

Spanish Neighborhood Improvement Team meeting
May 24, 2018
6:30 p.m.
Pentecostals Church
310 Central Avenue
Pittsburg, CA. 94565

Staff: Joe Sbranti, Hector Rojas, Fritz McKinley, Angelica Marin-Sandoval, Celina Palmer, Brian Matthews, Myla Rivers, Dick Abono, Haidi Muro, Toni Baldazo, Lisa Vela, Raquel Curran, Ramona Anderson, Jorge Esparza

Approximate number of Attendees: 63 (49 adults)

INTRODUCTION:

Thank you for having us in your beautiful church. My name is Joe Sbranti, and I am the City Manager. I want to thank all of you for coming. We tried to have this event last year and didn't have a great turn out. I specifically want to thank Pentecostals Church for having us. We are very happy to have so many people here.

The purpose of the meeting is to give you information. We have staff members here to share what we are working on. We have many Spanish speaking employees in our city staff, and we brought just some of them here tonight. We also have some of our English only speakers here also, to answer any questions you have. We want to make sure we're available to give you all the answers. With that I'll highlight one project I've been working on. The grand opening of the BART station located on Railroad Avenue. It is long awaited, and many have paid taxes on it for several years. We are excited that it will have an opening tomorrow.

A little more on BART, tomorrow afternoon they will be running the train for free for people to leave from Pittsburg Center Station at 3:00 p.m. There will be a ceremony at 11:00 a.m. at the Hillcrest Station in Antioch along with rides from there starting at 1:00 p.m.

Hector Rojas: Good evening thank you for allowing us the opportunity to come here today. My name is Hector Rojas, I work in the Department for Planning and Zoning. Many don't know exactly what it is, so I want to explain a little. We look at plans and projects and comment on them to make sure they meet the rules of the municipal code. One project I'm working on, next to your church is the Liberty Subdivision, which will have 57 houses. This project will go to Planning Commission for comments on June 6th. If you want to go to the meeting and/or have anything to say about this project feel free to join us at 6:30. We have many other housing projects going on right now another big one is Stoneman apartments, as well as commercial projects. If you have any questions about any projects I mentioned or other projects you've seen in town feel free to ask me when we are having our question/answer portion of the meeting or after the meeting.

Haidi Muro: Good evening, my name is Haidi Muro I am the Administrative Assistant to the City Manager, I provide him with administrative support by ensuring schedules, filtering phone calls and other office services. If you ever have a question for our City Manager that you would like to address in person you can contact me, and I will help you to setup a meeting with him.

Angelica Marin-Sandoval: My name is Angelica, I work for Environmental Affairs, somethings that I work on are permits and regulations for trash. Environmental Affairs handles projects that deal with recycling and keeping a safe environment. We will be hosting an event called Green Footprint Festival in July; there are flyers on the table behind me.

Lisa Vela: Hello, my name is Lisa Vela I work for the Housing Authority. Section 8 helps people pay for housing if they are low income and qualify for the program. Currently the Section 8 list is closed. We also help veterans find housing. If you need help I have my card so you can call me anytime.

Toni Baldazo: My Name is Toni Baldazo, I work for the Police Department. I am a resident of Pittsburg, I am working on an event called National Night Out that will happen in August. It's a free event at Small World Park. How many people have been to Small World? (about 20) if you haven't been there, we want you to know how great it is! It has rides, BBQ pits, a lot of things for kids, train, carousel, and more. You can come in free August 2nd until 8pm, we will have hotdogs and hamburgers.

Officer Raquel Curran: Good Evening, my name is Raquel Curran, I work for the Police Department, I am currently assigned to work at Rancho Medanos, as a resource officer. We have officers assigned to different schools for students, and staff to use as a resource. If you have questions for the Police Department I'm happy to answer them, my boss Sergeant Mathews is here as well, feel free to ask either one of us any questions that pertain to the Police Department. Myla Rivers is also here tonight. She works for Code Enforcement. They handle complaints of abandoned vehicles, abatement of substandard housing conditions and zoning violations, as well as blight issues. Again, we are here to answer any questions.

Jorge Esparza: Good evening, thank you for opening your doors for us tonight. My name is Jorge Esparza I've worked for the City of Pittsburg in the Public Works Department for years. The Public Works Department is responsible for the maintenance of City streets, streetlights, traffic signals, sewers, storm drains, and water. I am the Supervisor for sewer and storm drain system. If have any problems you can call me. Ramona Anderson is also here tonight, and she handles complaints about City trees and graffiti. If you see graffiti on walls in the City call us, and Ramona and her crew will come out to remove it.

