

Paramount Unified School District



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BOARD OF EDUCATION

CARMEN GOMEZ
President
YESENIA CUARENTA
Vice President
SONIA DE LEON
Member
LINDA GARCIA
Member
VIVIAN HANSEN
Member
RUTH PÉREZ
District Superintendent

STUDY SESSION MEETING OF BOARD OF EDUCATION

MINUTES August 26, 2019

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m. by President Carmen Gomez in the Boardroom at the District Office, 15110 California Avenue, Paramount, California.

Roll Call	Carmen Gomez Yesenia Cuarenta Sonia De Leon	Linda Garcia-ill Vivian Hansen
Administrators Present	Ruth Pérez, Superintendent Ruben Frutos, Assistant Superintendent-Business Services Myrna Morales, Assistant Superintendent-Human Resources Ryan Smith, Assistant Superintendent-Secondary Educational Services Debbie Stark, Assistant Superintendent-Educational Services Renee Jeffrey, Director-K-5 Innovative Program	
Pledge of Allegiance	Dr. Debbie Stark, Assistant Superintendent-Educational Services	
Approve Study Session Meeting Agenda August 26, 2019 1.275	Board Member De Leon moved, Vice President Cuarenta seconded and the motion carried 4-0 to approve the agenda of the Study Session Meeting of August 26, 2019. Ayes: 4 – Board member Cuarenta, De Leon, Gomez, Hansen Absent: 1 – Board member Garcia	

HEARING SECTION

During the public hearing section the following community members addressed the Board:

Speaker Reno Redula commented that once again Paramount residents led by parents, guardians are gathered here before you school Board members. Based on it to always demand for an event about term limits that must be initiated by you in the spirit of the Constitutional Rights Freedom of choice and therefore on your shoes. Now hope it is not motivated by greed. Now on your opposite, Paramount residents have no choice but to bring this very significant issue to other probable significant issue to a measure or ballot to voters to amend. The proof of the matter is that California Constitution article sixteen authorizes the state is not limited to school districts. To provide for manner in which the Times at which and the terms where, which the members of Board shall be elected for their

qualifications, compensations and removal. In this case, he agrees with this. In the spirit of democracy without this very important significant election, term limits on school Board members, the very sad thing is that Paramount residents can never expect a plan for an election, for an open seat. But a previous staff member knows this is a disadvantage to the new comers who are suited and well experienced for the job and are being discouraged to serve allowing for a status quo for decades without significant change to the school district in view of residents demand for term limits. You Board members, they'll take this for granted and honesty, transparency, professionalism must be adhered to always. The voice of the Paramount residents been heard and respected. He thanked the Board.

Speaker Sandra Dekay thanked the Board for the opportunity to address the Board at the meeting. She commented that she too is concerned about term limits for not only our city council but for the members of the school Board. She has lived in Paramount for more than 50 years. She has seen members of this school Board who have been in place for decades over the years, just look at Esther Caldwell, Richard Caldwell before they went over to the city council and others. Those are just a few. She could do more, but said she is not going to go into that. We citizens are tired of the same thing. We call to address our complaints at our schools, the safety of our children, all of these things. These are issues that are very dear and deeply rooted in our family, but we get absolutely nothing. Then we get lip service, oriented threats, which is wrong, but the same thing happens over and over and over again. Nobody listens to our concerns. So our children continue to be sickened. Our schools can still go down and their grades go down and nothing is taken care of. We can't even address other issues that are just really needed in our schools. The lack of teachers, teachers shouldn't be having to pay for setting up their classes and then spend hundreds of dollars. Why did we have to put up with this. These are issues that have been around for decades, upon decades, upon decades. It's time that we get some fresh blood, it's time that we did. People who care more for our children than as far as their pocketbook. And frankly, it's time for term limits. The president only gets two terms. The governor only gets two terms. Why then you members of this Board and members of our city council get decades of serving, getting the profit from it, but we as citizens get nothing. It's time for a change. She thanked the Board.

Speaker Gerald Cerda commented on the chronic absenteeism from a Board member and also from students which needs to be addressed. He added that on term limits, had this been in place many years ago Paramount Unified School District would not be in this position and Paramount Unified School District needs to reach its potential. He would like to get responses on what has been the water testing outcome. The results are mandated. He wants to know what the District has done to improve it water system and what has it done to provide the basic water necessities to students. We know he had the filtration stations some of them were exposed to the elements. It's, useless when we have element issues with the air and I know about responses that have been sent out and school administrators are saying that it does not pertain to the school because it is outside the perimeter. Who's making these decisions. Yes, It's outside, it's in the air. How can you control air from boundaries. You have to ask yourself which administrator would say something like that and send it up to the California Department of Education as evidence, so he would like to know what's being done to provide the basic necessity of

water. He still has family members in the school district where they're being asked to bring cases of water. Again, why are you asked to bring cases of water when, correct me if I'm wrong, the Paramount Unified School District has a budget of \$165 million. You have administrators getting six figures and you're asking the students to bring water to drink for basic necessity when they are in activities in the public school. He would like answers to his questions. He thanked the Board.

