

Gang & Youth Violence Commission Meeting in Napa 11/14/12

[Minutes prepared by Kerri Thompson]

ATTENDEES

Vanessa Luna Shannon	Eric Dreikosen
Charles Rose	Alicia Jaramillo
Jean Donaldson	Ivan Chaidez
Richard Melton	Alfredo Pedroza
Mary Butler	Patrick Sweeney
Terry Longoria for Barbara Nemko	Melanie Fae Garrett
Brad Wagenknecht	Wesley Simpson
Amanda Bevins	David Rodriguez

ABSENT

Jackie Rubin Susan Jones John Robertson Cindy Coffey Rich Hall
Karen Slusser Peter Mott Delaney Creswell Gary Lieberstein Caterina Sanchez

I. CALL TO ORDER – PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE/ROLL CALL

II. WELCOME COMMENTS – ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL EDDIE GONZALEZ, MCPHERSON SCHOOL

Gang prevention in this district, and the nation, is a very important issue. He is new here and originally from Sacramento. Our students are the “pride and promise of the future.” It’s important to listen to the students and what they have to say. He conducted some research recently through the United Way and found that children have three worlds to negotiate -1) family 2) school and 3) friends and peers. It is important to give children options as alternatives to gang affiliation.

III. PUBLIC COMMENT

Speaker #1(Alicia Jaramillo translated) Elena Rosa is the parent of teenage boy who is a junior at Napa High School. Although it is stated that we are here to help our students and prevent gangs, I don’t see how this is possible. The schools work in together with Juvenile probation and this has affected her son in a negative way. Her son has ADHD and when he was at public school he didn’t get the help that I think he needed. At Harvest school, he was treated like he was a delinquent. Under duress, she signed a letter which amounted to a voluntary transfer of her son to a county school. If she didn’t sign the letter, she and her son were going to be reported to the Superintendent of schools. This school is very restrictive and has zero tolerance for any behaviors they find unacceptable. Some of the students in this school have been diagnosed and other students are undiagnosed. She and her son are frustrated with his situation as it stands. She does not see a lot of Latino parents in the audience tonight and she wonders why this is. Many of the students in her son’s school are not referred by probation. They are in and out of Juvenile Hall. On all suspensions students are taken to the hall not sent home. They get suspended and taken to Juvenile hall for unknown reasons. Her son has been in Juvenile Hall three times. One time, he was asked to move from his desk. He didn’t want to do this and was sent to the hall. While at the hall, her son was being recorded. Someone overheard him saying that he wanted to get some alcohol and reported this. He was at the hall for several days and I found this to be unjust. When she found out,

she confronted probation and asked for proof that her son said this. She asked for the legal justification that supported the actions taken against her son. Were these actions justifiable and legal? She was not provided with any statutes that she requested. She also wrote a letter requesting this information. All of the children need help, but they need help differently. Not all respond to the same methods. She believes that there needs to be more creative outlets and they need activities to entertain them after school. She doesn't want this meeting to be for show but wants actions beyond the meeting that demonstrate that this community cares about all kids with all types of issues. Some activities in this community are not designed to accommodate students and families who are on limited incomes. For example, the Napa Opera House is a wonderful place but the ticket prices for events are so costly.

Speaker #2 Debbie Altar-Starr – She is the mother of a son who was on independent study for one year. He is an advanced student at this point. He was one of several students who were treated like truants. He's a bright student but didn't understand how the program worked and was confused. He can be a little "oppositional" like many kids at his age. The people in charge of the program sat him down and told him that he was being kicked out of the program. He is not a bad kid but he was testing the system a little. There are lots of great teachers but there is a tendency to label kids and this is not productive or helpful. Her son is a fluent Spanish speaker and participates in a free program through Vintage High School. She wants programs like this to get the support they need. A concerted effort should be made so that students from all walks of life feel comfortable participating in positive activities such as the one at Vintage. She believes that we currently set things up to fail instead of putting forth real efforts for student success. If students aren't made to feel comfortable they won't participate in clubs, like Key Club. She suggested that an Ethnic Studies program needs to be instituted in schools. Young males need a space to feel good and she believes that help should be dedicated to fill this gap.

