

LODI IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

February 9, 2016

6:00 P.M.
ROLL CALL

BOARD		STAFF
<u>PRESENT</u>	<u>ABSENT</u>	
Curt Juran (Chair)	Sunil Yadav (excused)	Joseph Wood, CDD
Maria Rosado (Vice-Chair)		Ruben Guardiola CDD
Fran Forkas		Tod Patterson LPD
Rehana Zaman		Tanya Hansford CDD

I. MINUTES

“January 12, 2016”

MOTION/VOTE:

The Lodi Improvement Committee, on the motion of Member Forkas, Rosado second approved the Minutes of January 12, 2016 as written.

The above motion carried by the following vote:

Ayes: Chair Juran, Vice-Chair Rosado, Mr. Forkas and Ms. Zaman
Noes: None
Absent: Mr. Yadav

II. ANNOUNCEMENTS/PRESENTATIONS

- A. Mr. Wood stated his appreciation for the public attendance and reminded everyone that the Lodi Improvement Committee meets on the second Tuesday of every month. He also stated that the public is always welcome to come and express their views or concerns.

III. AGENDA ITEMS

A. Presentation and Public Forum on Gang Issues in Lodi

Mr. Wood reported that following the recent shooting deaths and reports of routine gang gun violence in Lodi’s Eastside neighborhoods, there has been a great deal of public comment and concern as to what the City of Lodi is doing about gangs and related issues. He added that the City has not held a forum like this since 2011 which was when the gang violence was at its peak. This meeting will give the Committee and the public some information regarding what the City has been doing to counter the violence and give examples of some of the success stories.

In order to provide an accurate update and information on gang enforcement, intervention and prevention, and prosecution prevention staff has pulled together representatives from the Lodi Police Department, the Lodi Gang Reduction Intervention Prevention (LodiGRIP) Program, and the San Joaquin County District Attorney’s

Office to make the initial presentation and then remain to take public comments and questions.

The local agencies and community-based organizations, Mule Creek Juvenile Diversion Program, Community Partnership for Families of San Joaquin, and 180 Teen, that currently support intervention/prevention efforts in Lodi will also be present to provide additional information and make brief introductions. In that group will be some of the local youth who have come through our programs and have made a change to get out and away from gang activities. These youth have refocused their attention on getting their education, finding work and, in many cases, becoming mentors to others looking for opportunities to make similar changes.

Mr. Wood continued the report with the assistance of a PowerPoint presentation. He stated that Lodi had the second-most number of violent crimes among San Joaquin County cities in 2011-12. Lodi with a population of 63,000 had 262 incidents, Manteca with a population of 65,000 had 182 incidents, and Tracy with 79,000 had 153. Mr. Wood added that the numbers for Lodi have dropped with the implementation of the CalGRIP Grant that added the Youth Outreach Gang Specialist employees. The numbers went from 253 incidents in 2011 to 82 in 2015.

Mr. Wood reported that once the CalGRIP Grant funds ran out the City Council decided to continue the program with one full-time position. Ruben Guardiola works primarily on the high school and middle school campuses as well as contacting families at their homes. He develops long-term mentoring relationships in addition to steering youth into the community supportive programs. Mr. Guardiola works very hard and as you can imagine is spread very thin.

Mr. Wood introduced Caitlin Casey, Deputy District Attorney.

Ms. Casey stated that just this last January there were five to six new cases filed with the Gang Violence Suppression Unit and that is a large number for Lodi. This is an issue that everyone in Lodi should be concerned about. Older gang members are manipulating young recruits into thinking that they won't be prosecuted to the extent of an adult. Ms. Casey added that it is a lot easier to prevent it rather than address it after the fact. One solution in the prevention effort is to unite the patchwork resources that we currently have. That has been a challenge in this county, but she just doesn't see any other way for the program to work.

Mr. Wood introduced Tod Patterson, Lodi Police Chief.

Chief Patterson stated his appreciation for everyone attending. He added his concern over the sheer number of guns that have been taken off of the streets in the past couple of months and the uptick in violence in Lodi. The department has taken a pro-active approach regarding this issue and staff will work with everyone to make this program work and make Lodi a safer place for all.

Mr. Wood apologized for failing to mention the Lodi Unified School District as part of the support groups for this program and acknowledged the Principal of Millswood

Middle School, Erin Lenzi. He stated his appreciation for all of the support they have given to the program.

