

SAN FERNANDO CITY COUNCIL

**SPECIAL MEETING
MINUTES**

AUGUST 16, 2006 – 2:30 P.M.

THE FOLLOWING MINUTES ARE A SUMMARY OF ACTIONS TAKEN BY THE CITY COUNCIL. AUDIO CASSETTE TAPES OF THE ACTUAL MEETING ARE AVAILABLE FOR LISTENING IN THE CITY CLERK'S OFFICE.

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Mayor Nury Martinez called the meeting to order at 2:30 p.m.

PRESENT:

Council: Mayor Nury Martinez, Mayor Pro Tem Julie Ruelas, Councilmembers Steven Veres and Dr. José Hernández

Staff: City Administrator José E. Pulido, City Attorney Michael Estrada (*participated via conference call*), and Deputy City Clerk Laura Valdivia

ABSENT: Councilmember Maribel De La Torre

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion by Councilmember Veres, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Ruelas, to approve the agenda. The motion carried by the following vote:

AYES: Martinez, Ruelas, Veres, Hernández, – 4

ABSENT: De La Torre – 1

PUBLIC STATEMENTS

Angel Rodriguez, 429 Griswold, stated she was told that this meeting was called because erroneous information had been the basis for the motion passed on Monday. She said that the reason is because this bill is being rushed and there is no time to get the information out in a timely and accurate fashion. She stated that amendments have been added but San Fernando's suggestions for six changes were not included. She asked if the President's Report on School

Governance is set to be heard on August 22nd by the LAUSD Board why would the Mayor rush through a hurried piece of legislation and not give that report a chance to be heard, especially when members of many communities, including Julie Ruelas of San Fernando took time and thought to prepare it.

Michael Rodriguez, 429 Griswold, stated that he has been in the magnet program since the second grade and in an area as crowded as San Fernando it is actually easier to get into. He said that each semester he takes only three classes, which is similar to college and it gives him more time for homework and other projects. He said he wished people like Mayor Villaraigosa would come to his school and see what is working within LAUSD rather than assuming he can do better without seeing that there is success in District 2.

Christine Provencio, 605 Hollister, stated that parents here have great concerns and questions and Mayor Villaraigosa walks away from them, and if that is what he does with the parents what will he do with the children. She stated that we can appoint people to represent us in LAUSD and we appoint them because we have faith in them, but we can't even vote in Los Angeles. She said she thought the City Council had a clear understanding of what our parents' needs were, but there are too many personal agendas.

Zella Knight, 10749 New Haven Street, Sun Valley, representing Local District 2 Title One Program, read a quote and stated there is no detail goal for accountability and no specific defined problem with LAUSD in the bill. She said there is no measurement for success and this Council has an obligation to build community not destroy it and to preserve improvement of our students not fail it. She said that we will be at this table within the next five to ten years having the same conversation and having the same dilemma.

Hon. Julie Korenstein, LAUSD Board Member, stating she has been on the board for over 20 years and has given a large part of her life to public education. She said that all of the deals that have been made back and forth between the teachers union, Mayor Villaraigosa and a few legislators was a trade off. She stated the Los Angeles City Council voted in favor of this bill last week in order to get their initiative on the ballot to allow themselves an additional four years. She said there are those that are being pushed into a political corner but cautioned them be careful because this Mayor is not committed for a second term and everyone knows this is his springboard for governor, and it's a risky springboard. She stated that you cannot gamble with children's lives for political reasons.

Ms. Korenstein said the test scores that recently came in show the elementary school children did very well and during the last five to six years they have been steadily going up. She explained that middle schools and high schools did well in some areas but to remember they started the entire reform about five years ago and what they are beginning to see now is payoff in the elementary schools. She said it will take a little bit of time to catch up in the middle schools but as these children enter middle school we will begin to see an increase in test scores because they will be able to read and do mathematical computation.

Ms. Korenstein said the Board will have a superintendent in place and a contract signed before this bill is enacted because they cannot wait and allow all of their programs to be pushed aside. She said a selection will be made and a contract signed all before January 1st.

She said she has tried her best to work with the Council since becoming a Board Member and she could have easily built schools in other places, but she knew San Fernando needed them here and she was the Council's voice on the Board of Education. She stated she will always have an open door policy, but as of January 1st anything to do with facilities will have to go directly to the superintendent. Also as of January 1st any problems with contracts, vendors, and materials will be referred directly to the Superintendent because she will no longer have any authority over this.

She stated that Mayor Villaraigosa never sat down with the Board of Education to say what can we do together or to talk about how to select a superintendent. As a Board there was never any dialogue or never an invitation.

At this time City Attorney joined the meeting via conference call.

Ms. Korenstein continued and said that after everything is said and done none of the cities will be held liable because it all comes back to the District. She said her authority will be transferred due to that partnership and yet the District will be liable for it. She said there is nothing in the bill that has any plan for any type of education or curriculum or there is nothing in the plan that gives any indication that people who will be put in charge will know what they're doing.

She ended by saying that she was here to appeal to the Council that they think this through very carefully because this goes to the year 2013 and by then there will be another mayor that you will never vote for.