Speaker Andres Rivera asked if anyone remembers former council school Board Member Tony Peña. He grew up in Paramount and there used to be a lot of gang bangers out there. They used to tag on the walls and I used to be really scared to go play outside and my skateboard or my bike, you know, and stuff like that, and then here comes Tony Peña and we elected them. He was the right man at the right time. And now he thinks we're all happy that there's a lot of things implemented, proactive approaches to reducing gang violence in Paramount. And that's a big part thanks to him. Like he said, he was the right man at the right time and we have to take things like that into consideration so we could implement these term limits and we could get the right people at the right time. Another good example is obviously now there's been a lot of awareness in hexavalent chromium six and what did we do when there was the seat available. We voted and we voted for, he believes once again the right person that's actively doing something and that is Mrs. Sonia De Leon and he would like to give her a round of applause for her. Just to end with something to kind of help everyone here, not just anybody in particular, he wanted to say something. He has two things. One, he took a picture of it today because he works at a school district and this is the philosophy of their school. He added that he sorry, that was the wrong one, but this is what he wanted to end with anyways. This is words from Pablo Picasso. "I am always doing that which I cannot do in order that I may learn to do it." He added that he will end with that, give you guys time, let that sink in.

Speaker Rodolfo Barragan shared that he just wants to reflect and thank the Board for he thinks they gave us a great lesson and how government like kind of functions, which he thinks that a lot of people are just not aware of. You know, last time you were here you know you talked about, you know, there's the minutes and then there's the agenda. You know, I think clearly we want to be encouraging of more people participating in the governmental process. So he thinks just like knowing what minutes are and talking about, what is the best way to convey the minutes and of course, you talked in depth about how, you voted three of you voted for having minutes that essentially lists everything that the public and you yourself say, and he think that's really great that you came to that decision to really talk about that transparency because of course, you know, in many years from now, no one's really going to be looking at these youtube videos, but they may review the transcripts and it's just so much easier clearly, that, you know, you can see everything. And so he thanks them for letting the public know about like everything that was going on there. And he also really appreciated how there was this discussion that he had never just, he never had thought about that content, and so if you played a great educational role, and he just wanted to say thank you for that and if they know this distinction, but you know, like what is the Board, what is the superintendent, what are the voters like, what is everyone's role in the system of government. And he guesses what we learned, he didn't know, he doesn't think a lot of regular people know, of course there's the voters,

there's the people and the people then decide through elections how they're going, what policies they would like, it's by how will they vote for certain people that advocate for certain positions and of course in the last election we saw that, all of the new board members who pushed for things like term limits, who pushed for the environment, making sure that we have a healthy environment, those candidates then became Board members. So it's very clear, like there was a democratic voting process and then the people decided to three Board Members up there and now the three Board Members are representing the community in that way. So he thinks that's really great. And then how they talked about how they are the Board Members, we elect them and then, you know, the executive cabinet superintendent kind of like implements their decisions. So he thinks that was really educational. He thanked the Board.

INFORMATION ITEMS

General Services

Term Limits

Mr. Adam Probolsky, presented the Board with the results on the voter survey conducted by his Research firm on Board Member term limits.

Mr. Probolsky shared results on questions asked of 300 likely November 2020 voters in Paramount Unified School District. Interviews were conducted with respondents on both landlines and mobile phones and were offered in English and Spanish as well as on-line.

Mr. Probolsky shared the following information from the survey results:

- 13% cite lack of funding as a top issue facing the school district
- 68% would vote yes in favor of term limits
- 56% become more likely to vote yes knowing that an election to decide whether to impose term limits would cost the District as much as \$60,000
- 60% become more likely to vote yes knowing that if a term limit measure passes, current members would continue and still be eligible for re-election
- 52% agree that the school district loses experience and knowledge Board members acquire when they are forced to leave due to term limits
- 67% disagree it is near impossible for non-incumbent candidates to get elected to the Board of Education without term limits
- 88% agree term limits will bring fresh perspectives and new ideas to local schools
- 49.7% agree with statement saying that Board Members are just there to collect a paycheck funded by taxpayers
- 43% said Board Members should serve two terms if term limits are imposed on Board of Education members
- 78.3% would vote for term limits for Board of Education Members if the election were held today

Mr. Probolsky shared the following top reasons voters would support term limits:

- Need term limits to prevent abuse their power – 32.3%
- It will bring new ideas/perspective – 30.2%
- We need change, need new different people in the office – 20.9%
- Better district management doing their job serving their community

- 18.3%
- It helps to have more focus on problems that need to be fixed – 11.9%
- Give other people a chance – 7.7%
- To avoid corruption to make sure they don't get rich off our money – 6.4%
- Would like to know more about it – 3.4%
- General positive mentions – 3%
- Other – 4.7%
- Don't know/preferred not to answer – 3.8%

Mr. Probolsky shared the following top reasons voters would oppose term limits:

- Shouldn't have term limits if they are doing a great job – 30.6%
- Need more information – 12.2%
- Would lose the inherent knowledge experience – 12.2%
- It's waste of money – 10.2%
- Other – 18.4%
- None/nothing – 6.1%
- Don't know – 12.2%

Lastly, of the likely voters, 59.7% do not have children under 18 living in their household.

