

## Neighborhood Improvement Team Meeting (Spanish)

General Meeting, Willow Cove Elementary School

October 24, 2015, 9:30 a.m.

City Staff Present: Joe Sbranti, Fritz McKinley, Hector Rojas, Richard Abono, Kristen Pollot, Ron Nevels, Celina Palmer, Laura Wright, Lisa Vela, Myla Rivers, Hilario Mata, Haidi Muro, Jorge Esparza, Sharon Jackson, Arturo Fernandez, Melaine Venenciano, Don Buchanan, Alfredo Hurtado

CAC Member: Larry Wirick

Pittsburg Unified School District: Superintendent Dr. Janet Schulze

2 Residents Attended

INTRODUCTION – Hector Rojas, Senior Planner

I live in the City of Pittsburg, and I have two children who go to school in Pittsburg. It is important to me that I work in the City that my children go to school in.

We are glad to have this meeting in Spanish, it is very important for our demographics.

We are going to sit with you today, and have the people from the following departments: Planning, Engineering, Parks & Recreation, Police, Public Works, and they will talk about what they do.

Dick, Senior Civil Engineer, works with the infrastructure, streets, water.

Parks and Recreation handle recreation services.

Police Department, there is not as much crime now as in the past, I don't want to speak much on that subject; however, I would like to listen to Officer Fernandez. There are only 238 city workers, compared to 67,000 citizens in Pittsburg. These neighbors can see what happens in their respective places. We need to break down the barriers and encourage communication between the citizens and the City.

Did you have any questions?

*Member of audience commented that she was nervous with so many City employees there and only 2 community members.*

POLICE DEPARTEMENT - Officer Arturo Fernandez

Officer Fernandez has been with the city for 10 years, currently is a School Resource Officer (SRO) at Pittsburg High School, and has worked all of the schools previously. There are 4 SROs with the City. The SROs are stationed at: Pittsburg High School, Hillview Junior High School, Rancho Medanos Junior High School, and Martin Luther King Jr. Junior High School. The officers go to all the schools, monitor traffic, and talk to the students and faculty members. Although it is difficult to keep the kids off the

street, the officers work hard to go with the students and stop them from drinking and smoking, and other things along those lines. Officer Fernandez mentioned that he works at Pittsburg High School, but if residents would like information about the other schools, he could ask the Officer assigned to the school and then forward the information.

Officer Fernandez also brought up the fact that many Spanish speaking residents may know how to call, but are concerned that City employees mainly speak English. He wanted to promote the message that the employees are there to help and some speak Spanish, and those employees that don't would be able to forward the information to someone who does.

ENGINEERING DIVISION – Alfredo Hurtado?

There are 3 new housing projects in the City which are under construction.

We need your help when you see obstructions or anything in the City. You have to call and City Staff will help to resolve any problems.

**Q:** *Resident heard a rumor about a potential strip of land nearby park (DeAnza Park to be converted to housing).*

**A:** Joe Sbranti, City Manager, addressed her question by stating that different ideas are being considered; however, nothing is planned. There will be some construction occurring at the school (Willow Cove) and they may use the area for staging.

He also mentioned that they have received new equipment for the park that will be installed soon. There will be a new play structure near the trident in DeAnza Park, should be installed within 30 days. The park will not be converted.

**Q:** *Resident brought up that the area of the park near Hanlon has only dirt. The area is more open and having just grass on the site doesn't seem like the area is for playing. She asked if the City has a plan for that area of the park.*

**A:** Mr. Sbranti responded that there is currently no plan for that area. Due to the fact that it is a difficult area for PD to patrol, the City is considering leaving it open space and adding a camera for security; however, the camera idea is not yet funded.  
PD currently has approximately 50 cameras in the City. They are located at the schools and various intersections in the City. Hector Rojas mentioned the room in the Police Department where PD can observe the video from all of the cameras.

Mr. Rojas then introduced Leticia Gomez the new Parent Liaison for Pittsburg Unified School District. There is a Parent Liaison in each school and Ms. Gomez visits each of them. The role of the parent liaison is to help parents learn more about what is happening in the schools and with the students. Within one month, Pittsburg Unified School District is to have one parent liaison in each school and two in each high school.