Linda Ross, PTA President 31st District, said she spoke to this Council a few weeks ago at the Town Hall meeting so they know where the PTA stands on this issue and they know we are opposed to it and the reasons why. She said the PTA's belief is that this is too much power for one individual and asked the Council not to support this bill.

Mayor Martinez acknowledged Amy Orringer representative for LAUSD Board Member Jon Lauritzen.

NEW BUSINESS

1) CITY COUNCIL POSITION REGARDING AB1381

Councilmember Steven Veres stated there is a lot of misleading information for an against the bill. He stated that this Council took a position on Monday based on some incorrect information from the ICA. He said the motion that was made had a contingency

that discussed the new amendments put forth on August 10th that there would be a 10% veto vote authority, and from reading the ICA material San Fernando was excluded. He explained upon communication with Senator Escutia's office, who is making the amendments, San Fernando is not excluded. He said a tentative population ratio formula weight system has been worked out that, based on the number of people you have in your City, will equal your percentage participation in the vote and it is any combination of the cities within the jurisdiction of LAUSD. He explained that the Mayor, although a representative of 80% of the people, will need a 90% vote in order to hire a superintendent and the only element involved in this is the hiring of the superintendent. He said the City of San Fernando will have approximately ½ percent vote based on our population and currently School Board Member Korenstein represents 600,000 people and the City of San Fernando's population is 24,000 so we are currently about less than ½ percent of one school board district, so the formulas are relatively the same whether it is a school board member or part of this committee who votes for the superintendent. He said every other aspect remains the same, but the biggest contention is that we do not vote for the Mayor of Los Angeles but we do vote for a direct representative that will be part of this decision making process.

Mr. Veres stated this is a complicated issue and everyone has very different positions but there is a desire by all people at all levels to improve the school district and many of us see the good in our schools and many of us see the bad also. He said the desire has been to figure out how we can improve and get our students up to be the most competitive and the most successful that they can be. He stated one of the things he likes is that we are going to streamline and make immediate the relationship and connection with the superintendent. He agrees that more power will be transferred to the superintendent, but it will also enable us to communicate directly and forcibly in terms of our desires and interests.

He said he has brought up in past public meetings, the situation about the middle school auditorium and that the City lost about \$50,000 and that we really had a true desire to do something good there. He stated that cities need to be deeply involved and connected in school construction and the creation of community centers, so if redoing our method and input gives us an opportunity to have a more direct line it will improve as a function in the community.

Motion by Councilmember Veres that with the modification and clarification of the City of San Fernando to be included in the 10% veto and vote authority, he would like to support AB1381.

Mayor Pro Tem Julie Ruelas stated that we have the LAUSD Governance Commission recommendations that still need to be considered and she is committed to waiting until we hear the response from the Board to the recommendations because they were very carefully thought out. She wants to implement the recommendations and do the reforms

because they do include a vote of the people for any fundamental changes and the residents and voters will appreciate the opportunity to vote on any substantial changes that would occur. She said the decision making power will be at the school site level and it is the principals and teachers that really need to be empowered in order for any change to occur because they are the ones that will be doing the day to day instruction and decision making. She said no matter what you do at the upper levels if those teachers and principals don't want to do this and they're being forced into it then nothing will change and the atmosphere at the schools will be horrible.

Councilmember Dr. Hernández stated that whatever decision is made he requests that staff send a press release announcing the decision.

Mayor Nury Martinez stated that one of the most disappointing things that happened on Monday is that someone told the Los Angeles Times that the City had taken a position against the bill, which the Council had not done.

Mayor Martinez stated that several meetings had been held to try and figure this out and it is a decision that she did not arrive to on her own. She said she consulted with parents and people that were here on Monday who live in San Fernando and have kids in school and are not the magnet students but are kids that are struggling in the school system and don't have an out, but they still struggle with the fact that they are attending low performing schools. She said those parents also need to be heard and need to be at the table.

She stated that it is really sad that it has come to this point where someone had to draft legislation to this degree in order for us to pay more attention to our children's education. She said if there is not some sort of controversy no one talks about it and that is what the sad state of our education system is, and by not taking a position she thinks San Fernando is doing itself a disservice. She said the Council has heard from other community members who want us to take a position in favor of this legislation, who have come forward with petitions that want change and want to see some reform and who are not paid and we have got to respect the other side because they also need to be heard.

Mayor Martinez said that one of the things she discussed with Mayor Villaraigosa was to make sure that all the cities have a say of who votes in the majority as to who is going to be our designee. She also said it is very important for parents and community to be involved in the parts of the amendments which relate to ratifying the employment of local superintendents and she understands there is a possibility for us to create partnerships to get a ratification.

The above motion was seconded by Mayor Martinez, with direction to staff to prepare a press release announcing the Council's decision. Motion carried with the following vote:

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AYES: Hernández, Martinez, Veres – 3
ABSTAIN: Ruelas - 1
ABSENT: De La Torre - 1

ADJOURNMENT (3:13 P.M.)

Motion by Councilmember Hernández, seconded by Mayor Martinez, to adjourn. The motion carried with the following votes:

AYES: Hernández, Martinez, Ruelas, Veres – 4
ABSENT: De La Torre - 1