



## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** CITY COUNCIL

**FROM:** Jessica Matson, Legislative & Information Services Director/City Clerk

**SUBJECT:** Supplemental Information  
Agenda Item 12.a – Discussion of Preschool and Childcare Programs Offered Through the Recreation Services Department and the Mark M. Millis Community Center

**DATE:** April 25, 2023

Attached is additional correspondence received before 4 PM for the above referenced item.

cc: City Manager  
Assistant City Manager/Public Works Director  
Recreation Services Director  
City Attorney  
City Clerk  
City Website (or public review binder)

**From:** [Jami Fordyce](#)  
**To:** [public comment](#)  
**Subject:** Agenda item #12.a  
**Date:** Tuesday, April 25, 2023 3:47:00 PM

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Dear Council,

I am writing in support of both the preschool and the after school programs.

My children attended the preschool for a year, and it was a great resource for our family. Prior to going back to work full time, this low cost option for our twins allowed our children the opportunity to socialize and learn with amazing staff, and build community. We still socialize with families we met during that time.

Pre school is not affordable. When I went back to work full time and put our twins into full day preschool, we paid \$3,500 a month in 2018.

Both our children attend the after school care at Ocean View, and we would be devastated if that went away. I teach in Santa Maria, and am not able to pick our kids up right after school. I understand that the service would transition to the YMCA, however, I worry about the staff that would lose their jobs. We've had nothing but positive experiences with them.

Ms. Carrie has become a friend and I know that when our children are with her for any program, that they are safe, enjoying their time, and are taken care of.

My suggestion is to actually collect all of the taxes from the rental houses and put that towards these programs, and a new community center.

Priority should be put towards the preschool if one program has to be cut, but I urge you to find the money and get creative.

Sincerely,

Jami Fordyce

**From:** [Lily Clark](#)  
**To:** [public comment](#)  
**Subject:** Parks and Rec Preschool Program Public Comment  
**Date:** Monday, April 24, 2023 4:53:48 PM

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Honorable Mayor and Arroyo Grande City Council Members,

My name is Dr. Lily Clark. I grew up in Arroyo Grande and attended preschool via the parks and recreation child care program. I am disturbed to hear that the council is considering ending this critical program.

One concern raised in the staff report is whether the program is generating enough revenue. The point of educational programs is not to generate money but to invest in building the type of society in which we hope to live.

This program makes Arroyo Grande better not just for families with children, but for everyone. It encourages a more vital economy, allows more people to participate in the workforce, and has measurable developmental benefits for the children who attend. It helps attract and keep young families in the area. Affordable childcare is a cornerstone of diverse, vibrant, and welcoming communities.


As an alumni, I still have friendships I made while at the AG Preschool. As a mother and psychologist, I can attest to the pain that is created when programs like this one are not available.

I ask, respectfully, is continuing to invest in our youngest community members and the vitality of our town something we value? If so, I urge the honorable council members to maintain this program.

Kindly,  
Lily Clark, PhD

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Lily Clark, Ph.D. (she/her)



**From:** [Sara Gjerde](#)  
**To:** [public comment](#)  
**Subject:** Affordable part-time Preschool  
**Date:** Monday, April 24, 2023 5:21:37 PM

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Hello,

The AG rec preschool is the only affordable part time preschool available in the area.

We sent both of our boys there 2019/20 and 2020/21

Here are a few of the reasons:

-AFFORDABLE!!

-the location allows community members to walk/bike to school

-part time allows for age appropriate nap schedules

- allows socialization before school

-builds language/communication skills

Please consider supporting affordable accessible preschool through the city.

**From:** [Megan](#)  
**To:** [public comment](#)  
**Subject:** Do not close down the preschool  
**Date:** Monday, April 24, 2023 6:06:05 PM

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To Whom it May Concern,

We adamantly disagree with the closure of Arroyo Grande Parks and Rec Play and Learn Preschool. We have 4 children ages 16, 15, 7 and 4, all of them have attended Arroyo Grande Parks and Rec play and learn preschool. Our youngest is currently finishing her second year there, and loving it just as much as the other 3 have.

Roughly 8 out of the last 13 years we have had at least one child in this program and we cannot say enough good about it. It would be such a loss for this community to shut the preschool down. First of all, it is the only affordable, part time preschool program in the area. The cost and the hours are perfect for those that don't need "child care" options and just want their kids to be introduced to school. The staff is wonderful, and has always been. They truly care about the kids and the community. It is clean, it is safe and the child to staff ratio is perfect. The kids are all readily prepared for kindergarten and they have a lot of fun while learning, playing, making friends as well as being taught the importance of respecting their teachers, classroom and peers.

It would be such an unfortunate loss to close this program down and we truly hope that doesn't happen.

