

Shared Stories: The Ties That Bind

Candy Wong has a grown son who is a medical student. Her driving passion now is to master English and attend an American college. She is grateful to her first professor at Cerritos College who quoted Will Smith, taught her life skills as well as English, and introduced her to a life-changing exercise – the full plank. Shared Stories is a weekly column featuring articles by participants in a writing class at the Norwalk Senior Center. Bonnie Mansell is the instructor for this free class offered through the Cerritos College Adult Education Program. Curated by Carol Kearns

“A Magical Learning Experience” by Candy Wong

How would you feel if you could never read a book? Never understand what people around you are saying?

When I first came to the United States, I could do none of the above. I felt helpless when two people were talking in front of me, because I didn't understand what they were talking about.

With this built-up frustration, I decided to study the spoken word.

Since I began studying English 20 at Cerritos College, there has been a big change in my life. My English has improved and I have become an active learner. I consider my English professor, Dr. QB, as my mentor.

Before taking Professor QB's class, I was a lost college student who didn't know what to do, but Professor QB taught me how to be a better college student through encouragement, practicing the full plank exercise, using time management, linking up with student clubs, writing essays, and benefiting from her college story and her attitude to students. I have learned what I need to do in my academic path.

Dr. QB made me believe that I could advance my English through hard work. Even when I was in English 20, I found that writing was difficult for me. I didn't have the confidence to study at a higher level, but Dr. QB told me firmly that I could pass the next class - English 52. Now I am taking Dr. QB's English 100 online course, and it is a huge challenge for me.

I learned a new exercise when I enrolled in her class. My class started at 7 a.m. Some of my classmates were very sleepy. Dr. QB asked us to do an exercise called a full plank because it can make our blood circulate better. We wouldn't feel so tired in class.

She demonstrated how to do it. We put our hands and feet on the floor and straighten our bodies like a pieces of wood.

We did full plank only few seconds the first time. Each day we held it longer than the last time. I have continued to do this exercise for more than three months.

I found my asthma condition has been improving. In the past, I was attacked by asthma every month and took steroids to control my condition. There were side effects to my body using steroids such as weight gain, grayish skin, and insomnia.

My son is a medical school student. He warned me if I didn't take steroids to control my asthma, I might die of respiratory problems. I could not imagine that full plank could relieve my health condition. I have improved my English in English 20, and I also got the benefits from doing full plank.

Dr. QB taught me time management. We needed to record our activity for five days. From the information on my log, I analyzed that I was a person using most of my time to help others to do urgent things. It often made me lack time to do my important things.

Dr. QB asked students to do a daily planner, a weekly planner, and a course planner to guide us to study, to work, and to rest. After I learned how to do this, I have procrastinated a lot less. The pace of my life seems easier than before.

Dr. QB led students to link up with different students' clubs in Cerritos College. She divided us into several groups to do research and use PowerPoint to introduce Cerritos College student clubs.

It was a very useful activity; some of our classmates joined the clubs after the presentation. Dr. QB emphasized that students should make good use of school resources to help them advance.

Dr. QB taught us how to write an essay. After many practices in writing, I could recite the writing procedures without thinking. I have learned writing an essay since I was in elementary school, but no teacher could help me totally remember all the steps of writing correctly. Under Dr. QB's very clear instructions, each time I wrote an essay I could apply these writing rules spontaneously.

I enjoyed the 10-minute writing prompts in her class. They were great warm-up writing exercises at 7 a.m. I had a comfortable feeling after using my all my strength to write out my thoughts.

Professor QB set herself as an example to teach students how to succeed in college. She told us when she was in college, she didn't know her goals and dreams. Therefore, when she was in her sophomore year, she dropped out. From her working experiences, she encountered many unfair situations.

Those experiences made her know that if she wanted to have meaningful life, she would need to go back to school. Even after she went back college and got her degree, for many years she still could not find a job she really loved. Until she found her element; she saw that she was advancing towards her goals. She reminded each student going to college to set up his/her goals and drive himself/herself to accomplish them.

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NORWALK – The Cerritos College Board of Trustees swore in its most recently elected members last Wednesday during the annual board organizational meeting. In November, four seats were up for grabs on the seven-seat governing board for Cerritos College in Norwalk, and voters nearly kept all the incumbents. Dr. Sandra Salazar, Carmen Avalos, and Marisa Perez (picture above) were all re-elected by wide margins. However, longtime board member Bob Arthur was narrowly defeated by newcomer Martha Camacho-Rodriguez, who will now represent Trustee Area 1, which includes portions of Norwalk, Downey, South Gate, and Bell Gardens.



Margarita Rios



Jennifer Perez



Alberto Uribe

Kelley will not seek re-election as field of candidates comes into focus

■ Both Mike Mendez and Cheri Kelley will retire from the Norwalk City Council in March 2017.

