



# Meeting Minutes

**Date:** 12-19-2024 **Time:** 3:00 PM

**Meeting Called to Order By:** Van Roberts

**Location:** Wayside Center @ 44219 10<sup>th</sup> St W, Lancaster, CA 93534

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## Organizations in Attendance

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Voices of Our Youth, Parents Anonymous, Lancaster City Police Department, Auto Pros, Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department VMET, Children's Law Center, Tarzana Treatment Centers, Antelope Valley Union High School District Migrant Education

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## Minutes

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

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## Reports

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There are no reports at this time.

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## Old Business

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There was no old business at this time.

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## New Business

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Van greeted everyone and inquired about their well-being. He also inquired about their progress in holiday planning.

In 2025, our focus is on strengthening our community by leveraging our resources, which are also your resources. We have an abundance of resources available to support everyone.

Regrettably, this will mark Sergeant Chapman's final meeting as he has received a well-deserved promotion and is transitioning to new and exciting

opportunities. We extend our heartfelt wishes for his continued success and fulfillment in the future endeavors that await him!

We are also pleased to welcome Deputy Ken from the MET team, who has been away for some time. It's great to have you back!

Van requested all attendees to share a brief introduction as there are many new faces present in the room.

The purpose of the council is to provide support to the community by equipping law enforcement with the necessary tools for success. Together, we have limitless potential. Our focus is on achieving results and working cohesively as a team, where each individual plays a significant role.

**Icebreaker:** What issues do you hope the council will focus on in the upcoming year?

Sergeant Chapman: To better engage with youth, we aim to host additional small gatherings like "Snow Cone with a Deputy" to increase interaction, fun, and opportunities for meet and greets. Our goal is to shift the typical negative image associated with law enforcement interactions, which are often traumatic. By creating low-pressure environments without the fear of potential arrest, we hope to alleviate any apprehensions and foster positive connections.

Deputy Ken: To prevent deputies from being used as a weapon, it is important to educate parents on the roles of law enforcement. This education can help promote understanding and cooperation between the community and law enforcement officers, ensuring a safer and more harmonious environment for all.

Lizbeth: To learn more about the council and its members, and to inform migrant families about the safety of attending our events, including when law enforcement is present, to encourage their participation.

Ana: To acquire additional knowledge, resources, and tools to offer support to families within the community.

**Daniel:** To strive to enhance community engagement and awareness by showcasing a diverse range of events that cater to the interests of youth, individuals, veterans, families, and diverse communities.

**Karen M:** To enhance event promotion, encourage collaboration among various organizations, and facilitate the connection of resources and services to support our communities.

**Karen U:** Engaging in activities out of genuine desire rather than for appearances. Acting with true intentions and motivations.

??? – By promoting genuine actions over mere appearances, we can alleviate concerns, raise consciousness, and tackle the issue of homelessness effectively.

Van mentioned that while it may not be possible to completely eradicate homelessness, efforts can be made to reduce its impact. A significant portion of the homeless population comprises young individuals, including many who have been in the foster care system. Some individuals may even choose to live on the streets.

Homelessness can sometimes be seen as a profitable venture. It's important to recognize that not all individuals who appear to be homeless actually are.

Young people are exhibiting behavior that is concerning.

You must speak up and share your thoughts to create a positive impact. In this space, there are various tools and support available to assist you, but it all starts with your voice!

**Parents Anonymous:** Building trust is crucial, as many individuals may prefer homelessness over engaging with another individual or service provider. There is a fear that seeking assistance may lead to legal consequences or result in the removal of their children.

**Max:** Connecting parents with mentors, enhancing literacy for children in the AV to prevent social embarrassment, and providing supervision for custody visits with parents.

**Christine:** Let's shift our focus from discussing problems to taking action to solve them. Let's analyze the problem, break it down, and come up with solutions.

Let's collaborate outside of our regular meetings to achieve our goals. Let's identify a specific task and create a practical plan to get it done. Create workgroups to accomplish specific tasks.

Christine also suggested reviewing the latest City of Lancaster council meeting, where new ordinances were presented that could have an impact on our community work.

She also recommended exploring ways to engage with young people in their preferred environments. What might this involve? How might this evolve in the next five years, or further into the future?

Van described the waves of violence that impacted the Boulevard during the summer months. He explained how young people were using social media to organize and bring together individuals for their illegal activities.

Parents Anonymous inquired about the factors that played a role in shaping that decision.

Van mentioned that he had conversed with several young individuals who were involved during meetings with the H.E.L.P.E.R. Foundation, and they cited reasons such as enjoyment, peer pressure, and gang initiations.

Alex inquired about whether there are individuals who visit the homes and engage directly with the youth.

