

ITEM 2-A
COMMISSION ON DISABILITY
MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday, November 28, 2018, 6:30 PM

1. ROLL CALL

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: The meeting, the Commission on Disability on Wednesday, November 28th, 2018. Laura, would you like to do the roll call?

Vice Chair and Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: Present.

Anto Aghapekian: Present.

Leslie Morrison: Present.

Jennifer Roloff: Here.

Chair Elizabeth Kenny: Present via telephone.

Arnold Brillinger: Present.

Laurie Kozisek: Okay, not present is Lisa Hall and Susan Deutsch.

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: Okay. We'd like to extend a warm welcome to our newest commissioner. Leslie Morrison.

Leslie Morrison: Thank you.

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: So glad you're here.

Leslie Morrison: I participated in the earlier meeting last time, online but I couldn't speak. I heard everything that was going on, I watched what was happening.

Laurie Kozisek: Madam Chairman, we now have, Susan Deutsch has arrived and I also forgot to mention that Jenny Linton is not here.

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: Okay.

2. MINUTES

2-A Approval of Minutes for the September 12, 2018 meeting

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: Alright, we're going to move on to item number two, minutes. Do we have approval of the minutes from the meeting on September 12, 2018?

Anto Aghapekian: So moved.

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: Okay, do we have a second?

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Susan Deutsch: Second.

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: Okay. Susan.

[Discussion of audio difficulties]

Jennifer Roloff: Before we vote on that, Leslie it does say that you attempted to teleconference in, but you were unable to do so.

Leslie Morrison: That's correct. And then I watched it live on the web. So I was present, I just couldn't actively participate so I don't know how you want to record that.

Jennifer Roloff: Yeah. I don't know if we want to record that in the minutes as such.

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: Okay, so we have approval of the minutes by Anto and then the second by Susan.

3. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS/NON-AGEND (PUBLIC COMMENT)

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: And we'll move on to number three oral communications, any public comment other than our speakers today? Okay.

4. NEW BUSINESS

4-A Victoria Forrester, Director of special Education, AUSD
Mental and Emotional Wellness Needs Assessment

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: We're going to move on to new business number four A, we have Victoria Forester Director of Special Education from the Alameda Unified School District who will be speaking to us about mental and emotional wellness Needs Assessment.

Victoria Forester: Actually I am doing the strategic plan for special ed. And my colleague Jody will be doing the needs assessment.

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: Okay sorry about that.

Victoria Forester: That's okay. Here it comes, that is the beginning and then I'll let you know when My name is Victoria Forester, the Director of Special Education for Alameda Unified School District. I began in this position at the beginning of last school year and prior to that was the Director of Special Ed and Student Services in San Leandro Unified. But I've taught in this district prior since I was 20 years old, for 22 years, and this is my 34th year in public education. I'm happy to be here this evening and share really wonderful news with you around our special education strategic plan. I'm assuming I have about 15 minutes, two hours. Just kidding.

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Victoria Forester: So prior to this position being open I was doing a favor for Kerstin Zazo who is the Chief Student Support Officer and I was bringing, it was a kind of a consultant to work on the strategic plan for Alameda Unified. And so I came and facilitated the plan and we began in February of that year. And then the position was posted and I became director in July. So I've worked on this plan for a little over a year. You can see that the stakeholders were varied in our plan, we had parents, and community members, and Gen Ed teachers, and psychologists, support providers, and special ed teachers, and certainly site administrators, and district administrators. You'll notice my name isn't up there because I was the consultant that was facilitating the work.

Victoria Forester: The history of our work, often times school districts who are having difficulties in some fiscal area will ask for FCMAT to come in. That's Fiscal Crisis Management Assistance Team. Usually they study two departments within the district, the Business Department and the Department of Special Education. And in Alameda's case it was the Department of Special Education. So FCMAT comes in, and they study everything about special education from a deficit model, they're looking at things that don't work. They're not going to comment on things that are working well.

Victoria Forester: Many school districts who pay for FCMAT to come in, they take the report, they report on it to the board, and they put it in a white binder on their shelf. And as an ex-school principal, those are kind of our trophies, those white binders. And they never get read. Alameda chose not to do that. And the board asked us to create a planning team and to address the issues within the FCMAT report. And so this team was put together by Kerstin Zazo. And actually parents and teachers and staff had to apply to be a part of this team. And we engaged in 10 sessions more than 20 hours of work to create the strategic plan. And the School Board charged us with very clearly that we needed to define a service delivery model for students with special needs that is facilitated by high quality teachers, supported through active engagement in the least restrictive learning environment and monitored by multiple measures of student achievement. And so board said, put together a team and address this, this is your charge.

Victoria Forester: And so tonight, I am going to share with you some highlights from this special education strategic plan. I am going to show you the actual plan, and then I will share with you briefly the next steps in the work that we're engaging in this year. Special ed program beliefs. It took at least four sessions, not complete sessions, but four times we kept coming back to our program beliefs. And I won't read them to you. You can take a look at them. They're pretty strong program beliefs, they talk quite heavily about integration, about equity for students with disabilities, and about training, particularly of our staff and teachers and principals.

Victoria Forester: Our mission is an amazing mission and it begins with the mission of the Special Education program and yet you could take that out, and you could say the mission of the Alameda unified school district, because it's that chunky and that wonderful in partnership with families and the community is to support, prepare and empower our diverse learners in a least restrictive most inclusive environment that is safe, culturally responsive and academically rigorous, and that is taught and supported by highly trained professionals so that each student can participate meaningfully and excel as contributing members of our community. Again, that should be for every student. And it certainly is in Alameda Unified, that's what we are working toward. So I'm not going

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to have you do small group work, we had five program priorities and our program priorities we call chapters. And that sounds lengthy, but each chapter is one page long. The entire strategic plan is nine pages. It isn't found in a white binder, it's actually written to be used. And so I'll share those chapters with you, I'll show you the plan and then I will tell you the next steps.

Victoria Forester: Sorry, I need to go back one. The first program priority is looking at intervention and identification. So we wrote goals and strategies around how do we intervene for all students before they are assessed for special education services. And how do we properly identify students who need extra help. So the first chapter is all about intervention and identification.

Victoria Forester: The second priority is actually defining our program, our service delivery model. How are we going to serve the students all the way across the district, from age three all the way to age 22. Because in Special Education, we serve preschoolers all the way up until the age of 22. Or a culminating event such as graduation from high school.

Victoria Forester: Program priority three is our systems of support, we have invested time, energy, brain work and money into a multi tiered system of support, and within that system that encompasses General Ed, kiddos as well as special education kids.

Victoria Forester: Leadership and communication is chapter four. How do we go about engaging the community, engaging teachers, staff, parents and students into all of the work. And how do we communicate this. So this is my fourth stop on a road show about the strategic plan, and we are getting to anyone who will be willing to really engage in this work. I have met with parents, and teachers, and principals, community members. Because my desire in this work, we talked in the strategic plan about our destination for this work. Our destination post card. And mine is to be the premiere district in special education in the next five years. Lofty goal, one I believe in, one I believe we can do, and if we work through this three year plan, we will get there.

Victoria Forester: And the last thing is the most boring chapter for most people, but it is where my job lies. And that is in monitoring and compliance. Of course special education has more rules and regulation than any other part of education. Special education also is the most highly litigated legal work in the nation. More so than litigation around homicide, and crime, and burglary. Litigation around special education law. So I have become in the last five or six years in special ed, quite a lawyer. I know a lot about the law and a lot about compliance and this is something we need to grow in, in this district. That which gets monitored gets done.

Victoria Forester: So the strategic plan is actually a glossy beautiful nine-page document that will go out to every family in the district, both in online, sent in an email and also in paper copy. Again, it's supposed to be used. So it's the second attachment on your agenda. Oh, okay, yeah, that's it, isn't it cute? So again, and if you'll just scroll a bit, you'll see the beginning that I have already talked about, our strategic plan members, some actual pictures of people doing the work, and if you will scroll down to the next page, here you'll see the first chapter, you'll see that every chapter has a goal. Every goal has strategies and every strategy has action steps. The action steps are the interesting part, right? That's the part where we have to do something to make the strategy and the goal happen.

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Victoria Forester: And if you could stop it just right there, perfect. Systems of support, you'll see that each page is a chapter as I explained. And each chapter has goals, then a strategy to support the goal. Strategy number one in systems of support is to develop and implement effective procedures and protocols with fidelity, right. And certainly as we go through this plan, you'll see that it is costly. There are things that we need to do that cost money. And School districts always have a difficult time with budget. Our school district in particular has approved this plan, the Board of Education has, and adopted the fact that it's going to cost some money as we go through this process.