Respectfully,

Michael and Megan Sloan

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [Shannon Montesinos](#)  
**To:** [public comment](#)  
**Subject:** Closing parks and rec preschool.  
**Date:** Monday, April 24, 2023 6:37:21 PM

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I very much oppose closing the preschool. This community has benefited greatly from this program. It provides quality low cost education for our families. My children have directly benefited from this program. It's sad to me that this community would close the program rather than invest in the future of our community.

Shannon Montesinos

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**From:** [Terra Kissinger](#)  
**To:** [public comment](#)  
**Subject:** Preschool/childcare closure  
**Date:** Monday, April 24, 2023 8:01:56 PM

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Hello there,

My name is Terra and I am a current preschool teacher for the parks and rec dept. I have been an employee for over 12 years now and it saddens me to think that the program will no longer be. I put my own son in this preschool program for two years because teaching there I know and see on a daily basis how important preschool is not only to these families but the kids!! I would love to invite you all to our classroom to see the wall or cards and pictures and notes the kids make for us on a daily basis. To see the growth they make and how excited these kids get when something clicks really makes me proud to be an employee in this program!! I have built relationships with these families and it matters!!

Thank you for your time!  
Terra

[Sent from Yahoo Mail on Android](#)

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**From:** [Jennifer Newsom](#)  
**To:** [public comment](#)  
**Subject:** Save our Preschool  
**Date:** Monday, April 24, 2023 8:17:11 PM

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Hi.

My name is Jennifer and my daughter [REDACTED] attends the preschool at the AG parks and rec department. She is our 3rd kid to go there and we absolutely love that preschool as well as the staff and other families that go there. I'm writing to encourage you to please reconsider keeping the preschool open. It's the perfect little class, the price is so affordable and the teachers are amazing people that I trust with my kids. I feel like there are not enough preschools as it is and if you find one, there's usually a wait list to get in. It seems like there must be a way to help this preschool stay open. I hope you can take in to consideration that this is a very loved program and many care very much about this class. Thanks for reading.

Jennifer and [REDACTED] Newsom

Sent from my iPhone



**From:** [Tanessa Egan](#)  
**To:** [public comment](#)  
**Subject:** closing the Play and Learn preschool program and future child care programs  
**Date:** Monday, April 24, 2023 8:19:14 PM

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I do not support the motion to close play and learn preschool and future child programs. Our children are our future and they've already faced enough difficulty in their small short lives. To take away any advantage is inappropriate for the future of our children.

**From:** [Lindsey Clancy](#)  
**To:** [public comment](#)  
**Cc:** [Carrie Vanbeveren](#); [Sheridan Bohlken](#)  
**Subject:** Re: Potential Closure of Play and Learn Preschool  
**Date:** Monday, April 24, 2023 8:44:23 PM

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Dear Arroyo Grande City Council Members,

Thank you for your time and consideration of this email. We are parents of a daughter who currently attends the Play and Learn preschool program and are devastated to hear of its potential closing. The teachers, curriculum, and overall program are amazing. Our daughter has excelled academically, socially, and emotionally there. We were excited and hopeful for another year of attendance, and then sending our son there as well. We cannot stress how loved and important this program is to current parents, but also past families as well. So many community members have told us how lucky we are to have our daughter there, or they share the love they had for the program when they attended, or their kids did. Please do everything you can to keep this program in our community.

Respectfully,

Brian and Lindsey Clancy

**From:** [Heidi Crawford](#)  
**To:** [public comment](#)  
**Subject:** AG Rec Program  
**Date:** Monday, April 24, 2023 9:02:15 PM

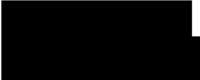
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To whom it may concern:

My daughter has been involved at Ocean View in the Rec program since last year and I want you to know the impact it has had on her little life.

I am a single mom and I do my very best to raise my daughter to be kind, respectful, smart and strong. If you have been a parent then you probably know that it seems kids listen to everyone more than you. My daughter is no exception. I can tell her things a million times, but as soon as one of the rec leaders tell her then it sticks. They have been my life savers and the village I've prayed for to help me raise her the way I described. She loves the arts and crafts, the music, and even her homework time. Most days when I go to pick her up, she asks me to wait until she's finished with her project. While waiting for my daughter, I get to see how the teachers and kids interact and it's heart warming. One of the teachers took a position elsewhere and the kids cried, she cried and I wanted to cry because I could feel the love. It seems like it's up for discussion to do away with the program and have the YMCA take over but I'd like to ask you not to change this amazing program and its people that my daughter loves and trusts and that I love and trust with her. She has blossomed from the staff and her friends and went from very shy to sometimes overly outgoing and I owe it to them! I would be thrilled to share more and anyone there can reach out to me at this email and I'll explain in even further depth how important this program is to our little family.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Heidi Crawford  
 mommy

