



Meeting Minutes

Date: 08-15-2024 **Time:** 3:00 PM

Meeting Called to Order By: Van Roberts

Location: Wayside Center @ 44219 10th St W, Lancaster, CA 93534

Organizations in Attendance

Voices of Our Youth, LASD Lancaster Station, City of Lancaster, Parents Anonymous, Veterans Information Center, LASD/DMH Veterans Mental Evaluation Team, Children's Law Center, Mental Health America Los Angeles, California Highway Patrol, Tunnel Vision Foundation, AV Seed & Grow, Tarzana Treatment Centers

Minutes

Minutes were posted to the VOYCC webpage on the Voices of Our Youth website.

Reports

There are no reports at this time.

Old Business

There was no old business at this time.

New Business

Van extended a warm welcome to all attendees and expressed gratitude for their presence. He acknowledged the sacrifice of their time amidst busy schedules to be present in the room. Van emphasized that his role was to advocate for the community rather than the officers. He highlighted that each individual present had been selected based on the impactful work of their organization. The exclusivity of the council was intentional to ensure that the participants were committed to driving change and finding solutions. Van emphasized the importance of collaboration, stating that working together made the community stronger.

At the start of our meeting, Pastor John Ward led us in a heartfelt prayer, asking God to shower us with love and guide us towards unity.

As we began our session, each participant took a moment to introduce themselves briefly.

After Sergeant Chapman addressed the audience, he highlighted the nature of calls for service that often do not necessitate police intervention. These calls typically involve situations such as a child refusing to attend school, not obeying parental instructions, or spending excessive time on gaming systems. While officers are willing to assist in these scenarios, they recognize that once they depart, parents may lack ongoing support. As a result, they are seeking resources from community members present to provide to parents for post-visit assistance. The officers often find themselves functioning more as counselors in these instances.

Jenifer Melendez from MHALA mentioned the availability of a mobile crisis response team dedicated to teenagers and older individuals. This team conducts assessments and can be reached at 800-854-7771. While the service is affiliated with Keiser, individuals do not need to be Keiser members to access this support.

Alvin Robinson from Parents Anonymous shared their helpline which offers free emotional support 855-427-2736.

Officer Jordan Church from the CHP inquired if there were volunteers available to support children in the event of their parents' arrest, until a family member could arrive. He mentioned that officers are willing to assist but it diverts them from their duties. Jennifer offered to check if the mobile crisis response team could provide this service and promised to update the group accordingly.

Pastor John Ward emphasized that the Bingo Hall serves as a community hub for hosting events. He mentioned an upcoming boys luncheon scheduled for the 22nd, focusing on cultivating manhood. In addition to this event, various other programs are offered. Boys between the ages of 10-18 who participate will receive \$100, and they will also receive weekly manhood challenges via text to support their growth. The parents are included in these texts to ensure everyone is



involved in the process. The ultimate goal is to provide these boys with a solid foundation as they transition into manhood.

Rosie Sigala from AV Seed and Grow recently delivered a thought-provoking presentation highlighting the distinctions between special needs and mental health concerns. Beginning with clear definitions of developmental disabilities and mental health disorders, Rosie provided illustrative examples for better understanding. She delved into the various ways these conditions impact individuals, underlining the significance of distinguishing between the two. Rosie also addressed prevalent misconceptions, the concept of dual diagnosis, and concerning statistics on interactions between individuals with developmental disabilities and law enforcement. Furthermore, she offered valuable insights on effective communication, behavior management, de-escalation techniques, and suggested training approaches for law enforcement officers.

Captain Paul Bartlett addressed the issue of community violence, noting that there was a 22% decrease in murders compared to the same time last year (15 compared to 22). He highlighted that the spike in numbers was primarily due to the 4 incidents that occurred within a 24-hour period at the end of June. In response to this, additional units were deployed to the AV area to increase visibility and presence throughout July, which proved to be effective in addressing the issue.

He also noted that collaborating with Van and VOY, along with the voucher program, has played a crucial role in reducing liability and risk. This partnership has reduced the number of situations where officers have to separate children from their families. It has also had a positive impact on the mindset of the deputies. The support of community organizations and resources is essential for law enforcement.

Van emphasized that everyone in the room has a resource to give – and that resource is you! Urgently, we need resources now to improve our community. It's time to unite and work together to solve problems. Van made it clear that he despises politics but understands the importance of reaching out to leaders when necessary to achieve goals. He believes that everyone present is a leader, and that his resources are at our disposal. Van expressed concern about the negative reputation the AV has in other areas, and he is determined to change that perception. He envisions a collaborative effort between the community and law enforcement to bring about positive change and alter people's perceptions for the better.

Councilwoman Lauren Hughes-Leslie expressed her deep love for our community, emphasizing that she, her family, friends, and neighbors all call this place home. She highlighted the importance of fostering a positive attitude among residents and encouraged a shift towards a can-do mindset. Rather than focusing on limitations, she urged individuals to embrace a mentality of abundance and possibilities. By reframing our perspective to one of optimism and resilience, she believes we can collectively bring about significant and positive transformations within our community.

Van expressed his gratitude to Pamela Jones and Jennifer Melendez from MHALA for their invaluable assistance to the Leon Family and the Streets to Suites program. Their support has been instrumental in transforming lives. Van commended Pamela and Jennifer for their exceptional ability to deliver results effectively and efficiently.

Jennifer shared some inspiring success stories that she and Pam have experienced while collaborating with Voices of Our Youth. These stories highlight the positive impact we have had on the lives of individuals and families. The achievements we have made would not have been possible without teamwork and collaboration.

Deputy Laurence Green emphasized the importance of using words thoughtfully as they hold significant power to influence thoughts and emotions. He stressed the need for individuals who can make quick decisions without hesitation, rather than those who require permission for every action. Green highlighted the urgency of addressing issues promptly, as crime and problems do not adhere to a 9-5 schedule. He expressed the necessity of reliable individuals who stand by their commitments and provide immediate support to law enforcement deputies. Green's focus is on efficiency and effectiveness, with a clear directive to prioritize action over unnecessary discussions or delays.

He highlighted the impact of budget cuts, such as the lack of a 24-hour facility in the AV for examining child rape victims. As a result, deputies must travel down the hill (2 hr. drive), potentially further traumatizing the child due to the journey, wait for the exam, and the examination itself. This situation also leads to a deputy being unavailable for several hours in a department that is already understaffed.

Christine Malta from the City of Lancaster mentioned that they are currently developing a project related to the 24-hour initiative, but it is not ready for implementation at this time. She assured us that she will provide updates

as soon as possible. It seems like there might be some confusion regarding whether the topic at hand pertains to the homeless drop-in center we previously discussed or the current 24-hour examination issue. I will follow up to seek clarification on this matter.

During our meeting, we reviewed and approved the framework and bylaws. With 28 members in attendance, both documents were unanimously voted in.

During our meeting, we reviewed the 2025 calendar. The only scheduling conflict we encountered was with the June date, which coincided with June 19, 2024 (Juneteenth). After some discussion, we unanimously agreed to reschedule the meeting to the week before. Therefore, the June 2025 meeting will now take place on June 12, 2025.

Other Information

None to report at this time.

Committee Reports

No reports at this time.

Announcements

No announcements at this time.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned around 5:00 pm.

Next Meeting

Thursday, September 19, 2024, @ Wayside Center @ 44219 10th St W, Lancaster, CA 93534, from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m.