By Christian Brown
Editor

NORWALK – After a combined 48 years in office, both Mayor Mike Mendez and Vice Mayor Cheri Kelley opted against running for re-election last Friday, ensuring the city will welcome three new leaders onto the dais in March.

While Mendez had previously announced that he would not seek reelection, Kelley's decision not to run for another four-year term was a surprise.

Kelley was first elected to the Norwalk City Council in 1997 and was re-elected four times subsequently. In 2013, she perhaps faced her toughest election, winning a tumultuous race against Enrique Aranda by just 34 votes.

Nonetheless, nine candidates

have already filed their nomination papers to replace both Kelley and Mendez.

According to City Clerk Theresa Devoy on Wednesday, Harvey Cardenas, Jamie Armenta, Esperanza Free, Tony Ayala, Marcel Mercado, Candy Martinez, Debbie Martinez, Enrique Aranda, and Norwalk Planning Commissioner Jennifer Perez have all submitted their paperwork to run for the two, four-year terms.

On March 7, 2017, Norwalk residents will vote to fill two, four-year terms, but also a single, two-year term to replace former Councilman Marcel Rodarte, who resigned in June.

Devoy said that three candidates will faceoff for that seat, including Alberto Uribe, Ken Menchaca, and current Norwalk-La Mirada Unified School board member Margarita L. Rios.

While they may choose not to run, four other residents pulled nomination papers for the four-year term seats, including

incumbent Norwalk planning commissioners Scott Collins, Jack Aduna, Leroy Baca, and Dr. Sandra Salazar, who was just re-elected to serve another term on



Vice Mayor Cheri Kelley

the Cerritos College Board of Trustees.

The window to file nomination papers officially opened on Monday, Nov. 14. and closed on Friday, Dec. 9 for the two-year term.

Since no incumbent filed before Dec. 9 for the four-year term, the deadline ended on Dec. 14.

Norwalk-La Mirada school board votes in new leadership as labor negotiations heat up

By Raul Samaniego
Contributor

NORWALK – The last 2016 meeting of the Norwalk-La Mirada Unified School District Board was held on Monday and the room was filled to capacity.

Another estimated 75 people listened to the proceedings outside via a loud speaker.

Earlier in the day, picketers carried signs regarding the status of the present labor negotiations.

When asked about the picketing, the president of the Teachers Association of the Norwalk-La Mirada Area (TANLA), Clay Walker, said, “The Teachers are angry; they’re outraged at the inequity we’ve been going through [with] our negotiations for bargaining.

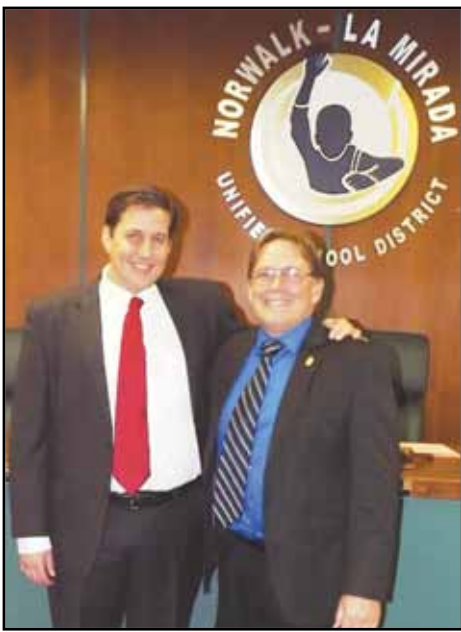
“They (the board of education) came back on their third time with a 1.5 percent (salary increase) and most recently a two percent.”

Finally Walker added, “All of this against a backdrop of a settlement, an agreement that was made between the Board and the Superintendent (Dr. Hasmik Danielian) for a three percent on top of whatever the Association settles for.”

The public portion of the meeting began on time at 6:30 p.m., lasting until all but a few audience members had left at 11:15 p.m.

The Board's first order of business was the selection of new officers with the choosing from their peers of new board president,

Sean Reagan, and Chris Pflanzner taking the seat next to him as the new board vice president. Both were elected with a 7-0 unanimous vote of the Board.



Sean Reagan and Chris Pflanzner

Sean Reagan assumed the presidency for the first time since his election in November 2013, while Chris Pflanzner takes his first executive position as vice president.

Pflanzner is a five-year member of the board, first elected in 2011.

After congratulations and photo opportunities, the meeting reconvened and the first of 23 individuals took the public speakers podium to address the newly-restructured Board.

First up, Patty Stierle addressed the Board with concerns about Booster Club and Teacher accountability issues.