**From:** [Megan Panofsky](#)  
**To:** [public comment](#)  
**Subject:** Bright Futures/AG Preschool Closure  
**Date:** Monday, April 24, 2023 10:59:06 PM

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Good Evening,

First, I'd like to express my extreme disappointment with how notification for the AG Recreation and Potential Closure of Preschool and Childcare Discussion was provided to the community. I received an email at 3 pm the day before the City Counsel meeting, whereas several other parents with children in the childcare programs did not receive notification at all. Childcare is one of the largest stressors for parents, and to not be provided with notification of potential changes to our children's care or to be provided with ample time to provide public comment is a disservice to the parents of Arroyo Grande.

My children attend the Bright Futures program at Ocean View Elementary and are regulars at the Parents Night Out events. We moved to Arroyo Grande just prior to my children starting school, and when I learned that the before/after school program and preschool were run by the City of Arroyo Grande, I can't express how supported I felt as a parent and a community member. Add to that the absolutely amazing staff, who truly care about my family, and hopefully you can understand my disappointment that closing these programs is even a discussion point. Furthering my disappointment is that the before/after school program would be taken from City staff, eliminating jobs, to be turned over to a large, private organization.

Finding childcare in the 5 Cities area is extremely difficult, and I was surprised by the 91 childcare vacancies stated in the discussion memorandum. That was certainly not my experience or the experience of any of my friends or acquaintances. No call backs was more common. Taking away a great and affordable preschool from the community is not serving the community.

Last, I would like to remind you all that these programs have truly impacted the lives of decades of children. I was recently talking about child care with colleagues and every person in the room had children, some now in their 20s, that had attended one of these programs through the City and/or had worked for one of the programs. Everyone had amazing stories to share and a wonderful experience. Please don't take that away from the community.

Thank you for your time.

Respectfully,

Megan

**From:** [Callie Hutt](#)  
**To:** [public comment](#)  
**Subject:** Preschool Program  
**Date:** Monday, April 24, 2023 11:43:27 PM

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Hi there!

I'm writing to express my deep appreciation and love for the preschool at the city of Arroyo Grande Rec center. I am aware that there will be a meeting this Tuesday night to discuss/vote on whether or not to keep the preschool going and I'd like to take a second to explain why I think it is so important to keep the program going.

My four year old daughter's first ever school experience was at this school this year and I cannot express how thankful I have been for the school.

My daughter has thrived here! She was so nervous at first (and actually had a breakdown on her second day) but every single one of the teachers showed her such patience and care and she has grown so much..and I believe it is because of how amazing the program is!

It not only has given my child an opportunity to learn, grow, and attend a program with other kids her age, but it has been really the only "schooling" option for us..as it was the most reasonably priced program. We weren't able to afford anything more than this preschool, but as we all know, every child deserves to go to school when he/she is ready and every child deserves an education.

This program gives kids, such as my daughter, a safe environment to flourish in their learning and growing and that is so important. I think it would be a huge disappointment, and a mistake, if program shut down. I was hoping to send my youngest daughter to this preschool when she turns three..and I know there are many kids who would benefit from the program if it remained open.

Please consider keeping it going! Thank you.

**From:** [mican hadley](#)  
**To:** [public comment](#)  
**Subject:** Preschool  
**Date:** Tuesday, April 25, 2023 12:27:31 AM

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Hello,

I am sad to hear about the potential closing of the Arroyo Grande Parks & Rec. Preschool. All 3 of my children have attended this preschool (my youngest is still attending) and we love the program. It has really helped my children grow and make friends as well as prepare them for kindergarten. It has also been a great way for me as a busy mom to make mom friends.

The parks and rec preschool is the most affordable Preschool around. When we moved here around 10 years ago we really struggled to find an affordable preschool option, until we found the parks and rec center. Please don't take one of the few affordable preschools away from us. Thanks.

Sincerely, Mican Hadley

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [public comment](#)  
**Subject:** Preschool Program  
**Date:** Tuesday, April 25, 2023 3:52:39 AM

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To All Concerned:

We were alarmed to see yesterday's TV news alerting the AG public concerning the possibility of terminating the preschool program! This must be averted!! Children need these early educational programs.

Please do all you can to find the funds to maintain the preschool programs.

Thank You for your immediate attention to this very important issue.

[Sent from the all new AOL app for iOS](#)

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**From:** [kristie davidson](#)  
**To:** [public comment](#)  
**Subject:** Future Child Care  
**Date:** Tuesday, April 25, 2023 4:04:07 AM

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To Whom It May Concern,

It is imperative that the City continues to offer affordable childcare opportunities for the people of this community. I am a nurse and depend on the childcare options the city offers. I have tried finding other childcare options in the past and it is difficult to find quality, affordable and reliable options.