Speaker #3 – Jose Hernandez (question) Is there a grant writer that works with the Commission? Programs don't exist due to lack of financial resources.

Answer – Vanessa Luna Shannon: There is not a designated grant writer for this commission. Members on the Commission represent agencies, such as Probation, the PD and the Office of Education, that employ grant writers. At this particular time of economic hardship, it is challenging to obtain funding for programs. Napa has to compete with larger cities in the Bay Area and southern California with high gang populations for available grants.

Patrick Sweeney – His agency uses the Office of Education for its grant writing. We are changing the way we teach – real world team projects. By 2015, classrooms will have WiFi so that students can be up to speed using the latest technology. There is an effort to get more ethnic studies classes in the high schools. The Positive Behavior Program is District-wide K – 12. Suspensions & expulsions have decreased significantly. There is more to do, we need to hire more teachers and be more inclusive. There is a lot to do and we are getting things accomplished as the budget allows.

Question (Alfredo Pedroza) – Are there any new social or recreational programs that we are looking to get in the future?

Terry Longoria (NCOE) – You will hear a presentation tonight from Johanna Guzman, Director of the Mariposa Project. This is an excellent example of a grant-funded program that is geared toward Latina students. We do not have grants for all projects and grants don't solve all problems. There is a lot of work ahead of us but there are lots of afterschool programs. Leslie Medine is the Director of On The Move which is an excellent program. There is a new grant that will move AmeriCorp students into schools. We have young adults working with other young adults on literacy and helping behaviors. There is the Catalyst Coalition (underage drinking program) as well. She is willing to meet with people who have information on other grant opportunities. She is also willing to share information about what programs currently exist in our area.

Maria Cisneros, Principal at Valley Oak High School – Currently there are students ready to drop out of school. Boys are of special concern. 58% of her student population is Latino. She asked the Commission if part of the Master Plan includes helping boys with developing leadership skills.

Eric Dreikosen - One Commission goal is to form a subcommittee that will take a current inventory of the existing prevention intervention programs county wide. This inventory will then be made available to the public. There are lots of partnerships and opportunities that people simply just do not know about.

Vanessa Luna Shannon – The inventory, once completed, will show where there are gaps that need to be filled. We are trying to connect students and their families with services that are currently available.

IV. APPROVAL OF AUGUST 15, 2012 REGULAR MEETING MINUTES.

Minutes revised with one correction. Councilwoman Karen Slusser was in attendance at the last meeting – add her as an attendee. Minutes approved.

V. REPORTING OF CURRENT ISSUES RE: GANG & YOUTH VIOLENCE INCLUDING TRUENCY PREVENTION IN NAPA COUNTY

Ivan Chaidez – When students are in school, their academic success is going to be better than if they are not in school. Grades of Ds or Fs are usually a reflection partly of a student's attendance. When a student is asked why he or she has low grades, the response usually is "because I don't go to class". Every Thursday, the District deals with truancy issues. There are different agencies there (ParentsCAN; CalWorks; Mental Health) to provide intervention resources for students and their families. There are lots of reasons why students are going to school. There are contracts between the school, the parents and the students. Such as a Panel: SARB Student Attendance Review Board . Schools attempt to resolve attendance issues with the student before resorting to SARB. First a student is helped at school. A student may be sent to the counseling center. The school will attempt to assist the parents in working with their child. Intervention efforts will involve school counselors, resource officers and principals parent conferences, phone calls, home visits. Finally, if these efforts don't result in improvement, the student and his or her parents are required to attend a SARB meeting. Last year, there were 163 students (6 – 17 ages) and their families who entered into SARB contracts. There were 41 more last year than in 2011. Once a student is 18 years old (12th grade) the law states that he or she is a legal adult and not subject to compulsory attendance. Out of these families, 46 families received criminal complaints

