

**From:** [samantha \[REDACTED\]](#)  
**To:** [-- City Clerk](#)  
**Subject:** Public Comment: Fairgrounds renter Live Oak Charter School letter of support  
**Date:** Monday, October 2, 2023 2:18:45 PM

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Dear Petaluma City Council,

My name is Samantha Sheppard. I currently hold the position of Secretary of the Live Oak Charter school board, and have been a parent at Live Oak for over 10 years, with a 7<sup>th</sup> grader currently enrolled, and a 10<sup>th</sup> grader now enrolled at Tech High. I am writing to voice my support of the proposed rent relief to provide Live Oak the ability to build new facilities that would benefit both the school and the Petaluma community at large.

When searching for a school for our preschooler over a decade ago, my husband and I were drawn to Live Oak because of its learning environment focused on developmental stages, its strong academics and its warm, welcoming community. At the time, we lived in Marin, and we moved to Petaluma because we wanted to be closer to our school community. I know there are many families who have moved to Petaluma because of the school, and I implore you to continue to support the educational options Petaluma provides.

When we joined the school, there was a wait list to get in, a situation that has changed during our tenure. Live Oak's enrollment is down, as enrollment across the state is down, due to the pandemic, and Live Oak has the added challenge of uncertainty around the future of the school, and the poor state of our facilities. As you may be aware, our school buildings are at or near their end of life.

Our school community is excited at the prospect of new facilities, both for the students and community at large. Working in partnership with the city to climb out of the financial hole the school finds itself in due to lower enrollment is something we look forward to as a community. However, we will not be able to look toward this future without the ability to save up for it, which is why the school is looking to the city to value and support education by providing rent relief. The money saved by the school will go directly to purchasing other facilities for use on site, and for basic maintenance of the existing buildings while they are still in use.

Our older son is starting his sophomore year at high school, and looking back on his time at Live Oak, I think one of the most valuable things he learned while at the school was about community. He learned how to contribute, how to accept others, and how he should expect his chosen community to treat him. In sum, he learned the value of community, how to contribute, what to expect, and what is expected of him, as a member of a strong, supportive community. I hope that the council will vote to support Live Oak in its next chapter by approving the proposed rent schedule this evening.

Sincerely,

Samantha Sheppard

Live Oak Charter School Parent

Live Oak, Secretary, Board of Directors