This city is very expensive and I worry that many of our lower paid parents will not be able to afford to live here if they can't find quality childcare.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Kristie Razi

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**From:** [Carrie VanBeveren](#)  
**To:** [public comment](#)  
**Subject:** Re: Childcare and Preschool  
**Date:** Tuesday, April 25, 2023 5:00:29 AM

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On Mon, Apr 24, 2023 at 7:42 PM Carrie VanBeveren <[REDACTED]> wrote:  
Dear Council Members,

I debated emailing you. I know we have tough economic times ahead and limited resources but I cannot let my programs go without at least having you hear what I think. It is hard to have these things come up time and time again and is very hard on me mentally and emotionally but this is too important to not speak up. First, I would like to say that my staff are wonderful, caring, dedicated, hard working people. They are paid some of the if not actually the lowest wages for city staff. With limited hours and no benefits yet the show up day after day, ready for work, making a difference in our community and doing wonderful things with our kids. They are compassionate, fun, well-educated, they keep the kids busy, productive and happy, and the children love them. Second, I would like to help separate preschool from childcare. They are not the same at all and I don't feel they should be lumped together. With the addition of the Bright Futures program and the loss of revenue that occurs with that I understand the financial difference in childcare that makes. I have 9-10 current staff working at any given time and I know that does make work for HR and the finance department but I would argue that it doesn't mean it's not worth it. Just because something can be farmed out doesn't necessarily mean it should. The Ymca can take it over, but like I said just because they could doesn't mean they should. Preschool however, is so different. It is a parent paid program. I only have 3 staff plus 2 substitutes that rarely work. That small amount of staff doesn't seem unreasonable to me or seem to put to much of a strain on other city departments. Yes there are concerns with our current building, but until we have a new one and this one is still available and ready to accept preschool children it might as well be used. There is no plan B for our preschool program and preschools are in such high demand in our area. Our program is very affordable, even if we were to raise the cost from \$18 per class to \$21 per class like I have suggested, it is still incredibly affordable comparatively. If you wanted to visit our classes and see how amazing our teachers are and the magic in the children's eyes as they learn new things or sing or play or dance, please feel free to visit. Parents need our program. It is not time to cancel it. Thank you for taking the time to read my message. I have poured my heart and soul into these programs (along with special events and a bunch of other things) for 21 years and these programs are magnificent and good and worthy and I just want you to know that they matter, the parents and kids matter, and my staff matter. I appreciate what you do and know you don't make decisions lightly. Thank you.  
Carrie Van Beveren

**From:** [Mei-Lin Gee](#)  
**To:** [public comment](#)  
**Subject:** Public Comment for PreSchool/Summer Camp Agenda Item  
**Date:** Tuesday, April 25, 2023 6:12:14 AM

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Council Members,

I implore you to keep the childcare programs provided through the city. It is so difficult to find child care in our area already. When summer camps open parents, countywide, are sitting at their computers in a mad rush to sign our children up before slots are filled in a matter of hours (sometimes less). I can't imagine losing another program. Private preschools and daycares are so high priced, many parents are unable to afford them. It is hard enough to make ends meet in our lovely community as it is. Please don't make it more difficult for families to survive and thrive here.

Thank You,  
Mei-Lin Gee

**From:** [Sarah Plaxco Rodriguez](#)  
**To:** [public comment](#)  
**Subject:** AG Recreation Child Care Program  
**Date:** Tuesday, April 25, 2023 10:00:11 AM

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Hello,

I'm contacting you regarding the AG Recreation Child Care Program, and more specifically the recreation program at Ocean View Elementary School. I would like to strongly encourage the City Council to continue this program.

It has benefited our family in the following ways: a stable after school program for working parents; child care during winter, spring, and summer breaks; positive relationships with teachers and students; fun and play (fundamental in a child's development); and a safe place for all students.

We have seen our child grow from being shy and timid to being excited to meet new friends. We have seen her imagination soar and her bucket filled with happiness. Our child is accepted and loved by the AG recreation child care teachers; and that is not something worth shutting down.

Thanks,

Sarah Rodriguez

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [public comment](#)  
**Subject:** preschool at the Parks and Rec Center  
**Date:** Tuesday, April 25, 2023 10:03:30 AM

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Dear AG City Council

A searing burn went through my heart last night to learn that ending the preschool program is being considered tonight.

Before I had my 3 children, I had not been around kids much, so everything that was new for my oldest was new for me as well. I found the program to be absolutely wonderful. My son was socialized through constructive and loving play, and I learned more about being a mom than I thought I would.