Victoria Forester: In the long run it will save the district money, because we are doing things right, and that's the point of this. Past chapter five, you'll see at the end of the plan the next page is a reference and literature page. Every reading that we did, every scholarly piece of work that we read is listed right here. If you go on our planning team web page on the Alameda Unified School District website you will see the work week, or month for month that we did. And you can look at all of the data that was collected. It really is a very transparent process. And if you'll scroll down one more, the glossary. I can speak in full paragraphs using acronyms. And no one understands what we're talking about and I often hear from my son around the dinner table, "Would you stop talking Special Ed?". Because we say the ELCA brought us the IEP, which kept this with FCMAT. So the glossary is there for folks that don't speak that highly acronym language to figure out what we're talking about.

Victoria Forester: The very last page is just a mailing sheet, if you fold the whole plan in half, you can't see the last page because it's not on here, then you can put a mailing label and put it in the mail, so it's a very usable plan. So what's next for our work this year is a three-session steering committee. Again, we have put together a strong committee of stakeholders that includes parents, as well as educational professionals. And we've actually asked a couple of high school students to be a part of our work as well. And our job, the steering committee's job, is to give my team the feedback on where we're accomplishing things within the strategic plan, and where we need more work. We will meet three times this year and three times next year. And in the third year, my goal is that we've accomplished everything in the plan, or almost everything, and we have to go back and write a new plan. That is the goal. It's a three year plan. Our steering committee will begin, gosh, week after next, and we will have a meeting in February as well, and then another meeting in April. With that, do you have questions about our strategic plan or anything about special education in the district that I could answer?

Leslie Morrison: I have a couple of questions. You said it's a three year plan.

Victoria Forester: Yes.

Jennifer Roloff: So, is that school year? Should I wait?

Victoria Forester: Yes, except for I have a couple of questions.

[more audio difficulties with the teleconferencing]

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Leslie Morrison: Okay. So you said it is a three-year plan. Was that sort of a school year, and did it start in the fall of '18? What's the time frame?

Victoria Forester: Great question. The plan was approved by the school board last spring. And so, yes, the work started with the '18/'19 school year. And there are many of the strategies in the plan that we've already tackled like we are working on it. That's going to be one of those things where we say, "We're getting there here." But then there's a lot of things on the plan, many strategies that we haven't even begun to tackle yet. And as I go around and talk with teachers, both general ed and special ed teachers, they say, "Well, there's a lot on here you haven't done. It's a three-year plan and it really is about we. All of us doing this work."

Leslie Morrison: So within the three-year plan, do you have one year goals that you've set to accomplish?

Victoria Forester: So that's part of the work that the steering committee is going to do. In the first meeting, they are going to be using a template for the work to continue. They're going to see what we're already tackling and getting close to really implementing, and then they're going to come up with a second square of strategies that are most important to tackle next. And that's how we'll go through it. There are some things that are more costly or that take longer to implement. And so those will be in the third box as we go along.

Leslie Morrison: And you talked about fidelity. I am wondering about the fidelity of the strategic plan to the findings in the FCMAT.

Victoria Forester: Yes. So the chapters really are the titles that the FCMAT report was broken into. These are the areas that need improvement. And so we took the FCMAT report, and we turned that into the chapters of the strategic plan. And before we did that, we actually took a look at... As a strategic planning team, we took a look at all of the data that we had. It was dead on. The other important thing to know is that the state of California also has a strategic plan, the Department of Education has a strategic plan for special education which they adopted in 1718. And if you look at our plan, and you look at the States plan, we're addressing the same issues. These are issues across the state, and they're issues across the nation. We're just deciding to really go hard and make a difference for kids. Other question?

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: Go ahead Commissioner Roloff.

Jennifer Roloff: So I have a couple of questions that are just sort of clarifications I am looking for, and then maybe a bigger one at the end. FCMAT, is that a third-party private company that the district pays for?

Victoria Forester: Yes. And many districts across California have used that process. And, again, we just decided to, since we were getting the feedback instead of just setting it aside and saying, "Well, we're doing well enough," we said, "We're going to do something about this."

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Jennifer Roloff: Okay. And with FCMAT are there competitors? Can you pick different organizations to use than FCMAT?

Victoria Forester: There are different FCMAT teams, and I'm not sure how Alameda went about that choice because I wasn't an employee yet.

Jennifer Roloff: Okay, got it. Let's see. Oh, when you say that you're looking for Alameda to be the premier destination, distinction for special ed, is that a real distinction? Is there an association where we can receive awards, and accolades?

Victoria Forester: Well, certainly within the state of California there are some markers in which you can say, "Dang, we're doing really well." But the way that the strategic plan kind of framed that was we were studying best practice from three school districts in the state, and then three school districts across the nation. We want to be written about and studied in that way. So one of the school districts... Was it back in Vermont? And I can't remember the name. We want to be that school district? And that's kind of how we framed the destination postcard.

Jennifer Roloff: Got it. Is there any way to differentiate what districts are falling behind in addressing the needs of special ed versus districts that are thriving? Is there a ranking or do you get reviewed every so often?

Victoria Forester: Really good question. There's several different ways, but right now the state of California has what's considered its dashboard for achievement. And that's a place where you can go on the CDE website, look up "Alameda unified," and you can find out all about our assessment scores, our achievement. And within that there are scores for our special education students achievement as well as discipline scores as well as broken down according to race, and ethnicity, or disaggregated. I can tell you that currently Alameda Unified is very close to significant disproportionality in the area of discipline for students with IEPs. Which means we have a lot of students mostly in high school who are being suspended, who have IEPs.

Victoria Forester: You can go further down and look at that based on race, and ethnicity, and you'll see more disproportionality. And we're not the only school district having those issues, but it's something that this strategic plan is hitting head on. That's just one indication of where we are in our special education in terms of doing well or not doing well. If you look at achievement scores on standardized tests, you'll see that our students with disabilities are struggling compared to our students in general education. We are not doing worse or better than most districts in California, but that's not good enough.

Jennifer Roloff: And then Jody is presenting another piece.

Victoria Forester: Jody is going to be presenting on health and wellness, and a needs assessment. And, yes, the two come together because if we just deal with special education by itself, we'll never get anywhere. It needs to be integrated into every bit of work that we do. And so you'll start to see that with Jody's presentation as well.

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Jennifer Roloff: Okay. So maybe I will save my question for after.

Victoria Forester: I'd be glad to come back.

Jennifer Roloff: Yeah. It will be for both. Okay. So I will wait on my final. Okay. Thank you.

Victoria Forester: You bet.

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: Does anyone else have any questions?

Anto Aghapekian: Did you say 36 years you've been in education?

Victoria Forester: Thirty four.

Anto Aghapekian: Thirty four. That's fantastic. Thank you.

Victoria Forester: Thank you.

Anto Aghapekian: And I have just clarification. Does the state or the federal government give you any funds?

Victoria Forester: That is an excellent question and one that's killing me lately. Yes, we receive all of our funding from both federal dollars as well as state dollars. I can tell you that both are abysmal. The cost of Special Education is higher than the cost of educating a general ed student. Many of our students are medically fragile. They may need extra support behaviorally, and all of that costs money. Currently, the federal government is funding based on the 1970s way of figuring out how much each school district receives for special education funding. Let me remind you it's 2018. So we are poorly funded in this state from the federal government, and our state is not stepping up to fund special education either. And I use the word abysmal. However, I also am in front of the State legislature quite often saying "Hey, we got to do better for our kids. We've got to do better for our school districts."

Anto Aghapekian: Okay. And the next question I have is, does the Alameda Unified have a person or a department that looks after the site, the schools and the physical plans to see if the buildings comply with ADA standards?

Victoria Forester: Yes. So we have a significant maintenance and operations department. And part of their work is to make sure that our buildings are ADA registered. We cannot do any new building with having that pass through ADA law. And our bathrooms need to be a certain size. We need to have ramps getting up to schools. And I know in the last three years we've done a lot in Alameda Unified to modernize our buildings with that, with students with disabilities and families with disabilities in mind.

Anto Aghapekian: And the last question I have is, if a student enrolls no matter what age but they have a special need that the district doesn't have, what do you do? What does the district do?

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Victoria Forester: Sure. The law says that we have to provide free and appropriate public education for every student and we have a large variety and a spectrum of classes to meet kids needs in Alameda Unified. But if we can't provide free and appropriate public education then we look to other districts. I have partnered with our SELPA districts like Berkley or Albany or Piedmont to see if there is placements, and then I've taken some students of theirs. And then there is also non-public schools that if we can't provide FAPE, Free Appropriate Public Education, then we reach out to a non-public school. Families do not pay for that. School district funds that.

