

PRESCOTT CITY COUNCIL
PUBLIC WORKSHOP
TUESDAY, JUNE 22, 2010
PRESCOTT, ARIZONA

MINUTES of the Prescott City Council Public Workshop held on June 22, 2010 in the City Hall Council Chambers, 201 South Cortez, Prescott, Arizona.

◆ **CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Kuykendall called the Public Workshop to order at 1:30 p.m.

◆ **ROLL CALL:**

PRESENT:

Mayor Kuykendall
Councilman Blair
Councilman Hanna
Councilman Lamerson
Councilwoman Lopas
Councilwoman Suttles

ABSENT:

Councilwoman Linn

Mayor Kuykendall said that this was a public workshop to let the public speak to a situation that has been in the community for a few weeks. He said that they would be letting all sides speak to the issue, but they would be reinstating the light to limit comments to five minutes. He asked that everyone be courteous and speak to the subject. He said that they would have to shut it down at 2:30 p.m. as they have other meetings after that time. He asked that comments be directed at the mural; not about personalities.

1. Public request for discussion of Miller Valley Elementary School Mural and related comments.

Tom Kayn, Prescott, began talking about the transcript of Mr. Blair's broadcast, but Mayor Kuykendall stopped him and asked him to stay on target—to discuss his feelings of the mural. Mr. Kayn continued, and mentioned the proposed recall election. Mayor Kuykendall, again, asked Mr. Kayn to discuss the mural.

Mr. Kayn asked that before the City considers arguments on both sides of the recall, that the citizens hear what the costs are going to be made to pay for the \$100,000 to pay for the recall. Mayor Kuykendall asked him to stay on target, but answered that they included \$100,000 in the budget for a potential election and it had to be removed from something else, but that was beside the point.

Pancho said that many do not know him, but he loves them all. He was not there for or against art because art speaks by itself. It would be more useful if they had a line for love and line for hate, and the majority would be in the line of love.

He said that he was a visitor and since he came to Prescott he has received a lot of signs of love, feeling very welcome. He said that his Dad and his family came from Mexico and his Grandpa is German so his last name is Ramos-Schlerle (?).

He said that Pablo Picasso said, "*Why do you try to understand art? Do you try to understand the singing of birds?*" He said that he is a scientist so he has to balance that art and science, and when it is balanced the beauty of life blossoms at its best.

He said that Albert Einstein said, "*A human being is a part of the whole universe—a part limited in space and time. He or she experiences himself, his feelings, his thoughts, his emotions and something separated from the rest. This is a kind of optical illusion. This illusion restricted us to our personal desires and to affection for the people near to us.*" He said that they must expand their circle of compassion to include all living beings at the whole of nature. The community of Prescott is beautiful.

Amanda Rummage Chartier, Prescott, said that she was a third-generation Prescott native. Her grandmother, Margaret Polly came to Prescott on a train at the depot at what is now Albertson's in 1940. She was a newlywed with no money, but big dreams. Prescott was good to them and she eventually founded an extremely successful Polly McDonald real estate business. She said that she tells them that because she is proud to call Prescott her home.

She has taught art in Prescott for 22 years (2 at Bradshaw Mountain Jr. High, 18 at Prescott Mile High Middle School, and the last 2 years at Prescott High School). In addition to teaching art she is the curriculum coordinator for Fine Arts for Prescott Unified School District.

After reading the letters to the editor in the Prescott courier, and listening to both Steve Blair and Terry Lovell's talk shows on KYCA, she can honestly say that every avenue and issue regarding the Miller Valley Mural has been exposed and exhausted. She has a few observations and a very small suggestion.

First, they must remember that art is in the eye of the beholder. Everyone has a varied opinion on what great art is. Historically there has been heated debate over art, especially public art. She said that they have lost the focus on why the mural was created. It was erected to encourage their students creatively. To display a commitment to a healthy lifestyle of walking, running and riding bikes to school and to respect the environment by recycling, reducing and reusing. Those

are all admirable goals that the staff of Miller Valley Elementary School take seriously and tries to instill in their students.

