

# EL CERRITO CITY COUNCIL

## MINUTES

**SPECIAL JOINT EL CERRITO CITY COUNCIL – WEST CONTRA COSTA UNIFIED  
SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD MEETING**  
Monday, December 14, 2009 – 7:00 p.m.  
City Council Chambers

**Meeting Location**  
El Cerrito City Hall – City Council Chambers  
10890 San Pablo Avenue, El Cerrito

Council Members	Board Members
Janet Abelson	Madeline Kronenberg
Ann Cheng	Antonio Medrano
Greg Lyman	Audrey Miles
William C. Jones, III	Charles T. Ramsey
Sandi Potter	Tony Thurmond

### ROLL CALL

**PRESENT:** Councilmembers Cheng, Lyman, Jones, Potter and Mayor Abelson.  
West Contra Costa Unified School Board Members Medrano, Miles, Ramsey,  
Thurmond and President Kronenberg.

**ABSENT:** None

**7:00 p.m. CONVENE SPECIAL JOINT CITY COUNCIL – WEST CONTRA COSTA UNIFIED  
SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD MEETING**

Mayor Abelson convened the Special Joint City Council/West Contra Costa Unified School District Board meeting at 7:06 p.m.

1. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG** was led by Mayor Abelson.
2. **STUDY SESSION RELATED TO THE TEMPORARY RELOCATION OF THE PORTOLA MIDDLE SCHOOL AND ASSOCIATED STUDENT SAFETY ISSUES**
  - a. **Historical context of the need for the Portola Middle School Relocation (WCCUSD)** – presented by Bill Savidge, WCCUSD Engineering Officer.
  - b. **Current status of the middle school relocation (WCCUSD)** – presentation by Bruce Harter, Ph.d, Superintendent, West Contra Costa Unified School District Board.
  - c. **Summary of City issues associated with the relocation (City)** – presentation by Karen Pinkos, Assistant City Manager.

**d. Update on campus safety issues and concerns (ECPD)** – presentation by Officer Brian Elder, Portola School Resource Officer; Officer Edwin Jacala and Officer Lauren Caputo, El Cerrito High School Resource Officers; Commander Michael Regan; and Police Chief Scott Kirkland.

**e. Public Comment:** 16 speakers.

Al Miller, El Cerrito, asked the School Board to undertake a thorough discussion and investigation of all safety issues prior to making a decision.

Robert Studdiford, El Cerrito, stated that the community would like to own the school, expressed concern for safety issues and said it is time to finish the process so the community can heal and go forward.

Adrian Studdiford, El Cerrito, emphasized the need for new play fields and said that there is no room for a portable campus at El Cerrito High School.

Sharon Johnson, El Cerrito, reported that she could hear the El Cerrito High School PA system in her living room and expressed safety issues. Ms. Johnson also expressed concerns with mixing the two school populations and said that she supports the staff recommendation as the least desirable option.

Allen Meacham, Kensington, asked the School Board to consider kids enrolled in shop classes and science labs and questioned whether there would be library and cafeteria services suitable for middle school kids. Mr. Meacham offered the Board some additional school configuration options for consideration

Lisa Bolton, El Cerrito, expressed concerns with the current conditions at the Portola site and urged the Board to make a decision as soon as possible to remove children from the Portola site.

Camille Mulligan, El Cerrito, stated that she believes that the lower Portola pad is the only option and that she would like to see the kids out of the building.

Nancy Cook, El Cerrito, expressed her concerns with mixing the two populations, particularly peer pressure, possible gang involvement, drug and alcohol use and after-school loitering, parking and the seismic safety of portable buildings. Ms. Cook stated her opposition to the move to El Cerrito High School.

Linda Takimoto, El Cerrito, expressed concerns with the physical and emotional safety of the kids and stated that the middle school age group is the most difficult group to teach as they experience many distractions. She is concerned that the kids will not feel safe and be so distracted that it will affect their ability to learn. *The best option is to stay out of El Cerrito High.*

Michele Jawad, El Cerrito. Ms. Jawad stated that moving kids to ECHS is not a good choice and expressed the need for everyone to work together and asked the School Board to make a decision so that other issues can be addressed such as violence in schools.

Lynn Chung, El Cerrito, stated that she agrees with concerns regarding traffic congestion issues. The portables at the Portola Campus were meant to be

temporary and are in need of repair. Ms. Chung expressed concerns with the emotional and social health of the kids and said that mixing 12 year olds and 18 year olds is a bad idea.

Joanna Pace, El Cerrito, Portola PTSA, stated that all Portola parents are concerned about safety and reiterated how much parents value the school community's relationship with the City of El Cerrito. Ms. Pace asked the School Board to make a decision soon and stated the need for a developmentally appropriate school for middle school kids to be built in the City of El Cerrito.

Jim Wright, El Cerrito, stated that there is no place for nimbyism in selection of a school site, said that locating a middle school next to a high school is a foolish decision and urged the School Board to make a decision that is right for the entire east bay community.

Charles Cowens, Kensington, asked for the fiscal difference between placing middle school kids on the lower Portola pad versus relocating them to El Cerrito High School.

Robert Brower, El Sobrante, provided comments to the City regarding the possibility of the City of El Cerrito bringing a lawsuit against the School District for placing middle school kids at El Cerrito High School and presented his analysis of CEQA issues.

Hallie Friedman, expressed concern with traffic issues and congestion at the High School, particularly with relocation of middle school there. Ms. Friedman also expressed her concerns with the impact on the playfield and gym.

Martyn Adair, El Cerrito, said his daughter does not feel safe at Portola School and is not challenged academically and reported that his family will be moving out of the area.

**f. Comments and Questions from the City Council/School Board**


**Action:** Presentations heard and discussion held.


**SUPPLEMENTAL REPORTS AND COMMUNICATIONS**

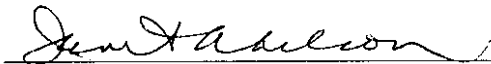
1. Portola Temporary Relocation Options Timelines – *Submitted by Dr. Harter.*
2. Portola Middle School: Background to Relocation Powerpoint Presentation – *Submitted by Dr. Harter.*
3. ECHS – *Cristian Barnell*
4. Portola Middle School Relocation – *Elizabeth Thorsnes*
5. Portola School Relocation – *Martin Snider*
6. Safety Issues at Portola Middle School – *Robin Harrison*
7. December 9 School Board Comment – *Tom Panas*

8. CEQA Comments – *Robert Brower*
9. City Powerpoint Presentation – *Karen Pinkos, Assistant City Manager*
3. **ADJOURNED JOINT MEETING** at 10:27 p.m. in memory of: 1) Fred Kucera, a long time resident of El Cerrito, who was a friend of youth, involved in youth soccer for 25 years, and a model of service to our community; and 2) Roberto Piantanida, who lived in El Cerrito from 1944 to 2003 and was part of a dynasty of the El Cerrito community. He was very involved in a number of community activities.

This is to certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of the minutes of the Special Joint El Cerrito City Council and West Contra Costa Unified School District Board of Education meeting of December 14, 2009 as approved by the El Cerrito City Council.



  
Cheryl Morse, City Clerk

  
Janet Abelson, Mayor