

**Malibu Middle and High Schools Environmental Task Force**  
**Inaugural Meeting**  
**Thursday, October 16, 2013**

In Attendance:

- Mark Katchen, Managing Principal, The Phylmar Group, Inc.
- Laurie Lieberman, President, Board of Education
- Sandra Lyon, Superintendent
- Jan Maez, Associate Superintendent, Business & Fiscal Services/CFO
- Jerry Block, Principal, Malibu H.S.
- Pam Herkner, Principal, Cabrillo E.S.
- Lisa Lambert, Teacher, Malibu H.S.
- Nancy Levy, Teacher, Cabrillo E.S.
- Yalile Pieper, Bilingual Liaison, Malibu H.S.
- Michael Jacobson, Student, Malibu H.S.
- Seth Jacobson, Parent, Malibu H.S. (*attended by phone*)
- Heather Anderson, Parent, Malibu H.S.
- Soniya Perl, Parent, Malibu H.S.
- Jennifer deNicola, Parent, Malibu H.S.
- Elaine René-Weissman, Community Liaison, Malibu H.S.

Absent:

- John Sibert, City Council Member, City of Malibu

This was the first meeting of a community-based task force formed by the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District to address concerns raised by Malibu Middle and High School staff that campus environmental conditions may be causing health issues. The group was tasked with reviewing and assisting the District in addressing the concerns that have been raised, providing a vehicle for receiving community input, and for ensuring that the community is well-informed as the process of seeking information goes forward. The Task Force will ensure that the District's process is transparent and that it obtains the information that will enable the District to respond expeditiously and with appropriate solutions to the community's concerns.

The meeting began with a detailed presentation by newly hired Environmental Coordinator Mark Katchen, who facilitated the first MALIBU SCHOOLS ENVIRONMENTAL TASK FORCE meeting. He reiterated that the purpose of the task force is to provide feedback from the community, serve as a conduit for information, and make sure that information is reliable, timely, and directed to the concerns of the community.

Mr. Katchen discussed strategies for communicating with all stakeholders. He also laid out the very complicated, and often misunderstood, ways of evaluating and addressing potential health risks. Mr. Katchen pointed out that a primary guideline involves maintaining clear, empathetic, and open communication to ensure that facts and information will flow from and to the Task Force. It was agreed that the Task Force must maintain transparency and embrace the concerns of every member of the community, while focusing on a fact-based, scientific approach to addressing concerns that have been raised. Mr. Katchen led a discussion about the very sensitive relationship between risk, hazard, and emotional reactions.

## KEY POINTS

1. In the last week, Mr. Katchen has held private interviews with teachers at MHS and Cabrillo. A teacher on the task force suggested that some teachers may not have participated because the time frame for responding was very short and the union provided no direction on their ability to do so. Mr. Katchen noted that he is available for further teacher interviews.
2. Mr. Katchen presented the results of the interviews in two graphs: one for MHS teachers, one for Cabrillo teachers. The graphs summarized a variety of teachers' potential and recognized health concerns. Based on this information, it was agreed that an environmental evaluation will be performed as quickly as possible in the classrooms to determine if there are sources of possible hazards in the classrooms and what these sources might be. Some of the concerns to be reviewed include: PCBs, mold, and radon. If a potential health risk is found to present, remediation steps will be taken.
3. Mr. Katchen discussed the very stringent and conservative hazard levels established for schools regarding the presence of toxic materials.
4. The group discussed the possible presence of PCBs and how they are very prevalent in our environment and what that means. Mr. Katchen presented several theories as to why PCBs were found in the soil in several areas of the MHS quad. One possible source is caulk, a commonly used building material. Caulk did contain PCBs until 1979, when the chemical was banned by the EPA. Some Task Force members were adamant that the paint in the classrooms be tested, and Mr. Katchen agreed that paint samples could be tested. Other members of the Task Force noted that the paint had already been tested for lead in previous Environmental Impact Reports. Wipe tests for PCBs could also be performed, which samples the classroom's vertical and horizontal surfaces.
5. Members of the Task Force urged Mr. Katchen to include classroom air tests for PCBs, as supported by a parent group. Several members of the Task Force urged Mr. Katchen to converse with an expert who was recently hired by a group of parents so that a joint air testing plan could be considered. It was agreed that using a shared data set was the best protocol.
6. Various Task Force members discussed the need to act quickly, emphasizing that people want a testing protocol established immediately, and results as soon as possible. Mr. Katchen was highly empathetic to the community's desire for quick answers, but he emphasized the need to be scientifically thorough, and that any recommended action items be based on data taken from the school sites.
7. Task Force members were concerned about a statement in the Arcadis report (soil removal report), which said that Malibu High School was closed during the remediation process. It was confirmed that, in fact, summer session was in progress during the soil remediation work. The Task Force agreed to seek an explanation from Arcadis. Mr. Katchen will contact them.
8. Mr. Katchen presented a highly detailed explanation of the stringent standards for threshold levels of various contaminants in schools compared with other workplaces.
9. The Task Force was informed that the following medical experts are currently being consulted: Dr. Wendy Cozen and Dr. Thomas Mack from the USC Keck School of Medicine, as well as experts from the LA County Department of Health.

## **IMMEDIATE ACTIONS** (next two weeks)

- Remove visible mold in Room 12 at Juan Cabrillo Elementary School.
- Release the report of the latest mold sampling at MHS. (Note: the report was posted the following day, October 17, 2013, and is available at [http://smmusd.org/PublicNotices/101713\\_MoldTestingReport.pdf](http://smmusd.org/PublicNotices/101713_MoldTestingReport.pdf).)
- The Task Force will work to set up a special location on MHS.com to provide regular updates, and any information available to the public.
- Post the existing asbestos management plan for MHS and Cabrillo.
- The public can submit questions to the Task Force at [mhsfaq@smmusd.org](mailto:mhsfaq@smmusd.org).
- Mr. Katchen will be available to give technical perspectives during PTA and faculty meetings at the Malibu schools.
- Superintendent Sandra Lyon will provide the District's official statements on any actions taken around this issue, and the Task Force will provide summaries of all meetings and information about its activities.
- Hard copies of environmental and testing reports will be available at the MHS Library.
- At next week's meeting (October 24, 2013), the Task Force will review a draft evaluation plan, with plans for implementation anticipated to start by October 31, 2013.

## **WHAT'S NEXT**

- The history of school construction projects and the property was discussed. Ms. Anderson volunteered to help with the timeline of the bond projects and construction work and testing done at MHS.
- Ms. Maez will work with Risk Manager Gary Bradbury to create a timeline of events regarding parents' and teachers' health concerns. Mr. Jacobson suggested that Ms. René-Weissman and Mr. Katchen sort through the information with reporters from The Malibu Times.
- Fact sheets will be developed in response to community questions in both English and Spanish and will be posted at <http://www.smmusd.org/PublicNotices/Malibu.html>.
- The Task Force will reconvene next Thursday, October 24, 2013, at 10:00am at Malibu High School, and will continue to meet weekly as necessary.

## **SUMMARY**

The Task Force agreed to the following:

- The testing protocols must yield scientifically solid, reliable data that will guide proper conclusions and any necessary action.
- Information must be readily available and distributed widely.
- The Task Force will work with all members of the community and seek to liaise with any experts in the field or organizations that are working on this issue.
- There is a tremendous sense of urgency to gather data, and answer questions and concerns, but the Task Force agreed that adequate time must be provided to ensure that the process is inclusive of community input and also conducted according to scientific protocol.