Secondly, the portion of Miller Valley School that was painted on is not a historical building. It was constructed in 1964. There are two schools in the Prescott Unified School Districts that are on the historical register—Washington and Lincoln.

She said that her one suggestion was to quit talking about the mural; quit writing letters to the editor, blogging, writing, talking. If the remarks are offensive to people, turn the other cheek and forgive. If they do not care for the mural as a form of art, look the other way. Do not let this issue define them as a community. Do not let revenge be their guiding force as their children are watching them.

In closing she quoted her Mother, *“Let the issue be the football. Enthusiastically kick it around, but don’t kick the players.”* She believed that they have kicked the football until it is a deflated pile of lifeless leather and now they were kicking the players.

She said that they can walk away from the issue today and choose to mend the disaster. She asked the community to please not let the issue define them as the state was watching them, the country was listening and most importantly their children deserve better.

R. E. Wall, Prescott Downtown Mural Project, Prescott, said that the process that has been pushing for five years has been intended to be all inclusive, bringing everyone together. He said that it was based on a poem, *“They drew a circle to keep me out. A heretic, a rebel and a thing to flout. But, love and I had wit to wind so we drew a circle and we brought them in.”* That is what they have been doing.

He said that they devised a project that was as fair and well-rounded as they possibly could make it. Not everyone has to participate, so sometimes people are hurt and feel left out. Hopefully in the future, as they continue with the project, they can remedy it by making it a louder and more-inclusive project.

Every time they have done a mural it has been brought to the City Council; not because they had to all the time, but because it was respectful. For this town, they do have respect. None of this was intended to get this far. If he had his way they would have just painted the mural and celebrated it, continuing on from there.

He said that in their relationship with the City they have been involved, ratified it and mandated it throughout the process. Even Rowle P. Simmons in 2007 declared them as the official mural project of the City of Prescott. They have been proud that the Council has been included and some have shown up to the

events and endorsed what they were doing, monetarily as well as physically. For those that have in the past helped them, they appreciated their support.

He said that he believed that in the situation they have with public art, they can become controversial, but the situation with the school it holds an autonomous relationship with the City that allows it to decorate its grounds as they wish. The decision was made by the school and ratified by 380 of its children, 40 of its staff members and almost 100 other artists that helped to make it happen.

It was a well thought-out project to the best of their ability. He does not think it is their responsibility to defend themselves in the process of making the murals. They were doing the best they could and so while all of this was taking place, upholding their duty to their community, they were not able to defend themselves during two months' worth of attacks being made from a radio station that influenced the community.

He said that without getting into Mr. Blair's position, their position has been to stay as true to their community as they could and they have tried to do that. The unfortunate consequences of this have had long reaching effects on the country. It was their honor to have been part of the international dialogue on the subject, but was not what it was intended to be. Green was not what they wanted to talk about.

He said that it was a legitimate project, ratified by the City of Prescott on numerous times. He hoped that they would see that over the past five years they have had 2,500 people invested in the murals.

He disagreed with the prior speaker, stating that he believes it does define their community and that is the point. They were defining themselves different from other cities in the country and how they choose to go about our actions from here is up to them.

In closing, he hoped they will continue to participate in the project and not take it as a negative but a positive. As a legitimate Mexican American citizen, the Governor of the State has informed them that they must take steps toward lifting up their community and especially their Mexican American citizens. He thanked them for their time and for holding the forum.

Mayor Kuykendall thanked Mr. Wall for verifying the position that the City had nothing to do with this particular project with regard to its approval. Mr. Wall said that the Council has voted twice on the project.

Zena Mitchell, Prescott, took a few minutes to show pictures that made her question the appropriateness of part of the mural. She stepped to the projector and pointed some things out. She showed pictures of the environment around the mural with the hospital, Hastings, busy intersection, etc. She said that what

caught her eye with the mural was the black child. It made her ask “*where are the children like me?*” which in itself is controversial.