issued by the District Attorney's Office. There were 9 fewer complaints last year from the year before (55). If the SARB contract is violated, the student and his or her parents will appear at Truancy Court. On an average there are 30 families at each Truancy Court date. These are held on one Friday each month. If a student improves attendance, he or she will be removed from Truancy Court hearings. Overall District wide, NVUSD is .8% increase in attendance, which equals \$800,000 in funding to the schools. Currently, there is a 96% attendance rate in our district which is quite good. But this also means that 4% of the student population is not regularly attending school. This is a loss of approximately \$4million dollars in funding to the schools in our county. Realistically, our goal is 97% attendance. Ideally, it would be 100%. This is a team effort and the most important goal is to get students prepared for college and careers. High attendance is key in achieving this goal for all students.

Question (Alfredo Pedroza) – Are there reasons that you can identify that are responsible for the increase in truancy rates?

Answer (Ivan Chaidez) - Some of the significant trends associated with the truancy rates can be attributed to broken families, drugs in the home, students self medicating or refusing to take prescribed medications, and the stresses associated with economic hardships, including losing homes to foreclosure.

VI. PRESENTATION – STUDENT GANG PREVENTION GROUP AND FACILITATOR JOHANA GUZMAN, NAPA COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION

In relation to the Gang Violence Suppression Grant, her supervisor and the evaluator for her program will be partnering with Omar Salem to evaluate his gang prevention program at Vintage High. Soon there will be a job announcement for an opening with her program to lead groups.

Her program plans on involving parents by doing presentations for them in English and Spanish. Puertas Abiertas is co-sponsoring the next presentation, which will be November 27th and the guest speaker will be Esmeralda Ramirez, with Juvenile Probation. She will talk about drugs and what parents should look out for in their children who might be at risk.

Mariposa is a program that is in the three major middle schools in Napa County. It is a girl empowerment program that teaches girls to stand up against violence. The girls with her are a part of this program. When getting ready to graduate from middle school, they suggested to her that they wanted to remain involved in Mariposa and bring it to the high schools. Over the summer they provided a 30-hour training for these girls on how to run groups and guest speakers came to speak to them. These girls are here to share what Mariposa has done for them and how they are mentoring another generation of girls in middle school.

Carolina Calderon She is a 10th grader at Vintage High School. She has been a part of this program for 3 years. Her boyfriend was involved in gang. His involvement put his family in danger. Before joining Mariposa, she was not a good student and she didn't have a person that she could talk to even though this is what she really needed at the time. Mariposa has provided her with a safe place where she can express her feelings. She can relate to her peers and has successfully made better choices since being involved in this group.

Claudia Vallejo - Her counselor recommended that she get involved with Mariposa. She used to fight a lot. This program has helped her see the world in a more positive way. She appreciates her family more and the program gives her a safe place to be and prevents her from becoming a runaway. Her father used to do drugs and he was abusive at home. Now she supports her mother and helps her family more.

Angela Reyes – before being in Mariposa, she was not doing well in school, she was skipping class. She now understands that school can help her and being involved in gangs will not get her anywhere. She feels that Mariposa has helped her understand the consequences of making bad choices. She makes a conscious effort to stay away from the streets and associating with gangs.

Lilianna is a Napa High School Student. She had a rough time at home. Mariposa became “the place to be” for her. She could talk and relate to her peers there. She feels that she has matured in the program and has role models there. It was difficult at first to join a club. She wanted to help other girls and went to the summer training offered by the program to help them become mentors to younger girls. She does not hang out on the streets and she is positively involved with her community now.

Napa High School Student - She has been in Mariposa for 3 years. She understands that gangs aren't good and gangsters are not positive role models. She wants good things in her life. Now school is an important focus. College is her goal. Initially, her mom made her join Mariposa at Silverado Middle School. It took her time to get comfortable in the program. Now she feels that Mariposa offers her another home away from home. The other girls in this group are her friends and they keep her positive. She thinks Johanna is great. She is now more comfortable being herself. She doesn't need drugs, alcohol or gangs to be herself or gain acceptance from others. She now really enjoys school. Her grades are all A's and B's.

