

**VENURA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT**  
**7-11 Advisory Committee**  
**December 17, 2019**  
**Minutes**

**Call to Order**

Ventura Unified School District held the first regular meeting of the 7-11 Advisory Committee on December 17, 2019 in the Einstein Room at 255 W. Stanley Avenue, in Ventura, California. Betsy George called the meeting to order at 5:33 p.m.

**Committee Member Introductions / Welcome**

Committee members had the opportunity to introduce themselves and share background, experience, expertise, and why they want to serve on the committee.

Dr. Rice and Betsy George welcomed committee members and thanked members for serving. Dr. Rice shared the District is going through exciting and challenging times--challenges like declining enrollment, aging of facilities, and a tough budget climate. At the same time, the District has a school board and staff that does not want to give in to these challenges in hopes that it will get better. He shared the District is fighting back by creating compelling opportunities for our kids and the community (i.e. restructuring some schools into K-8 programs). A stack of Career Tech facility grants was submitted for state funding to upgrade Career Tech Ed facilities, and a Career Tech Incentive grant for \$1.5M was also submitted. We are also finalizing the Strong Workforce Program grant that will be in the \$1M+ range. The school board is extremely supportive of the philosophy of, "let's get after it and let's compete." The District is opening up choice in ways that it has not done before—opening up schools that have traditionally been closed in the past.

The challenge for this group is to give the Board the benefit of your thinking regarding some District properties. The District has many properties that are underutilized or not utilized at all. Moving forward, as we strategize on how best to raise funds for renovations of aging facilities, we are looking at the potential of floating a school bond next November—one of the only mechanisms the state affords school district's to do massive renovations like what is needed by the district. We all need to be good stewards of fiscal resources and properties in order to be successful. Although none of the recommendations that will be made to the board as a committee are binding, Dr. Rice stated that he has found the board to be extremely open to committee input. The District is transparent and open and trying to be fair and trying to honor the contributions of the community. Dr. Rice welcomed communication by phone or email with him or Dr. Dannenberg, Board Representative, anytime through the process if anybody should feel the need to reach out.

**Roll Call:**

Committee Members Present: Louis Cunningham, Cheri Egbert, Daniel Flores, James Forsythe, Gabriel Hagerty, Christina Montero, Suz Montgomery, Jorge DeLeon, Tanner Shelton

Absent: Stephanie Caldwell, Brad Golden

VUSD Support Staff Present: Terri Allison, Rosi Cortéz, Dr. Jerry Dannenberg, Bill Elsenbaumer, Betsy George, Dr. Roger Rice

**Background on Advisory Committee's Work**

Betsy George shared the committee is governed by public agency guidelines—the Brown Act. Agendas must be posted 72 hours in advance, meetings are open to the public, the public does not engage in conversation during the meeting, but public comment is allowed. All the information provided to the committee is also available to the public. Several members of the committee should not get together to discuss committee business and make decisions. All work and decisions should happen in meetings, in public. The committee is comprised of nine

members and two alternates (Jorge DeLeon and Tanner Shelton). Alternates can fully engage in conversation and ask questions. As decisions are made and voting take place, depending on who has been able to attend meetings all along, a determination will be made from a loading standpoint. The committee may meet 3-4 times, but it will mainly depend on the committee to decide how many meetings are needed.

The committee was provided with a “Roles and Responsibilities” list—the charge of the committee, membership criteria, number of meetings to be held, information to be shared, and duties expectation were discussed. Information is mostly right from Ed Code. Ed Code is the California laws that govern public education. The committee is charged with making recommendations to deem properties surplus, which includes lease or sale. There are many more pages of law that stipulate about 23 steps in the process of deeming properties surplus—making a recommendation to the board, the board accepting the recommendation and deciding to do a resolution declaring the property surplus, the process of selling or leasing, etc. It’s a process that is controlled by the government.