Officer Raquel Curran: My Apologies, one thing I forgot to mention was that we have a program for young kids ages 14-18 years old. It is a two-week academy where they will learn what we do in the Police Department and many other things. Classes will begin in July in the Police Station. There is a flyer with more information on the table behind us.

Joe Sbranti: Ok, we are done with our quick introductions and would like to get to questions you may have for us. Just want to let everyone know that these questions are not restricted to what you just heard; they can be questions you have related to anything within the City.

QUESTION/ANSWER

Q: Will BART issue tickets to users' parking in neighborhoods? I saw signs that said permit parking, are residents supposed to get permits?

Joe Sbranti – If I understand correctly, your question is about BART users taking parking space around your house. What the city has done, not BART is put into place a permit parking program for those residents closest to BART. This Program was implemented in the High School Village neighborhood area because it was adjacent to BART and we thought it would be the area that would be most impacted by BART users. Police Department has staffed parking enforcement officers for compliance of signs that were installed prior to BART opening. We will monitor the area and address any concerns as they are presented. If you are a resident of the High School Village neighborhood and have not received your parking permits, please visit our Community Development counter at City Hall. (Dick Abono gave resident his card)

Q: I live on School Street and high school kids take up parking, will they get permits too?

Haidi Muro: Each residence in the High School Village neighborhood is entitled to 3 permits and 2 guest permits. Permits are only for residents of that neighborhood and will need to show proof of residency and current vehicle registration prior to being issued a permit. If the students do not live in the neighborhood, they will not be issued a permit; therefore can not legally park there between the hours posted on the signs or they will be cited.

Q: Is there a pad replacement in mind for soccer field at City Park? It has not been replaced in over 8 years. I have young kids who use the field and it is dangerous because there is damage. Per warranty shouldn't it be replaced?

Joe Sbranti: The soccer fields are used a lot, and we know there are worn spots in several areas. Our Public Works crew was out patching spots, and we know this is not a complete replacement, but we hope to have a project going forward soon. Hopefully within the next few months.

Follow-up to prior Q: We did notice the spots that were patched, but we pay taxes but don't see any major changes. Per warranty they should be replaced after 8 years.

Joe Sbranti: So, are you saying you want a brand-new park? The warranty doesn't mean replace, it guarantees that the pad will last 8 years. But point taken. Field gets used a lot and we should set aside funds to keep it in good shape and replace it, all we've been able to do is patch it. Unfortunately, we don't have the funds right now, but your comment is correct, it is time to replace it. We are exploring ways to find those funds right now.

Q: The funds received when people pay for use of fields, do they get used for projects/maintenance of the fields or are they be used in elsewhere?

Joe Sbranti: The funds collected for use of the fields must be set aside to help with maintenance, but there are not enough funds to do a replacement. We agree with you, it is time to have the fields replaced and we are working towards that goal. (Fritz gave resident his card)

Q: Is there a program, or someone that can come to our church to address drug prevention for adolescents?

Officer Raquel Curran: There is not necessarily a program in place where someone goes around talking to the youth about drug prevention. As a Resource Officer at Rancho Medanos, I talk to kids and parents about drugs and the internet. If you're interested in having me or another officer come and talk to the youth in your church, I can bring it up to my boss and see if this is something we can do. I repeat, we do it in the schools but if you need us to talk about drug prevention along with other things in English and/or Spanish give me your information and once I talk to my boss. I will contact you to see if I can come to the church. Also, keep in mind that we have the youth citizens academy, and youth activities League in the summer, these programs are triggered towards the youth in the community. Toni can give you more information on these programs and other programs that the Police Department is working on.

Q: My question is about parking directly surrounding the area of the 57 homes that are going to be built. With our parking already being an issue, would street parking be restricted for church members? I ask because we have 1200 members and when church is at its full capacity that might have an impact on homes and residual impact on church.

Joe Sbranti: It's my understanding that the developer has been working with Pentecostals church to try and help in some way with parking concerns, is that correct?

Pastor Brown: Developer spoke with us, and his idea was to put new asphalt and help us stripe, but for us to comply with parking, we would need a section of his land and he is not offering it.

Joe Sbranti: Would number of spaces grow with new striping?

Pastor Brown: No, it's the same amount of parking we hold now, 80-100 stalls total from here to fence.

Joe Sbranti: I want to share my opinion regarding parking, I believe that homeowners of this new development will park in their own property, not in Church parking lot, or even on the street on Central, so it really shouldn't impact your parking at all.