Mr. Sbranti introduced Community Advisory Commissioner, Larry Wirick. Commissioner Wirick welcomed the community members to the meeting and advised everyone that there is a special

meeting on Wednesday, November 4, 2015 at 7:00 p.m. at the California Theatre. At the meeting they hope to introduce the community to the “gem” (the theatre) in Pittsburg, and invited the community members to attend.

**Q:** *Resident mentioned that she did not know where the California Theatre was located.*

**A:** *It is near John Buckley Square, across from the Mecca. She also said that it is a very nice part of the City and the area provides many programs and services, as well as programs for children.*

#### **HOUSING DIVISION -**

Lisa Vela, Housing Specialist, came up to speak about her role with the City. She introduced Sharon Jackson, Housing Manager, and talked about the Section 8 program. Ms. Vela talked about how she has lived all of her life in Pittsburg, and lives here with her family. She also mentioned some of the events she helps to put on with the City. She is in charge of the Cesar Chavez March, and now the Dia de los Muertos Event at the Plaza at John Buckley Square. Ms. Vela invited the community members to the event, and let them know that the event would be free and that there would be a lot of fun activities for children. She asked that the community members spread the word about the event.

*Resident stated that she has lived in the City of Pittsburg for 35 years, and emphasized how she and her husband love the recreation area downtown. She talked about how she and her husband go on walks in the area, and she believes that it was a magnificent plan.*

**Q:** *Resident stated that she has lived in Pittsburg for 15 years, and when she has passed through downtown to grab a coffee or something she says the area always looks empty, so she leaves. She also stated that instead of going downtown, she and all of her neighbors go to Concord for shopping and activities.*

**A:** Mr. Rojas mentioned that the plan for Pittsburg is to get people to head downtown. To encourage that, the City puts on events at John Buckley Square and in the downtown area.

*Resident wanted to congratulate Pittsburg. She said that in her 35 years here, she has seen a change for the better.*

**Q:** *Another resident mentioned that she heard about good changes, but when she has visited downtown, it's been like a ghost town in that area, so her and her friends and family visit Concord where she says it is a 24/7 lively area.*

**A:** Mr. Rojas stated that there was a broad plan for the area downtown. The City incorporated housing to the area- so those persons would be able to go out day or night, the park area for those families, and the City is constantly trying to bring new businesses into the downtown area, such as CreAsian, a Vietnamese restaurant, which moved in this year.

#### **LANDSCAPING & RECREATION -**

Noe Escobar who has worked in the Recreation Department for 25 years, got up to speak. He acknowledged the community members and agreed with some of their comments. Mr. Escobar reinforced one person's comment, stating that, the City is very different than it was some years

ago. Now there are more than 25 parks in Pittsburg: Buchanan, Stoneman, North Central Park... and although some people may not know about them, the City wants to make people aware so they and their families can visit. He also mentioned that the Recreation Department is located on Harbor, and there they have a lot of pamphlets and information for the community. The department holds a lot of events in the City, such as the Movies in the Park, which is free for everyone. Mr. Escobar encouraged the residents to attend and visit the Senior Center to view the informational pamphlets.

*One resident commented on how pretty she thinks John Buckley Square is.* Mr. Rojas thanked her for her comment, letting the residents know that it is this feedback that helps better the park and make it what it is.

This past year, all of the movies shown at the Movies in the Park were in English; however, this coming year, in summer, the City plans to incorporate some Spanish speaking movies. The residents were made aware that they could see the information for the events on the Senior Center's Facebook page, or they could view the calendar on the City's webpage and register to receive the information electronically.

Staff also promoted the Halloween Events and Small World Park for children to ride the rides and get candy.

**Q:** *Resident mentioned that previously she would feel scared walking in the area near Small World Park; however, now she feels much better and feels safer around Small World Park today.*

**A:** Staff mentioned that the City's crime rate is at an all-time low. The Police Department works hard to patrol the area and keep a look out for drugs and guns. They put together a team to patrol the area, get to know the neighbors, and work together to know what's happening. Because of their efforts, going back to the neighborhood daily or weekly, they were able to rid a lot of crime from the area so it's not as big of a problem as before.

Staff also mentioned that they are glad for the citizen's comments about feeling safe in the park system, and mentioned that while crime is at an all-time low, they are also proud to state that the vandalism rate is down, and with DeAnza Park- now is the time to strike and fix the park up.