### **Elect Committee Chair and Vice Chair**

The election of 7-11 Advisory Committee Chair and Vice Chair officers is required. James Forsythe nominated Cherie Egbert. Ms. Egbert asked if anybody else was interested. Jorge DeLeon nominated Daniel Flores, not that Ms. Egbert wouldn’t do a good job, but Mr. Flores is in tune with the school district and has board experience. Betsy George asked if there was a second motion to the nominations. Lou Cunningham seconded Mr. DeLeon’s nominations. Tanner Shelton was nominated, but as an alternate cannot be voted into a position. He removed himself from consideration and thanked members for the gesture. Lou Cunningham volunteered to step in as Chair or Vice Chair if nobody else wants to do it. Jorge DeLeon proposed Daniel Flores as Chair and Cherie Egbert as Co-Chair, correcting himself to mean Vice Chair not Co-Chair. They would switch off every other meeting. Suz Montgomery suggested making one Chair and the other Vice Chair—it would be too confusing to have Co-Chairs. Mr. DeLeon meant to nominate Chair and Vice Chair not Co-Chairs. Lou Cunningham understood the nomination was for separate positions as well, not co-chairing so his second motion stands. Motion carried--all in favor to appoint Daniel Flores Chair and Cherie Egbert Vice Chair. Absent: Stephanie Caldwell and Brad Golden

### **Overview of Properties**

The committee received a handout of the properties the Board has requested be reviewed. Ms. George volunteered to email the Ed Code to the committee. Although Ed Code was verbally discussed and a short version was provided, she wants all to have exact expectations of committee. The committee will need to request what types of information will be needed based on the properties listed. A list of all VUSD properties was provided, as well as a list of vacant and leased properties and properties with potential for alternative uses. Maps of Avenue School, the Sudden Estate, the Jewett Estate, Washington School, ATLAS (Saticoy) School, Loma Vista School, Will Rogers School, Anacapa, and the Education Service Center (ESC) were provided in the handout. The District is comprised of approximately 380 acres, a couple million square feet. These are the properties that the committee is being asked to review. The Avenue School closed in the 80s. It is used for some storage, but for the most part is not used at all. The farm plots Jewett and Sudden Estates are both leased and actively farmed. Sudden property is land locked. The Ventura Christian School leased the Washington School property. Acreage listed on maps is total acreage not property to be considered. School sites that were chosen have large play fields that may not be fully utilized. Mr. Flores asked for clarification on whether alternative uses means there’s an option to sell, place portables or something else on property to expand it to a K-8 school. Ms. George confirmed it would not be for school use. Properties deemed surplus will be for property not being used for VUSD operations. Some of the underutilized playgrounds of school sites are not accessible—three sides are surrounded by houses. Anacapa site is a little different. The YMCA has approached the District about two years ago to allow expansion that would encroach on Anacapa property. They have asked to buy or lease some of the field area. The District can’t move forward with this request until the property is deemed surplus. Architectural drawings will be shared at the next meeting. The Education Service Center is the last property to be considered. One wing is occupied by VUSD, the other half of the building is empty for the most part. It is about 100,000 SF and we occupy only 50,000 SF. The Ventura College District leased 25,000 SF until they found their own permanent headquarters. VUSD staff moved in about 15 years ago, and 25,000 has been vacant 10 of 15 years. It hasn’t been a highly desirable option due to an older building and so many other options in the city. Should this 23 acre property be sold to acquire another building? Mission Produce has approached the District to purchase the whole property, but they have a timeline to move out of their

current place, which could exclude them from continuing to be interested in the property. They have submitted a proposal to lease the vacant part of the building. The District is not required to surplus ESC in order to lease to them, but surplus is required in order to lease with option to buy.

