

October 29, 2018

Dr. Edwin Gomez
Superintendent
Coachella Valley Unified School District
87-225 Church Street
P.O. Box 847
Thermal, CA 92274-0847
c/o mari.tarango@cvusd.us

Re: Hispanic Heritage Celebration

Dear Dr. Gomez:

Thank you for the opportunity to meet with you and the assistant superintendents on Thursday afternoon, October 25, 2018. I have informed the La Quinta City Council members of our meeting, and I agree with you that an unfortunate incident occurred on September 15, 2018, when the Coachella Valley Unified School District (CVUSD) students performed at the La Quinta Branch Library (Library).

As we discussed, and as the Mayor emphasized, the City takes these allegations seriously. When the City was first informed of this incident, the Community Resources Director (Director) initiated an internal review. His effort was then supplemented by a review conducted by the County of Riverside (County) and Library Systems and Services, LLC. Library services in La Quinta are provided by the County via a Memorandum of Understanding. The County has a separate and independent contract (to which the City is not a party) with Library Systems & Services, LLC (LS&S) for the provision of library services for the Riverside County Library System (County Library System).

I mention this, because neither the Mayor or Council members, or persons employed by the City, or any City department director, volunteer, or other representative, were present on September 15, 2018, when the events described in your October 11, 2018 letter occurred; and, no City department director, employee, volunteer, or representative directed any person to make any of the statements or to take any of the actions attributed to those you identify in your letter October 11, 2018 letter. I want to make sure this is documented because your October 11, 2018 letter is

addressed only to the La Quinta City Council and, while your letter copies Ms. Elizabeth Baiz as La Quinta Library Branch Manager and the CVUSD Board of Education, it is unclear whether the letter was sent to the County, which is the entity through which all Library operations and services, including staffing, are provided.

Regarding the September 15, 2018 event, it is my understanding that the City's and County's intent was that it should be similar to the event held last year, which was inclusive of the broad and diverse cultures and peoples of Hispanic heritage. In 2017, the Cesar Chavez Elementary School students performed at the Library. This program was new, and the goal was to make programs more diverse and attract more people to celebrate Hispanic culture and heritage. The City promoted the 2017 event as a cultural celebration and over 800 people attended. Following that event, the Director and the Community Resources Manager (Manager) anticipated that the 2018 event would be similarly inclusive.

In early September, the Director walked into the Library and saw a poster labeling the event as Mexican Independence Day; he visited the Library to see the activities occurring at Creation Station (the City's makerspace). The event poster, however, caught his attention because it did not reference Hispanic Heritage Month or advertise the program similarly to the 2017's event and programs. Moreover, the Director had the understanding that the 2018 event would have more programs than just a Mexican Independence Day presentation. Following that visit, on September 6, 2018, around 12:00 p.m., the Director discussed the advertisement with the Manager and asked whether the City and County could coordinate to update the title of the poster at the Library entrance, as that poster was the only advertisement of the program that the Director saw when at the Library.

That same day (September 6, 2018) after 1:00 p.m., the Manager contacted Ms. Sue Duran, Zone Manager for the County Library System to discuss whether the event and its advertising would or could be more inclusive of all Hispanic heritage and cultures, and not just advertised as a Mexican Independence Day event, to be similar to the 2017 event. Ms. Duran responded to the Manager after 4:00 p.m. that same day, at which time Ms. Duran indicated that she would discuss the matter with Ms. Baiz. The following day (September 7, 2018), Ms. Duran contacted the Manager and informed her that the event and its advertising would be renamed to be more inclusive as the Hispanic Heritage Celebration and the September 15 program would remain the same. Except as described above, there was no other

involvement by the City -- including no communications from the Mayor or City Council members, department directors, employees, volunteers, or other representatives to County or Library staff – that occurred prior to the September 15, 2018 event.

I ask that you and the CVUSD Board of Education recognize the reasoning for the Director's and Manager's involvement. The 2018 event was intended to be inclusive of the many peoples and cultures of Hispanic heritage, which encompass Mexico, and the many countries of Central America and South America. The City's goal was not to have the event focused on any one nation's independence or culture, but to focus on a range of cultures and numerous countries who achieved independence, all part of a broader aspect of Hispanic heritage. Accordingly, the City and County agreed that the event should be more appropriately called a Hispanic Heritage Celebration in order to best reflect the purpose of celebrating the multiple cultures and peoples of Mexico, Central America, and South America.

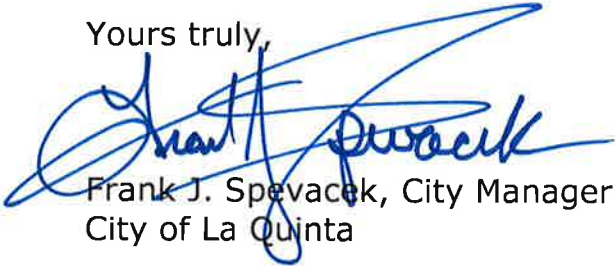
Notwithstanding the aforementioned events, and the reasons I believe all communications should involve the City, the County and LSS representatives, I understand why the CVUSD Board would prefer follow-through by the City, to which the City will do. You have asked for an independent investigation and "two-on-two" meetings with CVUSD Board Members, the Mayor, a Council member and respective staff. Taking your requests in order, the City is more than willing to participate in an independent investigation. I have contacted the County to solicit their involvement since the Library staff identified in your October 11, 2018 letter are either County or LS&S employees. I am ready to meet and outline the scope of a third-party investigation.

Regarding your request for a "two-on-two" meeting, the Mayor and I have discussed this, and we are ready to meet; I understand that Ms. Mari Tarango has transmitted an email to the Mayor with potential dates. However, before scheduling this meeting, we do request that the County and LS&S be included, due to their staff's roles and responsibilities. Since the "two-on-two" meeting would include elected officials, we also feel that one or two members of County Board of Supervisors, or their designees, attend.

Finally, I want to reassure you that the City of La Quinta and its City Council take your concerns seriously. This City takes pride in its ethnic diversity and its residents

with Mexican and Hispanic heritage. Indeed, the success of the 2017 event led to the anticipation of having a celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month with the City this year. As the City Manager, and as we discussed during the October 25, 2018 meeting, I am more than happy to work with you and any others from CVUSD to identify additional appropriate steps that the City may take to further address the concerns you raise in your letter.

Yours truly,



Frank J. Spevacek, City Manager
City of La Quinta

cc: Board of Education, Coachella Valley Unified School District
Ms. Amber Jacobson, Deputy Director, County of Riverside EDA
Ms. Elizabeth Baiz, Library Branch Manager
Mayor Linda Evans and Members of the La Quinta City Council
City Attorney's Office, City of La Quinta
Community Resources Department, City of La Quinta