennies for PEP” fundraiser, noting it was once highly popular with students but posed administrative challenges. She added that families continue to ask about it and suggested PTAs could help manage the program if it returns. Superintendent Lightle shared that, for now, the District is partnering with the PEP Board on a \$10 employee raffle to boost donations, but is exploring bringing back Pennies for PEP—likely starting with elementary schools next year—to create a more consistent funding stream. City Manager Moreno offered to contribute additional city-funded raffle prizes, which the District plans to include in ongoing promotions. Overall, there was consensus that, with better structure, Pennies for PEP could once again be an engaging and effective student-driven fundraiser.

ADJOURNMENT

City Manager John Moreno adjourned the meeting at 4:40 p.m.