We are not religious, so the idea of sending my son to a church sponsored preschool was not the right fit for us. We lived on one paycheck at that time, paid our mortgage and had one car, so sending him to any other type of preschool would not have been affordable. If it weren't for the city program, my children would not have gone to preschool. Full stop. My husband rode his bike to work so that I could have the car on preschool days. Can you imagine such a thing as not sending your vibrant tots to preschool because you can't afford it? I know it is that way for many, but not going to school is not the way for my family and many others in our area. A community is only as good as it treats its children and families. To end this program makes Arroyo Grande a less desirable place to live and raise families. As it is, the family aspect is one of the best marketing tools the City has to attract new residences and is not being used nearly enough.

All of my children attended the program. Mrs Keyes, may she rest in peace, was the one person who encouraged me to keep my child in preschool one extra year, she felt he wasn't ready for kindergarten even though he met the birthday cut off. I listened to her, and my child sailed through elementary school because he got that extra year in preschool. I never once helped him with his homework in elementary school, he didn't need it. When he was in 3rd grade I knew that he was going to go to a prestigious university and sure enough he is. As Mrs Keyes was battling cancer, we had a substitute teacher. Her son owns a small business in the Village and her daughter inlaw is a teacher at Harloe Elementary. The daughter inlaw used to watch my children for me when I went back to work and it worked out for her as well as she was back in school and needed a little income.

My middle child also went. Mrs Keyes had passed away and Ms Joyce had retired. We met our new teacher, Mrs Kaar. We made many friends then, that we are still in touch with to this day. My daughter went to preschool with the daughter of one of the teachers at the high school and they are lifelong friends. My daughter ended playing soccer with Mrs Kaar's daughter through high school. Mrs. Kaar now has 3 grown children and I can tell you their names, what they majored in at school and what the name of her son's dog is. Mrs Kaar spray painted pebbles gold and had the kids hunt for gold on St Patrick's Day. My daughter played a life time of soccer with another girl from preschool and together with their team they won the AGHS League Championship in Soccer in 2022, which had not been done in over 10 years. When my daughter moved to college, I found that she had kept the gold rocks in her dresser drawer and I was able to give a few back to Mrs Kaar and tell her yet again how wonderful she was as a teacher; and the rest of the gold pebbles rest in a potted houseplant of my daughter's. All of this is what makes a community thrive.

My youngest child also went to preschool there. The program set him up for a life time of good study habits, being considerate and respectful towards others. The program is a jewel for 5 Cities and should not be under valued. Children are a very important component of society and we can do better than eliminating this vital, wholesome, affordable program. I hope you will not eliminate the program and that you will commit to it further. This is how it works in a small town.

Eliminating services for children and families is short sided, distraughtful, and will cause long term, obtuse harm to the community whether they have kids there or not. Please do not make our city barren of what

truly matters.

Thank you for your consideration

Jill Vink, resident  
Mom of 3

**From:** Jared [REDACTED] >

**Sent:** Tuesday, April 25, 2023 11:14 AM

**To:** Kate Secrest <ksecrest@arroyogrande.org>; Lan George <lgeorge@arroyogrande.org>; Caren Ray Russom <crayrussom@arroyogrande.org>; Jim Guthrie <jguthrie@arroyogrande.org>; Kristen Barneich <kbarneich@arroyogrande.org>

**Subject:** Highly Valued! Pre school / before and after school programs

Good morning council members,

My wife, two children, and myself moved here to Arroyo grande just over 6 months ago. [REDACTED] will be 5 next month, beginning Ocean View in the fall, and [REDACTED] will be 1. One of the key selling points for us to move to AG was the school system and the programs offered, most notably the affordable pre-school and after school programs. We pay over \$10,000 per year in property taxes alone, which we're okay with as we love our new hometown and its offerings. Please keep these programs available; parent to parent, resident to resident.

Thank you for our time,

Jared McKnight, RIMS-CRMP, CSP, CRIS, OHST

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Myrna Vickery [REDACTED] >

**Sent:** Tuesday, April 25, 2023 8:37 AM

**To:** Caren Ray Russom <crayrussom@arroyogrande.org>

**Subject:** Recreation Dept services

As a regular volunteer at Rec Dept events over the past 20 years, I am asking you to please preserve as many Rec offerings as possible.

The Arroyo Grande Rec programs and activities provide entertainment for people of all ages, offer much-needed, quality child care to local parents, and foster a sense of community (and pride in that community) in the residents of Arroyo Grande. They play an invaluable role in making the city such a desirable place to live.