She said that the mural depicts a child jumping over a wall and looking at art, like many things, they take into account their past backgrounds, experiences, education, etc. and it made her ask why the artist was inviting illegals coming over the wall. She said that the matter of coming over the wall illegally is not a matter of racial profiling; it is America’s sovereignty at stake.

She said that she asked the artist what message they were going to put on the banner and he said that he might have to rethink it. Another concern is the levitated train. She said that she knows that the power elite in Washington want to get the masses on the fast-moving train that they were having the Chinese come to America to build. She asked the artist what the theme of the mural was and they said a step into the future. She asked how it could be a step into the future with the old-fashioned trucks.

Bob Small, Prescott, said that he has been in town for 40 years and a lot of people were missing the point on how they feel about the mural being on a public building. He said there was no public input. They did this at a time when everyone is broke and they took the money under the pretense of safety for the kids. That was not what the money was meant for. If so, it would have been named differently. He said that he called the state about it and they spent thousands of dollars. He asked how it helped the kids with safety. He said that the schools are one of the highest things on their property tax bills and without public input nothing should be put up on those buildings.

Joy Herhall, Prescott, said that diversity in the best sense of the word is bringing vitality. In the worst sense it brings conflict such as this. She wants Prescott to be vital and thriving. Her warning is that if they decide to cover it over they were going to make a martyr out of the mural and it will be exponentially stronger.

Kurk Womack, Prescott, said that he lived in Diamond Valley but was a taxpayer of Prescott Unified School District, as well as a taxpayer for ADOT every time he fills up. He said that Mr. Small made part of his point. From a taxpayer’s perspective, they said that the mural was about alternative transportation but he was trying to figure out what type of vehicles the three predominant figures were on.

He said that using taxpayer money to influence the taxpayers to use more taxpayer money is similar to the school district using taxpayer money to influence an election. He sees a gigantic train and in his opinion that is not green. Every mass transit system in the country is a massive black hole for the taxpayers. He said that he resents seeing the mural was used to promote such an item. He said that he was disgusted by the political correctness being used as a weapon.

Lisa Barnes, Prescott Alternative Transportation (PAT), said that they paid for the bulk of the mural. Later in today's regular Council meeting she will be speaking more about Safe Routes to School projects. The money used to pay for this mural was federal highway money that is specifically designated for education and increasing the number of students walking and biking to school. It cannot go to sidewalks or infrastructure. It must go to education and encouragement and the State has seen that a mural falls into that category.

She said that the format for the workshop was confusing. She was hoping to be able to come together to discuss the mural, but it is hard to speak with pros and cons. The mural exists. Whether some people like it or not it is legally there and they followed every rule and criteria to put it there. She said that the project was intended for the school and was voted on by every student at the school. That is why it exists the way it does.

She said that she does not see the mural as the controversy. Other things spurred this controversial discussion. When they did the mural at the Mile High Middle School she did not hear anything and now people want to take it down there, too. She said that public art is public art. Not everyone is going to like it. She said that they would not have hired the artists if they were not going to do a good job. They are unique projects. The Mile High Middle School mural has been given national designation and is something to be proud of. She said that the students learn from it. They feel they have done what the intent was.

Mayor Kuykendall clarified that the City did not solicit the meeting. They had several calls from people wanting to speak before the Council and the Council felt they must provide a forum for those wanting to express themselves.

Ms. Barnes asked if there was a desired outcome. Mayor Kuykendall said that would be in the outcome of those attending and those watching. He said that they will move forward as a community.

Deb Thurston, speaking as a citizen and not representing any organization, said that she asked her 27 year old son what he thought of the controversy. He said there are a lot of people in Prescott with too much time on their hands. She said that her personal feeling is that it is a darn shame to turn it into a discussion about diversity. She would hate to see it come down as that would make it worse.

She said that the conclusion she has come to on where the project fell short was on manners and respect for one's neighbor. She believed those involved in the project have probably learned how important is to invite everyone in on something so public.