One of the organizations supporting both the LodiGRIP and Stockton's Peacekeepers is the Mule Creek State Prison Juvenile Diversion Program (JDP). The at-risk youth that staff feels will benefit from this program are partnered up with inmate mentors that have been in their shoes and had the same experiences. Mr Wood stressed that his program is not a "scared straight" style program. The inmate mentors go through a "Choices and Decisions" exercise with the youth that lets them see the consequences that result. They also talk about the ripple effect it has on their family and their community. Mr. Wood added that the experience from his perspective has been very rewarding. The field trips are done every other month and he stated he wished they would do them every week. Mr. Wood added that for a fifteen/sixteen year old youth the experience is both frightening and enlightening. Mr. Wood shared and experience of rivals shaking hands and acknowledging the fact that the violence needs to stop after the trip.

Mr. Wood introduced Karen Heil with the Mule Creek Juvenile Diversion Program.

Ms. Heil stated there are eighteen inmates that participate in the program. In the beginning the program had no way to follow-up with the youth once they left the facility. Now with the Community Partnership Program the youth that go through the program can continue to receive help. Ms. Heil stated her appreciation for Ruben Guardiola and the work he does with Lodi's youth. She continued with a story of how one of those youths that had been in the program since 2014 that was turning his life around and making strides to help other get on the right path that was recently shot and killed. This is a fear she and others in the program live with every day.

Mr. Wood stated that the Community Partnership for Families of San Joaquin staff members are a part of the trips that are made to Mule Creek and are there to conduct follow up sessions with the youth after JDP, and to meet and work with the families. They also work the youth back into the larger group that plans activities and events and develop youth mentors.

Mr. Wood introduced Lindsay Grant, Community Partnership for Families of San Joaquin.

Ms. Grant stated her appreciation for Ruben Guardiola's work as well. She stated that once a youth comes back from a trip to Mule Creek, where they have set goals for themselves, they are put on a six-week program where there are follow up sessions with the family and youth. Once that six-week program is over, that youth goes back to Mule Creek and talks with the mentor about what they have done to reach the goals they set. Once the youth pass the initial six-week program, they then step up to be a part of the event planning for the group's Friday Night Live activities. This is not just a program that tells them to quit what they are doing by telling them it is wrong. The youth mentors receive a stipend for their time once they get to that level. This has been a great motivator for the youth that are new to the program. They can get paid to do something positive for the community.

Mr. Wood stated that the next steps will be to build on the success of the youth outreach, develop a strategy for 19-25 year old gang members and engage the local faith communities to assist in the effort to empower the residents to take back their neighborhoods. Mr. Wood shared a story from the last meeting where four youth that grew up rivals and have been cool toward each other at past meetings ended with handshakes and walking home together.

Comments/Questions from the Improvement Committee

Chair Juran acknowledged the praise that Mr. Guardiola has been receiving tonight and stated that tonight is his first chance to meet him. He added his acknowledgment of the two youth that are now mentors in the program that attended the meeting and thanked them for their commitment and courage. He would like to see the community educated in the area that this is a community issue not just an eastside issue.

Member Forkas asked Chief Patterson what needs to be done to reduce the 82 violent crime number cut in half. Chief Patterson stated that he doesn't know about cutting that number in half, but continuing with the GRIP program, more outreach and the collaborative efforts of our partnerships the number should continue to decline.

Vice Chair Rosado thanked everyone for attending. She stated that this is a wonderful program and it looks like everyone involved is doing a good job, but sees a component that could be added. She believes that the business community and other agencies should get involved. Mentoring is very important. Ms. Rosado stated that the program should bring the Chamber in as a partner and through their Vision 20/20 Program the youth can get a mentor in the business community and they will have a sense of what it takes to have a successful job or career. Mr. Wood stated that he did invite Mr. Patrick from the Chamber, but unfortunately he had a prior commitment, so he will be giving a presentation to the Chamber on March 15th.

Member Zaman stated that this needs to be a collaborate effort. It cannot all fall on the shoulders of the Police. As citizens of Lodi we need to step up and take action in reporting the questionable activities.

Comments/Questions from the Public

Ruben Guardiola stated that when he first started he heard how Lodi doesn't care. He is here to tell you that they do care. He is here because they care. The SROs that he works with at the schools are good people, but these youths aren't always comfortable talking with police officers. This program works. Mr. Guardiola clarified that the community of Lodi does care.

