

## Today's Board Meeting: Public Comments – Open Forum

Hello!

I believe this would be an Open Forum comment, as no related matter is listed under 8. Department Reports; c. Community Services Division: Recreation and Neighborhood Services.

The issue I'd like to bring to the attention of the commission is one of **Quality Control**:

How, and how often, does the Commission (or other administrative body) apply critical eyes to program operations to ensure they are currently providing (and continually improving) the most valuable benefits deserving of the families here in Richmond? This includes ensuring Richmond Rec & Parks is making the best use of city budgets and outside funding.

In other words: *Who's keeping an eye on the cultural and moral mission that should be driving the implementation of Richmond's community programming?* Are there processes in place to ensure all supervisors, directors and individual staff understand *the mission*, and are doing their best to stay true to it day-by-day?

Because looking at the program from a parent's or concerned outsider's perspective, it can easily appear as if Richmond Rec & Parks is just going through their necessary logistical and administrative steps with little, if any, attention paid to overall guiding principals.

(My context example that is only background information for reference:)

At Achieve Summer Camp, staff sell candy to the kids during lunch, and again during snack time. Meanwhile, the "healthy" lunch offering might consist of a cold bagel, baby carrots and milk. Wasting food is not discussed with the kids, nor is recycling of any kind.

So, thinking about the moral and cultural beliefs that Richmond parents would expect the city's programs are built on, any parent could see conflict because:

- 1) Providing kids processed sugar candy goes against what everyone knows about healthy nutrition.
- 2) (My children) are not "customers". They're not opportunities for center staff to make money from.
- 3) A city family program should help all kids gain healthy eating habits, not promote unhealthy habits that will affect them the rest of their lives. (Especially given there are signs posted at the centers saying "kids provided free, healthy lunch!")
- 4) When the kids eat candy instead of actual lunch, they throw away more uneaten healthy food.

So, Richmond Rec & Parks is encouraging our kids to be wasteful by so casually throwing away uneaten food, while food insecurity is all around us. (The Contra Costa food bank gives away food to needy families literally right outside the glass doors of the lunch area at the Nevin Center.)

5) By selling the kids candy, Rec & Parks is unnecessarily taking money from Richmond families (because free lunch is already provided.) Richmond families have tight budgets. Many are financially struggling.

6) When Rec & Parks give (my) kids the option to eat candy, they will of course eat that instead of lunch.

The food provided at the community centers through Rec & Parks programs is funded by the government, so when the kids throw away their provided lunch, Rec & Parks is wasting government grant money AND (my) family's money.

7) Selling candy creates class division - its unfair to the kids who don't have money to buy candy, and makes them feel bad about it. Some kids are eating cold bagels while kids around them are eating Skittles. This is something they're already sensitive to because some come from financially insecure homes.

I will be signing in to the board meeting tonight and hope to respectfully and succinctly outline this issue to the committee. Thank you!

Allen Schlossman

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**Public Comments agenda item #10.(a)**

Hello (again),

A topic I'd like to be addressed by the **Ad Hoc Committee** in their Report, **Item #10(a.) Sustainability and Climate Responsiveness Committee:**

1) Why don't the community centers recycle?

2) Why are kids essentially encouraged to waste lunch food (by selling them candy at lunch time), even WHILE the Contra Costa Food Bank gives food away to families in need right outside the door?

It's bad enough the programs don't bother to recycle anything, but it's 10x worse to *teach kids* that recycling isn't important at all—even when people right in front of them are so clearly in need.

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I'll be available during the online board meeting to offer additional information or answer any questions relating to this at the committee's discretion.

Allen Schlossman

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