Van connected with the younger generation at Chief Armalin's behest, just like Stan Mohammed from the H.E.L.P.E.R. Foundation. Van prefers to keep his actions low-key. He emphasized that many youths are not your typical youngsters.

Max: Parenting and coaching play vital roles in guiding and supporting young individuals as they navigate through life's challenges and opportunities.

Lekesha from Parents Anonymous believes that focusing on mental health counseling for youth is crucial.

Training is a significant challenge that needs to be addressed. Foster youth possess the skills to navigate the system in a way that benefits them.

Lekesha believes that the lack of connection is due to a desire to be seen as more than just a source of income. Foster youth long to feel valued and cared for as an individual, not just for their financial contributions.

Van recounted a story about a young individual Danci mentored. This 15-year-old foster youth had been involved in several fights at school, resulting in a one-week suspension. Danci had built a strong connection with the youth and decided to support her during her suspension by running errands together and engaging in meaningful conversations. During this time, the foster youth reached out to Van, confiding in him about smoking weed and expressing a need for birth control.

Danci shared her experiences with the foster youth, noting the youth's willingness to accept responsibility for her actions and engage positively. However, after Danci dropped her off and the foster mom confiscated her tablet as a consequence of the suspension, the situation took a turn. The foster mom, juggling care for multiple foster youth, including the 15-year-old, decided to withhold the tablet for the duration of the suspension.

That night, the 15-year-old foster youth, feeling overwhelmed by the situation, grabbed her backpack and left the home. The sudden departure left the other foster youth in the household feeling distressed and unsettled.

Lizbeth is employed by AVUHSD in the Migrant Education division where she works with migrant workers and their families through a federally funded program. This initiative offers parents the opportunity to attend classes and access resources while their children are in school. The program caters to individuals employed in agriculture with children between the ages of 3 and 21. Additionally, they offer supplementary education on Saturdays for one month during the summer.

Sergeant Chapman provided details about the upcoming events organized by the Sheriff's Station. These events will include multiple toy drives aimed at gathering toys for underprivileged children in the Antelope Valley. The specific dates and timings for these drives are currently being finalized and will be shared on the Lancaster Sheriff's Stations Facebook page once confirmed. In addition to the toy drives, there will also be an annual toy distribution scheduled for December 23 at a nearby park. The distribution details will be announced on their social media platforms two hours prior to the event and will continue until all the toys are all distributed.

The Sheriff's Department is currently seeking volunteers to join their Volunteer Program. They will be hosting a Volunteer Academy in either February or March for those interested in getting involved.

The Black History Month Celebration is scheduled for February 22, 2025, and will take place on the Blvd. For additional details, please reach out to Deputy Diana Leiva.

The upcoming class for The Explorers program is set to commence soon, with applications required to be submitted by January 10, 2025. Following this, the Academy will begin in February. It's important to note that participation in The Explorers program may involve expenses such as purchasing uniforms, PT gear, running shoes, and other necessary items. Sergeant Chapman emphasizes that the program is highly physically demanding.

Danci is passionate about addressing the homelessness issue in the AV region, uniting the community, and establishing Voices of Our Youth as a well-known and reliable resource.

Christine announced that on January 14, six new officers will be officially sworn in as members of the Lancaster Police Department.

Danci has collaborated with the Antelope Valley Chamber of Commerce on behalf of Voices of Our Youth to organize two events every month, one focusing on veterans and the other on youth.

Danci has various event ideas in mind, such as a teen fitness expo, a letters to Santa activity, a magical moment with Santa event, a Lego event, a teen sewing workshop, a teen cooking class, a basket weaving class, a teen internship program, collecting prom dress donations, organizing a pamper day for teens, hosting kids arts and crafts sessions, teen automotive expo, arranging a gently used clothing drive for babies and kids, hosting a forensic science event, and conducting a cursive writing workshop.

Danci showcases her creativity in fundraising for Voices of Our Youth with initiatives like the Million Dollar Challenge for Change and the Give a Dollar Fundraiser, which aim to support the organization's mission.

Deputy Ken discussed the literacy issue affecting our youth and proposed attending the school board meeting to advocate for change.

Van discussed the upcoming Holiday Whobilation event happening this Saturday and emphasized the significance of ensuring that families receive an ample amount of toys to bring home and place under the tree. This gesture aims to alleviate the stress placed on parents to provide gifts for their children and ultimately contributes to a decrease in crime rates.

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### **Other Information**

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None to report at this time.

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### **Committee Reports**

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No reports at this time.

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### **Announcements**

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No announcements at this time.

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### **Adjournment**

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The meeting was adjourned around 5:00 pm.

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### **Next Meeting**

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Thursday, January 16, 2025, @ Wayside Center @ 44219 10<sup>th</sup> St W, Lancaster, CA 93534, from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m.