

## Miriam Lens

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**From:** Sherry Blair  
**Sent:** Thursday, May 23, 2013 4:48 PM  
**To:** CityClerk  
**Subject:** Copy of letter to Council re: priorities

Miriam, here is a copy of the letter I sent to the council (and others) about the Council Priorities. I would appreciate it if it were uploaded to "items received" on the May 7th council meeting on the city's website.

In the future I will include you!

Thank you very much

Sherry

----- Forwarded message -----

**From:** Sherry Blair  
**Date:** Sun, May 5, 2013 at 6:11 PM  
**Subject:** City Council's Priorities FY2014  
**To:** Al Mendall <[Mendall@sbcglobal.net](mailto:Mendall@sbcglobal.net)>, Barbara Halliday <[Barbara.Halliday@hayward-ca.gov](mailto:Barbara.Halliday@hayward-ca.gov)>, Francisco C Zermeno <[machetez@sbcglobal.net](mailto:machetez@sbcglobal.net)>, Greg Jones <[Greg.Jones@hayward-ca.gov](mailto:Greg.Jones@hayward-ca.gov)>, Mark Salinas <[Mark.Salinas@hayward-ca.gov](mailto:Mark.Salinas@hayward-ca.gov)>, Marvin Peixoto <[Marvin.Peixoto@hayward-ca.gov](mailto:Marvin.Peixoto@hayward-ca.gov)>, Michael Sweeney <[Michael.Sweeney@hayward-ca.gov](mailto:Michael.Sweeney@hayward-ca.gov)>  
**Cc:** [HaywardBurbankNeighborhood@yahoogroups.com](mailto:HaywardBurbankNeighborhood@yahoogroups.com), Fran David <[Fran.David@hayward-ca.gov](mailto:Fran.David@hayward-ca.gov)>, David Korth <[David.Korth@hayward-ca.gov](mailto:David.Korth@hayward-ca.gov)>, Melinda Hall

I have been struggling right along with you to come up with the right set of priorities for Hayward. After a LOT of thought, I offer these conclusions:

Although the Safe, Clean and Green focus has been adequate until now, I believe that it is time to bring those priorities together into one holistic view that could be called Community Capacity Building. Everything else is connected to that central concept. (I might confess that I had to Google it to update my understanding of what "capacity building" really is. If you are only guessing now, it's worth doing the research.)

There are three ongoing major council priorities that we must now get on the front burner and keep there until they have accomplished their purpose. These are: The Neighborhood Partnership Program, Promise Neighborhood and the Healthy Eating, Active Living Campaign. These three will best help us to build capacity and increase our sustainability.

1. The Neighborhood Partnership Program has already met with some success, but much remains to be done and soon, before people lose interest and let the program stagnate. The following are my suggestions:

- Get the rest of the neighborhoods on board. None should be left behind in Hayward.
- In neighborhoods, like the Jackson Triangle, where there are no neighborhood groups, engage with elementary school parent groups. This is the first place where families become involved and parent groups can be incubators for citizen involvement.

- Convene a Neighborhood Leadership group NOW before enthusiasm is lost. This would give neighborhood leaders a chance to meet with each other to share information and ideas and help them to work through problems they are experiencing. This group would continue to improve the partnerships between the neighborhoods and the City that were begun at the beginning of the NPP. Relationships need attention and commitment. Leaders will carry information back to their neighbors for action. This is the necessary but missing step that will link the neighborhoods with the council (and connect voters with their elected officials.) Empowering leaders is an important step in community building.
- Grow and integrate Neighborhood Alert (SAFE) and Keep Hayward Clean and Green (CLEAN) with the Neighborhood groups (GREEN).

2. The Promise Neighborhood educational initiative has already met with some success. Our own institution of higher learning, for example, is learning new inspired and tested ideas and methodologies that will improve Hayward's whole educational system. The program has joined Hayward's agencies together and begun the hard work of breaking down agency silos of information that have long left gaps in services. That is essential to energize a system that will work for everyone. As the program is implemented we will begin to realize the increased benefit of changing what has been a competitive agency system into a more cooperative inclusive system. Programs that are beginning in the Jackson Triangle now are intended to be extended to all our neighborhoods.

But there is something missing in the program as implemented. Many community members were brought together to participate in the application process for this program. We were excited and motivated. But since then, we have been cut off from the ongoing process, leaving us in an information vacuum where nothing is being learned and no interaction is possible. This has been a big disappointment for those who supported this program the most. Keeping the public informed and listening to community feedback is vital to the success of the program especially now, in the beginning before its full value has sunk into the public consciousness.

Presentations to the Council are not sufficient to satisfy this unmet need. City Council meetings are not designed to offer adequate opportunity for the community to participate in a meaningful way.

City staff attempted to convene meetings of the community a couple of times earlier this year but those seem to have been discontinued. They should be restarted to keep community leaders engaged in the program. We will need ongoing meetings with next steps throughout this program, meetings we can count on before the ball is dropped and we lose interest.