She recommended that in the future if they have a mural in a place as public as this that there should be some regulation on bring the immediate community into the process, or perhaps using the Prescott Area Arts and Humanities Council.

She said that it was something they need to put in the past and learn from for the future.

Joseph Harding, Prescott, said that he was in favor of the mural. He just recently became involved in the Mural Mice. He is disabled with severe memory deficit. The process is more than just putting pictures on the wall. It is a community. He became involved with the Mural Mice Theater and working with them his memory has improved tenfold. They enrich the community and it has totally enriched his life. He can remember things now. They said that they are enriching the community with the art. He thought they were doing a wonderful service to the community.

Gene Gertler said that this was one of a series of murals in the City, several of them on public buildings and it has never been an issue. He wondered if the young man's face had looked like everyone else rather than the kids at the school, if they would be there today discussing it.

Grayson Lookner, Prescott, said that he has lived in Prescott for about eight years, from the east coast originally. He said that there are so many instances that he sees in the public that do not resonate with him that he has had to be subjected to like the billboards. He said that they do not live in a censored society, but in a free society where they hopefully honor freedom of expression. He said that he could find things in the mural on the Council Chambers' wall that do not resonate with him. It is a fine example of art but is equally unrealistic because there is no one of diversity represented in it. He could find so many things around the country. He said that he loves the town, the nature, the pace. It is beautiful and he hopes to remain objective about it. He said that if they were going to take it down, they should take everything down.

Jed, Groom Creek, said that he heard about this event while traveling in New York and found it was international news. He said that it was an important meeting, determining how they would appear in the eyes of people all over the world. He said that he was in support of art and culture. In his opinion that includes the rodeo, the antique stores, the murals, Tsunami on the Square. All of those things bring people in the town. There are things he does not like about the rodeo and there are some things he does not like about the mural. He said that the fact is that they bring people to Prescott and keep the money coming here. He said they would be shooting themselves in the foot if they took down any of the murals. They would come across as a community that cannot deal with things that are hard. He encouraged them to not take any action other than supporting public art. He thought the whole thing has been blown out of proportion.

Councilwoman Suttles said that she has heard at least five people mention consideration of taking down the mural. She asked who has suggested that. They have never heard anything about that being done. Mr. Wall said that one of the speakers on KYCA radio was promoting destruction of the murals.

Mayor Kuykendall told Mr. Wall that he was out of order. He said that they welcomed him there but they also expect them to listen, pay attention, and when they leave today their acts will show what their intentions are.

Nicole, Prescott, said that she was an active member of the Prescott community. She was very much for the mural; she thought it was a beautiful piece of art. She said that it does show the diversity that does exist in Prescott. Not all of the children on the mural identify as Mexican or Black. A few of them appear to be White as well. She believes that the racial slurs she has heard about are out of line. She hates to think of the six-year old boy (on the mural) growing up and wondering about the town being in a tizzy over the color of his skin.

Sherece McCray, Prescott, brought in two of the children that helped paint the mural. She said that she works in the school and their job is to teach diversity and acceptance of everyone. She said that the fact that someone would suggest that the mural be painted over, after it was complete, is sad. The mural is beautiful and they put in a lot of hard work.

Jan Monroe, Prescott, said that she thought there can be a lot learned from the process. They should accept it and move on. She thought that if the citizens had known more about it from the beginning it would not have happened. She thought that the Daily Courier missed the mark on telling the story. They never heard their names or seen an interview with them. She would suspect that the children were proud to be selected. She said that it is a lot harder to attack the mural if you know what is behind something. She said that there is a big sign out there now telling about an Eagle Scout project. She hoped that had gone through all the channels so they do not end up having to have this type of meeting again.

Mayor Kuykendall said that the Council would not be making any decision that affected the mural in any way.

Coss Lamour, Prescott, said that responses to the mural suggest several things that might be pondering. She shared some statistics on recent research regarding minority youth. She said that one cannot but wonder if the public outcry would be there if the face was not brown.