When I am volunteering at events such as the Easter egg hunt and Halloween carnival, parent after parent comes up to tell me how special AG Rec is and how much they and their children value the services. Parents of children in the preschool program describe the growth in social skills and academic readiness their children achieve as a result of the program. Many parents also mention having had difficulty finding quality and affordable preschool care prior to learning about the Rec preschool. Parents of older kids in the before and after school child care program describe how much these services mean to their families, with many sharing that the availability of the program is crucial to them being able to work and support their children.

Beyond all of these benefits, the Rec Dept is simply fun! The staff are well qualified, enthusiastic, and dedicated to the community they serve. The programs offered cater to a wide range of interests, and many of them are unique to the area. Simply put, the programs and events provided by Rec bring joy to our community.

I understand that the city faces grim budget issues, and I certainly don't envy your duty to make tough budgetary decisions, but I implore you to please recognize and bear in mind the plethora of benefits the Rec Dept provides to the people of Arroyo Grande.

Thank you,

Myrna Vickery  
AG resident

**From:** Dustin <[REDACTED]>

**Sent:** Tuesday, April 25, 2023 5:12 AM

**To:** Caren Ray Russom <crayrussom@arroyogrande.org>

**Subject:** Preschool

Good morning Mayor,

I'm having a hard time wrapping the thought around my head that there is talk about closing the city of AG preschool @ Elm street. Before I was a teacher, I taught at that preschool (3 of the 4 classes that were offered) for several years. The structure that the kids learned absolutely prepared them all for Kindergarten. The relationships that I have made and kept with fellow staff members as well as student's parents is nothing short of extraordinary. 3 of my 4 kids attended that preschool and it makes me sick thinking that this affordable preschool will be ripped away for undisclosed reasons. Taking this away does not move this community in the right direction. The real ones who lose in this situation are the kids. I am asking to please reconsider eliminating the preschool. Carrie Van Beveren has given her blood, sweat and tears to this program. The staff at the recreation department are wonderful people, the same people who were responsible for the protection and care of your 2 boys when they were in the Oceanview Elementary before and after school programs. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Dustin Cecchi  
Nuclear Security Officer  
[REDACTED]



**From:** Emily Van Beveren [REDACTED] >

**Sent:** Monday, April 24, 2023 11:25 PM

**To:** Caren Ray Russom <crayrussom@arroyogrande.org>; Kristen Barneich <kbarneich@arroyogrande.org>; Jim Guthrie <jguthrie@arroyogrande.org>; Kate Secrest <ksecrest@arroyogrande.org>; Lan George <lgeorge@arroyogrande.org>

**Subject:** Childcare and preschool programs

Dear City Council Members,

My name is Emily Van Beveren and I am emailing to voice my opinion about the potential defunding of the recreation departments preschool and child care services. This department provides high quality child care and preschool at an affordable price for the community. I have had the incredible privilege to volunteer for the after school and summer care programs for many years. My mother, Carrie Van Beveren, runs this program so I have gotten to see just how much her and all of the other staffs hard work has positively impacted so many children lives. The staff at these programs work tirelessly to provide educational, interactive and fun activities for children of all ages. I have personally heard so many children tell my mom and other staff how excited they are to be at the daycare program and how they look forward to it everyday. These programs have provided a safe and reliable place for parents to leave their kids while they work and cutting this program would be a disservice to these families. I appreciate you taking the time to read this email and hope you take my and many other community members opinion into account during your vote and decide to keep this wonderful program funded.

Thank you so much,  
Emily Van Beveren

**From:** Julia George [REDACTED] >

**Sent:** Monday, April 24, 2023 11:09 PM

**To:** Caren Ray Russom <crayrussom@arroyogrande.org>

**Subject:** City Council Meeting 4/25/2023 - Discussion of Preschool and Child Care Programs Offered through the Recreation Services Department and the Mark M. Mills Community Center

Dear Mayor Russom,

My name is Julia George, and I am contacting you today in regards to the Discussion of Preschool and Child Care Programs Offered through the Recreation Services Department and the Mark M. Mills Community Center. I urge you to please consider the community impact the Arroyo Grande Recreation Services Department brings to our town.

The budget is a never ending problem that you all are tasked to solve, and for that I want to acknowledge the tough position that you are in. And while I understand that the high turn-over rate of employees, given the city's limited HR department costs more to the city that would be desirable. However, the child care programs offered by the Recreation Services Department are something so special, I think it would be a disservice to the community should it be taken away.