**Q:** *What can be done for young adults, ages 18 and up, who get into a bad situations? At that age, parents may no longer be able to control their children; parents can be there to support the person- but cannot make their decisions for them. Resident told a story about a family member, age 22, whose lifestyle is hurting the family. This individual has a serious drug problem with pills. She mentioned that she felt very hurt and saddened about all of the lost potential with this individual. She mentioned that the family would like to put him into a rehabilitation facility to help, but that they are unable to force him to stay.*

**A:** Officer Fernandez touched on the subject, stating that it is difficult for the police to act in that situation. Because the individual is considered an adult at 18, the police cannot force him from the house and into a hospital.

Jorge Esparza, of Public Works, came up and talked about things he does to keep his kids busy and

to keep them out of trouble. His children are in a soccer league in Pittsburg, are involved in the church, get a group together to play basketball, and things like that. Mr. Esparza mentioned a flyer that shows a list of programs in Pittsburg and said he would provide the residents with the information.

Staff also mentioned the Future Build Program, which helps to get people on the right road. Staff provided a flyer for Future Build and talked about how they offer classes and certification programs to help members find jobs. It serves as a pathway to give individuals the skills needed to work.

**Q:** *Resident expressed concern about her sister. In Mexico, when someone was sick, the doctor would visit and give medicine and that would be the end of it. However, once they were here, her sister got sick and it's like a whole different world. Her sister felt differently about the doctors here, and the doctors would say they cannot force her sister to do anything if she does not want help.*

**A:** Officer Fernandez addressed this concern as well stating that unfortunately, it is a different culture here than in Mexico. He also suggested that she work with Officer Sarah Spires who works with mental health, to see if she could provide information for her sister, and that Officer Spires knows a lot of programs that may be helpful to her. Staff let the Citizen know that the important thing for her to recognize is that she is not alone. She could contact the City, and that although the person she talks to may not know exactly how to help, there are a lot of staff members that we can connect to and find someone to help or provide a referral.

**Q:** *Resident stated that she sees a lot of kids depressed these days, who do not want to do anything.*

**A:** Staff said they would provide phone numbers and programs to show who to call for help. *La Clinica de Pittsburg* was suggested.

**Q:** *On Hanlon Street, there are cars that have been parked along the street for months. Because of these parked cars, the trash and dust builds up around them, and make it unable to clean. The dust from this area kicks up and bothers people's eyes. Resident stated that she had called previously but no tickets were issued for those vehicles.*

**A:** Officer Fernandez addressed her concerns. He said that if she were to call and did not see a response, the best thing to do would be to call again. If there is a problem, the City wants to solve it.

At the time of this meeting, PG&E was to be doing work in that area, and they would likely post a notice that the cars must be moved. This same issue was brought up at the NIT meeting just 3 days prior. To resolve this issue, since police are now alerted to the situation, they can send out code enforcement and possibly issue tickets. Staff also stated that they would look into discussions with the traffic committee regarding the feasibility of placing a sign to prohibit parking during street sweeping hours.

Officer Fernandez also suggested establishing a neighborhood watch in the area, where all the neighbors could come together to discuss any problems they face in the area. An officer would also be able to touch base with this group and work together.

**Q:** *Along the street people own many cars. One home on the street houses six cars; meanwhile the houses (often duets or duplexes) only have the parking space for one car. It is believed that some of the neighbors may be running a car dealership from their homes; however, the cars do not have "For Sale" signs on them- but people see the cars and stop to ask about them.*

*Also related to home-based businesses, if someone has a home occupation, are they allowed to park a commercial vehicle at their home? Much of the street has large commercial vehicles parked there, so I do not know where to park my vehicle. Also there is another person on the street that sells tamales outside.*

**A:** Mr. Rojas let the community member know that his department, Planning, enforces the Pittsburg Municipal Code and would be able to write a Notice of Violation should she provide the address of the person with a home occupation.

**Q:** *Resident responded that she didn't want to bother anyone and that she was scared to say anything. She stated that many of the cars have been parked there for weeks and she doesn't know where to park her personal vehicle.*

**A:** Staff also pointed out that there is an area on the City's website where one can submit any concerns or complaints. They provided the residents with flyers for the "GoCity" site, and let her know that if the requests are not responded to in a timely fashion; the requests get forwarded to the City Manager, Joe Sbranti, who will encourage staff to respond more quickly. Another method to address the issue would be to call the police. Officer Fernandez stated that there are currently 3 Code Enforcement Officers on the street that address complaints. Also, when community members do call, there is someone available who speaks Spanish to field the call. Once the complaint is documented, Code Enforcement can go out to address the issue and help solve the problem.

