

Use of law enforcement grant questioned by City Council

By Chris Frost
Bulletin Staff Writer

COMPTON—Debate continues on using the portion of the 2008 Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant for the purchase of 35 ballistic vests for the Municipal Law Enforcement Service.

The City Council pulled the resolution from the September 14 meeting agenda because of questions about which account would receive the funds.

The vests were to be purchased from Galls Inc. at a cost of no more than \$41,067. The purchase was protested by residents speaking during public comments at the Sept. 6 and 13 meetings.

Proponents of the purchase say the vests are necessary to provide protection for law enforcement officers because law enforce-

ment personnel who do not wear body armor are reportedly 14 times more likely to be killed on the job than those who do.

The Byrne grant money has been assigned to the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department budget because there is currently no MLES account that would qualify to receive JAG grant funds.

In addition, questions were raised during the Sept. 13 meeting about whether MLES services can be defined as law enforcement.

"The MLES is not a legal law enforcement agency, and now you want to buy them bullet-proof vests," resident Lynn Boone said. "When murders occur in other cities, law enforcement agencies have cameras recording crimes to assist them. We ask our deputies to do the same work with nothing. You continue to make the installation of cameras the last thing to address."

Councilman Willie Jones asked why the money was not part of the MLES budget but had been placed in the sheriff's budget.

MLES interim Director Carl Houston identified the account number as part of the budget, which prompted further questioning from Jones.

"The account number as I understand it allocates \$278,000 identified as JAG security bike equipment for the LASD," Jones said. "I need someone to clarify if this is the right account number."

Norfleet asked City Controller Stephen Ajobiewe to explain the account number usage, and he informed the Council that it was not the proper number.

Norfleet responded, saying that an MLES account will be created and the money would be transferred from the Sheriff Department's account at that time.

"I feel that legally, we need to have this accounting issue corrected before we can vote in this item," Zurita said. "You are saying that this is the right number, and that it is going to be the right number at the same time."

Zurita asked Deputy City Attorney Ruth Rugley to offer a legal opinion on the accounting issue before the council, and she deferred back to Ajobiewe.

"I cannot comment on this because I do not have a copy of the budget in front of me," she said. "If we can adjourn for maybe five minutes, then I can get the budget and look at it."

Councilwoman Yvonne Arceneaux suggested pulling the resolution from the agenda, and members agreed.

The item was placed back on the agenda for the Sept. 20 council meeting.