Board Member De Leon commented that last time Mr. Probolsky came, he answered all her questions and she knows the community was in favor of term limits.

Board Member Hansen commented that it was very comprehensive and once she had an opportunity to read the entire report, she felt like all of her questions were answered and appreciated that and is comfortable. She thanked Mr. Probolsky.

President Gomez commented that it is great research that he did and thanked Mr. Probolsky.

President Gomez added that with that, a vote would be taken to make a determination on putting term limits on the 2020 ballot next month. If it passes next month, this September, we will bring it to say what the description of what we want to add to the ballot on how many years or what we want to add to the description of that election. President Gomez asked for a vote.

Board Member Hansen commented that she believed the night's meeting was a Study Session. President Gomez replied that no, at the last meeting it was determined that today after Mr. Probolsky would come, they would ask to place it on the ballot if it passes, in September they would come back with a description and asked the Superintendent if she was correct.

Superintendent Pérez replied that her remembrance was that a study session was asked for so that Mr. Probolsky could come and answer any questions. Board Member Hansen added that there's nothing on there about an action item.

Superintendent Pérez added that she does not remember if it was said that it would be brought in September to whether or not to take a vote, put it on ballot or if it was a night that a vote was going to be taken. We can go back to the archives and look at that. She added that what she remembered is in September it would be brought back although it doesn't preclude the Board from taking a vote, but that was her recollection.

President Gomez asked if any other Board Member had a recollection/ Board Member De Leon commented that she remembers that it was stated, first that one Board Member wanted just to meet with Mr. Probolsky and then there was another Board Member and then you intervened and said, well, let's just have a study sessions so that way we're all together, we could ask the questions if that needs to be and then we could take a vote.

President Gomez commented that since Board Member Garcia is not in attendance but can see the meeting online, a vote will be taken in September with the description if it passes in September, that same night the Board will come up with a description. So meanwhile she asked the Board to think about if it does pass, think about what they would like on the election ballot. Two years, three year term, a two years, not come back anymore. Two years, take a term off and come back or any other description they would like to see on the election ballot if it passes.

Superintendent Pérez commented that it would be shared with the attorney and they can look at ballot language to make sure that the language is correct.

President Gomez asked if the attorney could provide the Board with it on the Wednesday before, just like they get the agenda and that way they will be prepared and September make both, the putting in place, placing on the ballot and if it passes we could just go forward with whatever description we want instead of waiting another month.

President Gomez commented that for the record, we will come back in September and take the vote to place term limits on the ballot. If it passes, a description will be made that same night, that way we go forward to something else.

An audience member asked who votes. President Gomez commented that it's the five Board Members who represent the community.

The audience member asked what if two voted in favor and three voted against then it doesn't pass and somebody on the Board wants to keep their foot in the door. President Gomez responded that what can be said is that the Board all have their own vote and whatever the majority of the vote is, that's what it is. No matter if we go against it or for it, it's in the books, the majority. That is what is always said on the board, it's a team. We could all get upset if it doesn't pass, but whatever the majority chooses, that's what we have to go by sir. That is our democracy

President Gomez added that if there is a tie, two to two vote, we would have to bring it back. If it does not pass, it just does not pass and we cannot do anything for 2020. It doesn't say we cannot bring it up in future,

but for the 2020, whatever the outcome is in September, that's the outcome. She knows the residents are hoping, because that's what the research shows. The residents are hoping. But we cannot guarantee until we take a vote. She knows that all residents have seen this online, have come in person and what she is saying is that it's the majority and not just for term limits, it's all issues. When the Board takes a vote, is the majority that wins no matter if a resident gets upset, no matter even after the vote, if I have my neighbor come and tell me Carmen, sorry the majority spoke and unfortunately that's the way our democracy works.

ADJOURNMENT

Board Member Hansen moved, Board Member De Leon seconded, and the motion carried 4-0 to adjourn the Study Session meeting of the Board of Education held on August 26, 2019 at 6:12 p.m.

Ayes: 4 – Board Members De Leon, Hansen, Vice President Cuarenta,
President Gomez

Absent: 1 – Board Member Garcia

Ruth Pérez, Secretary
To the Board of Education

President

Vice President/Clerk