*One resident mentioned a potential traffic issue along Dolphin Drive and Polaris Drive; there are many small children in the area, and cars driving by do not stop and she is concerned that it may lead to an accident. She had previously called police about the area and an officer was sent to the location where he issued many tickets and even her son got a ticket for failing to stop! She was very thankful that the City worked to solve this problem; however, after some time the same pattern started again and drivers are not stopping as they should. She stated that her story was meant to show other residents that if you call, you can get help.*

**Q:** *Cleanliness of the streets again - Resident mentioned that cars that are constantly parked on the street and are not moved when the street cleaner comes.*

**A:** Officer Fernandez mentioned that they can go out, mark the tires, and check the mileage on the car to make sure that it has not been moved. Staff can continue to send notifications, but it is difficult to enforce when complaints/requests are not submitted to check the sites. Staff asked the residents to provide the information for the effected streets, and stated that they would look into the feasibility of putting up a "No Parking" sign for the scheduled street sweeping hours. The Public Works Department also commented that the City contracts to the Delta Diablo Sanitation District (DDSD) for street cleaning. He stated that he would talk to the Assistant Public

Works Director, Hilario Mata, to communicate with DDSD about noticing the neighborhood.

**Q:** *Resident mentioned some street lights that are not working.*

**A:** Staff mentioned that though some street lights are the responsibility of the City, others are the responsibility of PG&E. Either way, residents can contact the City and staff will work to address if it is a City streetlight or a PG&E streetlight. Again staff referenced the “GoCity” site, and let the residents know that they could fill it out in Spanish and it will be forwarded to someone who could respond.

Staff brought up other reasons that the City would like to receive calls from residents: anything involving streets, if there is water leaking somewhere onto the street, excessive trash on the street, and anytime gas is concerned.

Another issue with trash and other things going into the drains is that it can cause clogs and overflows. There are many kitchen towels found and even hazardous items such as light bulbs, and batteries. The hazardous items may seem harmless, but have mercury that is hazardous. For hazardous materials, such as these, staff noted that there is a household hazardous waste collection facility at DDSD near Goodwill/Costco for a free drop off of light bulbs, medicine, paint, used oil and other items.

*Low attendance for this meeting - Resident stated that many members of the Latino Community work on Saturdays and would be unable to attend meetings like this on that day. She suggested that it would be better to schedule a Spanish NIT meeting on a weekday evening to get more people to come out. She also stated that she knows people who have attended other NIT meetings, but that they have all been in English, where there were only a couple of words she could translate. She stated that she was very happy to have a meeting like this in Spanish and she invited everyone she could; however, they all had work.*

**Q:** *Whose is responsibility for the maintenance of sewer lines?*

**A:** Staff responded that when the line is in the street it may be the responsibility of the City, but when it goes to the house, it is the owner’s responsibility. They could also call someone out to the site to check whether that particular line is within the owner’s property or the City’s property. Staff also mentioned that the same goes for water and the sidewalk, once it is within the homeowner’s property line it is the homeowner’s responsibility.

**Q:** *Sidewalks on Canal Street near SR-4 - Resident stated that there is no sidewalk. In addition, there are no street lights and she has seen people with strollers and people in wheelchairs struggling to go down that street. She mentioned that it is not a safe area and she wouldn’t be comfortable walking the area, unless in a group. She also pointed out that there are several homeless encampments in that area.*

**A:** Staff pointed out that Canal Street is a county street and is located in Bay Point. Staff also stated that they would call the county to check if they have persons employed there who speak Spanish in the County’s Planning Department.

Following this, there were no more questions, so staff thanked the community members for attending, and several employees provided their contact information.

Staff also invited the residents to upcoming City Events, such as the Halloween event at Small World Park (free), and Pittsburg Diamonds Baseball Team Events at City Park (\$5-10).

*The community members thanked everyone for answering their questions and taking the time to meet with them. They said that it was such a good meeting for them and that they were pleasantly surprised that so many staff members would be there to help and provide information for just 2 City residents.*