Johanna Guzman – These girls meet every two weeks in her office. This is where they create their lesson plans for the girls that they mentor at the middle school.

The girls prepared a Thank You tribute to Johanna Guzman for being a mentor, sister and second-mom to them.

Questions /Comments

David Rodriguez, Parent Organization Representative: He commended the girls and praised them for being role models to others.

Vanessa Luna Shannon expressed how proud she is of these girls. She thanked them for sharing their stories and for dedicating their time to helping other young people. She asked for input from these girls about what their thoughts are on what types of activities or groups are needed for other young people to get positively engaged.

One student expressed the need for a group to get boys involved as a counterpart to Mariposa. She mentioned Omar Salem's group at Vintage High. Boys who are “gang wannabe's” will turn to this

positive group rather than join gangs. She also hopes that more groups will join groups that are similar to Mariposa.

Liliana – She also stressed the need for guys to have an equivalent to Mariposa. They need to keep busy in a positive way. They need a place where they feel comfortable expressing themselves amongst their peers. They need to be around people who are positive role models, like Johanna Guzman and Carlos Hagedorn. They need alternatives to hanging out on the streets, gangs and doing drugs.

Question -Eric Dreikosen: How can others get involved or get more information on the Mariposa Program? There are people in this room tonight who might be interested in participating or getting their children involved in Mariposa.

Answer – Johanna Guzman: School Counselors have her information and the application forms for this program. Parents and students can contact the counselors or school administrators for this information.

Answer - Terry Longoria: Mariposa is not a “flash in the pan” group. It’s an established program and it has generational leadership of strong Latinas such as Vanessa Luna Shannon, Johanna Guzman and the young women that have been heard at this meeting. This started as a pregnancy prevention program and has steadily evolved into a gang prevention program. She commended these girls for their work and presentation.

Question - Vanessa Luna Shannon: What guest speakers or agencies has Mariposa collaborated with?

Answer – Alicia Jaramillo gave a presentation to the group about cyber-bullying and sexting. Leslie Severe gave a presentation on gangs. Napa Emergency Womens Services gave a presentation on violence. Cope Family Center presented on mandated reporting. A self-defense class was given by Matt Bailey of VOICES. Lisa Jovar from SANE/SART, a registered nurse who does rape kits also came to speak to the girls about victims of sexual assault. Francis Ortiz from Puertas Abiertas spoke about Latino culture and resources that are available to Latino families.

VII. REPORT OF NEW VINTAGE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT PROGRAM – CHIEF RICH MELTON, NAPA POLICE DEPARTMENT

Rich Melton – Thanked Dr. Sweeney for supporting this new program. He acknowledged the command staff, including the School Resource Officers and Debbie Peacock, present at this meeting who have been supportive of this new program. He introduced the two leaders of this program Omar Salem and Carlos Hagedorn. The idea to start this program came from Omar and Carlos. They worked tirelessly to get this program properly approved and funded.

Omar Salem – He has worked as a Napa Police Officer for the past 5 years. He is currently assigned as the school resource officer at Vintage High School.

Carlos Hagedorn – He is an instructor at Napa Valley College. He teaches 2 courses Chicano Mexican American Studies and Latin American Studies. He also facilitates 4 CLARO groups – 2 in St. Helena and 2 in Calistoga. He passed out two hand-outs related to this new program.

Omar – the Mission Statement of this program “Our group provides a safe space and companionship that promotes positive outcomes, positive opportunities, and fosters relationships that will have positive long term benefits for our community as well as develop leadership skills. Our goals are pro-social approaches that will engage high school youth within their communities, schools, organizations, peer groups, and families that are productive and constructive. It recognizes, utilizes and enhances strengths and provides positive outcomes for our young adults.”