Q: Maybe I should redirect the question. My concern is, if this new development would cause a restriction to come into place where the congregation could not park on street?

Joe Sbranti: No, this new development will not affect your ability to park on street, these are public streets. Besides, houses face away from Central so parking on Central would not be very likely. The plans are available on-line if you wanted to see where the houses will face. As a side note, you may start to see grading taking place this year but no residences until at least next year.

Q: Unclear if the area where railroad tracks are just South of the Church is our property; suddenly we saw fence and railroad tracks. Was that eminent domain or how did it happen?

Joe Sbranti- That was built within their own right away, did not take it from you. They just hadn't used the land until then. We can get you the parcel maps from over the years, so you can see where that land ends and yours begins.

Joe Sbranti: Is there anyone who hasn't asked a question that has one?

Q: My question is like the one just asked, is the land South of the church available for us to buy if it's not being used by railroad company?

Joe Sbranti: In general Railroad Companies never sell property, they have been here since the 1800s and they've held onto the land because they might need it in the future. You can certainly ask, and we can help find their contact information if you want to approach them.

Q: It was my understanding from working in this building when it was a theatre many years ago, that the land where the fence is, South of the Church belonged to the theatre and the owner used to manage it, is that not true?

Joe Sbranti: We can provide a parcel map for the property, but the best way to find out is to have a surveyor come out and survey the property lines for this property. The document we can provide is not official but can help give you an idea of where the property lines are, if you need help reading the map we can help. (Dick Abono gave Pastor his card)

Q: We are a house of God, we need help in this area. We are trying to change people and help all those in the streets who are homeless. They need our help. They might not have blankets, or food and we can only help so many people with limited space. In our hearts, we know we want to do more to help. For God this is a big house, and he would want us to help but we don't have many resources or the space to take people in, what can the City do to help us acquire more land? The Railroad property would be great to help us expand and be able to help all those in the streets who need a place to stay for the night.

Joe Sbranti: It is clear that the people here want to help the homeless community. Unfortunately, we can't buy land for you, but we can give you contact information to help you reach out to the owners. Whoever you want to contact we can help you get contact information.

Q: Does the City have programs for single mothers or working parents to help watch their children afterschool? This community needs help keeping kids away from drugs, gangs, and violence.

Joe Sbranti: There are programs, many ran by the County. We can gather information and bring it to the church if that is something you would like to have. STS Academy has an afterschool program for kids, this is a great opportunity for them to succeed. STS works closely with Pittsburg Police Activity League and they do just what you're asking, they help kids find their way. STS is located at City Park and it is subsidized by the city.

Toni Baldazo: We have flyers for summer activities as well as the recreational guide for 2018 on the table behind us, please feel free to take what you need.

Officer Raquel Curran: People Who Care is another program that is subsidized by the City. It provides educational, vocational and employment training programs to children ages 12 through 21 years old, many at risk of dropping out or entering juvenile justice system. They are located on Railroad Avenue

Q: Does the city have a plan for that area South of the Church?

Joe Sbranti: The property referred to is owned by railroad company, we will find out all about it and provide this information to church for example: shape, size, ownership, and any public records. Nothing on the table for City of Pittsburg to build, as it is not our land.

Q: What is the city doing about the homeless problem in the community, what programs are available? We try to help by providing food if they need food, but can the City tell us what we can do if other assistance is needed?

Lt. Brian Mathews: Thank you for your question, unfortunately the homeless issues we experience in this city are issues happening throughout California. It is complicated and requires a comprehensive approach. Pittsburg Police Department is sensitive to the needs of the homeless but also to the needs of the community. We are leading homeless efforts in 2 big ways, one way is working solely with the homeless. We know many have mental health and substance abuse issues. Therefore, we have an officer that works with those homeless individuals that require mental health assistance. The second way is by getting grants and other types of County provided resources for food and temporary housing. If there are members of the community that want to help by providing information to our homeless community, we have cards with contact information for shelters and outreach for homeless veterans.

Lisa Vela: The Housing Authority also works with veterans. If there is a homeless veteran that needs housing I can help them, and their family find housing.

Q: I am a high school student attending Pittsburg High, and there was a lock down twice in a row because of a gas leak. Should we be concerned for our health?

Joe Sbranti: The shelter in place that happened most recently came from a rail car that was leaking what was thought to be hazardous material. A shutdown of the Parkside neighborhood was done as a precaution. The lockdown was put in place until HAZMAT was able to go on scene and investigate.

