

# VOICES TO VISION

## Town Hall Meeting Q&A

Following are answers for questions posed at the October Town Hall Meetings:

[Is there a mandate from GSUSA to councils to divest themselves of properties?](#)

[Does GSUSA no longer have a focus on camp properties?](#)

[Is GSUSA becoming more of a corporation than an organization?](#)

[Are donors not funding us because we are leaving our values and the Girl Scout culture behind?](#)

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[Why are we sending girls to other properties for specialty camps instead of using our own?](#)

[Exactly where is our girl population? \(We must know this to determine where our facilities need to be.\)](#)

[Why is the Camp Lakota Lodge \\$4 million to build?](#)

[Do we own our properties outright?](#)

[Do we rent out our properties like churches?](#)

[Have we checked with owners of successful camps? How are they funded? What are they doing that we aren't?](#)

[Are there others we can partner with who feel as strongly about the outdoors as we do?](#)

[There were a number of questions about pre-merger legacy council data related to their budgets, deficits, etc.](#)

### **Is there a GSUSA mandate for councils to divest themselves of properties?**

No. Although there is a lot of information on the internet, including articles that suggest the sale of camp properties might be one way for councils to fund their portion of the national pension liability, there is no mandate for councils to divest themselves of property. The national pension, which offered vested Girl Scout staff with a small pension at retirement as an employee benefit, was frozen in 2010 due to its underfunded status.

### **Does GSUSA no longer have a focus on camp properties?**

GSUSA does not own camp property. Girl Scout councils across the country lease or own their properties. Each council is responsible for all use and maintenance of the properties. The purpose of council properties is to deliver program experience to their members. Decisions regarding camp properties rest with each council and not with GSUSA.

### **Is GSUSA becoming more of a corporation than an organization?**

GSUSA continues to be a non-profit 501 (c) 3 corporation whose mission is to build girls of courage, confidence, and character who make the world a better place. There are many federal, state and local regulations placed on nonprofit and for profit organizations (such as HR and IRS mandates). All nonprofit and for profit organizations must abide by these requirements and practices.

### **Are donors not funding us because we are leaving our values and the Girl Scout culture behind?**

GSUSA and GSGLA will never abandon our key values and culture. In fact, to the contrary, donors fund GSGLA precisely because of the values and character we help instill in the next generation of girls. GSGLA annually raises \$1.8 million in public support which has more than doubled since the beginning of the economic recession. In addition, the council has received \$550,000 in two major capital gifts since the merger for the new pool at Camp Osito Rancho (\$300,000) and toward the Camp Lakota Lodge project (\$250,000).

### **Did GSGLA turn down a corporate donation for Skyland Ranch?**

No. There was a potentially sizeable corporate donor for Skyland Ranch, but in the end the company decided not to move forward with funding.

### **Why don't we extend the cookie sales season [to raise money for camp costs]?**

The Girl Scout Cookie Program is the largest financial literacy program for girls in the country and is part of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience. The program emphasizes the "5 Skills for Girls." Because it is a program, the planning, preparation and execution is based on a timeline which takes into account membership registration, troop and council calendars, program logistics, volunteer support and a history of best practices that date back to 1917.

The troops gear up for an all-out effort each year, but with today's demanding volunteer and girl schedules, maintaining that intensity dwindles over longer periods of time. And as the longest program of the year, the cookie program limits troop participation in other activities during that time. While there are so many other activities that Girl Scouts participate in, dominating their Girl Scout experience with cookies would limit their exposure to other programs.

From the public's perspective, they know the cookies are available once a year, and this is the primary driver of the supply and demand quotient, and a major factor in the success of the program. The numbers indicate that we can sell enough cookies to meet our budgetary goals if girl participation is strong, troops are motivated and properly trained, and adults support the girls.

### **Is GSUSA getting more cookie money in order to pay salaries and pension expenses?**

No, 100 percent of the \$4 per box of cookies remains within our council to fund local council programs, properties, member services, volunteer training and support, troop proceeds, girl rewards, the cost of the cookies, and the logistics to administer the program. GSUSA does, however, receive royalties from the bakeries on cookies, as they do on all licensed products.

### **Can cookie money be redirected to camps?**

Cookie money already does support camps and all council-operated properties as part of the annual operating budget.

### **Do we own our properties outright?**

All four mountain camps are owned outright. Program centers are a mix of owned and some public/private partnerships with local cities and parks.

### **Do we rent out our properties like churches?**

Yes, the council does rent its properties to outside users who pay a higher use fee than Girl Scout members. Girl Scout members have longer lead times to make reservations ensuring members have precedence over outside groups.

### **Have we checked with owners of successful camps? How are they funded? What are they doing that we aren't?**

Yes, GSGLA and the Property Task Force are continuously researching and learning ways to make camp programs successful. Comparatively, some camps are funded by outside sources, such as Camp Ronald McDonald that is backed by a for-profit corporation. Church camps are supported by their church membership, but many are struggling to keep camps afloat and are finding the need to charge higher usage fees. Others are for profit camps that charge much higher camp fees and usage fees, in several instances 3-4 times higher than what we charge our members.

### **Are there others we can partner with who feel as strongly about the outdoors as we do?**

Public/private partnerships have the potential to provide opportunities for Girl Scouts to utilize space or share Girl Scout camps with others to offset operating costs. If members know of any interested parties, please share your suggestions at the property planning email box: [propertyplanning@girlscoutsla.org](mailto:propertyplanning@girlscoutsla.org).

### **Why is the Camp Lakota Lodge \$4 million to [re]build?**

The lodge design aspired to incorporate council needs, volunteer input, and be appealing to corporate usage as a retreat destination to maximize usage and offset operating costs. The building was also designed for energy efficiency with features that would reduce operating costs, provide for STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, & Math) education, and align with Girl Scouts' values as good

environmental stewards. As the design phase was completed, construction costs escalated. We received member feedback on this issue, and the lodge design for Camp Lakota will be re-evaluated.

### **Why are we sending girls to other properties for specialty camps instead of using our own?**

Specialty camps offer unique experiences for girls that require facilities and/or locations geared for the type of program offered. For example, offering the Horse Day Camp equestrian experience in a day format at one a GSGLA camp is not possible due to distance. Our Surf Camp is another example where the council must use other facilities because the site must include a beach with waves. Another example is Catalina Camp, which is a destination unto itself.

Whenever we can offer programming at a council-owned facility, we prefer to do so. Two specialty camps that do take place on council properties are the one-week theme camp at Skyland Ranch and family camp at Camp Osito Rancho.

### **Exactly where are the girls located? *(We must know this to determine where our facilities need to be.)***

The GSGLA has produced a council map that shows both current membership (via blue dots) and girl population (via pink dots). It also shows the location of our existing program centers, camps, and service centers. This map will be available in large format at the Jan/Feb Town Halls and will be posted soon in the Property Strategic Planning section of the council website for all to view.

### **There were a number of questions about pre-merger legacy council data related to their budgets, deficits, etc.**

Prior budgets and data dating back to pre-merger were on a variety of software systems. These budgets were closed by the CRC (Council Realignment Committee). The CRC was comprised of legacy Board members and staff, and unfortunately, the budgets and the systems are no longer retrievable.

### **Who do I contact if I have more questions?**

If you have additional questions, please send them to [PropertyPlanning@girlscoutsla.org](mailto:PropertyPlanning@girlscoutsla.org).