We only have a short time left to set the groundwork before the PN funds run out. After that it will be up to us to follow through to success. The council needs to renew its commitment to this opportunity now. If there is a problem, it must be worked through and if you feel resistance within yourself learn more. This is our best opportunity to change the schools I hear you complaining about all the time. Don't waste it.

3. The HEALTHY EATING ACTIVE LIVING Campaign is the newest most urgent and important initiative and the one that needs the most understanding and work. In order to create a sustainable community, we need to change our consciousness to align more closely with global and national efforts in this area. In the end, we can do what it says: HEAL. (Ourselves and Mother Earth)

When I first heard of the HEAL campaign, I immediately thought of Michelle Obama's work during her first year as First Lady. She began by expressing gratitude to all the governmental agencies for the work they do and then she created a vegetable garden at the White House. A new garden was next installed at the Department of Agriculture which administers SNAP (the food stamp program). We need to follow her lead.

Hayward has a long history of deep involvement with our land, farming, gardening and food. When the Council was approving the HEAL resolution; the city was also in the midst of changing its relationship with the Hayward Community Gardens. Those two interests led to the City partnering with HARD to convene a series of community meetings to envision “Urban agriculture in the greater Hayward area.” These were all about Hayward’s need for healthy food for all. Community members showed up and participated in those visioning meetings. By the end of the visioning process they had envisioned both long term and short term goals. The next step was to create a food policy council at the library.

Then both the City and HARD abruptly dropped the ball and the process ended with a vision but no action. That was a huge disappointment to those who had worked so hard on the visioning. It also disconnected those people and agency representatives and their vision from making progress on this Council Priority and the resolution to join the HEAL campaign.

The City manager reported in her recent discussion on the Council Priorities that efforts had been blocked because of “not having a strong partner agency with which to implement programs.” This item is now at the very bottom of the City’s tentative list of unscheduled Council agenda items.

I believe it was a mistake to seek that partner and, in fact, doing so set up a lot of interpersonal and interagency conflicts within the community. What was needed was what actually had begun, a task force that could bring all agencies and individuals concerned with Food Security together to break down silos of information and fill in the gaps in services in the same way that we are learning to do for education through the PN initiative.

Last year, the UN General Assembly adopted resolution 66/288 “The future we want.”

*According to that resolution, “Poverty eradication is the greatest global challenge facing the world today and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development. In this regard we are committed to freeing humanity from poverty and hunger as a matter of urgency.*

*We therefore acknowledge the need to further mainstream sustainable development at all levels, integrating economic, social and environmental aspects and recognizing their interlinkages, so as to achieve sustainable development in all its dimensions.”*

And it goes on, all well worth the time to study.

Poverty eradication is also Hayward’s greatest challenge. The year 2013 began with a Teach-In on Hunger and Homelessness at City Hall which has now evolved into the Task Force to End Hunger and Homelessness in Hayward. This task force is made up of people who are well aware of the need to change our present system to accommodate those who have lost in the old competitive economic system that more than meets the needs of those at the top at the expense of the meeting the needs of those at the bottom. It is clear that in order to be sustainable, we must create a more balanced system of cooperation and inclusion. I didn’t see this in Hayward’s Economic Development Strategic Plan.

Hungry and homeless people seen on the streets of Hayward are only the tip of the iceberg, the visible part, the part that draws our attention to this problem even if we don’t want to face it. Yet they only hint at the full extent of the problem in Hayward. The vast majority of our citizens who are impoverished by our present economic system suffer in private where they remain invisible and ignored. Many are ignorant of what social safety net we have. Others are receiving benefits that are inadequate to meet the need. In the meantime, empty houses and business have been left behind after their inhabitants moved because of foreclosures and business failures.

More and more people are gaining the courage to speak up at city council meetings and at neighborhood meetings. We need to change our attitudes towards these people as well as our approach to this problem. They need to be safe, clean and healthy just like us. We need a program that works for everyone from the bottom up.

Jobs are not the only answer. Many people, including the disabled, the old and the young cannot work. Others are not considered employable for other reasons. Hunger and homelessness alone contribute to this lack of employability. For those with jobs, a LIVING wage is not generally available. Yet our small businesses cannot afford such a thing for their employees.

The Council needs to prioritize its involvement with the Task Force to End Hunger and Homelessness. It must be willing to look at sacred cows and change codes and fees to better accommodate those on the bottom. The city and our institutions must work hand in hand to research new and innovative approaches. The accomplishments of the earlier "Visioning" sessions fit nicely into this new task force too.

Solving these problems in Hayward must include a regional effort not only so that Hayward does not become a magnet for the poor, but also because Hayward should be a model for localities who accept their share of the responsibility.

Finally, we are in the habit of saying there isn't enough money. The idea of scarcity has kept us down for too long. Yet, when the City wanted to update its General Plan, a lot of money was made available. And last night, I saw Southgate's revitalized swim center on TV. There wasn't enough money for that either, but because people didn't let that stop them, the money came. That's the spirit we need!

Thank you for your consideration,

Sherry