Lt. Brian Mathews: With trains coming through with sensitive material, we take situations with potential leaks very seriously. There are a lot of agencies that get involved in the investigation for example: City, County and State levels all work close together; in this particular situation it was not a gas leak, and not airborne.

Joe Sbranti: We take these types of situations very seriously, and those who manage rail cars and gas lines would have to pay severe fines, so they take it very seriously too.

Lt. Brian Mathews: One other thing I would like to emphasize on is anytime something concerns those in the community, always go to the City of Pittsburg or Police Department's social media for active information. The reason I say this is because misinformation goes out and scares people unnecessarily.

Q: I want to piggy back on question about homeless and what resources can be provided to us so we can help. We have a good number of volunteers for a homeless program. Every Monday we go out into the community and feed the homeless. Some brothers of our Church have people in their house for days and weeks but can't kick them out. How do we get them any resources the City has available? If they decide to clean up and straighten out, it's hard to tell them, we don't have resources how can we help. Is there partial funding, or can we get funds allocated through a non-profit to help these people?

Joe Sbranti: The lead person who runs homeless programs for Contra Costa County, Lavonna Martin, lives in Pittsburg and is wonderfully talented. I want her to meet you to tell you directly, so you hear about any resources first hand, I will introduce her to the Pastor. She can tell you what exactly is out there to help the homeless community.

Q: what resources does the City have for seniors?

JS: We have senior discount on water bills, the Senior Center also has legal counsel-ongoing programs like legal aid, will assistance, and tax services. Please contact our Senior Center for more information. 925-252-4890.

Joe Sbranti: This is a good place to take a pause and say that this is the reason why we host these meetings, because it allows us the opportunity to come out and hear directly from you. There are only 260 staff members and 70,000 residents, we can't be everywhere, but we do like to get feedback on areas for improvement. There have been good questions and suggestions tonight. We are not leaving yet but I thought it would be good to reiterate the reason for these meetings and thank you again for allowing us to come and hear from you as well as let us tell you a little bit about us and what we are working on.

Q: I have a group here at the Church for the youth and I would like to work with Police Department, is there a program for the youth to participate in?

Joe Sbranti: The youth can participate in programs we already have in place, to name a couple we have the Youth Citizens Academy, and PAL program. Please take Toni's card, she can provide information on what the Police Department is working on.

Lt. Brian Mathews: we are always looking for new ways to engage youth, if you have an idea we're happy to work with you to see if we can make it reality.

Any more questions? don't be embarrassed, now is the time, this is for you, we came here to hear your ideas, comments, and suggestion to help make the community better.

Q: Does the adult school offer child care?

Joe Sbranti: Education programs are separate from the City, but we can find out and let you know.

Q: I'm a student at LMC and I've noticed they have been installing what appears to be new alarms or something white like a clock with speakers and they haven't said what the new system is, have you guys heard anything?

Joe Sbranti: LMC and all our education programs are separate from City but if you wanted us to call and find out we could do that.

Q: I Live by PHS on Harbor Street in the Stone Harbor Subdivision and at the end of Seward Drive there is an abandoned house, the trees and bushes are over grown, it looks very ugly. Another thing is that it is very dark in that area, is this something that the city can address?

Myla Rivers: I believe the property you are asking about is 1906 Seward Drive. the owner passed away and his son does not live in the area. Code Enforcement has gone in to board up the house to prevent break ins, but we are still trying to have the owner's family address all the issues with this property. Unfortunately, no one lives there, and the City can't go in without permission. Homeowners Association (HOA) has different rules. It is the property owner's responsibility to maintain their property in good condition. We are doing our best to get this problem resolved as soon as possible.

Joe Sbranti: We will communicate with our Public Works crew to determine if the street lights are City maintained, if they are not we will contact the HOA to notify them of the problem.

Q: On the corner of Marsh and W. Leland Rd there have been about 30 accidents in a year, is there something to help at that intersection? I believe the striping needs to be repainted starting at Crestview.

Joe Sbranti: At the Intersection of Burton and W. Leland there will be a traffic signal modification that will go in this summer, it is currently hard to make left turns, so we are taking steps to improve that. We will look at Marsh to see if we can make safety improvements there as well. Signal modification will help improve school traffic.

Lt. Brian Mathews: Traffic team has recommended a lot of enforcement in that area, we are adding 2 traffic officers, so it will be up to 5. More officers patrolling the area in the mornings.

Q: On 10th Street people are smoking marijuana what can the City do?

Officer Raquel Curran: Are they smoking outside or inside their house? I ask because it is legal for adults 18 and over to smoke marijuana in their houses in a private building, therefore we cannot do anything if it is inside private properties, now if they are outside that is different.

