



CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

SPECIAL MEETING
Tuesday, June 13, 2006
6:30 p.m.
City of Menlo Park
The Menlo Park City Council Chambers
701 Laurel Street
Menlo Park, CA 94025

The meeting was called to order at 6:40 p.m.

A. ROLL CALL – Jellins, Fergusson, Cohen, Duboc (absent), Winkler

STAFF PRESENT – David Boesch, City Manager; William McClure, City Attorney; Silvia Vonderlinden, City Clerk. Other City staff was in the audience.

B. PUBLIC COMMENT - None

C. SPECIAL MEETING ITEM

1. Request of Council Member Cohen that the City Council discuss the Belle Haven Summer School Program.

Council Member Cohen requested that the City Council discuss the Belle Haven summer school program. He explained that Angel Dodson had written to Council on June 6th with concerns about summer fees for her child who attends Beechwood School. Council Member Cohen added that Ms. Dodson's child participates in the Belle Haven school-age program and she was perplexed when Michael Taylor would not allow her child to attend for 2.5 hours during the summer months without being charged the full Menlo Kids' Club fees. He provided additional specifics about the situation and asked Mr. Taylor to respond.

Michael Taylor, Acting Community Services Director, explained that this change in the program is because staff is trying to eliminate exceptions that were allowed in years prior when prorating the summer camp fees was permitted. He added that seventy-one children are served in the program, which is now full with the exception of the one spot that is being held for Ms. Dodson if she chooses to take it. There are also two children on the waiting list. Mr. Taylor said the program was always intended to be a summer camp program and not an after-school program, he acknowledged that there were some exceptions made in the past. The program serves four separate school districts, and there are often requests for changes and adjustments for vacations. In the past, staff has authorized these; there were nine exceptions made last year. Mr. Taylor explained that it is difficult to coordinate schedules when exceptions are allowed.

Public Comment

Tammy Rainer addressed the Council saying she has four children that attend the Menlo Kids' Club. In addition to paying her fee, she pays for her children to attend additional activities that have been offered. Two months ago she lost her job and was unable to pay the \$800 fee for summer camp. She asked about a grant but was told no, without any explanation. Then she was told that the program was already subsidized. She was also told the City no longer offered the sibling discount when she enrolled her fourth child.

Marcia Dore-Perez, with time donated by Edgar Perez, thanked Council Member Cohen for placing this matter on the agenda. She believes the Beechwood exception has been in

place for 10 years and parents were not notified of the change. Ms. Dore-Perez opined that there is a division in the community and parents wish to be part of the decisions that impact them. She read the City's value statement and commented that there is indifference in the part of the city to understand the needs of the community. She would like the Director of Community Services to meet with parents four times a year and she expects better communication.

Council Discussion

Various Council Members expressed their views on the matter and Council Member Cohen asked specific questions of staff regarding noticing. Mr. Taylor explained that the program information went out in April, May and June and then again via the City's Activity Guide. Council Member Winkler asked if staff sent out notifications about the program and Mr. Taylor confirmed. Mayor Pro Tem Fergusson would like to keep with previous practice since the specific cancellation of the exception was not mentioned to the parents. She believes that this had served as an after school program and it should not be cut off without appropriate notice. Mayor Jellins stated that the Council is in charge of setting policy and it is not his preference to micro-manage the City Manager or the Community Services Acting Director. He understands the issues but would not like to give direction on the matter since he is satisfied with the answers provided by staff. By the same token he sympathizes with the issues presented by the parents. Council Member Cohen believes staff should have provided better notice about the change in policy in regards to exceptions and he is not happy with the situation.

M/S Cohen/Fergusson that the program remain the same as it was last year and include the exceptions. Motion fails 2-2 with Council Members Cohen and Fergusson voting in favor and Council Members Jellins and Winkler opposing.

D. ADJOURNMENT - the meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Silvia M. Vonderlinden, CMC

Approved at the City Council Meeting of November 14, 2006.