

MINUTES OF MEETING OF EDUCATION COMMITTEE OF GRASS ROOTS VENICE NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL FOR THURSDAY, JANUARY 26, 2006

On Thursday, January 26, 2006, the **Education Committee** of the **Grass Roots Venice Neighborhood Council** held its inaugural meeting in the community room of the Venice Family Clinic located at 622 Rose Avenue, Venice, California 90291.

A list of attendees will be attached to these minutes.

The Chairperson of the Committee, Naomi Nightingale, opened the meeting with general comments with regard to the committee's aims and purposes and elicited general views from those present on what they felt the proper role and activities of the committee should be.

ROLE OF GRVNC & MISSION OF THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Lauren Gross indicated that she appreciated the fact that the committee might serve as a kind of information source or information clearing house on the subject of parent's rights.

Rick Selan indicated that the committee could serve as a forum for the airing of grievances. Specifically mentioned was the recent problem at Mark Twain and the manner in which the administration dealt with the disturbances that occurred and the citations which were issued to some of the students.

Pam Anderson indicated that the committee could serve as an advocate for children and parents to remedy problems and challenges that occur at local schools. Pam specifically mentioned the need for better teachers, better programs, and better books at Broadway Elementary.

Naomi Nightingale indicated that one role neighborhood councils can play in this area is to represent the issues confronting the community and to advocate for their solution before various government bodies - acting in the role of an advisory group. In addition, the committee can act to reach out to the community - to generate alliances with other groups in the community - including other Neighborhood Councils.

Carol WebDemocias was identified as the Mayor's "point person" on educational issues.

Rick Selan brought up the question of the budget needs of neighborhood councils - Why defining a clear role for neighborhood councils in this area could justify the appropriation of more funds for neighborhood council which could be directed into means and methods to make communities more "liveable".

Naomi Nightingale also indicated that at the meeting the prior Saturday to discuss the Mayor's proposed budget, education was a top item (with transportation being second).

Lauren pointed out that the City currently spends around \$200 Million on various programs related to the delivery of educational services, including after school programs. The Mayor possesses the power to recommend that these funds be redirected into areas such as:

CHE Exam (Which is a priority for Venice).

Noel Weiss indicated that the Education Committee can play a role in the community as a kind of “information clearing house” - a place where members of the community can to get answers to problems and issues relating to how public educational services are being delivered in their community, how similar problems may have been solved in the past, and to help define the needs in the future so that political consensus behind needed reforms and innovations can be developed.

Education Committee Mission Statement

Naomi Nightingale proposed the following “Mission Statement” for consideration by the group:

Mission Statement

“The mission of the GRVNC Education Committee is to initiate, support, promote, and develop educational programs and services that meet the education and training needs of youth, and adults in the Venice community”.

Discussion then ensued about this “mission statement”.

DeDee Audet indicated she was concerned about the reference to “develop” - That the “development” of educational programs was an educator’s function not one which should be the province of a governmental educational committee.

This view was commented on by Rick and Antoinette when they indicated that the committee could weigh in with recommendations on programs or, at a minimum, facilitate the discussion or dissemination of ideas with regard to programs that work or prove effective.

In this regard, Naomi cited her work while at the MTA to develop a community grant for an Educational Program whereby the MTA could sponsor programs at local schools where students could choose to educate themselves in new skills and techniques which would enable them to qualify and eventually work themselves into enhanced and higher skilled job opportunities.

Naomi’s view was that this might serve as a model for programs which the neighborhood council might be able to initiate.

In response, DeDee indicated that as an arm of City government, there are limitations on the acceptance of gifts or what the City can do with gifts once received. There was also a reference to Proposition "O" monies and a proposal GRVNC made for public works monies for one or more council "projects".

Naomi indicated that there might be ways to write into a bid proposal that those companies wishing to contract with the City of Los Angeles to construct public works projects be required to use qualified educated people from the community up to a certain percentage (3% being the bare minimum); and that in connection with such requirements, companies might be open to being more responsive to the educational needs and capabilities of those who reside in the communities where the contractor seeks to construct public works projects.

Another participant then focused on the portion of the mission statement that deals with training the community's citizens and stakeholders and questioned whether there was a way to facilitate or act as a bridge to procure funding from LAUSD in order to incorporate various programs into the Venice Skill Center (at Venice High School).

Naomi felt that this might be another way for the educational committee to be more involved in the needs of the community. Again, Naomi made reference to the MTA program developed to teach and educate kids with regard to the kinds of skills they would need to work with and for the MTA. It was also pointed out that MTA had control over the funds to develop this program (procured from the grant).

Based on the discussion, Naomi then put together a list of activities in which the committee could engage which were reflective of the consensus on the kinds of specific activities in which the committee can involve itself and focus its attention, consistent with the "Mission Statement" noted above:

1. After School Programs
 - (I) Including an evaluation of the effectiveness of the monies Currently spent by the City;
2. California High School Exit Exam Preparation & Skills
 - (I) This includes educating parents on the nature of the test, Why it is important, and what parents can do to help their Kids do the very best they can
 - (II) Of special importance is to educate parents on how to Read and interpret the scores of their children on these tests (including STAR test results);
3. Educational Resource Center - A Clearing-House of Ideas - A forum for Parents and the Community to confront problems and challenges in how Public Educational Services are delivered (both in a general sense and With reference to specific situations which arise). Included would be

Sponsoring forums or workshops in which interested members of the Community could attend and listen to experts or advisers in one or more Areas of interest;

4. A Forum or clearing house where ideas can be exchanged by and between Schools within the Venice Community (where, for example, discussion between elementary, middle, and high schools can be facilitated);
5. Beautification Grants to Schools;
6. Act as a liaison to the community to identify problems, concerns, and challenges; perhaps to the point of establishing a "grievance committee" To mediate or help resolve disputes that arise.

In the end, everyone believed that the Mission Statement, as drafted, was adequate.

Education Committee's Relationship with GRVNC Council Board

Naomi pointed out that the Education Committee is currently an "ad hoc" committee because it is not in the by-laws. This raises a question on whether the Education Committee needs to be a permanent committee or continue as an ad-hoc committee.

Naomi pointed out that the by-laws of GRVNC are currently being debated so it is relevant to discuss whether they should include a reference to their being a permanent Education Committee.

There was further discussion on the pros and cons of being a permanent standing committee (it is permanent) versus ad-hoc (it exists at the "pleasure" of the Board and the Mission Statement could be changed at any time).

The general consensus was that it would be better if the Education Committee was made permanent and that Naomi will request that it be made a standing committee; with the back-up position that if there are problems in pursuing this, that the Mission Statement, as adopted, will be withdrawn so it is not formally rejected by the GRVNC Board. Should such a circumstance arise, even though it would be withdrawn from consideration by the GRVNC Board, the Mission Statement would still continue to operate as the guiding principles for the Education Committee sitting as an "ad hoc" committee.

Future Meetings - Timing

Discussion then went into when the next meeting is to be scheduled and the regularity of the meetings. The group felt that one meeting per month on Thursdays would be the best for now. Because the President's Governance Commission meets on

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Thursdays, Naomi indicated that she would await word on when those meetings were scheduled so that Noel Weiss could attend the Governance Commission meetings and report back to the group on what is transpiring with the Governance Commission.