Jose, Youth Mentor, came forward to express his appreciation for the program. He started out avoiding Ruben when he would come on campus, then when he was shot a couple of years ago and in the hospital only three people came to visit out of all of his friends; Ruben, his best friend and his best friend's brother. Even after this experience he continued with the gang life and when he returned to the high school Ruben took

him into the JDP. This is a program that you cannot explain how it changes you; you have to experience it to understand. He told a story of when one of the fourteen year old youths that had gone on that same trip to Mule Creek was shot and killed, he was sure which direction was best for him. The public doesn't hear about the success stories, they only hear about the shootings.

Emma Hernandez, sister to Silvestre Guzman, came forward to thank everyone that is involved in the program. Her brother was a true testament that the program works. She expressed her thankfulness to Ruben for everything he has done for her family. She would like to know what the Police Department can do to assist witnesses that are scared to come forward. She feels the lack of protection is a deterrent to witnesses coming forward. Ms. Casey stated that when witnesses come forward it means a lot to help in a conviction and their bravery is recognized in the community. Tori Verber-Salazar, District Attorney with San Joaquin County, added that there are several programs that assist victims and witnesses of crimes. There is a whole division that is dedicated to victim advocacy and witness advocacy. These programs are important because the District Attorney's office considers everyone that comes forward as a witness a super hero. There are laws that govern a witness protection. On the flip side if everyone uses the excuse of being scared for not coming forward then essentially you are letting the lawlessness win. The community has to step up every time for the community to win.

Claudia Standbridge, Lodi Unified School District Educator, came forward to state her concern with the number of grade school students that are wearing gang colors. It is important for the parents to become educated on what their children are doing on social media and find out what the lifestyle is all about like the music and clothing that they are wearing indicates. Some of our parents are afraid to report a crime because they may be undocumented and don't want to be deported. We need the Police to come out and reassure them that won't happen. She appreciates the willingness of the mentors coming back to the schools and talking with the students. She believes the students are more likely to listen to them.

John Johnson, concerned citizen, came forward to express his concerns. He stated that the gang problem is not just an eastside problem. This is a City problem. He stated that a couple of weeks ago a car stopped in front of his home on the west side of town and two individuals got out of the vehicle with guns. He commended the Police for their response that day. At 2:18 each day the same car races around the neighborhood with the same individuals. He expressed concern for the students that walk home from school in that area. Mr. Johnson added that he is frustrated that nothing seems to be able to be done about them. It should not be allowed for them to be able to just drive around a neighborhood with no cause to be there. We have to stop this and take back our neighborhood by getting outside.

Joaquin Hernandez, concerned eastside resident, came forward to express his concerns with the assistance of an interpreter. He expressed his condolences to the families that experienced loses recently. He concurred that the problem is a City wide problem not just an east side problem. There needs to be more security from the Police. Communication is very important within the community. It does not matter what color

our skin is or what language we speak, we all care about the community where we live. There are meetings held at the end of every month at California Human Development. Immigration status should not stop the community from taking a stand in their neighborhood. Mr. Hernandez stated that he is speaking in Spanish because he would like the community to know that they do not need to be afraid to come forward to express their views or concerns.

Somber Melendez, concerned citizen, came forward to express her concerns. Ms. Melendez stated that this will require a community effort if you want to see change. All of the community resources need to be involved in preventing our youth from developing the knowledge or desire to join a gang. They need to be reaching out to the parents and educating them as well as the rest of the community. Ms. Melendez added that the City Council should hold a meeting at a location that isn't so intimidating. We need to start at the elementary level to prevent any further recruitment by the gangs. She mentioned getting the Boys and Girls Club involved with helping to keep the kids distracted and helping to educate them in looking for what to avoid.

Alison McGregor, 180 Teen Center Director, came forward to express her support of the program. She has been working with the GRIP for the last few years, but has been counseling gang members for the last eight years. She now works at Joe Serna [Charter School] and after the last couple of shootings she was expecting an action plan for after an incident. The parents were concerned and afraid. The GRIP Committee is a great committee and they need to set up a plan for after an incident where they notify the principals for the schools, so they can then communicate with their parents. Three things need to be communicated to the parents: 1 – What happened, just the facts; 2 – Safety plan, this is what is happening right now to keep the rest of the community safe; 3 – these are the resources that you can utilize to assist you if you have been effected. The teachers all need to receive this email, so that they can then relay the information to their students in an age appropriate discussion. There is a perception that the Police are scary and they should be feared. Ms. McGregor added that is a perception that she is working every day to change.