I have had the lovely opportunity of regularly volunteering at and participating in the various events and child care programs that the Recreation Services Department conducts. Specifically, I have worked closely with Mrs. Carrie VanBeveren starting as early as 2013. Just this April (2023), I volunteered at the annual easter egg hunt, and never in my life have I seen such a showing of people. As I spent my Saturday helping out, I not only got to see the way that the children reacted to the event, but also to Mrs. Carrie VanBeveren. So many kids would stop to talk to "Ms. Carrie" and a lot of them knew her through the Recreation Services Department child care programs such as Parent's Night Out. It was undeniable in that moment to disregard the effect that the Recreation Services Department has had on so many individuals. While some might consider the Easter Egg hunt more of a childrens event, what surprised me was the amount of teenagers that also showed up for the festivities, many of which had been coming since they were little kids. But, to be honest with you, there has not been a single event that I have volunteered at for Ms. Carrie, where there was not depth in the community's love for what she does, and what is provided from her and the Recreation Services Department.

As someone who grew up in Arroyo Grande, while surrounded by a lot of nature and beauty, there are few things in Arroyo Grande for kids to do. The Arroyo Grande Recreation Services Department, in my experience, has always served as a safe place for kids to have something to do. Whether it is through the events that they throw for the entirety of the five cities, or the child care programs, the Arroyo Grande Recreation Services Department has always been such a beautiful way for our community to come together. Especially now, as we are on the tail-end of an unprecedented time of no socialization, I urge you to please consider Alternative 3: Review and discuss child care programs offered by the Recreation Services Department and direct staff conduct a statistically valid survey/needs assessment for child care and the MMMCC. Thank you for your time and consideration.

**From:** Breanna England [REDACTED] >

**Sent:** Monday, April 24, 2023 8:04 PM

**To:** Caren Ray Russom <crayrussom@arroyogrande.org>; Kristen Barneich <kbarneich@arroyogrande.org>; Lan George <lgeorge@arroyogrande.org>; Jim Guthrie <jguthrie@arroyogrande.org>; Kate Secrest <ksecrest@arroyogrande.org>

**Subject:** Please save our sweet school

Good evening city members,

My name is Breanna England and I have been a preschool teacher with the city's parks and rec dept for almost 5 years. My family recently bought a house in Paso Robles, and I, heartbreakingly, had to resign at Play and Learn Preschool because the commute wasn't feasible. It was so hard to leave such an incredible preschool program... and to be honest, my dream job.

The families that it serves, in the community, are amazing and in all my years there, they have expressed time and time again how happy they are with their child's preschool experience, and how grateful they are for it.

It was my absolute delight to get to watch the children grow and learn, and of course, have fun! I miss being in that positive, loving environment so much! I substitute any chance I get! I am making my plea to those in the position to vote to keep this invaluable preschool running to keep serving the wonderful families in the community and giving us preschool teachers an amazing place to work.

Please, please, please save our school

Thank you so much for your consideration!

**From:** Marlena Figueroa <[REDACTED]>

**Sent:** Monday, April 24, 2023 7:49 PM

**To:** Caren Ray Russom <crayrussom@arroyogrande.org>; Kristen Barneich <kbarneich@arroyogrande.org>; Lan George <lgeorge@arroyogrande.org>; Jim Guthrie <jguthrie@arroyogrande.org>; Kate Secrest <ksecrest@arroyogrande.org>

**Subject:** Parks and Rec Childcare Program

Members of City Council,

It has come to my attention that there is an intent to shut down the Parks and Recreation preschool and childcare programs.

My son is in kindergarten and attends the Bright Futures Program at Ocean View Elementary.

To be admitted into this program meant I had to set an alarm for the exact day and time enrollment was allowed because of how impacted the program is. The spots fill up within moments of opening. Finding childcare in this community is like waiting in a queue to purchase popular concert tickets! So many are left scrambling or needing to evaluate how they can keep their jobs without childcare availability.

To decrease the number of childcare options in an already underserved community would be devastating and a huge impact on working parents.

We love the Parks and Rec team. And so do our children. Carrie Vanbeveren has been running a wonderful, organized, and caring program. We are so thankful for her and the staff!

It seems as though we need to continue to have the YMCA Program as well as Parks and Rec. There simply isn't enough to serve the need.

Please consider the stress and anxiety this is bringing to the parents at Ocean View's Bright Futures.

I support the Parks and Rec program and hope you will too.

-Marlena Edward

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** Megan [REDACTED] >  
**Sent:** Monday, April 24, 2023 6:15 PM  
**To:** Caren Ray Russom <crayrussom@arroyogrande.org>  
**Subject:** Do not close the Preschool down!  
Ms. Russom,

We adamantly disagree with the closure of Arroyo Grande Parks and Rec Play and Learn Preschool.

We have 4 children ages 16, 15, 7 and 4, all of them have attended Arroyo Grande Parks and Rec play and learn preschool. Our youngest is currently finishing her second year there, and loving it just as much as the other 3 have.

