



COUNCIL AGENDA: 2/2/2021
FILE: 21-188
ITEM: 3.3

Memorandum

TO: CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Councilmember Sylvia Arenas
District 8

SUBJECT: SEE BELOW

DATE: February 2, 2021

Approved

Sylvia Arenas

Date

2/2/2021

SUBJECT: City's COVID-19 Response: Child Care Update

RECOMMENDATION

Direct the City Manager to:

- 1) Continue to prioritize learning pod and other childcare community solutions throughout the COVID crisis, including prioritizing these programs for additional local assistance relief funding that comes out of new federal legislation.
- 2) Create a referral process for isolation assistance and homelessness prevention whenever any learning pod participant or family is exposed to COVID.
- 3) Quickly reopen the Recreation Leader position to allow for sufficient staffing availability for the learning pod programs through the end of this fiscal year.
- 4) Directly coordinate with school districts – both 1-on-1 and through the Schools City Collaborative – to request that each school district currently referring children to a City of San Jose learning pod also provide PRNS with at least one resource specialist (educational) who can provide support for the high needs children we're serving.
- 5) Produce a Manager's Budget Addendum that presents options to create full time position classifications for preschool – as has previously been developed by PRNS – and also present options to create a full-time classification to support other educational roles within PRNS's recreation programs, such as learning pods.
- 6) Inform council offices of open preschool and learning pod slots available to students in their districts at the beginning of each session – and request that each council member commit to designate a staff member in each of our offices to support the referral process to fill these slots with qualifying children.

BACKGROUND

The COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare the challenges San Jose families have been facing for far too long. Safe and affordable access to high quality childcare is – without question – one of those longstanding challenges. And it's a challenge that has brutally ballooned during the crisis,

especially for working class families that work as in-person essential service workers. We must respond to the multiple jobs that parents are forced to take on to keep a roof over their family's head, as well as to afford childcare.

Distance learning has specifically created a challenge to working women. Acknowledging that there are many different family structures and the progress of professional women in this country, childcare continues to be a familial responsibility typically designated to women. As such, we have seen women across this city and country leave paid work to oversee distance learning with their children from home. Ultimately, this results in outcomes that are detrimental to the advancement of working women. That's why I began highlighting this issue during the spring budget season – and why I will continue to advocate so that we can all appreciate the whole picture in clear focus.

Our City of San Jose employees and our partners have worked diligently to put into place new programs quickly to support our families. They moved quickly – mostly for the good. There have also been lessons learned about making sure we're getting these resources out in a way that makes a direct impact on kids and families.

In particular, the relaunch of the city's ROCK afterschool program as full-day "Rock n Learn" learning pods, has been a huge success. Over 400 children who face some of the highest risks and greatest disadvantages are being lifted up. Kids who were desperately behind in homework are catching up to their peers. They are learning that they may achieve being "good at distance learning."

As we move forward, it's incumbent on the Council to provide PRNS with the resources it needs to help this program continue to succeed – and that's the spirit that most items in my recommendations are offered. The most acute needs are related to staffing, though funding may still be necessary. The other acute need is to support children scholastically within our programs.

COVID has brought the needs of these families and children into focus. We know the challenges they face, but it's up to us what we do to support them in this time of crisis and beyond.