(NOTE: The Board addressed the issue of a Booster Club

application for Girls Soccer at La Mirada High School by approving Item 14 (on the agenda) by a 7-0 vote.)

Stierle's second concern was what she described as “Teacher Accountability” when it came to the reporting of grades in a timely matter.

Her condemnation was met with sneers and “boos,” from the teacher-filled audience.

From then on, teacher after teacher addressed the Board with questions asking why the Board doesn't “respect” their work ethic or how a relatively new Superintendent, Dr. Hasmik Danielian, could receive a 3% raise on top of any increase the teachers might get.

The Board had begun the salary talks with a 0% opening offer.

Many of the educators and speakers spoke of the “insulting offer,” throughout the nearly four-hour marathon public address portion.

Most spoke more than their allotted 3-minute time limitation.

President Reagan reminded the speakers of the time limit, but in the interest of “transparency,” wanted everyone to get a chance to speak.

Citing California law and Board procedures, no responses on any of the public comments were offered by board members.

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Weekend at a Glance

Friday 60°

Saturday 60°

Sunday 64°

THINGS TO DO



Holiday POPS

Saturday - Warner Grand Theatre in San Pedro, 8 pm

The Golden Holiday Pops Orchestra performs holiday film music and traditional classics.



Hopkins vs. Smith

Saturday - The Forum, 4-10 pm

Future hall of famer Bernard Hopkins fights the last bout of his career against light heavyweight Joe Smith.



Family Game Night

Saturday - Columbia Memorial Space Center, 6:30 pm

A “Star Wars” themed event with games and activities for the entire family.



Cruise Night

Sunday - Whittier Boulevard, 9 pm

Bring your classic cars for a Sunday night cruise down Whittier Blvd. Meet at the East L.A. sign.

FROM OUR FACEBOOK

Cheri Kelley chooses not to run for re-election as field of final candidates settles

David Lauderdale: This is an opportunity for Norwalk residents to get some fresh blood on this council.. Hopefully collectively they can get this city back to being a great place to live.. Please do your homework before March and lets get some new perspective in this city.

Rita Elizarraras: Sorry to hear that, Cheri.

Ken Cook: Mike Mendez and Cheri Kelley are the real deal, or I would be the first to criticize them. I'm a local high school teacher, and they are always there to provide their support. At some point, we all need to step aside, and let the next generation take over. The Norwalk City Council truly is an awesome organization.

Ed Escoto: Just seems like odd transition planning, especially with three councilmember seats up for reelection. I respect your opinion and it's possible you're right. You're absolutely right, it's vital for people to be involved.

Join the conversation at: [Facebook.com/NorwalkPatriot](https://www.facebook.com/NorwalkPatriot)

TALON MARKS

CERRITOS COLLEGE

Vigil held in support of making Cerritos College a sanctuary campus

By Karla Enriquez

NORWALK – “We’re a bridge, we’re like the tip of the sphere, we’re the light.”

Political Science Professor Dennis Falcon had a message of hope for the community who attended the Tuesday, Nov. 22 Protected Together Candlelight Vigil.

The Dream Club along with MEChA de Cerritos College and the Bellflower and Norwalk coalition hosted the vigil in support of Cerritos College becoming a sanctuary school.

Former senator and Dream Club member Luis Guzman said, “We’re having a candlelight vigil in support of making this school a sanctuary college, we invited people from the community. What it means basically, is we want it to be [a] safe space for all students.

“In light of the elections, students that are undocumented, there’s that fear that they might get deported. To be a safe campus, to be a sanctuary campus means that for example if ICE wants to come to the school and they want to get information on students that are undocumented, we won’t comply.”



Photo | Karla Enriquez

College President Dr. Jose Fierro assured students that the school will continue to protect and provide education for all students in a speech that followed one by Falcon and Guzman.

He said, “We have for many years welcomed all students and ensured that we protect all students and ensure access to education and we’re going to continue to do the same as we move forward. We’re going to take an additional step forward actively reassuring all the students in our community that we’re here to serve them, protect them and provide access to education.”

Fierro also asked for unity.

Falcon continued his metaphorical use of lights and bridges to drive the point home that the change students want to see starts with them.

“I tell my students, when you go home be the light, if your parents have questions about

things on the news, talk about it, you’re the light, you’re the bridge. This kind of event brings us together that’s why the candle is symbolic.”

“We’re going to be the light and the bridge and it doesn’t take a million people to light the darkness,” Falcon said to the small crowd present including students, professors, administrators and trustees.

Moving forward, Guzman stated that legislation was presented to the board of trustees to make the college a sanctuary school but he will be presenting legislation to senate.

This story was originally published in Talon Marks , the student-ran newspaper at Cerritos College. To read the original version, visit www.talonmarks.com/news/2016/12/14/10031693.