Roughly 8 out of the last 13 years we have had at least one child in this program and we cannot say enough good about it. It would be such a loss for this community to shut the preschool down. First of all, it is the only affordable, part time preschool program in the area. The cost and the hours are perfect for those that don't need "child care" options and just want their kids to be introduced to school. The staff is wonderful, and has always been. They truly care about the kids and the community. It is clean, it is safe and the child to staff ratio is perfect. The kids are all readily prepared for kindergarten and they have a lot of fun while learning, playing, making friends as well as being taught the importance of respecting their teachers, classroom and peers.

It would be such an unfortunate loss to close this program down and we truly hope that doesn't happen.

Respectfully,

Michael and Megan Sloan

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** KAYLA M KING [REDACTED] >

**Sent:** Monday, April 24, 2023 2:45 PM

**To:** Caren Ray Russom <crayrussom@arroyogrande.org>

**Subject:** Arroyo Grande Community Preschool Program

Dear Mayor Russom,

I'm writing in response to council agenda item 12a for Tuesday, April 25th, 2023.

As a mother, lifelong resident, and property owner in the City of Arroyo Grande, I urge you to keep the pre-school and childcare programs at the Mark M. Millis Community Center OPEN and available to the community.

Schools and safe and reliable childcare provide an important resource for community members. We live in an expensive area as I'm sure you're aware and with rising costs everywhere, for many of us, it's costing most of our paychecks to pay mortgages or rent and put food on the table. Add in the cost of private childcare and many families can't make ends meet. Schools should be one of the first places we invest funds as a community. These kids are the future of our community and we should be making affordable, safe childcare and early education a priority. I've, personally, voted yes on every school bond on every ballot since 2001.

Additionally, our community is diverse both demographically and financially. I think it's what makes our area wonderful. If we start to close our community preschools, what options do lower-income families have? Not everyone can afford private preschools and not everyone can afford to stay home. Personally, I would hate to see our community prioritize those with wealth over those with less. That wouldn't be a town I'd care to live in anymore.

I'm not aware of the reason behind the impending closure, but if it is financial, what are other solutions for funding the program? Can funds be reallocated in order to keep this program running? How can the community help this program stay alive?

Please, please do not close this program. Too many families rely on it.

Sincerely,  
Kayla King

**From:** Justine Waldram [REDACTED] >

**Sent:** Sunday, April 23, 2023 12:59 PM

**To:** Caren Ray Russom <crayrussom@arroyogrande.org>

**Subject:** AG Rec

Dear Mr. Mayor,

I know you are a busy man, so I'll keep this brief. I have sent 3 of my 4 kids to the AG Rec preschool, I am planning to send my 4th there next year. Its affordable prices and quality care are an asset to the community and taking that away would be a step backwards in the state's effort to providing access to affordable childcare to all.

Please don't take this away from our community.

Justine Waldram.

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** rebecca barrow [REDACTED] >

**Sent:** Tuesday, April 25, 2023 12:34 PM

**To:** Lan George <lgeorge@arroyogrande.org>; Caren Ray Russom <crayrussom@arroyogrande.org>; Kristen Barneich <kbarneich@arroyogrande.org>; Jim Guthrie <jguthrie@arroyogrande.org>; Kate Secrest <ksecrest@arroyogrande.org>

**Subject:** City Childcare Programs Need to Stay Open

Dear Arroyo Grande City Council,

As a former preschool student and former volunteer for the Recreation's childcare program, I am asking you to keep the childcare and preschool program open for the community you serve.

Closing this program will cost Arroyo Grande residents jobs and will take away an affordable, well run preschool program. Having an affordable program is very important to the community you serve as housing costs are going up. More specially according to SLO health counts the median household gross rent was \$1,703 between 2017 and 2021 and is trending upward. In addition, 51.5% of Arroyo Grande community members who rent spend 30% or more of household income on rent. The last thing parents need to worry about is expensive childcare. You don't have much control when it comes to housing costs, but you have the ability to keep this program so that Arroyo Grande parents have an affordable preschool option.

Please see data referenced here: <https://link.edgepilot.com/s/0643f6e3/joIr0ZwfbkSNGPGVdh76gg?u=https://www.slohealthcounts.org/indicators/index/dashboard?module=indicators%26controller=index%26action=dashboard%26id=95187615192696565%26card=0%26localeId=7637>

Lastly, here are a few things these programs have done for me:

- The preschool program has allowed me to have many lifelong friends and teachers whom have shaped who I am today.
- The childcare programs have given me a lifelong sense of community. I still feel very much apart of the AG community even though I don't live, go to school or work there

Please think of the impact your decision has on the the community members you serve.

Sincerely,

Becca Barrow