

# TOWNHALL MEETING - TEEN CENTER

Thursday, April 22, 2010

12:00pm – 1:30pm

DeMartini House – 207 Front Street, Loyalton

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## - ATTENDANCE -

### Mental Health Advisory Board:

Mike Filippini (Chair); Linda Diltz (consumer family member); Dave Goiceochea (County Board of Supervisors); Robin Jaquez (Public Health Nurse); Kim Turner (community member); Judy Blakney (County Fiscal Technician)

### Community Members:

Ken Bennett, Jesse Whitley, Lori McGee, Bre' Whitley, Aubree Taylor, Tricia Valene, Vanessa Fatheree, Jamie Morrison, John Fatheree, Jacob Mathis, Dianne Bruns, Ron Hall, Karen Rickman, Gary Shelton, Joanne Nunes, Ashley Cabrera, Jan Buck, Laurenc DeVita

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## QUESTIONS/ANSWERS & PUBLIC COMMENTARY

**Ashley Cabrera, senior at Loyalton High School, presented the survey results from her polling of high school students with regard to the possibility of a Teen Center, what activities and services they would like to see, what hours of availability they would like, and what location they preferred.**

*In summary, youth requested a Loyalton venue (many specifically named the Middle School campus) with access to the soccer field, basketball courts, and gymnasium. The teens specifically liked the idea of a teen-run, teen-focused community center. They requested afterschool tutoring and homework help, sports equipment, video games/movies/TV, computers, pool table/foosball table/air hockey table, bean bag chairs, indoor and outdoor furniture for hanging out, and a snack bar. They also requested a BBQ so they could organize community BBQ events. They were very flexible with regard to hours of availability, primarily Monday through Saturday.*

**Gary S: What will be the hours and days it's open?**

*Carol R: Scheduling, activities, availability to be determined by the teens.*

**Karen R: Will there be an opportunity for community members to volunteer or provide mentoring? Will community members/volunteers be covered under county insurance and liability?**

*Carol R: Yes to all.*

**Gary S: Who from Human Services will be staffed at the Teen Center (TC)? What will the requirements and qualifications consist of?**

*Carol R: Part-time staff will be hired from within the community. Finger-printing and drug-testing will be required. Other Human Services staff available may include a mental health therapist and the Student Assistance Program counselor.*

**Jan B/Sierra Booster: Is there any possibility of partnering with the Arts Council for use of the stage, to bring arts into the community?**

*Carol R: Yes.*

**Aubree T: Will there be a membership fee for use of the TC?**

*Carol R: No.*

**Dave G: What is the identified target population? Just local Loyaltown youth? How will the transportation issues be handled?**

*Joanne N: There are 137 students in the high school, and unclear how many middle school students. Using sports, dances, and other extra-curricular activities as examples, students have always found a way to stay in town and get home.*

**Karen R: Will there be a snack bar?**

*Carol R: Yes.*

**Ron H: One neighbor complaint can shut the whole project down; are the neighbors going to be okay with it?**

*Robin J: I am a neighbor, and I'm completely for it. I'd rather see that building being used than sitting empty. It was a school with student activity at one time; it will be no different now.*

*Ashley C: The rules of conduct for the TC will be designed by teens and will follow their own rules.*

**Ron H: You can also probably get low-cost furnishings from local casinos.**

**Jesse W: Parents who are interested in contributing without stepping on toes are encouraged to attend the meeting at the Family Resource Center at the end of the month. Parents and adults may have been afraid to get involved because of the liability. In light of Devin's suicide, we need to have adults who are willing to stand up and be identified as available trusted resources. We can learn a lot from these teens. (applause)**

**Dianne B: The school was closed for safety reasons; have those safety issues been addressed?**

*Carol R/Mike F: The school was closed because of the higher structural requirements for school buildings, and because of budget cuts (was a savings to the school district to close the middle school and consolidate locations. The floor tiles in the auditorium and hallway were identified to have asbestos, so part of the renovations will be to seal those tiles and comply with safety regulations. The Teen Center activities will be relegated to the portion of the middle school building that did not have issues with the windows. Bottom line, the school is structurally sound and safe.*

**Jan B/Sierra Booster: What about the rest of the building?**

*Carol R: That's open to possibility.*

*Ashley C: The teens have suggested leasing the other portion to generate income.*

*Mike F: The school retains ownership of that portion, of the maintenance of the building; the goal is to have the building fully used through community partnerships.*

**Joanne N: These are great kids, a true compliment to their parents. These kids have been excellent in managing their expectations; they've been realistic, open, and not demanding. They asked for a BBQ so they could host a community gathering.**

**Lori M: As a community parent, I am very supportive of the Teen Center. As for transportation, kids are very resourceful and creative, and would be nice to see it. (In response to Mr. Goicoechea:) The youth will congregate and manage their own transportation.**

**Ron H:** At the vigil for Devin last week, 80% of the school showed up; they have tremendous support for one another.

**Ken B:** All the kids at my youth group have voiced support and desire for a Teen Center. We totally support this.

**Dianne B:** The use of the stage would be awesome! We would have a venue for drama productions. The idea of this as a resource is awesome!