Anto Aghapekian: Thank you.

Victoria Forester: You're very welcome.

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: Anyone else? Otherwise, I have a few questions... Just one question. Can you talk about maybe one or two tangible measures of success, whether it be improved test scores, or graduation, or something that you're trying to achieve from this master plan?

Victoria Forester: Absolutely. There's a couple of things that pop into my mind. I would like to see our general education teachers and, again, that is my background. I'm a credentialed general ed teacher. I would like our gen ed teachers to have the knowledge and ability to teach any student that is in their classrooms so that we can achieve more inclusion of our special needs students. That's number one. Number two is I would like to see less qualification for an IEP or special education because we're serving our general ed kids better. Every kid with an IEP starts as a child in general education. And so those are two ways that I would like to see us achieve. And the second way, of course, saves the district a lot of money. I am passionate about equity for our students, and believe that our kids with IEPs, with special needs, really are a part of that equity piece. And they need to be included, and have access to core curriculum. The more we do that the higher those test scores will get.

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: I was just wondering on the five levels of your strategic plan, where does... What level does a student get assessed for an IEP?

Victoria Forester: That would be in chapter one, in identification and intervention, right? How do we identify kids who need special education services and we assess in all areas of suspected disability to qualify a student. But before we ever do that, we engage with our kids in forms of intervention. So, small group intervention, a child we think they may have a mathematics disability, but before we qualify a student and put them through assessment, we put 'em in a small group, and we really hammer them over the head with some math instruction, right? If that doesn't work we go to tier three where we do more individualized service. And still if the student is presenting with a learning disability in the area of say math, then we do the assessment.

Leslie Morrison: Yes. So the second measure that you had described, I wasn't quite tracking what you said, can you explain that again? So one was about training teachers in gen ed to work with a broader range of students. And the second one had to do with qualifying for an IEP. Can you just explain that one again?

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Victoria Forester: Right. So, if we do a better job of teaching all students then we will qualify less students for IEPs. And so that qualification goal is not about not giving kids what they need, it's about giving kids what they need at an earlier or lower level. I'm a firm believer in early intervention. We have very strong preschool programs that give kids what they need from a very... From three years old. The law says that we must find every child in our school district who may have a disability. And so we begin working with kids as early as two and a half.

Leslie Morrison: So, you had also mentioned a couple of measures on the dashboard where Alameda has opportunities for improvement. One is discipline and expulsion. Kids with disabilities have a higher rate and...

Victoria Forester: It's suspension. Not quite expulsion.

Leslie Morrison: So are some of those also measures that you're looking at, that you're looking to improve?

Victoria Forester: Absolutely. We have a full integrated plan with the county of Alameda around disproportionality particularly looking at the discipline of students with disabilities, and even one layer deeper African-American students with disabilities. And so that plan with the county really feathers into our strategic plan to improve across the board.

Leslie Morrison: And when you talked about lowering the number of kids on IEPs, where do 504 plans come in?

Victoria Forester: Section 504 is for general ed students with a handicapping condition. So as a school principal, I once wrote a 504 plan for a kid that broke his right arm during testing time. You'd have to bubble in, and he couldn't do that. So we wrote a short-term 504 plan for that. Many kids have 504 plans for health issues, for ADHD oftentimes. And it still comes under the umbrella of the Americans with Disabilities Act. It's not directly related to my department. Jody is in charge of 504s but certainly, as I stand here and say every kid is a General Ed kid first, many kids with 504s eventually become kids with IEPs. But 504 plans are often seen as lesser than. That is just not true. It's all under the same legislation. It's all under the same law. And so a powerful 504 is powerful if you put it into place. And that goes to fidelity.

Leslie Morrison: It's certainly my experience that oftentimes kids start off with 504s and then graduate to IEPs. So I was wondering if you have some targets around 504s like you do with IEPs.

Victoria Forester: Again, just giving kids what they need within the 504. From my own personal experience, my son holds a Section 504 Plan. He has obsessive-compulsive disorder, super bright kid. And he was fine through middle school and in high school, and I'm a 504 lady. I'd have to bring the 504 plan pretty much to every one of his teachers, and really advocate for him because he wasn't able to advocate for himself yet. And that is where we need to get better so that everyone understands what kids need, and how to give kids what they need. And then he doesn't need to have an IEP if his 504 plan is put into place. Does it help?

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Leslie Morrison: It does.

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: Great. Thank you so much.

Victoria Forester: Thank you all. I appreciate it.

Leslie Morrison: And I just have a question. Will we at some point have an opportunity to hear how they're doing? In a year or two, will there be an opportunity to come back?

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: That would be great if you would be happy to come back.

Victoria Forrester: Yes.

4-B Jodi McCarthy, Program manager, Student Support Services, AUSD

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: We really appreciate that. And you'll stick around in case we have more questions. Alright. So Jodi McCarthy, thank you so much for joining us. She is the Program Manager of the Student Support Services at Alameda Unified School District.

Jodi McCarthy: And I'm talking to you about the needs assessment that Alameda Unified conducted last year. We took a real comprehensive look at the behavioral health needs of our students, because we were seeing a lot more reports of students being 5150 for suicide ideation, students needing more support with 504s around anxiety and depression, and eating disorders, and some mental health, behavioral health things that were going on. So what the district did last year was, took a really comprehensive look at all of the kids in our district from elementary school to middle school up to high school. Oh, and I have it. I've got it. Hang on. Let me see if I can do this. Okay, here we go. So, the purpose and the goal of the needs assessment was to really analyze what we were doing well, and what we were missing. We took a look at it through a deficit model much like Victoria was talking about. We wanted to see where the holes were, and how we can help kind of support and fill those holes. And fill the needs that our kids need because all kids need to learn, and they need to be able to thrive.

Jodi McCarthy: The needs assessment is 50 pages long, and I'm not going to do all 50 pages. It contains all of this stuff. It has everything that we did. We did online surveys with all of the students, we did online surveys with the staff, and online surveys with the parents. We did focus groups with fifth graders at a few of the elementary schools. We did focus groups with a girl's group and a boy's group at the two middle schools. We did four focus groups with students at Encinal and Alameda High. We looked at African-American students, we looked at the high-achieving students, students with a 4.2 or above. We looked at a girls group, and then a boys group. So we picked those four different focus groups, and had about a dozen kids in each of the groups that we did at the various schools. We did focus groups with parents through the after school program. We did the most, I think, that we could do. We thought of everything. That we had partners with Girls Inc. Girls Inc. came in and helped us run a bunch of the focus groups. So as many of our community members that we could touch, we tried to get that information from them.

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Jodi McCarthy: And then additionally, we also took a data from the Healthy Kids, the California Healthy Kids Survey, that's given to students at the end of school year. So, the report has all of these different categories. There's an executive summary, and we looked at seven findings. We looked at the tiers of support that we have at our schools, how we coordinate our practices, what the school's responsibility is, the district capacity, cultural responsiveness of the district. We looked at our school-based health center. There's a school-based health center at each high school site, one in Alameda High, one in Encinal, and one that serves like ECLC and that community, and ASTI and Island.

Jodi McCarthy: We had a couple of things that fell into another category, and you'll see what those are. I'll tell you those in a minute. Then we looked at the next steps. We came up with a list. There were 21 no-cost recommendations, things that we could implement right away that didn't have any cost. It's in the full report. In the report there's also a budget that we would need in order to really adequately address all of the things that we found. And then there's a list of references.

Jodi McCarthy: So what I'm going to do is give you just key findings of the seven different categories that we looked at. And I'm just going to highlight a couple of them out of each category because some of it is like school talk it, and it's not very exciting. So one of the things I think that is important that was a key finding out of the three tiers of support, the tier one is all everybody. The tier two system of support is groups of students, and the tier three support is individualized support.

Jodi McCarthy: So we looked at all of the tiers. We looked at what are we doing for everybody, what are we doing for groups of kids, and what are we doing for individual kids. And what came out of the findings of that section of it was that we need more help, we need more staff, more specialized staff to deal with things that are going on with our kids' needs. There's a critical need to increase partnerships with mental health providers in our community. And we need to integrate them better. We need to be able to communicate with those different partners better. There was a large group of parents that didn't agree about the consequences that were given to kids, whether it be suspensions or referrals, that it wasn't fairly enforced across the school. So there was like an equity piece that came out of that that we're looking at.

Jodi McCarthy: Parents, students and staff all believe that there's a lot of work that needs to be done in fostering a sense of community and A sense of belonging-ness at all of our schools we're working really hard on that, right now, through restorative practices and the last couple of bullet points is that the students really reported a lot of problems dealing with stress and anxiety, feelings of sadness and hopelessness and suicidal thoughts which we knew because there's been an increase of risk assessments done with our kids from the counselors and the school psychologists.