Omar has his own deep personal roots in working with young people. They are our future. He was a young adult and he became a police officer to change people’s lives. It’s important to invest time in our youth, particularly those that susceptible to gangs. He wants to create an environment where these young men help them develop into the leaders that he believes they can become. This group just had its second meeting. He explained that this group came about as a result of his interactions with a student who came to his office to have a conversation about some issues he was dealing with in his family. This student revealed that nobody graduated high school in his family. He expressed the desire to be the first one in his family to graduate. He stated that the gang lifestyle really put set his family back. He asked Omar “why can’t we do something about changing the mind set of others who are susceptible to the gang lifestyle”. This student was one of two who helped with getting the group started. They wanted to create a space for males who wanted a place to talk about the issues that they are dealing with. He asked these two students to write down their desires and goals for this group as well as the problems that they were facing that they wanted to address in this group. They provided Omar with lots of written feedback. Omar then went to the School Board and high school administration and told them about idea for this group. This initiative and pilot program has been embraced and fully supported at all levels of the school administration. Parents have given permission for their sons to skip 6th period in order to attend the meetings held on campus. In the spring semester they are looking to see how this group could be converted into an approved class. This group has been very effective in getting boys to open up about what is going on in their lives. Currently, there are 15 committed youth in the program. They have expressed their desire to share what is going on in this group with the community and to Napa High School in particular.

Carlos Hagedorn (curriculum component) – This group got established pretty quickly. There is a sense of urgency and students are asking for this type of group. The 50-minute sessions are very intense. All of the participants are actively engaged. These students know that they are looked at as gang members. At the first session, Carlos made it clear to them that first and foremost, they are students. They need to be engaged in their education. He wanted them to focus on why they are here. Handout #1 is a representation of the brainstorming session during the first group meeting. He highlighted three items:

1) To not be looked down upon;

2) To reunite ‘La Raza’ (our Latino community); The group discussed what it means for La Raza to be *re-*united. The answer: We use to be united. Now we have to figure out how to reunite. They spent 10 minutes critically thinking about the meaning of a word (reunite). They were seeking the root of a truth around an issue that they are dealing with.

3) To change our book cover; They want to change the way they are perceived. This is powerful.

After their second meeting, it has become evident that there are challenges but it is very exciting. The young men are curious and very engaged. They are planning a field trip during their Christmas break. He mentioned that City Departments and the Educational institutions are working together to figure out how to help the students. This represents a huge community effort. The police department has been very supportive in this effort.

Handout#2 is a skeleton of this program. 5 days per week class in spring semester – improving grades. Implementing academic support system and peer to peer accountability and tutoring. There will be a focus on college and career counseling curriculum – ethnic studies emphasis- Latino studies focus evidence-based model (academic, social maturity and self-esteem). Leadership development – one of the students (the visionary) is already inquiring about participating in presentations about their group.

Vanessa Luna Shannon –questions: Students from “both sides.” Do you see the positive energy within the group translating to positive energy and bonding outside of the group sessions on campus?

Answer (Omar) – It’s hard to answer that question now since because the group is so new yet. The participants know who the Norteno and Sureno affiliates are and there is still this “enemy viewpoint” that needs to wear down. This will take time and work. This group is working with NCOE to complete a survey with their students’ participation. In addition there will be a post –survey to gage any progress.

Carlos Hagedorn: There are fewer Surenos (Southerners) in this group. Some uncomfortable feelings are present and this is part of the challenge. Nortenos (Northerners) in the group have asked how do we get the Surenos here? If they aren’t here how do we reunite? They asked Omar to go outside on campus and bring them into the group. It is hopeful that the conversations that currently happen in this group will translate to positive interaction outside the confines of the group sessions.

Omar – This process is a lot harder than one might think. These kids are deeply entrenched in their gangs. They tattoo their affiliations on their bodies, on their children in their homes. It’s what they have believed in. Solving these issues will take time. Omar and Carlos, as facilitators of this group, cannot force a certain pace for progress. Omar and Carlos want them to be leaders in the community and mentors to their peers.

Brad Wagenknecht – How was this program able to be implemented so quickly? Who were the participants in its implementation? He complimented Omar and Carlos for their abilities to make this happen.