Lisa Vela: If the person smoking marijuana lives in a section 8 apartment, please call Housing Authority. They cannot smoke while participating in the section 8 program.

Q: Is the Housing Authority building private property? Because this is where they are smoking marijuana.

Joe Sbranti: The building is privately owned by Domus, they can restrict what happens on the property, but we can't issue citations unless they are breaking the law.

Joe Sbranti: There are so many things we do in the City that we have not talked about, we offer swimming lessons for kids at Buchanan Par. We have brought recreational guides for everyone; these will help keep you informed of all the events happening in the City. We are working on new shopping in town. We are planning to develop parks and make traffic improvements to name a few things. We are doing a lot of things, but we are talking about just what you want to talk about.

Q: Could you talk about some of the projects you just mentioned?

Joe Sbranti: Yes, at the corner of Leland Rd. and San Marco Blvd on the West end of town, we just opened a park named Ray Giacomelli park. Adjacent to that there are 3 acres of land on that corner where we are looking to get a small shopping center with a small grocery store and possibly a sit-down restaurant. Across from that just East of there is a 12-acre piece of land where we just signed documents that require it to be held as commercial space. It would be a full-size grocery store with a gas station and many shops around it like you would see in a full-size shopping center. These projects don't happen overnight, but we are working towards them because we know that area of town is growing fast.

Q: What are the cross streets on that 12-acre piece of land you are talking about?

Joe Sbranti: The cross street for the 12-acre piece of land would be Alves Ranch Rd and W. Leland Rd. We are anticipating a growth of 25,000 residents West of Bailey Rd. When it's built out it could be like its own city. I also want to mention that in our downtown area, there are a lot of private investments, business owners are investing in their businesses to make buildings nicer and help bring business to the downtown area. Another project that I want to tell you about on the North side of town on the corner of Harbor and 3rd Street what used to be the Johns Manville building where they manufactured roofing material. That property and the one immediately to the north were acquired by a charter school called Making Waves. We are working with them for a joint use agreement of their sports fields, so when school is not in session we can use those fields. Making Waves is a K-12, meaning it operates as an elementary, middle, and high school. Lastly, I'll mention Sonic Restaurant. This project is on the corner of Loveridge and California Ave. If you are interested in any of these projects, we have documents submitted by applicants that you can view.

Q: Can the Police Department go to a resident's house and give them a citation for having overgrown weeds, or trash in front of their house?

Myla Rivers: Yes, if you have a complaint about somebody's yard or overgrown weeds call the Code Enforcement department or go online and submit a complaint. If you submit your complaint online, you can attach a picture and address of the location. When we receive complaints, we have 10 working days to respond. When we respond we will send a courtesy

notice that says please address the problem, and we will list what we noted while responding to complaint. If resident does not respond or fix the problem in 10 days from receiving this courtesy notice, then Code Enforcement Department can start issuing citations. The first fine is \$100 then \$200 then \$500 and if the resident does not pay these fines, we will put a lien on the house. Other options would be for the City to go to court and get a warrant to enter the property to fix the problem and then bill the property owner.

Joe Sbranti: If there are no more questions I would like to say that some staff members here today have shirts on that say "stronger through diversity". That was specifically requested to be put on our shirts by our Mayor this year, partially because we are such a diverse city, we have quite a few backgrounds, but more than 40% are from the Hispanic sector. We thank you all for being here tonight this is another example of being stronger through diversity. I see the look on the kids' faces telling us that it's time to wrap this up, what I would like to do for those who have questions, is ask that you come ask us directly and we will be happy to answer your questions face to face.

Q: What percent of Pittsburg officers are Spanish Speakers?

Officer Raquel Curran: I don't know the exact percent, but I would say we have about 8-9 officers that are bilingual, but we are working hard to get a more diverse Police Department; we are looking for Hispanic, African American, Asian, etc. We need you, so apply! This is important for us because it makes us stronger as a community and makes communication easier.

Q: How many Police Officers are in the Department?

Officer Raquel Curran: We have about 75 officers and we're hiring more. Just as a side note the City offers an incentive if you are bilingual. We also have translating services in the station.

Joe Sbranti: Thank you for coming and thanks to Pentecostals for having us. We will stick around to answer any questions, feel free to look at and take event and informational flyers we have on the table. We have a sign in sheet on the table as well, please sign in and provide us with an email address so you can be added to the email notification list.

Meeting ended at 8:05 and staff stayed around to answer individual questions.

Interpreter to work/volunteer for City.