Jodi McCarthy: Drug use, and abuse is also a big problem on our campuses not just our high school campuses. Vaping is ridiculous right now. Key findings that came out of the coordinated practices surveys were that the systems of behavioral health support vary site-by-site, a lot of that has to do with funding and the populations of those groups. Some of our West End schools have a higher Medi-Cal and free reduced lunch population, and there's a lot more services that you can bring into schools like that, because some providers can only bill for Medi-Cal students. Some of

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our East End schools, they have a hard time getting supports in because they already have health insurance and they can't get any special funding for that.

Jodi McCarthy: There needs to be improved coordination with outside agencies so that we're really providing a holistic continuum of coordinated support for the kids and it's not so fragmented, there are some challenges with that, with our school-based health center who are governed by different privacy laws, they're governed by HIPAA and we're governed by FERPA in education. So there's some logistical things that we need to kind of work out so that it's collaborative, and it's a wrap around service. Some of the school-wide responsibility, key findings that came out that I think are really important is that there needs to be more training for our staff when it comes to helping kids who have ADHD, or depression or autism. Kids with disabilities there needs to be a lot more training that needs to happen with our staff. Internal communication needs to happen better within the school site in order to coordinate and provide the services, Victoria was saying that she would have to... At a different district would have to walk the 504 plans. So we've done some things within our database to kind of help improve that. But it could always get better.

Jodi McCarthy: And a greater awareness for staff really about what our kids are struggling with, because it is a whole different world that they are growing up in these days than what we grew up in, and the kids feel a disconnect, like the "you adults don't understand what we're going through these days". So there needs to be more training that needs to happen with our staff and building capacity to help support their needs also needs to happen. District capacity key findings there. We're doing a lot of amazing things at our district office, and there's a lot of acronyms up there. The MTSS, PBIS, the education terms that happen, with all of these initiatives with Multi-Tiered Systems of Support, the MTSS, there's a lot that we're doing and when it comes to building capacity of our staff some of our staff just need a minute to kind of really grasp what that is and to do it and to do it well. So we're trying to be really intentional and deliberate when it comes to rolling out new systems of support that we have for our kids, and with the budget realignments we're trying to tighten up the budget and we're trying to tighten up staff.

Jodi McCarthy: And the roles that the district staff play need to be better defined and clear because my role, I'm partially Special Ed, but I'm also funded out of Student Services so there needs to be like a better kind of definition of what the different people at the district office to so that the staff can come and get support from us. And clear expectations for outside providers are also needed. A lot of things came out of the cultural responsiveness key findings. The big ones that I feel that Victoria hit on is that there's a disparity regarding the suspension rates in many of our schools, especially as it relates to our African-American students and our students with special needs. They're being suspended at a higher rate than our other students, so that's something that we really need to focus on and take a look at, not only as a district, but at each school site and each admin team needs to look at that. Some of the students felt that the teachers and the adults don't understand certain cultural backgrounds, including those that have lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Some students reported in the focus groups that they felt that they weren't really understood by their teachers, like the teachers didn't really understand all of the different pressures that they were dealing with and they needed to be more understood and have more compassion.

Jodi McCarthy: The curriculum needs to be more culturally responsive. And then another thing

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that we're working on with our human resource department is that... because it was across the board, the students, staff, and families, all of them felt that there was a need for a more diverse staff. So we need to see more people that look like our students, teaching and in admin roles across our district. Access to the school-based health center at our high school sites. This was fun to talk about with our high school kids. The kids believe that the Health Center really is maximized. There's a lot of services that the health center offers, and it ranges from mental health, behavioral health services, from counseling, to condoms and birth control and reproductive health and physicals for sports as well as like immunizations. The school-based health center offers a lot to our kids, and there's kind of a stigma associated with using the school-based health center. It was one of the biggest barriers I think that came, that the kids reported.

Jodi McCarthy: Some of the kids didn't want to be seen walking into the school-based health center because "Johnny is going there for you know what, because him and Debbie are going to go under the..." So there's like this teasing and stigma, I guess, is the best word to describe it, around using the Health Center because they're teenagers. The thing also that was reported by the kids was those who were seeking counseling services. There's often a wait list for them to be seen by a therapist and get some counseling around stress and anxiety and the things that they were dealing with. The other category, things that we found, cellphone policies were inconsistent, and there's issues on the elementary school playground, and food came up. Food options came up a lot, especially with the high school kids. Over at Alameda High, there's access to Park Street, so there's more things for them to eat because who wants to eat school food. But over at Encinal it's a bit of a hike to actually get to something that they find more palatable. Some things that I pulled out of the survey that I wanted to go over really quickly. There's a few items, bullying, drugs and alcohol, and depression, and then there's a couple on the other slide.

Jodi McCarthy: The thing that we found was, Alameda High, and I don't know necessarily why, but it has a higher percentage of students that are struggling with things, with bullying, with drugs and alcohol. 86% of the students surveyed felt that a lot or some students were affected by drug or alcohol use. 87%, feelings of depression, right? Versus Encinal where it was only 64%. The stress, anxiety, and feeling worried, 92% of the students at Alameda High felt that kids were going through a lot of anxiety, and a lot of stress. Which really speaks to me.

Jodi McCarthy: The threats or feeling unsafe at Alameda High, there was 37% of the students felt that a lot or some of them were affected by feeling unsafe and at Encinal it was only 29%. But it's really that 92% at Alameda High that's kind of got a whole lot of red flags ringing for me. Through the California Healthy Kids survey, some of the biggest areas of concern that we looked at were cigarette use and vaping devices. 5% of seventh graders were using cigarettes or vaping devices. Seventh grade, like in middle school, so it's starting at middle school, and it just, is increasing up to where it was at least half of the students at the continuation school, were vaping or smoking. Chronic sadness and hopelessness was high across the grade levels.

Jodi McCarthy: It ranged from 21% to 35%, 14% of the ninth graders, and 21% of the students at the continuation High School had seriously considered attempting suicide. That's seriously considered, not just kind of thought about it but seriously considered it, to even attempting. Cyber bullying was reported the highest in middle school at 12%, and 11th grade at 14%. And kids need to

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eat their breakfast, whether or not they have... You know, my kids have it, it's in there, that they don't, kids need to eat their breakfast. We provide options for them at school, in the office, mostly, there's a bowl of fresh fruit or in most school offices there's access to food, kids have the access to food, they just need to eat it.

Jodi McCarthy: The online survey. Depression, feeling sad, teasing and problems at home were the areas for all three groups, the students, the parents and the staff that really popped up when it came to why kids were feeling stressed. There's underlying, there's already underlying mental health issues with depression or sadness. There's teasing and there's problems at home. In the top five relationship issues, staff reported that there's bullying and families reported that their kids are feeling lonely or left out. The focus groups were so fun.

Jodi McCarthy: The biggest unmet needs that the kids told us about in these groups was there's a lot of stress that they're dealing with, there's a lot of conflicts trying to balance everything. They've got a full academic load at school plus they play sports plus they're in clubs and then there's their social needs and playing Fortnite and all the other stuff that goes along with being a kid, it's really hard for them to kind of find balance and they need strategies and they need skills. They reported a lot of like, I need to learn how to manage it and I don't know how, and they need somebody to show them how to do it.

Jodi McCarthy: And dealing with social situations with their friends. High school students reported a huge problem with cannabis. They reported that vaping and marijuana was quite common and not unheard of, and it's even bigger than the alcohol use in the school. Adderall is big especially during finals. They reported a lot of depression, anxiety, and stress, too much homework, struggling with their grades, and teachers not understanding really what's going on with them at home. Pulling out the two different sub-groups the African-American and the high achieving students, the African-American students reported stress balancing life with sports and grades and homework and family life.

Jodi McCarthy: They really felt that their teachers and the adults on campus don't know what's going on with them. There's not a lot of connection that they feel with the adults on campus. They really said that they need more support and they felt like there wasn't a community and the teachers didn't really care if they passed or failed. That they were just another body in a class. So we need to do a better job at connecting with those students. And our high achieving students said that sleep was a huge issue. Stress, depression, anxiety and again, the balancing of their lives, the balancing of school and sports and the different clubs and stuff that they belong to. They really felt pressured to develop relationships with adults on campus. They felt like, that was something that they really needed to do. And parent pressure, they reported a lot of pressure and stress from their parents and their expectations of them, and living up to those expectations.

