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Santa Monica Daily Press

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THE KEEPING IT GREEN ISSUE

Union wants staffing cuts to be equal

BY MELODY HANATANI
Daily Press Staff Writer

SMMUSD HDQTRS The public school's teachers union is calling on administrators to equally distribute possible staffing cuts — a result of declining enrollment — across the board and to keep losses as far away from the classroom as possible.

Harry Keiley, the president of the Santa Monica-Malibu Classroom Teachers Association, proposed last week cutting between nine and 11 administrative positions at the central office and schools incre-

mentally over the next few years, saving in excess of \$1 million.

The Board of Education discussed the staffing cuts at its meeting on Thursday when assistant Superintendent Mike Matthews presented a new proposal that would save the district approximately \$2.5 million in staffing cuts made across the board, but most heavily in teaching positions.

"We want this to be done in a sensitive way and in an incremental way," Keiley said on Friday. "In 12 to 24 months from now, we should be looking at a central office and have fewer adults working there."

Keiley stressed that the union's recommendation isn't based on performance or mismanagement of funds at the central office level, but rather a need to see an equal distribution of cuts from top to bottom.

"We've seen a proportional decrease in the number of teachers we have in the system over the last four years," Keiley added. "Where we have not seen a comparable reduction is in the district office."

In the latest recommendation by Matthews, approximately \$2.1 million in teaching positions will be cut as compared to roughly \$400,000 in central office and site

administrators. Other reductions will come from classified employees — both on school sites and in the central office.

Under the new recommendation, classrooms in all secondary schools, with the exception of John Adams Middle School, will be staffed at a 31-to-1 level. JAMS will be staffed at a 30-to-1 level, up from 29-to-1 currently. During a meeting in February, board member Kelly Pye expressed concerns about increasing the teacher-to-student ratio at John Adams, which had experienced

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SOULFUL LADY: PEACH is busy concentrating on her next album on which she plans to work with blues musician Keb Mo. She is also planning a two-week concert tour.

COMMUNITY PROFILES PEACH

Singer is a late blues bloomer

BY MELODY HANATANI
Daily Press Staff Writer

WEST L.A. The sound of plastic compact disc jewel cases clanking into each other filled the air as a pair of hands frantically rifled through a row of albums.

Finally, the hands reached their destination — a solid white tablet with the name of an artist who after decades had finally reached the ultimate benchmark in a career, a record album.

PEACH smiled at the sight of her name, standing in the Warehouse music store on Wilshire Boulevard. She flipped the white tablet and saw the reason for her special trip — "PEACH LIVE!"

It was in that euphoric moment in 2002, standing in front of a music bin, when PEACH had finally seen a lifetime goal realized.

"I was so excited I had finally gotten my CD, seeing a bin with my name on it," the musician said. "I felt like I had finally gotten my stuff out there."

It's been a long musical journey for the blues artist from Anderson, Ind., with its pit stops and detours, some with career-affirming moments, others a bit more jaded.

It's a journey that has taken the Santa Monica across the globe, from the youth church performances in her hometown, to the genre-departing years in a classical music school in Colorado. Pit stops have included six months spent in Osaka, performing in concerts and learning the Japanese language, and 10 years circulating the club circuit in San Francisco, residing in the famous

Haight-Ashbury district during the 1970s.

The musical foundation was laid at a young age when PEACH, which is the artist's legal name, sat in her family's mid-western home, listening to her mother playing the piano, usually focusing on the blues. By the age of 11, PEACH was holding her first electric guitar. By 16, she was rocking it in front of screaming crowds.

"I wish I had (the guitar) today because it would be really worth something," PEACH joked during an interview on Thursday.

Following her college years at the University of Denver in a classical music program, PEACH moved to San Francisco where she spent years performing the club circuit, all while becoming familiar with the computer trade at the time.

"The computer business was something I could get a handle on," PEACH said. "It gave me a good relief to be able to take care of myself financially."

The 1980s brought PEACH to the Los Angeles area where she continued to split her time between her music and computer work. Calling herself a "geekette," PEACH decided to place music on hiatus and concentrate solely on computers in the early 1990s after a series of incidents that left her a bit disillusioned by the music industry.

"I call it my musical remission phase," PEACH said on Thursday from the Santa Monica home in which she moved into seven months ago.

It was during that "musical remission" phase that PEACH welcomed her daughter,

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Santa Monican likes to sing the blues

FROM CP PAGE 1

Gina Segall into the world.

The artist could not stay away from her musical passion for too long and in 2001, PEACH was called out of temporary retirement. Her comeback, a performance at a close friend's wedding.

She knew she couldn't let go again.

The debut album came unexpectedly. It came in the form of an unauthorized recording that someone made of her performance at an open-air concert in Riverside. PEACH purchased the rights to the recording for \$50 and turned it into her freshman album. After being named the Blues Artist of the Year by the L.A. Music Awards in 2001 and an Award of Excellence in 2002, the album gained some steam and distribution skyrocketed.

She followed "PEACH LIVE!" with her sophomore album in 2006, "PEACH The Real Thing," a compilation influenced by the artists' personal heroes, including blues musician Taj Mahal, with whom she duets in the title track, and Garth Hudson.

Today PEACH is busy concentrating on her next album on which she plans to work with blues musician Keb Mo. But her next big project will be an upcoming two-week concert tour to Copenhagen.

"I'm a poster child for late bloomers," PEACH said. "I meet young women thinking their careers are over at 23 and I'm still committed to my dreams."



Photo courtesy PEACH

LADY SINGS THE BLUES: PEACH says that she's a late bloomer and should be an example for other people chasing their dreams.

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City officials could move toward franchising cab companies



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TAKING CONTROL? City officials are considering a possible shift from the long-standing practice of licensing to franchising.

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is conducting the study for Santa Monica and met with cab owners last month during two workshops.

The taxi drivers seemed to universally express that there were too many cabs operating in the city and would like

ANY CAB COMPANY CAN PUT STICKERS ON THEIR VEHICLES CLAIMING TO BE GREEN, AND SOME DO."

Wendy Radwan,

Director of client and public relations, Taxi Taxi

more done to control the quality of service and fares, Koffman said. Those same thoughts were also expressed by the city staff who deals with cab companies, also feeling there were too many cabs in the city.

"I was a little surprised to learn how fondly (taxi drivers) felt about the need for the city to do more in regulation," Koffman said.

Koffman added that while franchising in general is not a common municipal practice for regulating cabs, it is typical-

ly seen in Southern California.

The consultant has so far completed his data gathering process, which includes practices in cities like Los Angeles, West Hollywood and Beverly Hills.

"We're formulating a variety of alternatives and outlining what those impacts would be," Koffman said.

Wendy Radwan, director of client and public relations for Santa Monica-based Taxi Taxi, said on Friday that she was encouraged to learn city officials were paying attention to some of the issues of cabs in Santa Monica.

The company, which operates several hybrid cabs and was nominated for a Sustainable Quality Award in 2008, sees its number one issue as being parking and finding places to leave their car without receiving a citation. Radwan added that the company would be pleased with new standards for alternative fuel vehicles as long as they are feasible, reasonable and enforceable.

"Any cab company can put stickers on their vehicles claiming to be green, and some do," Radwan said. "But, we know the truth.

"We feel that franchising can really benefit the community and the locally-operated taxi companies if it is properly implemented," she said. "If the city is going to set standards of service then they should also be willing to address our concerns."

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