

Mira Mesa Town Council Meeting Minutes
September 14, 2020, 7:00 PM
Meeting held via Zoom

Introduction: MMTC President Bari Vaz welcomed people to the meeting and announced that we would be having candidate's forums for County Board of Supervisors, candidates Terra Lawson-Remer and Kristin Gaspar, and San Diego School Board, candidates Crystal Trull and Sabrina Bazzo.

MMHS Volunteer Student Tutoring: Sindhu Perubotla, MMHS Senior, and Mallory Asis, Sophomore, described the tutoring program they have set up at Mira Mesa High School. They now have 30 tutors and 47 students. For information contact stperubotla@gmail.com.

Candidates Forum for San Diego County Board of Supervisors: MMTC Secretary Jeff Stevens moderated the forum. Candidates had a 3 minute introduction, a 2 minute conclusion and up to 2 minutes to answer each question.

Kristin Gaspar – mother of 3 children, small business owner with husband of a physical therapy business. As County Supervisor has worked on problems of homelessness and addiction. Has travelled across the Country working on programs that benefit San Diego. County has \$63 million budget. Needs to work with people of both parties including President Trump and Governor Newsom.

Terra Lawson-Remer – 3rd generation San Diegan. Soft spot for Mira Mesa. Has a law degree and Ph.D. in economics. Raising a daughter. Worked in the Obama administration. Was an economist with the United Nations and World Bank.

Question: How well has the County handled the pandemic and what would you do differently?

Terra: top priority – scale up testing and contact tracing. Need an evidence-based response to the pandemic. Need to get the economy running again when this is over; have experience doing so.

Kristin: testing in schools should be done by the schools. We have learned a lot in the past 6 months. Have a problem with managing the whole state with a one size fits all approach. Want more local control in management of the problem.

Question: What is your opinion of Proposition 15, which will increase property taxes?

Kristin: opposed.

Terra: supports.

Question: What changes can be made to the police to improve race relations?

Terra: Agrees with recommendations from an article by former police chief Jerry Sanders. More and better training for police officers. Less militarized response. First responders trained in mental health instead of police. Likes the Cahoots program developed in Eugene, Oregon.

Kristin: Structural racism does exist across the country and in San Diego. Working with DA's office and police department to address. Need bi-partisan coalition to address problem of disproportionately high child welfare problems in African American communities. Need to stop the revolving door of repeat offenders.

Question: The State has made proposals to increase high density housing and to eliminate single-family residential zoning. What do you think of these proposals?

Kristin: There are a lot of fatal flaws in our planning system. There is a housing shortage. 60,000 units were built when we needed 250,000. Only 10,000 were low-moderate income housing. More realism is needed. For example, cramming all of the housing along transit corridors in Encinitas is some of the most expensive land. We need better plans, better execution, strong leaders.

Terra: San Diego is becoming less and less affordable. Need to be realistic, so that new housing doesn't increase traffic congestion. Need homes close to where we live and work. Invest in transit. Not going to be a cheap or easy fix.

Question: SANDAG's transportation plan.

Terra: Gold Coast, Parkdale full of potholes. Need road repair. Need transit investments to serve community.

Kristin: You have been investing in transportation for a long time. 70 cents of every gallon of gasoline is tax. The County of San Diego does not pave streets. That is the City's responsibility. Does not support SANDAG's proposed tax increases. Can use recycled material to pave more miles at lower cost.

Closing statements:

Terra: Three priorities: 1) Accountability and transparency of taxpayer funds; 2) homelessness and mental health services; 3) COVID – working to get economy back on track.

Kristin: Very Important election. Majority control of Board by Democrats could put labor unions in charge of County.

Intermission – Reports.

Anthony Nguyen for Scott Peters: have received calls regarding stimulus checks. Feel free to call office about any issues.