Jodi McCarthy: That was a lot. So out of all of that we dug really deep to kind of get at the needs of our students, we came up with the next steps. We have already formed a steering committee to kind of help drive this work now that we have it. We have a committee. We met already, in November, there's three other dates that we're going to meet through the school year to help gather the work and drive it, developing a communication plan so that we can bring out our findings to the

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community, and kind of solicit help with it. Developing a financial sustainability plan, because additional staff, it costs Money. Things that kind of fell into the no cost solutions were developing a clear process and site expectations for the referrals and for crisis intervention, kind of revising our roles and responsibilities on who we have providing mental health services, hopefully, freeing up more of our experts, freeing up more of our school psychologists who aren't just doing assessments for kids that are coming up for special education, like doing a better job with our tier one and our tier two. So that is, you know where I'm going with that.

Jodi McCarthy: So utilizing them better and strengthening and building relationships with outside partners which is really hard to do, it's really hard to do, especially in a community that doesn't have a lot of Medi-Cal population. Stuff that we already have planned, we're presenting all of this at the school sites, we're doing some community presentations, we have monthly meetings with Alameda Family Services, and they're going through their own revamping and we've already presented to the board and we're going to do more presentations on what we're doing in order to kind of move this process along. That's it.

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: Great. Thank you so much, I'm sure we have some questions.

Jodi McCarthy: A million I'm sure. Yeah, it's a lot.

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: Commissioner Brillinger, do you have anything that you want to...

Arnold Brillinger: I have. If you would have been working back in the '60s or in the '90s, with the same kind of assessment to find out what these different feelings were, how do your findings differ from somebody that would have been in the '60s, going to high school or in the 90s?

Jodi McCarthy: So I was going to high school in the 90s. Okay, early 90s, like '91, '92, but it was still the 90s, and I have a 13 and a 15 year old son and I was a counselor in the high school, I was at Alameda High, I was at Island high for a while. And the main difference I think for kids these days, versus kids back in the '80s or the '90s, is their access to each other and their access to information. And how fast this world moves.

Jodi McCarthy: You know what I mean? When Jewell came on to the scene - it's like an E-cig type of thing. When the vaping came on to the scene, everybody knew about it, right away because it was right there. If it was back in my day we would have to actually dial a phone to tell each other about it and then listen to the modem as it kind of screeched along and maybe someone would get a page. Their access, I think, their access, their access to information, their access to ways to use, their access to peers, and the social pressures. I think that's the biggest difference between then and now.

Arnold Brillinger: Alright. And I realize that the cyber bullying and so forth has a lot to do with it.

Jodi McCarthy: Some.

Arnold Brillinger: And we didn't have it way back then. We had to do it in your face.

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Jodi McCarthy: Right.

Arnold Brillinger: But I was thinking, a lot of these things but no one asked us back in the 60s. I don't know, did they ask you in the 90s?

Jodi McCarthy: Ask me what?

Arnold Brillinger: About these different behaviors.

Jodi McCarthy: I don't recall ever getting asked about it. I don't know if I was ever asked about it in high school, or if a report like this ever came out in the 90s. But then, I was a teenager and it was all about me, so I don't know what, right? What was really going on. I don't know. I don't remember participating in anything like the depth that we did with this survey last year.

Arnold Brillinger: Yes. I mean, I would like to commend you for doing this.

Jodi McCarthy: Thank you.

Arnold Brillinger: But I've, I was going to high school and middle school in the 60s. And a lot of these things I thought, "Hey, we had those things too". We didn't have the cyber things of course, but the whole thing about "You don't understand me". And so forth. And I bet everybody here remembers that when they were growing up, no matter what, if they were 60s, it's good to get this out in the open. And we need to have the cooperation of the parents and the staff, the teachers, the administration, and all through the educational process. So I commend you for doing this. And I also wanted to know. Well, obviously there are other school districts that are doing something like this. How do your students seem to compare to them or is it pretty much the same way? As percentages and stuff like that?

Jodi McCarthy: So when we were starting this process, we looked at New Haven Unified and we looked at Berkeley Unified, they both did. We looked to them, because I don't want to reinvent the wheel, you want to see what people have done and what worked and you want to use what they used. And our needs assessment showed... Our needs assessment showed a higher increase in the anxiety and the depression and the suicide ideation. I spoke to Karen, oh God Karen Orlashack. She runs the Intensive Outpatient Program at Kaiser. I spoke to her at the beginning of the year about a couple of our students, who were 5150'd and they go into either the partial hospitalization program or they go into the Intensive Outpatient Program. And she asked me, she's like, "What is going on in Alameda?" And I'm like, "What are you talking about?" She said, "Well, anywhere from 30 to 50% of the kids in the IOP or the PHP programs are from Alameda". That's huge, because they serve Berkley, Emeryville, San Leandro, San Lorenzo, Hayward and Oakland. And for a program to have 30 to 50% of the participants in it from Alameda, is alarming.

Jodi McCarthy: So alarming that I met with Kaiser this morning to find out how we can partner with them more. But of the comparable needs assessments that I've looked at, it's our depression, our anxiety, our stress, and our suicide ideation, as is more. And our drug use is a little bit more

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because kids use that to cope with this, and it's just a snowball.

Arnold Brillinger: What kind of pressures would be different here in Alameda that's raising those percentages?

Jodi McCarthy: In the shows, you find more of those pressures on the east end. It's the higher socioeconomic, the higher demand on the kids, the higher stress that you're going to go to Harvard or Yale or Stanford, and to do that, you need to play football, basketball, baseball, run track, do cross-country, be in this club, be in that club, do your community service. So there's a lot of pressure that's being put on our kids, especially at our higher-performing, higher-achieving students, so much so that we have a homework committee at Alameda Unified looking at reducing homework for our kids across the district, like limiting what AP classes you can take. Our kids are taking five different advanced placement courses plus taking a course at the community college. The level of stress that they're under is ridiculous.

Arnold Brillinger: Now Alameda High takes in all of the students from Harbor Bay Island?

Jodi McCarthy: Bay Farm, yes.

Arnold Brillinger: Oh, Bay Farm? Okay.

Jodi McCarthy: Union [Street]? Thank you. I should know. Yeah, that's the line.

Arnold Brillinger: Alright, thank you very much.

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: God, I feel so grim.

Jodi McCarthy: Sorry, it's this heavy. I know, I'm sorry.

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: Commissioner Roloff?

Jennifer Roloff: Okay, so first of all, thank you both so much for coming. I'm the, what am I, the liaison to the school board from our commission. And so as our commission decided at our retreat last January, and I think we'll be having another retreat to decide on priorities we probably decided to prioritize and focus on mental health needs, not that we're eliminating anything else, but to put a focus on there. So in seeing what the school board was up to, this was the first report that I caught a wind of and what struck me was that - and correct me where I'm wrong - but it's my understanding that they said, "Well we don't really have any money to focus on the things that would take money, so let's focus on the things that we can do that are no cost." And I think that's fantastic that we're doing that. So as a commission, what we're chartered with is to try and make referrals to council and encourage council.

Jennifer Roloff: And this is where I was saying earlier, talking to both of you, is there anything that you think that we can do to advocate to the city for budget or resources to help where the school district is saying no to you, or maybe you're already looking at other sources of funding? It's a lot, I

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know, and you don't have to answer it all now. You can get back to us too.

Jodi McCarthy: Anything you can do to advocate for services, I'm not going to say no to. And that's kind of what we're doing now is we're presenting these needs. It's like, "Hey community... " Because, we can't take care of our children by ourselves, you know what I mean? The school district can't do it all. We need the community. We need the parents, we need the non-profits, we need the village.

Victoria Forester: And right now what we're seeing is that when it comes to mental health needs, the only game in town is special education. So in order to get help if we have mental health issues which many of our students do, you have to get referred for an IEP, individualized education plan, then the cost of special education skyrockets and it just becomes this wall. In other districts that have lower socio-economics and higher Medi-Cal needs, you can harness that Medi-Cal dollar to get everything that they need. Alameda's, it's trickier. It's trickier because we have less than 30% of our students on Medi-Cal and in neighboring districts, folks in Oakland and Berkeley. San Leandro's has 73% of their students qualify for Medi-Cal. Heck, I had all sorts of services in San. Leandro.

Victoria Forester: It's extremely difficult. So any way that we can partner with community organizations to bring mental health services or just some emotional work to our students, we're bettering the situation. That's a great question. And we will... You will see both of us link arms with anyone that wants to help us bring this work to our kids. What you saw tonight is incredibly alarming. And again, 34 years in public education, I'm a little older than Jodi, those statistics that are just about Alameda Unified are extremely alarming.

Jennifer Roloff: Right, okay. Just a thought, maybe we put that on our agenda for our upcoming retreat. We'll have another one early in 2019 and see what we can come up with.

