



City/School Liaison Committee Minutes



City/School Liaison Committee Meeting Wednesday, September 24, 2008

8:15 AM to 9:30 AM
City of Palo Alto Civic Center
Council Conference Room
250 Hamilton Ave
Palo Alto

In Attendance:

City of Palo Alto

Pat Burt, Council Member, Chair of Committee

Larry Klein, Mayor

Steve Emslie, Deputy City Manager

Nick Marinaro, Fire Chief

Barbara Cimino, OES Coordinator

Deniz Tunc, Administrative Associate

Annette Glanckopf, Palo Alto Neighborhoods Association (PAN)

Palo Alto Unified School District

Camille Townsend, Board Member

Melissa Baten Caswell, Board Member

Victoria Geen-Lew, Risk Management Supervisor

Handouts: **All handouts can be viewed in the City Manager's office at 250 Hamilton Ave**

Meeting convened at 8:19 a.m.

1. Oral Communications: None

2. Approval of Minutes from June 25, 2008

Board Member Baten Caswell moved to approve; Mayor Klein seconded. Minutes were approved 3-0.

3. 11th Day Enrollment

Ms. Baten Caswell presented the Palo Alto Unified School District's 11th Day Enrollment. She distributed a presentation to the Committee.

Chair Burt asked about the statistics on page three. He asked whether the pluses/minuses determine the net difference.

Ms. Baten Caswell responded yes.

Chair Burt said it does not seem to add up.

Ms. Baten Caswell said she would get back to that point.

Ms. Baten Caswell discussed Grade Span Growth, referring to page four. Enrollment is expanding, but not evenly – the biggest growth is occurring in grades K-5, as well as 9-12. However, these growths are less than anticipated. Also, there was a slight drop in middle school enrollment.

Ms. Townsend said middle and high schools grew less than the least projection. And elementary schools grew above the mid-projection.

Ms. Baten Caswell said current numbers are overall within the enrollment forecast, but the district will have to watch these changes carefully due to housing development, people moving in, etc.

Ms. Townsend said the district does not have “survey exits” for all families who leave Palo Alto.

Ms. Baten Caswell added that staff noticed two conflicting contributors as to why sixth grade levels fell: taking kids out of private schools and people moving out of the area due to the economy slowdown.

Chair Burt cautioned that the City has real estate data – an indicator of the number of houses on the market supports the fact that people are not moving out of Palo Alto.

Mayor Klein added there is a notion that the wave of exit from Palo Alto is not supported by the data.

Chair Burt raised concern that tentative determinations were being made on anecdotes that are contradictory to data that the demographer would be using. This anecdotal notion from the demographer that there is an exodus from Palo Alto is incorrect.

Ms. Baten Caswell clarified that these anecdotes were not created by the demographer, but by PAUSD staff. She stated that she would not bring up the anecdotes again.

Ms. Baten Caswell said PAUSD does not have a specific reason as for some of the changes in enrollment, but the district is within the forecast.

Ms. Baten Caswell said PAUSD is trying to keep classrooms as close to full as possible, while maintaining flexibility for additions or losses.

Ms. Townsend said that of the 247 investigations of children improperly in PAUSD, 27 (approximately 10%) of them were disenrolled.

Ms. Baten Caswell said kids come in from other districts for various reasons (hardships, etc.). Currently this number stands at 55.

Ms. Baten Caswell said there are 573 kids in the district from the voluntary transfer programs and 11 overflows in 2006-2007.

Ms. Baten Caswell stated the number of kids that were at schools that do not have a choice went from 129 last year to 20 this year.

Ms. Townsend said PAUSD is being very cautious that classrooms should be filled to 20 students, and to make sure not to hire more teachers than what PAUSD needs.

Ms. Baten Caswell said classrooms are tight for space right now.

Ms. Townsend asked if there were any questions aside from the fact that schools are doing well.

Ms. Baten Caswell said there is no indication whether next year kindergarten numbers will be different than this year.

Chair Burt asked about how growth in private schools in the community may in fact be part of the explanation as to what is going on with the numbers. He also asked if gender/racial distributions are available by grade level?

Ms. Baten Caswell answered that it may or may not.