Liz Stefon, 180 Teen Center, came forward to express her appreciation for the program. She stated that the relationship between the Lodi Police and the School District is very strong. There needs to be a way to resource parents. The power of the parents has been taken by gangs. There needs to be an empowerment meeting with parents to help them set healthy boundaries for their children. The families are ready for change to happen; they just need to resources and the support to assist them. It would be nice to have the program "Coffee with a Cop" have an evening event on the east side in a location where these families hang out. Mr. Forkas asked Ms. Stefon if she had any ideas of how to get these parents and children together to work on this. Ms. Stefon stated that an after school assembly with all of the resources there to answer questions might be a good start.

Ms. Hernandez, concerned citizen, came forward to express her views. She would like to see a Community Center set up to get involved in helping children stay focused on school and other activities that do not involve gangs. She struggled with maintaining friends in school because she would not follow them down the path that would lead to

gangs. She has been lucky to have a father that is very involved in her life and has kept her focused, not all children are as fortunate. A Community Center will help keep kids focused on activities other than gang activities.

Adam Cortez, concerned resident, came forward to express his views. When he first came to Lodi the gangs were a huge draw because they offer friends and someone to care about you. This problem can be changed if everyone steps forward and offers a helping hand, a friendship to someone that is in need or an ear to listen. The churches need to get out into the community and have neighborhood get-togethers that bring the people in the community together.

Chief Patterson came forward to state that the Police Department truly cares about this community. There used to be a "Meet the Beat" program where officers would visit the schools. Chief Patterson added that it is one of his goals to get programs like that back out in the community. All of the officers are committed to this community.

Donna Phillips, concerned citizen, came forward to express her views. It would be nice to have a hotline for people to call before an incident happens rather than waiting until something goes wrong. Chair Juran stated that he believes that there is a hotline for people to call. Chief Patterson confirmed that the police receive in excess of 150 calls a day regarding suspicious behavior. There is also the Crime Stoppers tip line 209-369-2746 will also receive texts. He also added that two arrests have been made just recently from tips received on the hotline. Chair Juran shared an experience that he had where he was threatened, but he made the call and it lead to an arrest. He added that it took a bit of courage on his part to make the call.

Mr. Wood stated that there are pamphlets out on the table that has information that has been mentioned here tonight.

Chair Juran expressed his appreciation for all of the law enforcement that is in attendance and stated that he would like to see this type of meeting happen quarterly.

B. Follow up on Issues From Previous Meetings

Follow up on Goals for 2015/16

- Address Main Street Issues
 - A meeting is being scheduled with the property owner.
 - I will be looking into whether there are any plans for development of facilities around the Parks & Rec Corporation Yard (around the City Water Tower and original City Hall/Fire Station No. 1) and the vacant land between those sites and the UPRR line that would preclude an effort to renovate the Fire Station and possible work to develop a community center on the vacant parcel.

Mr. Wood added that the costs will be prohibitive.

- Cherokee Lane
 - Provided Public Works-Engineering with the recommendations of priority sites for the first phase of improvements.

Mr. Wood stated that Community Development Block Grant monies are being reallocated to help with the ADA improvements.

- Eastside Afterschool Programs and Activities
 - Junior Giants Program – We are beginning to prepare for the 2016 season. The registration period will open on Friday, March 4th and is proposed to run through Friday, May 6th. The season opens the week of June 13th and runs through the week of August 1st.

Mr. Wood stated that this program is going into its third year. The program started its first year with a 160 kids and ended its second year with over 420. This is a free non-competitive community program for both boys and girls from the age of 5 through 18.

- Gang Problem
 - Mr. Wood stated that this was discussed above.
- Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area
 - Mr. Wood reported that this will be brought back to a later date.

Comments by the Public

- None

Comments by Board Members on Non-Agenda Items

- None

IV. New Business

A. Looking Ahead

- **March 8 – Election of Officers & Preview of 2016-17 CDBG**
- **April 12 – Review and Comment on Draft Annual Action Plan for 2016-17 CDBG**
- **May 10 – Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area- Public Meeting**
- **June 14 – *Open***
- **July 12 – *Open***

** Noting that LIC Member Sunil Yadav will not be present at this meeting.*

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned at 7:44 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Joseph Wood, Staff Liaison