Compton Community College District track and football field re-opens

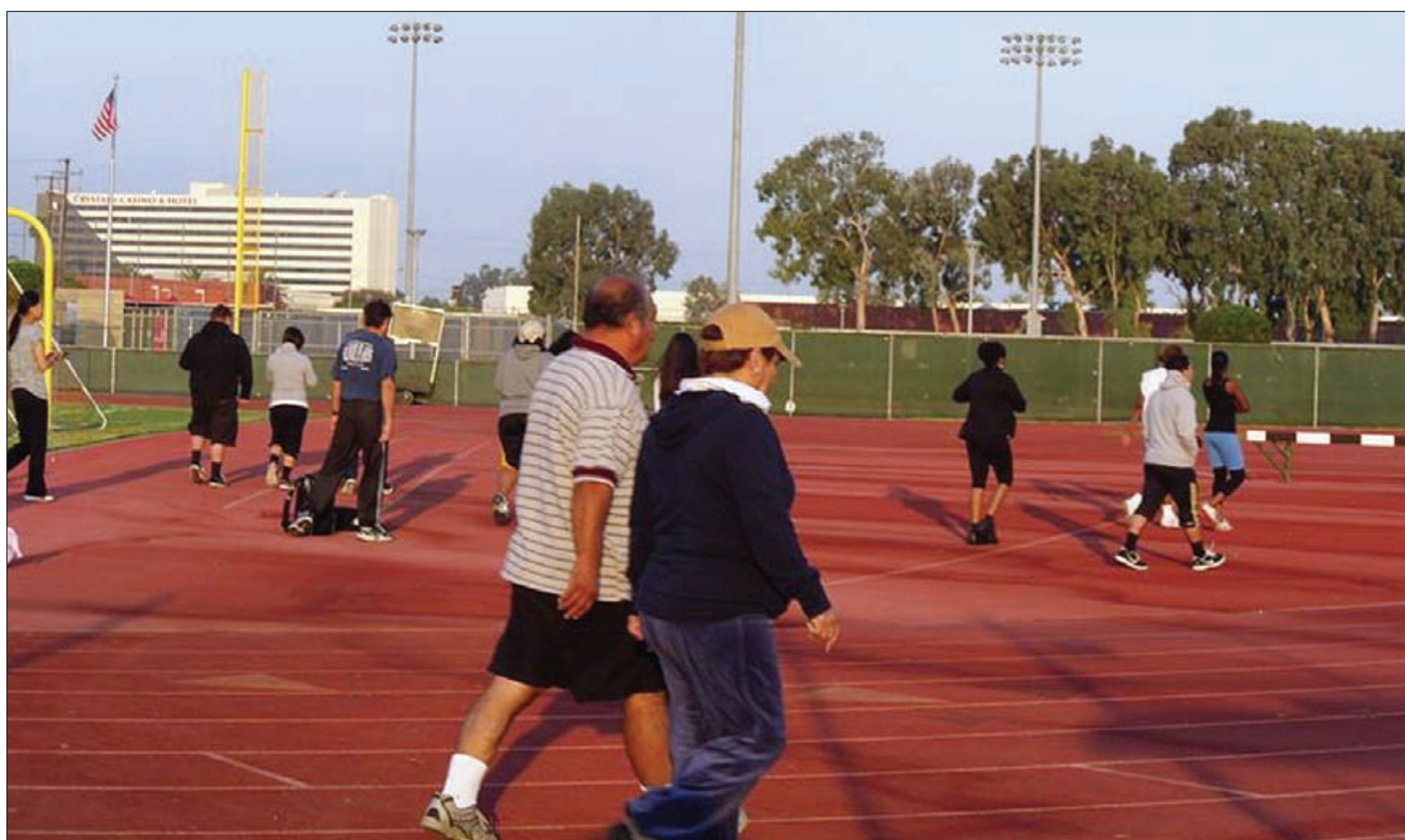


Photo courtesy of
El Camino Community College

The community is already enjoying the recently re-opened Compton Community College District track and football field. The track was temporarily closed last month to allow staff to make improvements and upgrades to ready the football field for the Tartar football season. Work completed includes turf maintenance and leveling, watering, irrigation system repair, outdoor lighting replacement and refurbishment near the restrooms.

College CEO Curry praises student success

By Cheryl Scott
Bulletin Staff Writer

COMPTON—El Camino Compton Center CEO Keith Curry said that every student is a success story. "Every student is a success because they are in school," he told The Bulletin in a telephone interview this week.

"Since I was first appointed interim CEO I've been immersed in the details of the job and the effort to earn accreditation from the ACCJC," he said. "But I've been here six months, and I decided to take the time to reflect on the situation at the college now. I'm elated over the success of our students."

In the 2007-08 school year, the college awarded 106 degrees and 29 certificates. This year 222 students earned degrees and 52 were certified.

A report detailing academic progress at the center is being mailed to homes in Compton and the other cities in the district.

"The Five Year Success Report is amazing," he said. "It motivates me. I think that the community will be surprised and happy to see how much improvement there has been and how much it has affected student success."

Curry plans to step up the effort to keep the community informed about the progress the college is making toward accreditation and about the academic successes of the students.

"I don't think people realize just how much is going on here and how much things have approved since 2007," he said. "There has been controversy over various aspects of the accreditation process and about decisions made by the Com-

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El Camino Compton Center CEO **Keith Curry**

ton Community College District. But when you just step back and look at what the students are doing, it's very gratifying."

He will be visiting community organizations in the upcoming weeks. "After that, I'll be making presentations at all of the city council meetings in the district. The students de-

serve to be recognized for their achievements, and the college needs to be recognized for the improvements that have been made on the road back to accreditation."

Compton Community College lost its accreditation in 2007 after the Board of Trustees informed the state Department of Education that

it was operating at a deficit and did not have the funds to meet its payroll.

AB 318, sponsored by Assemblyman Mervyn Dymally was passed to make it possible for the college to partner with the El Camino Community College District so that there would continue to be a college open in the Compton district.

The partnership has been controversial from the start, prompting the Concerned Citizens of Compton and the Committee to Save the Compton Community College District to appeal to state education officials over perceived problems in the accreditation effort.

"I think that is because we have not made enough effort to let everyone know just how well we are doing," Curry said. "The negative stories out there overshadow the progress we've made in the last five years. But when people see the Five Year Success Report they will be surprised."

The rate of student transfers to four-year colleges or universities has increased since the

partnership with El Camino began. "You can't top student success," Curry said. "Students graduating and going on to earn bachelors degrees is the most important indication that what we're doing is working."

The CCCD is still working through the budget for the next fiscal year. State law requires that 50 percent of the budget be spent in the classroom. The district will probably face budget cuts of 2.3 percent next year because of a reduction in funding coming from the state for full time student enrollment.

"My goal is to support the

partnership with El Camino because that's the path toward accreditation," he said. "My next goal is to be out in the community with updates and information about how we are doing. I also will be sending out newsletters and working on our website to make sure the information is there about the progress we are making."

"Most importantly, my goal is to make the community aware of the stunning successes of our students. That's the real bottom line."

The Five Year Success Report will be released this week.



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