Jeff Stevens, chair Mira Mesa Community Planning Group. Last month MMCPG approved the master plan for the Stone Creek project, which will build 4450 homes in Carroll Canyon. MMCPG likes the design but is concerned about two issues: 1) that the project will be built as designed in the master plan; and 2) that traffic mitigation is in place before residents move in.

The Planning Department has put out a survey on proposed changes to the Mira Mesa Community Plan. The changes would add high density housing to the Mira Mesa Market Center, Mira Mesa Mall and three locations in Sorrento Mesa as well as the Miramar area near Black Mountain Road. It is very important for Mira Mesa residents to take this survey to have some input into the proposed changes. The link to the survey can be found at <https://www.miramesatowncouncil.org/take-the-community-plan-update-survey/>.

Candidates Forum for San Diego Unified School Board: MMTTC Secretary Jeff Stevens moderated the forum. Same rules as the Supervisor forum.

Crystal Trull – Grew up in Mira Mesa, graduate of Mason, Wangenheim and Mira Mesa High School. Can provide leadership. Parent, mother of 3 children, 2 in middle school and 1 in elementary. More than 20

years experience with non-profit management. Prioritize being accountable and accessible. Ensure we put our students first.

Sabrina Bazzo – 18 year parent volunteer in Mira Mesa schools. Kids went through K-12 in Mira Mesa schools. MMHS Foundation president for 6 years. MMTC Board. MMTC Volunteer of the year in 2016. Public health degree from SDSU; 25 years working in public health. San Diego Academy Physicians non-profit organization. Believe we need to have strong schools in every neighborhood. Mira Mesa has good schools. Public health background is important during this time of COVID.

Question: How well do you think the School District has handled COVID-19 and what changes would you propose?

Sabrina: District has done a good job. 2nd largest school district in the State of California. Had to plan distribution of laptops, make sure teachers and administrators were coordinated. At MMHS, students volunteered to provide tutoring support.

Crystal: The District was quick to provide laptops, meals, but slow in moving into the distance learning program. As a parent, got a front row seat. Was surprised that there was not already a plan in place for emergencies like this.

Question: How do we retain seasoned teachers and new hires?

Crystal: Teaching is very difficult. Teachers need more than just money. Need a good working environment, opportunities to increase quality. Need more diversity in teaching staff. High cost of housing in San Diego is a disincentive.

Sabrina: Teachers are the heart of our schools. A lot cannot afford to live here. Santa Cruz is building housing for teachers. We need to mentor our teachers more so they want to stay.

Question: What is your opinion of Charter schools and how would you encourage students to stay in public schools?

Sabrina: I don't have a problem with Charter Schools as long as they follow the same standards as public schools. Some do not. Some do not allow teachers to join union, which should be their right.

Crystal: Charter schools are complementary to public schools (they are actually public schools). They can offer what traditional schools do, plus some things that traditional schools can't. They have to go through a renewal process every 5 years. Supports parent choice.

Question: What do you think of proposition 15?

Crystal – still looking into it, but generally does not support this type of proposition. No guarantee money will go to schools.

Sabrina – supports. Make sure schools are fully funded when they reopen.

Question: How should the Board work with teacher's unions.

Sabrina – Board and Unions are in a partnership. Continue to do town hall meetings.

Crystal – need to collaborate. The Union is in place to protect teachers. School District needs to ensure that students are educated, prepared for the society of tomorrow.

Closing statements:

Sabrina – strong supporter of public schools. Both parents were school teachers in a racially and ethnically diverse area of Chicago. When we chose Mira Mesa we wanted our daughters to grow up in a similarly diverse community. Have volunteered in schools for many years and did not stop when kids graduated. President of the Mira Mesa High School Foundation, which provided funds to avoid teacher layoffs and for site modernization.

Crystal – I personally know the power of public schools. We need leadership. Need to provide for the future. I will be a parent's voice and think outside the box. Have lived for the past 20 years in Mira Mesa, University City and Clairemont.