Chair Burt said there are two things to look at closely: 1) whether schools within Palo Alto have a degree of impact on transfers (good or bad), and 2) what kind of impact takes place when schools are single-gendered?

Ms. Baten Caswell said that during bad economic times, the number of kids that go to private schools goes down.

Ms. Townsend said there are 2,500 kids in middle school and 3,600 in high school in Palo Alto – this is the norm.

Mayor Klein said he is intrigued by the male/female breakdown.

Ms. Baten Caswell said the African American and Hispanic populations have dramatically lower test scores than Caucasians. This is a challenge that the school district is taking on to positively impact.

Chair Burt said it might be worth looking at that anomaly (middle school population being lower) – is there an explanation for that? He was also interested to see a difference in ethnic breakdown by primary and secondary schools.

Mayor Klein asked if PAUSD allows kids to either high school.

Ms. Baten Caswell replied only if there is room.

Ms. Townsend said there is more flow from Gunn to Palo Alto high school because Palo Alto high school has more room.

Mayor Klein raised concern that the new development at the former Rickey's Hyatt site is overwhelmingly Asian (approximately 90%) because the City wants to be sure the community is integrated – the City does not want any “ghettos”.

Ms. Baten Caswell said if PAUSD does not allow programs to be different, then it will be harder for schools to look better than others.

Mayor Klein asked if ethnic distributions are different between Gunn and Palo Alto high schools.

Ms. Townsend said yes. Ms. Baten Caswell said the PAUSD does not have specific data for that question.

4. Emergency Preparedness

Chief Marinaro thanked the City/School Committee for an opportunity to present and passed out copies of a power point presentation.

Chief Marinaro said he would update the Committee on what the City has been doing – developing an emergency recovery plan for the City and the school district (short-term focus) and the development of a Wildland Management Plan.

Mayor Klein asked Chief Marinaro to provide some background on the Wildland Management Plan since the school board members do not have any information regarding the plan.

Chief Marinaro stated that 25 of a 50 square mile area are susceptible to brush fires in Palo Alto (Urban Wildland Interface) – this area ranges from highway 280 to Skyline. There is a potential for wild land fires. The City is working with PAN (Palo Alto Neighborhoods). There is also an ongoing PANDA (Palo Alto Neighborhood Disaster Activities) training for members of the community to become Community

Emergency Response Training Members (CERT) – Barbara Cimino and her staff trained 800 CERTs.

Chief Marinaro said the Police Department is completing the design for a mobile command vehicle received through a grant. He also said the Red Ribbon Task Force was converted into a Citizens Corp Council - the City wants to take this more to a working group concept.

Chief Marinaro explained that the Silver Sentinel – a statewide drill – will coordinate emergency operation centers and public safety agencies in October 2008 – this year's focus will be on an earthquake event. City staff has been trained for this event as EOC responders.

Ms. Baten Caswell asked if the entire state participates in this drill on the same day.

Chief Marinaro answered yes, but it is voluntary participation.

Chief Marinaro then said the City adopted an Emergency Volunteer Center Plan, while the City is in the process of finalizing the Volunteer Disaster Service Worker Plan.

Chief Marinaro said Victoria Geen-Lew, the school district's supervisor in Risk Management, would present the district's status.

Ms. Geen-Lew said the district ensures inventory in storage sheds is fresh and sufficient. She said the district gave old bottled water to landscaping for the City – lawns, plants, flower beds, etc. The supplies in each shed contain water and food for each student in the district for a 72-hour period following a disaster.

Ms. Townsend asked if Ms. Geen-Lew could send this information to board members.

Ms. Geen-Lew said yes.

Ms. Baten Caswell asked if there were some surprise increases in enrollment, would those increases be covered with the emergency plan.

Ms. Geen-Lew said yes.

Ms. Geen-Lew said the second main focus for PAUSD was to develop a comprehensive all-hazards emergency management plan. PAUSD took the most important information from several safety plan binders and put it in one binder – it is to be considered a living document.

Ms. Baten Caswell asked how site administrators are trained.

Ms. Geen-Lew replied that she has that information ready for later in the presentation.

