ACONA Meeting Notes
May 6, 2014

Following introductions, the following topics were discussed:

PUSD Update

Kim Kenne (kim@kimweb.com), VP of the PUSD Board of Education and representative of District 1, which includes most of the Altadena schools, gave an update on the state of the PUSD.

Roosevelt, San Rafael and Webster Elementary schools have been chosen as Distinguished Schools by the California Department of Education, the first year PUSD has had three schools recognized.

Graduation rates: CALPADS (California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System) allows the state to track individual students, which means that graduation rates are now more accurate. PUSD's rate was 82.3%, which is slightly higher than the state and county average.

Common Core: continuing professional development for teachers, curriculum development is progressing, testing is basically "testing the test" to see if the test reflects mastery of the curriculum and the standards. Testing is being done via Chromebooks (over 4,000 purchased). Testing 3rd-8th graders; 11th graders also take the English/Math test. CST (California Standards Tests) Science tests are being administered to 5th, 8th and 10th graders, and the 11th graders take the EAP (Early Assessment Program, to test for college readiness).

Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF): District gets a base amount per student, with amounts varying based on grade level. There's also a supplemental grant (based on number of English learners, foster care children, low income families). Concentration grants go to districts with over 50% of such students (PUSD has 75%).

Categorical funding (i.e., funds only earmarked for specific programs) is kaput. Instead, there's a block of funding that the school district determines how to allocate.

LCAP-- Local Control and Accountability Plan details how the funds are spent. There is a 40-member working group giving input, that is made up of stakeholders (teachers, staff...). There are two parent advisory groups who will give input in May, and there are public hearings scheduled for the end of May/beginning of June. The draft plan is on the PUSD website and the public can make comments there.

PUSD Master Planning/Boundaries Subcommittee, a subcommittee of the school board, is trying to determine whether there need to be new attendance boundaries. This year there are 17,500 PUSD students in 28 schools. The district has been losing an average of 500 students a year for the last 10 years. Reasons: fewer children, more charter schools. And there's no reason to think this will change. One solution: close some schools.

School/City/Community Work Plan: The school as the hub of the community, providing services for families. Year 2 plan was just approved at a joint PUSD/Pasadena City Council meeting.

Trying to figure out how the governance should work, without creating another layer of bureaucracy.

Upcoming PUSD Board Election: The filing process begins in the fall for the 2015 election in March. Districts 2, 4 and 6 seats will be up for election, following which the entire school board will be representing districts.

School-Related Parking: In the school district, the principals are the people to contact about parking issues at specific schools. They can send out memos and phone blasts to parents. If the principal doesn't seem willing to work with the neighborhood, people can go to the school district. PUSD facilities department has been working with Measure TT bond money to make more accommodations for drop-off/pick-up. For charter schools, the school director is the person to contact.

In the county area, primary enforcement for traffic is the CHP. Sheriff's department can also handle traffic issues. CHP has a traffic complaint form that can be filled out. Officer Phil Cooper has been the CHP parking enforcement officer since February and he has been proactively going to the schools to try and address parking issues before they become severe.

Walkability Report

Barbie Ishida from Neighbors Building a Better Altadena (NBBA) reported on the walkability study her group has been conducting. Surveys were done on Lincoln and Lake Avenues between Woodbury and Altadena Drive.

Walkability is:
How well a place supports/encourages walking: quality, safety, access
Good for physical, social and economic health of neighborhoods.

The study measured intersection safety, traffic volume, street design, land use, and perceived safety.

Results:
12 of 31 (39%) of the blocks studied were rated poor or unsuitable for pedestrians. Most measurements were aesthetic.
Common factors among these blocks were sporadic/missing street trees, permanent sidewalk obstructions, missing sidewalks, narrow throughways, no pedestrian-scale lighting, no traffic calming, four lanes of traffic (Lake Avenue), speed limits over 25 mph, little or no public seating, no public art.

Solutions:
Denver model: work one block at a time, do things that don't require permits: greenery, crosswalks, planters, public art — community effort
Shuttle bus (long term goal)
Community groups: hold block parties, present walkability ideas at parties, include local businesses

[Jeff Sedlik shared his interactive map of Altadena Watch and Neighborhood Associations, which is also linked on ACONAOnline.org.]

Q&A

Common Core vs. Teaching to the Test: Teaching to the Test is not an official strategy; it's something that evolved. The theory behind a common core standard curriculum is that if you teach to the standard, students will do well on the test. Common Core has about an 80% overlap with the old California standards, but is very different for other states. The new tests are not multiple choice. They are more critical thinking based.

Jackson parking issue on Casitas: people are not obeying the no parking signs, and are even double-parking. Pick-up is worse than drop-off, between 2:30 and 3:00. Officer Cooper will try to provide a presence there to see if the problem can be alleviated.

Where does the funding come from for the walkability solutions? The solutions proposed are low-cost; many can be done for free.