*Carol R:* We have no lighting equipment; we will definitely include that in the budget.

**Linda D:** This is a great idea for teen activity; we will work on addressing the transportation issues, but there really isn't a downside to this proposal. Can anyone specify a downside to this?

**Dave G:** While not exactly a downside, there are concerns. We are concerned about the 20-year commitment of money and peripheral expenses at the same time we're letting teachers go and cutting important classes, and losing student enrollment. At one time, there were 800 students enrolled in this county, and now there are only 400.

**Aubree T:** The Teen Center would be a preventative outlet. The activities will be supervised and somewhat structured. This may even turn out to be a cost-savings in the long run.

**Karen R:** I agree with the gravity of the issues mentioned by Supervisor Goiceochea; but this is also a positive opportunity for the community. The community needs to be actively supportive, though. This could help the economic viability of our community.

**Jesse W (in response to DG):** Yes, these are economic stresses. There is always a risk, but our teens are worth taking that gamble in a fiscally and structurally responsible way. These teens want to see the risk for improvement.

**Tricia V:** Other communities with Teen Centers offer programs that support academics with tutoring and homework help.

**Ron H:** Have you surveyed teen centers in other rural communities?

*Joanne N:* We had a wonderful teen center in Elk Grove where I grew up, a very rural community. Having the teen center actually improved academic scores in our school even though the school had very little resources. We looked at how Elk Grove's teen center worked, and value the peer-to-peer homework help.

**Gary S:** Has there ever been a Teen Center here before:

*Mike F:* The only teen-specific activities in this community have been faith-based, run through the community churches.

**Laurenc D/Sierra County Prospect:** What are the funding specifics? Will any of the money from the county General Fund be used for this project? If not, what other peripheral county dollars are involved in this project? What is the county's obligation to this project?

*Dave G:* Yes, this ultimately a county responsibility in terms of county overhead, but no General Fund money will be used for this project. This is a specific funding stream that can only be used for a special innovative project like this.

*Carol R: The MHSA money is a voter-approved tax; the only way this money goes away is if the California voters vote to repeal Proposition 63. There is \$68,500 for the Innovations stream, and operations will be covered through a blending of this money. If this project is determined to be a success for the teens, we'll combine it into the CSS and PEI funding streams (WET and CFTN are only one-time funding allocations; CSS, PEI, and INN are continuing).*

**Aubree T: If this money weren't spent on a Teen Center, where would it go? What would we do with it?**

*Carol R: This project was devised in response to the community-wide demand for activities specifically for teens. Ashley has done the leg work in gathering teen-input for this project. If this is not what the community wants, then we will go back to square one and determine what the community wants.*

**Gary S: What happens IF voters rescind Prop 63? Is the county then on the hook to return the money to the state?**

*Carol R: No.*

**Karen R: What are the budget specifications? We would like to see those.**

*Carol R: Those specifications are part of the next step, after we determine as a group with the teens exactly what services, hours, activities, etc., will be offered and available. That information will be posted for public review and comment after the proposal has been drafted, and changes incorporated as appropriate.*

**Dave G: The DeMartini House purchase is a part of Prop 63 funding. We'll need to consider what the financial liabilities are for the REST of the building as the school funds decrease. Because of the dual entity, things get complicated.**

**Mike F: This has been a tough decision for the school board, but ultimately they are in support and have voted to approve their partnership.**

**Judy B: This philosophical question seems to be 'are we ready and willing to invest in our kids and our community?' Once it gets going, the momentum will carry it forward. Investing in people is far more important than worrying about financial what-ifs.**

**Ron H: Where is Wilderness Challenge in all this? Do these activities get in the way?**

*Carol R: Absolutely not; two different programs for the community. Wilderness Challenge programs will actually be expanded and improved through the introduction of Project Venture.*

**Laurenc: What happens to our 20-year lease if the school defaults on their agreement?**

*Carol R: More than likely, the State will understand the default was not our fault, and we will not be penalized.*

Townhall Meeting adjourned at 1:30pm.