XXX asked what ever happened to the First Amendment, the one about free speech. She said that the school missed a teachable moment when this all arose. It was a perfect time to talk about the First Amendment. The remarks angered a number of people, but they are all American citizens and they have the right to speak. She said that they can all love or hate the mural, but they should have the right to say what they want.

Ernie Rodarte, Prescott, said that the mural has caused a lot of grief for the community. He read about it while in Austin and showed it to his grandchildren.

He said that he went to Lincoln and could not believe the comments made. He said that CNN did a 30-minute talk about it and it has destroyed people that have worked so hard.

He said that he used to put a lot of time in selling the community. He was involved with the Chamber and in his own position with the company that serves electricity in the town. What happened is totally unfair. When he met the young students that were chosen to be in the portrait and he talked to them. They were there and observing. All he could say was, "God bless all of you." He said that there was something here, it is called diversity and he knows about it and he knows about racism. He lived through it in a segregated school called Lincoln.

He said that he had four brothers in World War II and he was a Korean Vet. No one says they cannot express their views, but when they try to destroy someone's ethnicity, he was very sad to see what has happened to his hometown of 80 years. He said that the world is in a mess and losing wonderful men. They need to get it over with and go on to the real priorities of the community.

Mayor Kuykendall said that he knew most of Mr. Rodarte's family and Prescott would not be the Prescott they love if it had not been for their family, and many others. He said that they led the way and they want to be good followers.

Norman Lafeber, Prescott, said that it and of itself there is nothing wrong with the mural, but it should be a representation of the community itself. He thought they would have a real problem if they were in a predominantly Hispanic or Black community to have a mural with two White kids.

Councilwoman Suttles said that they have heard from both sides and have a feeling of what they are into. It is time to get it behind them and move on. She felt that some of the speakers were taking them there so they should work it out. The mural is staying; no one is going to do anything with it. She said that the Council has more to deal with than arguing over who likes the mural and who does not.

Councilman Lamerson said that he has maintained since he has been on the Council that he did not believe in censorship of the arts. This was a Prescott Unified School Board issue. It was on school property and not in the City purview to say who or what was painted any more than the school board has a right to say what the City can put on the side of City Hall.

Councilman Hanna said that when he was running for Council he made a comment that he wanted to keep Prescott a quality of life that he grew up with. He has been there for almost 55 years and this is exactly what he was talking about, when outside people come to a town and try to change their complexity of their town was and it turns into a diversity issue. Asked who the outside people were Councilman Hanna responded that the comment he made when he was

running, in answer to the question, was regarding people coming in from California and bringing children that were in gangs to get away from gangs. That was an example and it was taken out of context. Then it was said he did not like Californians. He said that this is the problem they have. Prescott is not an inner-city area that paints murals on walls.

When he was growing up in Prescott they did not worry about diversity. There was plenty of diversity in Prescott. The majority of his friends were of a different race than he is, but he never thought of them being of a different race. They have turned this into a race issue because that is what people are trying to stir up. He grew up with a totally different type of mentality. His parents raised him to judge a human being by their integrity, by their conduct and their actions; not by the color of their skin. They have turned it around and tried to make this a race issue and it is not. They are Americans. They hear so often that someone is an African American, Mexican American, Italian American; they are Americans.

He then read a statement by Theodore Roosevelt in 1907 which had to do with immigrants and minorities. *“In the first place we should insist that if an immigrant who comes here in good faith becomes an American and assimilates himself to us, he shall be treated on an exact equality with everyone else for it is an outrage to discriminate against any such man because of creed, birth place or origin. But this is predicated upon a person becoming in every facet an American and nothing but an American. There can be no divided allegiance. Any man who says he is an American but is something else isn’t an American. We have room for but one flag, the American flag. We have room for but one language, the English language. We have room for but one sole loyalty and that is to the American people.”*

2. Adjournment.

There being no further business to be brought before the Council, the Prescott City Council Public Workshop of June 22, 2010 adjourned at 2:37 p.m.

MARLIN D. KUYKENDALL, Mayor

ATTEST:

ELIZABETH A. BURKE, City Clerk