Omar – He started this back in August of 2012 and meeting with some of the young people (now in the program). He met with Assistant Principal Luis Mungia, Jen Cole and Principal Michael Pearson who supported the idea immediately. Vintage provided a classroom, projectors and computers for the meetings. Then he went to his sergeant who assisted in writing a proposal. This went up the command chain to Captain and Chief.

Carlos Hagedorn – He recalled a preliminary meeting where the feeling was “we have to start now” There was a spirit of urgency. Omar navigated the system really well. He used my experience as a teacher to assist in developing this program.

Question (Mother in audience) – Can this program be implemented elsewhere, such as Napa High?

Answer – This is the goal. It can be done. There are lots of good people out there.

Caroline Wilson – Chamberlain teacher: She commended Probation and feels that it has “done miracles” for our youth.

VIII. MASTER PLAN – COMPLETING RECOMMENDATIONS

Vanessa Luna Shannon: The commission is working off of The Master Plan. This was a large study that was conducted 2010. The report was published in 2011 through the County and some consultants. This was a study of gangs and gathered data which assisted in the formulation of 8 recommendations. The groups that gave presentations tonight fulfill some of the recommendations. Recommendation 1 - Build on current collaborative meetings and stake-holder groups to develop a more efficient monitoring system to observe trends associated with gangs and crime. The Commission meeting could be an example of such a collaborative meeting. Other collaborative meetings held in Napa County would be the School-Law meetings, the Gang Violence Suppression Grant, which is run out of the DA’s office and is a multidisciplinary program. A subcommittee was formed at our last meeting to look at best practices and resources that are available in Napa County. Cindy Coffey, the Chair for this subcommittee, could not be present tonight.

Eric Dreikosen, subcommittee member – He reported on the work of this subcommittee. They have met once and communicated via email several times. This is a very large task because there are lots of things happening in our county. There are over 500 registered non-profits in Napa County. Sorting through these and making a determination about which are applicable to our mission takes some time. Taking inventory of what happens at the school and government levels is also time consuming. There are several grass root organizations as well. This will be put into a report. The group has developed a brief questionnaire for these groups to complete and return to the commission. There will be more to report on this at the next commission meeting in February.

IX. ANNUAL REPORT – DISCUSSION & PLANNING

Annual Report – Gary Lieberstein, Charlie Rose and Eric Dreikosen went before the Board of Supervisors and gave an oral report for the first fiscal year of the commission.

Charles Rose – This is a relatively young commission. Gary Lieberstein provided a lengthy oral report to the Board of Supervisors. The Board accepted the oral report. The next report to the BOS will be in written format. It will be more comprehensive about the activities of the Commission.

Vanessa Luna Shannon – After the February Commission meeting, the building of the structure of the next report will begin. Her goal is to have the report completed by May so that any revisions can be made.

X. DISCUSSION OF CREATION OF SUB-COMMITTEE TO INVENTORY GANG AND YOUTH PREVENTION EFFORTS COUNTYWIDE

Creation of a subcommittee of collaborative partners that are attending these respective groups or any meetings where there are gang data or information that is being exchanged. She asked for volunteers to be on this subcommittee. **It was mentioned that this may need to be set as a future agenda item before the subcommittee can be formed.** [Vanessa acknowledged that she was unsure of the proper protocol for this.] This will be put on the agenda for the February commission meeting. A vote will be taken at the next meeting.

XI. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Future Agenda Items – Charles Rose suggested creating a committee to lend some structure to the next annual report

Alicia Jaramillo – Since elections have concluded, will there be a shuffle of representatives on this commission? This commission has suggested the addition of a faith-based commission appointment.

Vanessa Luna Shannon agreed with this and also suggested that there might be room for the additional of another youth based representative from Napa or American Canyon.

XII. ADJOURNMENT/NEXT REGULAR MEETING

Meeting was adjourned at 7:25 p.m. by Chair Vanessa Luna Shannon. The next Commission meeting will be held on February 13, 2013 in Calistoga. The location for this meeting is still to be determined.