Jodi McCarthy: The city of Alameda also did a needs assessment last year, and one of their findings was there was a need for mental health services. So it's not just a finding for the school district, but... I don't know, I think there's more awareness...

Jennifer Roloff: Find a way to bridge those two. Okay, thank you. I think that was my big broad question. So I know that was a lot, I'll stop there. Thanks so much for coming in.

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: Commissioner Deutsch.

Susan Deutsch: Well thank you very much. These presentations were excellent. I worked in the Berkeley Unified School District in Special Ed. In Berkeley, they have Berkeley Mental Health. We referred so many students there, but are those just Medi-Cal students that get access? And how does Berkeley Mental Health get their funding, because that's not county, that's city?

Jodi McCarthy: Right. And right now for our mental health work in special education, we have partnered with the county most of all. We're also using East Bay Association for Children, EBAC, for our mental health work. But any way you slice it, the billing is much more expensive for

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students who don't have Medi-Cal, right?

Jodi McCarthy: And so you'll see the long lines or the waitlists for our students, they're for students who don't have Medi-Cal. And what our findings showed in this needs assessment is that our students without Medi-Cal are actually more stressed out, having more suicidal ideation. And so we're chugging along, and again, over qualifying kids for special education services because it's the only game in town, simply because we can't afford to afford not to.

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: Commissioner Morrison.

Leslie Morrison: Yeah, thank you so much for the presentation. And the statistics are really alarming, and I don't know that there's an easy fix. One of the questions I had was really about the availability of mental health services in the city, and I think you've already addressed that. I'm new to the commission, so I'm not really certain about the history, but I think that there is a paucity of mental health providers across the country, and particularly mental health providers for children. And my experience is there aren't a lot of mental health providers in the city of Alameda. Or people who are private pay. And so, I like you reaching out to Kaiser. I wonder about reaching out to some of the other providers. I don't think it's an easy solution. And I'm just sort of parroting what you've already said, but I think to put it all on the school district doesn't really seem fair, but it's a big problem, I don't know where to start.

Jodi McCarthy: Well in the Kaiser and the health insurance it took me a year and a half to get the right person, I guess, because they're a huge are organization, and I'm a little person, looking for that right person at the right time to get in front of.

Leslie Morrison: But there aren't a lot of child psychiatrists in the country. There aren't a lot of child therapists in the country. So it's not just an Alameda problem, it's kind of a national problem. I also don't know that private providers are really wanting to volunteer to provide mental health services. You talk about access point, certainly, special education is an access point, but you talk about people getting 5150'd because that's the way they can get into the mental health service community which, again, you don't want to be 5150-ing people to get them mental health services, but sometimes that's the only point of access because the wait list for therapy sessions is comparably six to eight weeks out anyway.

Victoria Forester: We have actually instructed parents on how to go about that situation for kids that were in that desperate need. And I think that's among the hardest work I've ever done is to talk to a mom about how to call the police, and what to say to get your kid into a hospital. You can't unlearn that work. It's very, very difficult. And yet, sometimes that's what we have to do to get some of the help for mental health, particularly behavioral issues particularly at home. I can't always effect at home as educators during the day. So instructing parents on how to go about that is heart-wrenching.

Leslie Morrison: The only other thought that I have is about developing a peer network in your schools, and I don't know if that would be a low cost or a no cost option, but certainly at schools of higher education that are really developing mental health services programs, they are really looking

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at sort of a peer-to-peer model.

Jodi McCarthy: We have that. The county runs a program called TUPE, Tobacco-Use Prevention Education. They use a peer-to-peer model, so they do a lot of training of peers around tobacco and vaping and stuff like that, to go out and do the work. They do that in the middle and high schools. So we have our middle and high schools participating in that. And then also through the school-based health centers, they have something called, YEAH, and I forget right now what that stands for, but it's... Youth Education something, but it's the students doing peer-to-peer connections within the high schools. And what we presented, don't forget, it's a deficit model. We're doing a lot of amazing, wonderful things, but we have huge needs.

Victoria Forester: Certainly, my experience is that a lot of kids are the identified patients. And so there was a lot that you said about family pressures and stresses at home that the kids are bringing to school. And again, that's sort of beyond the scope of what a school can look at, but I think that that plays a part, it might be the one that's showing up, displaying the stress and they're coming to the place where they do that, but it's a larger system that's playing it, it's what loops back to what services were available.

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: Commissioner Anto.

Anto Aghapekian: I'm overwhelmed with all the information that you gave us tonight, and I'm basically humbled. [inaudible].

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: Yeah, I want to follow up on that as well. The work that you're doing is definitely very difficult with all the things that are coming in different directions and stuff. So we really thank you for the work that you do and for coming to present with us. It's really great. And we have people who listen to this meeting as well. So, it's hopefully getting out to a broad base. With so many issues that you've brought up, where do you start? I'm just listening all these things and I'm like, "Gosh, I wouldn't know where to start." Do you start with the suicide prevention? Do you start with the vaping? How do you tackle this?

Jodi McCarthy: It can be really overwhelming. It's a lot. And we're doing a lot as a district. Kirsten Zazo and myself, she's the Chief of Student Support Services, we are on the board of Alameda Family Services, to kind of strengthen that partnership, we're doing a lot of outreach and, "Hey, we need help", type things. We're also doing a lot of things at the district. We're doing the multi-tier systems of support, which is providing different supports, both academics, socio-emotional at all of our school sites. Girls Inc is an amazing partner. They are putting groups, girls groups in every single elementary school, trying to empower these young women in our political climate that we have right now that is not... Anyway, so they're empowering girls, and teaching girls how to talk to each other, and how to be friends and not be so catty, and just strengthening those skills at the elementary level, so that when they get to the high school and middle school level, they'll have a solid base.

Jodi McCarthy: It is doing things like bringing in restorative practices. There's about 10 of us or so at the district office that are trained, trainers for restorative practices. So teaching... We have this

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three-year rollout of bringing restorative practices into school to bring down... So there's a lot of awesome stuff that we're doing, and it's not like you can pick vaping.

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: Okay, does anyone have any other questions or comments?

Arnold Brillinger: I just wanted to thank you also, because I've spent a lot of time in elementary education, and I've been on the south side of Chicago and East Oakland. These were all not public schools though. Okay. And also in San Francisco. When they took their achievement tests and stuff like that, the whole school was up in the top 90s, that kind of stuff. And so I've been a part of both of those different groups, but was really surprised to see the stats that you brought up here.

Victoria Forester: Alright, we're glad to come back in and talk about progress.

S?: Thanks so much.

4-C Retreat Scheduling for 2019 at Mastic Senior Center
Available dates are 1/12, 1/26, 2/9 and 2/16. No retreat in 2019 is also an option.

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: Okay, so we're going to move into item 4C, which is the retreat scheduling. It's open to the public. You're welcome. So Laurie, were you going to provide the dates or do you want me to? Sorry, I don't have them.

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: So I believe the first thing we need to vote on is whether or not we would like a retreat this year. Because of the way that we had had the schedule in the past, we needed to make up a meeting because of how we had it every other month with the August, City not having any meetings that month. So this year we can decide whether or not we want to have the meeting, otherwise we have our six regular schedule meetings. I would like to propose that we do have a retreat, an extended time that we all get to talk and plan for the year. So I think we should propose a vote on whether or not you guys also agree with having a retreat for next year. Can I do all in favor or...

Jennifer Roloff: So I'm just looking, January 9th is our next meeting. Are you saying we add an extra date or maybe take January 9th and change that, use our retreat in lieu of a meeting, or add an extra meeting?

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: Laurie, do you know?

Laurie Kozisek: Madam Chair, I believe the reason that we started having the retreats was because we only had five meetings per year and we needed a minimum of six, because we couldn't meet in August because the Council chamber was dark. So we switched to odd months, so now we get our six meetings in. So if you want to do the retreat, it's just because you want to do a retreat. It could be an extra meeting, or you could choose to do the retreat, and then cancel one of the regular meetings. It's up to you if you want to cancel the November one or something.

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: Okay, so maybe we vote on whether or not we would like a retreat.

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These are usually on a Saturday. I think it was maybe three hours, three or four hours last year. Maybe we vote on whether we want to have a retreat, and then we can decide on whether or not we would like to cancel our January meeting. That sound good? Okay. So everyone in favor of having a retreat.

Arnold Brillinger: I move that we have a retreat next year.

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: Right. Do we have a second?

Jennifer Roloff: I second it.

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: Okay. All in favor?

All except Leslie Morrison: Aye.