Ms. Geen-Lew said the district's plan was reviewed by the City's Office of Emergency Services (OES). During this past summer, the PAUSD upgraded two-way radio communications in a complete overhaul. Each school site would have a radio network that would be connected to Ms. Geen-Lew's office.

Ms. Baten Caswell asked if the district uses the same frequencies as the City.

Ms. Geen-Lew said no. Ms. Cimino answered that in Santa Clara County, all EOCs are on a single frequency so that all EOCs can speak to each other in the event of an emergency – in the process of getting the district's EOC on to that same frequency.

Ms. Geen-Lew stated there are ongoing trainings scheduled in search and rescue, first aid, CPR, NIMS (National Incident Management System) and SEMS (Standardized Emergency Management System).

Ms. Baten Caswell asked if there was any unevenness in the way schools were handling training. There needs to be consistent training at each site.

Ms. Cimino responded that training begins at Gunn and Palo Alto high schools and then trickles down as needed to junior high levels.

Chair Burt asked if training is oriented more towards staff rather than parent volunteers, PTA Councils, etc.

Ms. Geen-Lew answered that the training is directed towards both groups; however the core of it is primarily for staff and team members.

Chair Burt asked if there is a determination as to their availability during an emergency of staff members who are key in the aftermath of any disaster.

Ms. Geen-Lew said there is an Emergency Disaster Service Code. Staff members would have to respond once they make sure their family is safe first.

Ms. Geen-Lew said staff needs to make plans for care of their family according to the contingency plan.

Chair Burt asked if all staff members are equally involved or if there is a subset of primary point people.

Ms. Geen-Lew answered principals designate volunteers. They determine skill sets and comfort levels, but always have backups to the primaries.

Mayor Klein if there has been any training implemented for kids.

Ms. Geen-Lew said yes. PAUSD has bi-annual drills (disaster drills). In addition, earthquake drills are coordinated with radio tests. These are comprehensive drills that cover the main points to remember during an actual emergency.

Ms. Baten Caswell said PAUSD can ask parent volunteers to get involved, but the district has to understand their own expectations since things can change.

Ms. Geen-Lew added that the district holds monthly fire drills at elementary schools and every other month at high schools. Additionally, the PEPC (PAUSD Emergency Preparedness Committee) has gatherings of elementary school principals to discuss ideas, questions, issues, etc.

Chief Marinaro then said he would discuss how PAUSD and the City have collaborated in their Emergency Preparedness efforts.

Chief Marinaro said there is a joint NIMS/SEMS monthly training, they conduct Code Red Trainings, they are working with the Police Department on Automated Critical Asset Management System (ACAMS) – active shooter situations - and they train all principals/assistant principals and staff.

Chief Marinaro said the benefits of collaboration include 1) a unified, coordinated response, 2) additional trained responders to augment professional first responders, and 3) a mutual understanding of planning and response procedures.

Chief Marinaro said future efforts include continuing studying the feasibility for an alternate EOC (Emergency Operations Center) at Gunn high school and inclusion of school staff in city drills.

Ms. Baten Caswell asked if Gunn high school meets seismic requirements.

Chief Marinaro said yes. For an EOC, it needs to be able to withstand 1 ½ times the earthquake seismic requirements. There is more focus on library requirements.

Chair Burt then introduced Annette Glanckopf from Palo Alto Neighborhoods Association (PAN).

Ms. Glanckopf said the daytime population of Palo Alto is approximately 100,000. With 35,000 people at Stanford, there are a lot of people here to take care of.

Ms. Glanckopf asked why residents should organize and prepare themselves.

Ms. Glanckopf said risk ever-present, especially with the possibility of earthquakes, floods, etc. There is a need for schools and homes to be prepared.

Ms. Glanckopf introduced the BPC (Block Preparedness Coordinator) Program which holds true to the following: 1) a partnership between the City and community, 2) establishment of links in communication, and 3) promotion of resident self-sufficiency.

Ms. Glanckopf stressed the importance of involving neighborhoods in these developments.

Ms. Glanckopf stated the BPC key activities include meeting neighbors, creating a directory, distributing information, serving as a community node and planning an event once a year.

Fire alarm sounded in City Hall.

Meeting Adjourned at 9:50 a.m.