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C A S E S T U D I E S :

Intergovernmental Cooperation

The city of Vallejo, California, is located on San Pablo Bay, about 30 miles northeast of San Francisco. During the late 1960s and early 1970s, the San Francisco Bay area grew rapidly. At first, Vallejo was just beyond the growth pattern. Because the city had a tremendous amount of open land, however, it seemed only a matter of time before Vallejo would be affected as well. The town's economy had traditionally centered around Mare Island Naval Base. The city itself was more than 100 years old, and the naval base had been there even longer.

The residents began commuting to jobs in San Francisco, the community began to change from a Navy town to a suburban community. The city council became concerned with Vallejo's image, with particular interest in the school system. After all, in large measure, a school system attracts new residents and determines the demographics of a community. School districts in California operate independently of cities, so most city councils are not in a position to influence the educational process. In Vallejo, however, the city realized that one way to assist the school system and improve Vallejo's image was to make aesthetic improvements.

For several months, the city had been requesting that the Vallejo City Unified School District improve the landscaping and exteriors of its school buildings. The school district was under a financial strain, however, and could barely afford to fund what goes on inside the schools, let alone the outside. Through increased communication between the school district and the city over this issue, the city came to recognize the severe financial problems experienced by the school district and developed a unique funding method to solve the problem. The city offered to reserve the school district's municipal water payments in a school grounds improvement trust fund to pay for capital improvements. One of the most attractive features of this mechanism is that, as the school district grows, its water payments grow and therefore increasing funds are available. In 1974, the Inter-Agency Committee for Schools was established to designate improvement projects. In addition to the school district and the city, the Greater Vallejo Recreation District was included.

The recreation district had long-standing separate relationships with both the city and the school district. The city owns some of the property operated by the recreation district.

Vallejo, California

Lori Raineri

The school district and the recreation district regularly worked together to schedule the use of school property for recreational use. A beautification program was developed and is still implemented by the interagency committee, with the city council approving projects and the school district contracting and supervising the work. Projects consist primarily of landscaping work such as the installation of irrigation, turf, and asphalt. By bringing together all three agencies in one forum, with a shared goal of improving school grounds, Vallejo has been able to complete projects that serve the entire community, realize economies of scale in staff time, construction, and land use, and improve communication at all levels.

The committee consists of three members of the city council, two school board members, two directors from the recreation district, and two city planning commissioners. For each agency, membership in the interagency committee was one fewer than the majority of the governing board. This means that interagency committee members need only to seek the support of one more member of their own governing board for approval of interagency committee recommendations. After almost 15 years of operation, all three agencies report approval of every interagency committee recommendation. Staff of each agency was assigned to serve the committee as well. Former superintendent of schools Dr. Philip Bowman, who served as staff to the committee from its inception until his retirement in 1987, watched the interagency committee grow from an idea into an institution. Dr. Bowman feels that not only were many worthwhile projects completed, but intergovernmental communication became the rule, rather than the exception.

The interagency committee continues to serve the community by being a catalyst for understanding each agency's unique problems and offering an opportunity to use the different authority and funding mechanisms of each agency collectively. David Lindquist, assistant city manager, has been the principal city staff person to the committee for eight years. Mr. Lindquist says, "The committee promotes an attitude of cooperation and allows the capital programming of each agency to be coordinated." Mr. Lindquist feels that many projects the committee has completed would otherwise never have come into being.

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By 1977 Vallejo's population had grown to 75,000, and all Vallejo government agencies were finding it difficult to keep pace with the growth. California school districts have a particularly difficult time with fast growth because of the state's method of funding new school construction. New homes can be constructed in less than a year, and school age children quickly follow. State funding for new school construction can take several years, however, and requires documentation of overcrowding before funding is approved. Then it will generally require a year to build a new school. As a result, people were moving to Vallejo for the quality of life, yet upon arrival found no schools for their children.

“Vallejo has made intergovernmental cooperation an institution.”