Leslie Morrison: I abstain, just because I've never been in the council, I don't really have an opinion either way for the vote. I would abstain.

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: No problem. Okay, anyone in favor of canceling the January 9th meeting in order to have the retreat?

Jennifer Roloff: OK, I'll move, or re-schedule the January meeting into a retreat. So that it's a retreat, okay. Is that weekend? Yeah, I would make that. Yeah, I move to do that.

Susan Deutsch: I second

Anto Aghapekian: I second [inaudible comments]

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: So we have a few options, sorry, for the retreat. It could be the 12th, the 26th, or February 9th, or February 16th. So we can agree on a date, hopefully, that most people are able to attend. We want to try to pick a date first.

All: [short discussion on dates]

Arnold Brillinger: Did we have someone second her motion?

Susan Deutsch: Yes, I did.

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: This is for the cancellation of the...Rescheduling, sorry. Thank you. Rescheduling of the meeting from January which is the 9th to one of the retreat weeks. But we just wanted to check and see if there was a weekend that worked with everyone. So if we want to have a motion, if someone would like to do a motion to reschedule, and then...

All: [More discussion of dates]

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Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: So I would like to do a motion to move the January 9th meeting to February 9th, and it would be a retreat. And we would work out the timing, not sure what it will be, but I think it was like 10:00 to 2:00 last year. So do we have a second?

Susan Deutch: I second.

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: Okay. All in favor?

Arnold Brillinger: No, wait a minute. Let's have some discussion.

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: Go ahead.

Arnold Brillinger: Yes, I don't think that we necessarily need to get less meetings because this group, when I look at the people here, there are a lot of things that can be discussed and voted on, and worked on in six meetings plus a retreat, and I would just not like to shorten it down again. So I'm saying we should still keep the January meeting and schedule a retreat somewhere.

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: Okay. And we also, I believe, have some speakers for our January 9th meeting. Correct, Laurie? So that's another thing that we want to take into consideration as well.

Anto Aghapekian: I move that we have the January meeting, and also in addition, we have the retreat, so that we don't compromise the guests who will come on the 9th, and that's what I propose.

Jennifer Roloff: I'll second that. That's okay.

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: We want to vote on that?

Leslie Morrison: So, technically, those are conflicting amendments; one is to reschedule the January, 9th meeting. So I think you have to vote on whether you're going to reschedule the January 9th meeting, and if that motion doesn't pass, then you could have a second motion to have an additional retreat meeting, but I don't know how you amend the first. I don't think it's a friendly amendment. I think you have to vote down the motion on the first.

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: Okay. So we'll vote.

Leslie Morrison: Yeah, take a vote on whether we're going to move the January meeting and everyone who thinks that we should have an extra meeting would then vote no to rescheduling the January meeting, and then we would have an additional... I think that that would be the proper way to do that.

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: Okay. So we'll go back to the January 9th meeting, a motion to keep it as it is and not reschedule it.

Leslie Morrison: The motion is to reschedule. So all those in favor of rescheduling the January 9th meeting to a February retreat, that's the motion that's on. You could also withdraw that motion if the

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person, people who made it want to withdraw it given the comments. It could be withdrawn also. Or we can vote on the motion, either way. Who made the motion? Do they want to withdraw it?

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: Who made the motion, Laurie?

Laurie Kozisek: The motion was made by Jennifer, and then it was remade by Jenn, and was seconded by Susan.

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: Do we want to withdraw that?

Jennifer Roloff: So we would like to withdraw the motion.

Susan Duetsch: Okay. Yes, we'll withdraw the motion.

Jennifer Roloff: Yes. So now you can have a new motion.

Arnold Brillinger: Okay, I'll make the motion that we have our six scheduled meetings plus a retreat, because the retreat is very important for us to get to know each other, and we need to build relationships. That's what those two ladies said that they need to build relationships in Alameda between parents, teachers and committee members. And so, okay, so that's my motion is that we keep the six plus a retreat date.

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: Okay. Do we have a second?

Anto Aghapekian: Second.

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: All in favor?

All except Leslie Morrison: Aye.

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: Any opposed?

Leslie Morrison: And I again am going to abstain being a new member. But I'm happy to attend in February.

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: Okay. I believe we're done with item 4C. So we'll move on to Old Business, Commission and Board Liaison Reports. Oh, go ahead, Laurie.

Laurie Kozisek: Could I get a clarification that Arnold made a motion that we keep the scheduled meeting and add a retreat?

Arnold Brillinger: Correct.

Laurie Kozisek: I think you need to make another motion saying the retreat will be on such and such day from 10:00 to 12:00 or 10:00 to 2:00.

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Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: 10:00 to 2:00. Okay. So I would like to make an additional motion that we have the retreat on February 9th, from 10:00 to 2:00 PM. Can I have a Second?

Susan Deutsch: I second.

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: Okay. All in favor?

All: Aye.

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: Any abstain or nay? No? Okay. Okay, I believe we're all set now.

5. OLD BUSINESS

5-A Commission and Board Liaison Reports (All commissioners)

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: Old Business Commission and Board Liaison Reports. Commissioner Brillinger?

Arnold Brillinger: Yes, I've been going to various commissions on disability in Berkeley and also in Oakland. The ones in Oakland seem to have lot of meat to them, because they're doing all kinds of work. Not only worried about the paratransit in the East Bay, but they're also dealing with different matters of transportation and how things are being constructed in Oakland. And I also went to the different AC Transit meeting, and they're continuing on with the working on International Boulevard to make it where the buses have their own lanes and things. So it's going to be interesting to see that. Our transportation meeting here in Alameda is next week, so I'll tell us about it in January. So those are my things.

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: Great, thank you. Commissioner Roloff?

Jennifer Roloff: The only thing I wanted to follow up on is... And I think, I don't know if we have a commission, but is it Jennifer, Jen and Anto, you were working on ADA for businesses, and we had suggested that the Facade grant that the city matches be extended into businesses doing ADA, and essentially, Laurie came back with a "No". And I'm wondering if there's a way we can push on that, if we could talk to someone in the city offices as to why or...

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: That would be great. Do we know who is in charge of issuing the grant, or different grants for the city?

Jennifer Roloff: Like the Facade grant. Do you remember the Facade grant, and that you came back and you said you checked into it and they said "No"? And I'm thinking maybe we can push a little bit.

Laurie Kozisek: I can't remember at the moment. I will get back to you on that. Who should I report that to?

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Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: You can report it to me. And then I'll spread the word.

Jennifer Roloff: Okay, thank you. That's all I have for today.

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: Thank you so much. Commissioner Deutsch.

Susan Deutsch: So I went to the park and rec mission meeting, and I presented about inclusive playgrounds. I thought they were very receptive. I heard that they liked my presentation, just from somebody, randomly, who heard about it. So I think it really went well. They're, right now, in the process of re-doing Littlejohn Park, and that park is going to have some inclusive aspects to it, but it's not going to be totally inclusive; it's a small park. And I think they're going to be talking more as they re-do other parks and build other parks. They're going to be talking more about how they can make the playgrounds more inclusive from the conversations. So I could send out a copy of what their plans are, for Littlejohn Park, but you really can't tell from the picture, really. But if everyone wants that, I can send it to Laurie and she can send it out or however.

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: Great. Are their plans pretty solidified at this point?

Susan Deutsch: For Littlejohn, yeah, yeah, that's solidified, so we can't make changes for that.

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: So maybe future parks we can try to get in early.

Susan Deutsch: Yeah, they're really open to it for future...

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: Oh, that's awesome, great.

Anto Aghapekian: I was speaking with one of the commissioners about your presentations, and he said that he was very impressed as well as the other members of the commission, and they learned a lot from your presentation, not only they would invest, but they're going to use some of the items with the presentation in their future plans.

Susan Deutsch: Thank you. I had that impression from them.

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: So Commissioner Morrison, just so you're aware that each year during our retreat, we have specific organizations or Commissions within the city that we all attend. And so during our retreat, we'll re-categorize who would like to be a representative for our commission and attend meetings or events, etcetera, so that the city knows that we're available as a resource and that we're able to get information from them and provide information to them, so it works out well.

Leslie Morrison: Great. Looking forward to participating.

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: Great. Commissioner Anto.

Anto Aghapekian: I don't have much. The city was very quiet, I guess it was maybe because after

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the elections. But there is two items that the planning department is working on, and you've probably heard them that's one on Central that a member of the planning department came and did a presentation for us last year, and they have made some changes, some modifications to the original plan. And then the other one is on Clement Street. The plans are pretty well-developed. And I would like to, if the mission's agreeable, to invite one of the planning department officials to come and make presentation to us and both develop next meeting or the week, whenever they can come.

