

Community Magnet School Town Hall – June 20, 2002

Meeting was called to order by Tracy Carness. Ground rules were set.

1. 3 minutes to speak
2. Speak from the “I” voice
3. Try to keep comments clear and focused.
4. Try to keep comments personal, not “hearsay”

Pam welcomed the crowd. She went on to mention the urgency of the situation. She then introduced Nina Barsky as one of the founding parents and gave a brief history of Community. Twenty-five years ago Community moved to our current site as a temporary home. We’ve had many promises of improvements. So far our only improvements have been done by our community. The District has not fulfilled any promises. We have had many disappointments. We lost the room at LACES, we didn’t get Osage, Scott, the National Blue Ribbon School Site Visitor told the Board that we were on an inadequate site. Then the Board said we would move to Walgrove. Walgrove was not happy. We were willing to move. We started the process with the District and architects. We worked for two years. Then the district said we didn’t have enough money to build on Walgrove, we would stay at Community. Our budget would buy a library, a cafeteria and air conditioning. Currently, we still do not have an architect for that project. Meanwhile, the Bond work should be starting this summer. Two weeks ago Mitchell Stark, our Project Manager told us that the trenching may get done, but the air conditioning won’t be done and LACES’ gym will be torn down starting in October. He also told us that Bellagio Road was being closed. A charter school is interested in leasing it for a year. Pam and a few parents went up to look for it. They made some phone calls to see if it was actually a possibility for us. We believe it could happen.

Details

- 20 acres of land
- Above Sunset
- 25 classrooms
- Library
- Computer lab
- Nurse’s bungalow
- 3.2 acres of playground

Council members were introduced. They will listen to all of the voices of the community as well as gain input from anyone not in attendance then meet to make a decision on the move, so we are ready to act if the site is offered to us over the summer.

What follows are summaries of the comments made by each speaker, who was given three minutes to make their point.

Sherry Marks – CATCH – We will probably lose some mentors. But the space would be great for CATCH. Hopefully, we could renew our relationship with UCLA. Koreh L.A. might send us some valley mentors. Good opportunity for growth for CATCH and the school. May be a good place to make connections.

Jim House – grades 1 and graduate – The cultural diversity and parent involvement are what make our school special. Our location is perfect for that diversity. People from different ethnic groups and economic status have an opportunity to choose a school near their homes. About 85% of our student body live near our school. This promotes volunteering. Our facilities are substandard, but we need to keep asking the district for more. A move could change our sense of pride and community.

Nina Barsky – Founding Parent, grandparent of a grade 1 – Go for this change. We have to think about children of future times. We need to address concerns about transportation. We will not lose the cultural diversity or volunteers. It gives our children a chance to be near nature. UCLA should be a big draw. The drop-off area is great. We'll figure out something for camp. We'll have the facilities we deserve.

Tony Palermo – grades 3 and 1 – Opposes this move. The classrooms at Bellagio look just like the classrooms here. It was windy and dusty. The cafeteria is a small area with an outdoor lunch area. What are we trading? The auditorium is not large enough for the whole student body. The West View Charter school wants to move in there. It's a middle school that wants to serve the Bel Air Community. People move into this area to come to Community. Who comes to community? See attachment. When our students graduate, who will apply. Westside families already have many good schools to choose from.

Ian Dodd – grades K and 4 – He understands the concerns. The people make a school. We'll have better facilities at the Bellagio site. We can put time and energy into the children. We will move and continue our vitality.

Barrett Sherwood – grades k and 4 – He's worried about District promises. He visited the site and thinks it is comparable to our campus. If we move our population will change. He loves the diversity. This is home. We can make this campus work.

Callan Hinman – grades 2 and pre-k – She lives 2 minutes from Community. She loved the nature at Bellagio. The ethnic diversity of our school won't change. We have concerns that need to be met. If we stay here we will need to deal with the building next door. Wherever we go we will go as a team. Change is scary, but we want the best for the kids. The new site would be worth it. The Board seems enthusiastic about what we were presenting. Land and trees are great!

Carl Mueller – grade 2 – He’s concerned about our leadership. We have already put in a lot of hours fighting LAUSD. He doesn’t believe the buildings will be put up here. He wants us to support the administration at Community. He’s very concerned about the construction at LACES.

Cliff Lee – 3rd grade – Didn’t like the site after the visit. It isn’t enough – it’s a library, an auditorium, and a good place to play. He didn’t like the way things have been presented. It’s too much of a hard sell.

Julie Shannon – grade 2 – Feels the new site is comparable to this. She is afraid the ethnic makeup will change. Do our opinions matter? Will the reps vote for their personal desire or will they vote the way their grade level feels. Can’t we all vote?

Keri Fitzgerald – grade 1 – Loves our ethnic makeup. On the other hand, she would love to have more nature. It’s a long drive. How can we move this culture there? There are negatives and positives. Some good ideas – creative carpooling, hire a bus. We can turn negatives into positives. Negatives are true, but positives are strong. Try to be open.

Elena Winston – grades 5 and K – New site is too far away. How do we get to our kids in an emergency? If we move, we will become a community school for the new community. It’s hard to think of putting a 5 year old on a bus across time. What about childcare? Can camp last until 7:00? What kind of political action can we take to make the district do right by us?