The interagency committee brought the issue to the attention of the city council, and in 1977 the city approved a school impact mitigation tax. Because Vallejo is a charter city, it had the ability to pass such a tax, one of the first cities in California to do so. Originally the tax ranged from \$150 for each new one-bedroom unit to \$450 for each unit with five bedrooms or more. The proceeds of these development fees were placed in a special fund that the district used to purchase more than 40 portable classrooms, adding space to more than 70 percent of the district's schools. Ten years later, the state passed legislation enabling school districts to levy development impact fees, and the school district instituted its own program. In addition, the city levied development impact fees for bridges, fire stations, and parks. Dick Conzelmann, general manager of the Greater Vallejo Recreation District, says that in almost 15 years of levying park impact fees, more than \$20 million has been collected. This has funded one or two new parks per year.

One of the most important concepts developed by the interagency committee was the joint school and park site. Although the juxtaposition of a school site and a park is not unique to Vallejo, the committee made it a priority. All new schools built in Vallejo since 1974 have incorporated the multiuse concept. In 1980, a community center was added to an elementary school site, and the committee is currently exploring the possibilities of locating child care facilities in the center. The convenience for parents and the shared use of playground equipment are important benefits. In addition, the joint school-park site concept allows the recreation district to use its state grant money on open space that also serves the school district. For many sites, the recre-

ation district and the school district have entered into joint powers agreements in order to qualify for this funding. Currently, the interagency committee is considering expanding the use of a new high school planned by the school district. The site will have a park on either side of the school campus (park-school-park plan), and the school auditorium facilities will be designed as a cultural arts center. Dale Welsh, superintendent of schools, says that “the interagency committee allows school facilities to be designed for cultural and recreational activities as well as educational purposes. The facilities don't cost more, but many more citizens are served.”

In 1982, the interagency committee turned its attention to a highly visible project, the rehabilitation of Corbus Field. The interagency committee felt that a first-class amateur sports facility would enhance community spirit and participation. The \$1.2 million cost made it the largest single project undertaken by the committee. Three sources of funding were utilized: the school grounds improvement trust fund, the school impact mitigation tax fund, and the city's water capital improvement fund. Since the tax fund is designated for mitigation of the impact of growth, this fund will be repaid from future revenues in the school grounds improvement trust fund. The city's water capital improvement fund, which is for municipal water improvements, is funding the relocation of a water line. Today, Corbus Field has an all-weather track ringing the football field, new seats in the stadium, and a beautiful entry way. The recreation district and both high schools in Vallejo use the facility.

In 1986, the city encouraged developers in the Glen Cove area of Vallejo to donate land for a new school site. Developers were in favor of the new school because it was a necessary inducement for the sales of the new homes being built. The city and Solano County then set up a redevelopment project area in Glen Cove. The Vallejo Redevelopment Agency issued bonds to finance the construction of the new elementary school. The primary source of repayment was the tax increment to be derived from the development of the area, and a special tax to be levied on raw land as a secondary source if the land did not develop as expected. Glen Cove Elementary School will be open for the 1988-89 school year. Thus far, the special tax has not been levied, and tax increment is sufficient to repay the bonds.

In addition, Glen Cove is a joint park-school site. There is an office and storage room for the recreation district at the school, playground equipment is used by the school and for recreational programs, grounds maintenance is shared by the school district and the recreation district, and staffing for afterschool programs is provided by the recre-

ation district. Dick Conzelmann of the Greater Vallejo Recreation District has worked with the committee for 11 years and feels that the committee has prevented selfishness and rivalry between agencies. Mr. Conzelmann says the committee "reflects the epitome of what public agencies are all about. We have one product—service to the community. The interagency concept has maximized tax dollars and improved the service delivery system."

During the past 15 years, Vallejo has grown to a population of more than 95,000 and is experiencing problems more typical of urban areas than suburban. In response to growing drug abuse, the committee has been renamed the Inter-Agency Committee on Youth, and its focus expanded beyond capital improvements to all community issues relevant to youth. Cynthia Kay, vice mayor of

Vallejo and the current chair of the inter-agency committee, feels that the war on drugs can be successfully waged only with the cooperation of all government agencies working together. Vice Mayor Kay says, "Drug abuse is the most critical issue for the community. The only way to deal with it is treatment, prevention, education, and awareness. The city cannot accomplish these goals alone."

Vallejo has made intergovernmental cooperation an institution. Superintendent Welsh feels that public officials in Vallejo wouldn't know how to get along without it. He has developed the three C's of public service: caring, communicating, and cooperating. These three C's add up to quality services for the community. Superintendent Welsh put it best: "Working together works!" **PM**