### **Questions, Comments and Discussion by Committee Members**

Mr. DeLeon noticed Balboa is not on the list of properties being considered for surplus and asked why it is not since there is a lot of space on the property that could be designated as excess space. Per Mr. DeLeon's perspective, some of the properties designated have no market value to them because of location. Lou Cunningham asked if there has been any discussion about selling part of the ESC property that is not used—the front Stanley parking lot area. Dr. Rice shared the ESC has been under discussion for a long time. Affordable employee housing has come up as an alternative use by carving out a part of the property. The Housing Authority has approached the District on this subject. Stanley traffic patterns have also been a topic of discussion with the City. Gentrification has also been a topic of discussion. Many conversations have taken place regarding the Stanley property. A property on the southern portion of the ESC property is in the process of development for a 78-unit multi-story underground parking development. Suz Montgomery mentioned she has been working with Cal Trans and property owners, including VUSD, on redesigning traffic patterns on Stanley. Ms. Egbert asked for clarification on the ESC boundaries. Dr. Rice marked the ESC property map and passed it around for a clearer picture of the boundary. Mr. Shelton who works in land use in this community, shared that any decision put forward will produce some level of opposition from neighbors and the community. Committee decisions that will have the least impact to the community and what is best for the kids is what decisions need to be based on. Chair Flores suggested creating a rubric or parameters of what the community will accept, what is the student safety impact, principals' input. Dr. Roger confirmed affected property principals were and continue to be consulted. Ms. Egbert shared that Phil Foster Ranger, great grandson of the Fosters, commented that the site could not be used in its current state for a K-8 school due to asbestos. Keeping the architectural design of the Foster House was discussed. Ms. Egbert requested the enrollment size of the Ventura Christian School. She shared her desire to consider the property for park use (City making it a park). In Ms. Egbert's opinion, who lives near and is there almost every day, Loma Vista's whole field is utilized. The pros of green space were discussed. Ms. Egbert feels the ESC property would cause the least harm to the community. Christina Montero shared she feels the Will Rogers field area is being utilized. Mr. Flores commented as a teacher working at Will Rogers that the field area is a very big piece of land and sometimes interaction with the community is not always positive. The back fence area attracts shady characters that create problems for the school site—security is always an issue. Mr. Flores commented he would like to know what the viability of the property is—maybe Mr. DeLeon or Mr. Shelton could assist with this. Mr. Shelton suggested the importance of receiving information from City of Ventura in on land development—a presentation in a future meeting would be very helpful to the committee to assist in making recommendations to the Board of Education.

### **Discuss Information Needed for Next Meeting/Next Steps**

The committee requested the following information for the next meeting:

- Enrollment projections/ 10-years
- School lot sizes (minimum lot sizes)
- Jewett & Sudden lease information
- EDC projections
- City of Ventura Planning presentation
- Requirements Checklist
- ESC property backup plan
- 10-year enrollment history
- Student per acre
- Rubric development

Mr. DeLeon asked if this committee could make recommendations outside of the established properties presented for surplus (i.e. Will Rogers complete property being sold, not just the underutilized fields). Ms. George responded that the District is not considering closing schools at this time. Earlier in the meeting Mr. DeLeon suggested Will Rogers and Loma Vista properties be removed from list due to not much value in only the field portions of the properties. Ms. George confirmed that Mr. DeLeon did not make a motion regarding the two properties—it was more of a consideration to keep in mind.

### **Public Input/Comments**

Mr. Spencer Noren, City of Ventura Parks & Recreation Commissioner attended the meeting and emphasized how important it is to help out the District. He spoke as a community member and resident. He stated the EP Foster

property is very dear to his heart. He mentioned witnessing the testimony of Mr. Gardener and how disappointed he is in how the City and the community have disrespected the Foster family. The Foster family left the land to the District for educational purposes, not to be sold off for development. Secondly, he mentioned leasing more of the Stanley property or possibly selling it is a very reasonable topic of discussion according to what he is hearing around the community. Thirdly, community discussion of the lack of middle schools east of Kimball Road is a concern. Mentioned retaining ATLAS land and creating a K-8 school would be very beneficial to the community and the District.

#### **Future Meeting Schedule**

The next meeting was prescheduled for Tuesday, January 21, 2020, 5:30 pm. Ms. George proposed a third meeting be scheduled for February 18, 2020, 5:30 – 7:30 p.m., and at the January 21st meeting discuss a date for a tour of the District properties between January and February meeting.

**Adjournment** – Lou Cunningham motioned to adjourn and all in favor. Meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.