BOARD: Members disagree on how and where to use Measure G funds

CONTINUED from Page 1

Also, during the Public Comment section, parent Rocio Garcia, through an interpreter asked why Norwalk High School was seemingly overlooked when it came to improvements at the central city campus.

Her final comments were to remind the Board of the upcoming elections next year.

The Board listened intently to the comments with board member Darryl Adams being reminded from a voice in the audience to “Pay attention, Mr. Adams,” when he looked away for a moment.

MEASURE G UPDATE

With the last of the public speakers finished, the Board moved onto other scheduled business including an update on Measure G funding and projects.

This was important for all students, family and faculty of the dual-city district.

Board and audience members listened to Isela Vazquez, Director [of] Facilities Planning & Construction, as she described the proposed projects to be undertaken with the approval of the Board, including clarification on the schedule for improvements at Norwalk and John Glenn high schools respectively.

The Board defeated a motion to revisit a vote from the last meeting, Nov. 21, on the Phase 1 projects approved at that meeting.

At its Nov. 21 meeting, the board approved a plan for improvements at John Glenn High School after a proposed Norwalk High improvement plan was rejected after it was determined that far more safety issues existed at the John Glenn campus.

Norwalk High School proposed improvements were an estimated \$14,263,000 for the improvements to the softball field, soccer fields, synthetic turf for the on-campus football field and what are deemed, “accessory buildings.”

No funding was allocated for the construction of bleachers or lights, meaning that no stadium plans were allocated funds.

At the same Nov. 21 meeting, funds were allocated for the improvement of the John Glenn High School multipurpose room.

In the discussion on the revisiting, Board member Jesse Urquidi reiterated his objection repeatedly accompanied by his open and closed fist pounding of the desktop.

Board Vice President Chris Pflanzner attempted to introduce an amended proposal to include a culinary facility addition at Norwalk High School. However, the proposal was defeated.

After discussion, a vote was taken and it was agreed that both Norwalk and John Glenn high schools would receive funding for improvements to their athletic fields with synthetic turf for both schools.

No funding was made available for stadiums at either campus, nor was a culinary facility at Norwalk High School approved.

No funding for stadium improvements at La Mirada High School was ever considered.

Several attempts to reach Isela Vazquez, Director of Facilities Planning & Construction for the Norwalk La Mirada Unified School District for comment on the final time sequencing of the projects were unsuccessful prior to story deadline.

Downey councilman alleges Brown Act violations, threatens to sue the city

DOWNEY – Councilman Sean Ashton, who was passed over for the position of mayor pro tem in a controversial decision Tuesday, has accused the city of Downey of violating the state’s open meetings law, and is threatening to sue if the violations “are not addressed.”

On Tuesday, the City Council voted to make Fernando Vasquez

mayor for 2017. After no nominations were received, Alex Saab nominated himself for the position of mayor pro tem, after which Ashton nominated himself for the same position.

“This is the time where I expected to hear some sort of explanation as to why they believed that I was not “ready” to serve as Mayor Pro Tem,” said Ashton. “However, to my surprise, there was silence.”

Ashton’s motion died for lack of a second; Councilman Rick Rodriguez seconded Saab’s original motion, which passed on a 4-0 vote, with Ashton abstaining.

“Two Brown Act violations occurred in [Tuesday’s] meeting,” alleged Ashton. “The first violation was when other council members had a meeting before they decided to vote. This meeting was an illegal closed meeting that violated the Brown Act. The second violation was when the Mayor did not allow

for public comment on this item (or for the appointment of the Mayor as well).

“It is with a sad heart, but a heavy resolve that I decided to file with the City of Downey a letter of notification of a Brown Act violation. The City of Downey has 30 days to respond to my letter. If they do not respond or do not agree with my letter, then I will file a complaint with the District Attorney for the County of Los Angeles.

“In effect, I will be suing the City of Downey if the Brown Act violations are not addressed. I am prepared to spend my own money to fight this; not because I like to take people to court, but I am an elected official for the City of Downey and I must do this to protect the rights of the people of the city.

“In closing, I am disappointed by the actions of my council colleagues; not because I wasn’t appointed as the Mayor Pro Tem, but because of the illegal way they went about doing it. Especially when the Mayor just last night talked about how our government needs to be “transparent”

–Eric Pierce, editor

Norwalk Library hosts color club

NORWALK – Norwalk Library’s adult coloring club, Color Us Happy, is seeking new members for its weekly gathering every Thursday in December from 1-2 p.m.

Supplies will be available, but members are welcome to bring their own.

In partnership with L.A. Law Library, the Norwalk Library also offers free law librarian assistance.

L.A. Law Library does not provide legal advice, but does provide legal resources and assistance with legal research as an educational service. These programs are all free and open to adults.

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