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: Okay. So, on my part, I went to a Chamber of Commerce meeting to talk about the ADA Initiative that I've done, been working on for getting businesses to be doing small steps to be more accessible under the ADA, and providing certificate, showing that they've made progress. So I left a number of flyers there, and we have a commission email address so that people can email and ask questions and send in photos of their before and after. And I also got in contact with three city staff members that I met and have asked them to pass along our flyer and our information as well. I'm still going to try to work on spreading the word a little bit more the best I can, so any ideas on how to do that, the better. And then I believe the... I'm sorry, I don't know the exact name. They came to talk to us about the help for the elderly and some of the homeless. They're going to be talking in front of the city council next meeting, I believe.

Laurie Kozisek: If you're speaking of the Alameda Collaborative, which is working on the McKay Wellness Center, yes, they spoke here, and then they spoke at the planning board, and then I think they're speaking at the council.

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: And this is to remove the government name on the parcel right now.

Laurie Kozisek: Yes, it's to remove the government overlay, which is a required step before they can sell the property. They already have it leased and they're already going ahead with their plans.

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: If anyone's interested at the next council meeting. Does anyone have any other items?

Arnold Brillinger: Jen, I had a question for your group. Are there certificates that you're handing out already?

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: I have not handed one out yet, but I do have a copy of it. It'll probably... It'll be half-sized, but it'll look like this.

Arnold Brillinger: Okay, because there's... I'm kind of slow going down Park Street, and so it gives me time to read all of the notices in the different windows. And somebody had a thing up there, it was a certificate that they were passed by a CASp person, but it didn't have any signatures. Because I was wondering who did this, and I didn't know where they got the certificate from.

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: Laurie, I think you would be able to answer that question since you're CASp certified.

Laurie Kozisek: I would.

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Arnold Brillinger: Now see, I'm going to have to go back and find out because I don't remember where it was that I saw it.

Laurie Kozisek: Okay, do take a look at it again. There should be a number on it or something, so that you can see who the issuing person was, and their CASp number.

Arnold Brillinger: I don't think it was signed, or that it had anything on there. Well, let me find out. I'll give you a call and let you check it out. Because I thought it was kind of interesting because I thought, "Oh, the group is working on this and here's somebody's order, or whatever..." But I don't think it looked like that.

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: Right. No, so that's something that you can pay for to have a certified accessibility inspector come in and look into your facility. Separate, more intensive than this program. This is more of a free encouragement. That's more of a compliance-based.

6. STAFF COMMUNICATIONS

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: Okay. We'll move on to number six, staff communications.

Laurie Kozisek: Thank you, Madam Chairman. The only thing I have to present is that I got an email today from someone who was ejected out of a restaurant because she had a service animal, which rather surprised her. So you might want to consider looking into service animals and educating people on what's a service animal as opposed to an emotional support animal or therapy animal or whatever, and add that to your education of businesses.

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: Right. Yeah, that's a huge item. Thank you for bringing that up, and I think that's something that we should definitely look into. You see it on the news a lot recently, and it's definitely illegal to eject someone who has a service animal. So it's sad to hear that that's happening in Alameda if that was the case.

7. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: Item seven, any announcements? Commissioner Brillinger?

Arnold Brillinger: The other day I was going down Park Street again, and I heard someone yelling. "Hey you, stop, stop," and I thought, "Well, there's a lot of 'hey yours out here, so I don't... I'm not going to turn around." And so then, "You in a wheelchair, stop!" So then I did a U and I looked, and it was another lady in a power chair and she says, "You're on that commission for the city." I said, "Well, yes." And she says, "Well I've got a problem." And her problem was that her power chair had stopped on her when she was at Mastick, and I don't know how she ever got home, but it turned out that no one was really able to help her.

Arnold Brillinger: And there's nothing... The county used to have a service where if you had some kind of a problem with your wheelchair, you could call them and see if you can get some help. Now

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I've had problems with mine, but I've luckily been able to get help and get back home because of AC Transit or somebody else who really went out on a limb and took care of it for me. So what I would like to do just in this announcement thing, could we put it on the next agenda? And it'd only be like five minutes or something like that of trying to work up something in the county again and... Okay.

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: So we actually do have it as part of our agenda. It reached Laurie as well that people are having trouble getting home. So, perfect prelude into our next meeting. This is a huge issue that was cancelled, this program that Arnold is speaking of where the fire department will not come and pick you up and take you home. There's not a current system. And I think this is something that we really need to look into and try to help address so that people are not stranded when their wheelchair or other mobility device fails them when they're out on the streets.

Anto Aghapekian: Two or three meetings ago, we had a presentation about emergency help for people, if somebody faints on the street, there is an emergency department in the city that goes and picks you up. Wasn't there a lady that gave a representation like that to us, about three meetings ago, two meetings ago?

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: I know we've spoken about a number of transportation items whether it be the taxi or the Paratransit or the shuttle. When we're talking about the bikes, and maybe they would prevent you from going down a curb ramp or something. So it's definitely come up, but I don't think we've had a concrete solution. Because they could submit something to the city, but that request is not something that's immediate. The see click fix is something that you guys work on over a period of time. It's not like an emergency service. If anyone has any other comments on that.

Susan Deutsch: Well, we did have a presentation just about emergencies in general, like if there's an earthquake or some kind of major emergency in the city, somebody presented that there's a plan for that, but it didn't include somebody getting stuck with their wheelchair, just going out on... So yeah, we have to...

Anto Aghapekian: I brought that up, that issue. I did bring it up; what happens if a person in a wheelchair is stuck because of the curb, the sidewalk or whatever, and they said that they did not have any services for people who are in wheelchairs or they're handicapped. And I brought it up especially because they were assisting other people, but for some reason, not people in wheelchairs. That's why I brought it up.

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: So maybe we can brainstorm and look into things between now and our next meeting since it is going to be a topic. And maybe, since you're connected with the other disability commissions, see if they have anything.

Arnold Brillinger: I was going to suggest that, let's say we can't do it this meeting because it's not on the agenda, but for this group to say "Yes, let's look into that," and get people from the other groups to get together and approach the county and say, "This is what we can do," or, "how is this funded," or find out all the things about it. So it sounds to me like the same lady probably called you or whatever, and she's probably watching right now too, so...

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Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: And then she's the one who reported it, but I'm sure that it happens to people a lot more often than we know of. So I definitely want to take it seriously and look into it.

Jennifer Roloff: Do we know, so if you actually call the fire department, they would say, "Sorry, no"?

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: That's what an email correspondence that Laurie had said, yeah. It's not part of their...

Arnold Brillinger: They may show up though. I've had occasion where I was dropped off, and instead of turning right on the sidewalk, I went over on the grassy area, and it was right after a big rain, and if I would have kept on going, I would have gotten back to the sidewalk, but stupid me, I stopped for a moment, and then tried to get going again, and just dug a big old pit in the people's lawn. And in that case, I did call the fire department, they sent out some burly guys and they alley-ooped me back to the sidewalk. So, there are certain situations where they will, but in this one, I don't remember, it was some kind of a mechanical problem, I think.

Laurie Kozisek: Madam Chairman, I believe in your case, Commissioner Arnold, it was a lift assist. They were getting you back up on your feet, so to speak. And they do that a lot. They do it every day with people. Whereas this person that contacted you and contacted us was in good health, but had a chair that wouldn't move, and so she essentially needed another way to get home. And so the staff got her out to the curb and got an Uber or something like that for her to get her home. So the fire department wouldn't have been able to drive her home.

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: Okay. So, it's understanding the differences of what is under their role, and then what is beyond their role that is the gap that we're missing. Does anyone have any further comments or announcements?

Jennifer Roloff: I just wanted to remind everyone, or share that December 15th, between 10:00 AM and noon, and I believe it's rain or shine, is the dedication opening of Jean Sweeney Park. And if we can go there, I think it's great. Amy will be there from Parks and Rec, and I think it's always good we can have a presence. I plan to be there. 10:00 AM to noon, Jean Sweeney Park, on the 15th. And then, on a happy note, this Saturday, December 1st, from 12:00 PM to 5:00 PM at Feel Good Chiropractic on Central, Sensory Santa is taking appointments, and I think it's for children with sensory issues. So, there's no spotlights, no crowds, no extra noise, one-on-one quiet appointments, and I thought that was fantastic that our community was responding to needs of some of the children. So, they're still taking appointments. If anyone watching is interested, or spread the word.

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: That's awesome.

8. ADJOURNMENT

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: Okay, I'd like to do a motion to adjourn this meeting. Do I have a

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second?

Arnold Brillinger: Second.

Acting Chair Jenn Barrett: All in favor?

All: Aye.