Sally Sotow – There is space for 500 children on the new site. Will we have to grow? Do we really think we could continue after school here? That doesn’t seem feasible.

Rena Jacobs – grade 4 – Don’t expect the Board to do much of anything on this campus. People come from all over L.A. to get to Community. If we moved to Bellagio our kids would have a place to play. We need to do what’s right for children in the future. LACES is going to take over this campus and move us to the valley. This is an opportunity. This is a community of people who care about each other.

Leah Fleishmann – grade 2 – She’s concerned that the diversity will change. She was impressed by the school, but not overwhelmed. It’s not that great. Her biggest concern is for the construction at LACES. She’s kind of sitting on the fence.

Vincent – new parent – He doesn’t trust LAUSD. We have 2 acres here. We’ll have 19 up there. The drive is a killer. It’s nice to have nature and room to run. Construction at LACES will be hard.

Phoebe Neil – grade 2 – She didn’t want to move to Walgrove. She hasn’t seen one improvement done by the district here. She want to move to Bellagio. She’s especially worried about the construction. She’s concerned about the teachers and their working conditions here. She thinks we can work things out with busing and carpooling. She sees the commute as the only negative. The new campus has a lot of potential.

Dana Pehrson – grade K – She lives very close to Community, but she will move to Bellagio in a heartbeat. She is very glad to see so many people here tonight. We can fix up the new site.

Charles Dale – grades k and 2 – If you care enough to volunteer now, why not drive up to Bel Air and work up there. The nature at Bellagio is great. It will encourage creativity.

Cathy Turkel – President of Friends of LACES – Commutes to Brentwood Science Magnet with her elementary student. Loves the diversity and feeling of community there. A magnet school means that you are willing to go outside of your neighborhood. Community is LACES #1 feeder school. She will look forward to having us there soon. She is happy construction going on at LACES. There will be a lot of construction. And it will be awful.

Cheryl Harris– grade 2 – The geographical difference could make a difference in our ethnic makeup. Will it? If we were at Osage would she have applied for our school? Yes! An ideal situation would have been for us to find a site near our present location. But that can not happen. LACES needs to grow. When our kids are there, we will want a good site for them. What will our decision process be? If we move what can we do to keep our population?

Phil Hollis – coordinator – His commute will be shorter! Phil has been here through many changes. It has been very difficult sharing facilities with LACES. We are a magnet school. You got in here because of your points. Impacted schools give you more points. Now we have 29 buses. It's a nightmare. We would have 9 buses at the Bellagio site. We share the buses with LACES – these are huge routes. Our population will stay the same. We must meet the magnet formula.

Sandra Ohno – entering k student – Will we still have all day K? Yes. Will aftercare be extended until 7:00? She is very impressed with the parent participation. The district is looking at more budget cuts. The district does not keep promises.

Pam Marton – principal – grade 2 – We are a magnet school. We have no resident population. We are a wonderful school because of our families. Our waiting list is made up of children with points depending on how impacted their schools are. Children from schools in Bel Air have 0 points. Our population should not change. Bellagio is an old school, but it has so much space! She then shared a map of the construction plans here. Trenching should start in August. It won't be done by September. We will lose a great deal of our yard with the new construction. Our multipurpose room will hold 100 people. Bellagio is a site we could move into.

Tony Sherin – He is concerned about the children who are coming from farther away. Their bus rides will be even worse. He has questions about impacted schools. The new commute would be awful. It takes 1 hour round trip.

Michael Sands – grade 1 – He volunteers at school. It would be a struggle to drive to Bellagio. There is a window of opportunity to move to this new facility. He fears the district will eventually boot us out of here. He's concerned about the construction at LACES. He's glad to see so many parents here. This should be about the kids education. A group of parents is going to see Marlene Canter's aide tomorrow at 10:00 a.m.

Trish Taylor– entering K student – She was surprised to learn of our relationship with LACES and the coming construction. She likes the new site. She does not feel that we should change the voting process at this time of crisis. She is looking to the leaders at the school to make a good decision. Time should not be the issue here.

Gloria Gwynne – 3rd grade - The school was founded to make a community. Who will be going to the new school? This site is so convenient for so many ethnic communities.

Terri Benton – 4th grade – She lives pretty far from our present campus. LAUSD has lied to us for years. If they will give us this new campus, how can we say no? It's a "bird in the hand". No other campus exists for us. We will be on the road a lot, but at least we will have a campus.

Emily Stuver – teacher – She loves our diverse student body. The parents and children are incredible here. The teachers are also pretty good. She lives in the valley, but wouldn't consider working elsewhere. Teachers here don't complain. Actually, it's very noisy to teach on this campus. LACES and our playground are so close to the classrooms. Emily hopes that our latino community might grow if we move west. The new site would give us so much more room.

Hilda Husband – grade 3 – She lives close to our present campus. She was considering keeping her daughter home for elementary school. There is a latino community near our present campus. They have applied for our school, they haven't gotten in. She is involved at the school now, if we move that will be difficult. If we get together we can fight for a space close by.

Mi – (two Korean moms)– They like the space at the new campus, but it's too far to drive. What if there is an emergency? They worry about their children being so far away. The drive is just too long.