

From: [Ayinde Rudolph](#)
To: [City Council](#)
Cc: [trustees](#); [McCarthy, Kimbra](#); [Rebecca Westover](#); [Ramberg, Audrey Seymour](#); [Nellie Meyer](#); [trustees@mvla.net](#)
Subject: Comments
Date: Tuesday, March 28, 2023 3:28:32 PM
Attachments: [Letter to City Council re Shoreline JPA funds.pdf](#)

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I understand that following meeting has been rescheduled to a later date. Please see my attached comments about the cancelled agenda item.

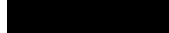
I look forward to speaking to the council in person when the meeting is rescheduled.

Respectfully,

Ayindé Rudolph Ed.D.

Superintendent

Mountain View Whisman School District



<https://www.mvwsd.org/>

City of Mountain View
500 Castro St.
Mountain View, CA 94041

Dear Honorable Councilmembers:

This year will mark the almost 60th anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s most consequential letter written about the civil rights movement: "Letter From a Birmingham Jail." In it, you hear such phrases as "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere" and my favorite quote, which I have recited to this esteemed body routinely: "We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly."

What resonates with me are not the famous quotes but instead the message he is trying to convey to the leaders in his community. There are laws that man creates, and then there are those that are created by a higher power. That the need for tension is critical to eliminate the status quo and create a collective fillip that will result in a win-win for our students and community members.

Dr. King recognized that discourse and negotiation are often hard work, tenuous and messy. He notes that at that time the establishment, and leaders, highlight that they do not have enough time to "act," further delaying any action. He even poignantly notes that "History {has the} long and tragic story of the fact that privileged groups seldom give up their privileges voluntarily." Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. doesn't mince words in his question to these leaders why, when it is convenient for us, we

"... advocate {for} breaking some laws and obeying others? The answer is found in the fact that there are two types of laws: just laws and unjust laws. I agree with St. Augustine: 'An unjust law is no law at all.'"

You may ask what law is being broken, and what parallels exist between the 1960s and today?

We are all aware that California redevelopment districts were abolished in 2012 by a budgetary act with the promise that all obligations would be eventually unwound and revenue redistributed to all taxing entities. But we also know that while the Shoreline Regional Park Community was not defined as a redevelopment district through special legislative action, it functions as one, thus creating a loophole for past unjust laws to continue.

We also are aware that previous city councils, at the request of members of the public and the school district, began to understand that our schools are a vital part of this community and that without proper funding they would not be able to provide a competitive education for all of its students. This is precisely why the JPA was created and has released close to \$50 million of taxpayer funds that MVWSD is entitled to while keeping close to \$134 million for redevelopment.

In my mind, the argument for numbers and facts is irrelevant, not just because we have entered into a political theater where facts that we disagree with can be discarded as misinformation, but because all of us as leaders are charged with looking after our fellow man; those who are downtrodden, who lack agency and voice, and need us to represent them now more than ever.

As someone who grew up in the “Rust Belt,” I am often asked how the MAGA movement was able to take hold. Why do so many people view polarized extremism as the norm, as opposed to centrist approaches? I point to my brethren in Appalachia who are watching machines mine coal. Have you met with the farmer who is working hard from sun up and sun down, only to watch his crops get undercut by a corporate farm? What about the fifth-generation factory worker who is no longer middle class? They feel abandoned and dissuaded by the promises of future jobs, housing, and precise plans. They care not about what will happen 25 years from now but about how their family can keep their home or if their children will have the opportunities they need to be successful.

During the pandemic, I saw the heart of our community. I saw willingness to give, to venerate, and to champion the laborer. For a brief moment, we were all empathetic to forgotten needs. It took isolation for us to realize that we needed each other. It took soaring unemployment for civic leaders to enact legislation to invest in healthcare, rent stabilization, mental health and education. We finally embodied the idea of an interconnected web of mutuality. In our darkest moments, leaders, like yourself, began to understand that you had the power to change others' lives.

You understand our community must address issues challenging our most vulnerable citizens. I am asking you to remember the hard-working school staff members who are trying to close the achievement gap, and help students with interrupted educational experiences and trauma.

With the stroke of a pen:

City Council could create a sizable investment in mental health by releasing more funds to address ever-present mental health concerns, whether that means investing in community organizations like CHAC or placing more guidance counselors in our schools.

With the stroke of a pen:

You can signal to our parents and teachers that you hear their continued pleas for smaller class sizes so their children can learn in an environment where they are afforded the personal attention needed to grow, learn and thrive.

With the stroke of a pen:

You can help MVWSD continue its approach of providing students with free meals during the school day and during breaks. You can expand a summer feeding program that focuses not only on anyone under the age of 18 but also our senior citizens.

With the stroke of a pen:

This City Council can signal to our community that being connected to the internet is critical for every family to access resources and as a necessary tool for learning.

With the stroke of a pen:

You can look to the future jobs that will be created in East Whisman and North Bayshore and know that you helped to create an opportunity for the son of a house cleaner, an eager immigrant, or an aspiring woman president who never knew that their dreams were possible because they couldn't afford the type of education that our most affluent members of society could. You could fund universal preschool education, after-school programs, and college and career experiences.

And finally, with the stroke of a pen, you could preserve the Shoreline Regional Park Community and its environmental obligations while investing heavily in the education of our future community members. It is not an “either/or” conundrum. Precedent set by previous City Councils demonstrates that you have more discretion to release funds to other government entities. I ask you to help our community see that our challenges are competing forces only if they are treated separately rather than parts of a greater whole.

I close with these final thoughts. Earlier, I spoke about faith. There is one basic tenet in all faiths: to take care of all our sisters and brothers as if they were family. Dr. King noted that giving up something is tough, and making the decision does not put one in an enviable position. But I implore you to think about how a simple investment today could empower a future generation's faith in public leaders and servants. I ask you to focus on both the laws of man and to act on the laws of a higher power. Show the community that investing in all of our families is not a competing initiative but rather a moral obligation of duly-elected officials because we are all “caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly.”

Respectfully,



Ayindé Rudolph, Ed.D.
Superintendent