



City/School Liaison Committee Minutes



City/School Liaison Committee Meeting Wednesday, September 3, 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

Curtis Williams, Interim Planning Director

Gayle Likens, Transportation Manager

Robert De Geus, CSD Division Manager

Adam Howard, Recreation Program Supervisor

Deniz Tunc, Administrative Associate

Palo Alto Unified School District

Camille Townsend, Board Member

Melissa Baten Caswell, Board Member

Bob Golton, District Co-Chief Business Officer

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

Meeting convened at 8:20 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 4-0.

3. Back to School Update

Ms. Townsend said the Palo Alto Recreation Foundation & Partners in Education are organizing the Black & White Ball on October 4 and that everyone is invited. The theme of the Ball is “Plaid To Be Here.” She continued by saying that school started on August 26 and on the first day, PAUSD members and school staff split up and toured the community to go to all the schools.

Ms. Townsend also said enrollment is inching up and budgeting is set by 11th day enrollment. She stated that the PAUSD will have their 11th day enrollment figures by the next City/School meeting.

Ms. Baten Caswell said schools are currently tight and new classroom space is needed to allocate resources for students. The major growth seems to take place in elementary – this will eventually trickle throughout the system once these kids get older.

Ms. Townsend said schools were doing additional hires (four days prior to the start of the school year), especially at the kindergarten level, due to an increase in the number of students registered.

Ms. Baten Caswell said there are approximately 24 students in the 4th and 5th grades throughout PAUSD. In the past, the normal numbers of students in these grades were at 20-22. She also said the district received STAR testing results and there are a higher percentage of kids in proficient and advanced categories than last year.

Ms. Townsend said Standard & Poor’s upgraded PAUSD’s bond rating to AAA. This is significant because no district in the state is higher than AA+. Ms. Townsend confirmed this fact with Mr. Golton.

Chair Burt suggested these items be discussed at a later date if need be since there was only a short amount of time allotted for this agenda item.

4. Youth Activities/Entertainment

Chair Burt stated the committee should address existing and perspective common efforts in serving the youth of Palo Alto, between the school district and the City. This conversation would serve as a baseline and might lead to discussion for further development.

Mr. Emslie introduced Robert De Geus (Division Manager, Recreations & Golf, of the Community Services Department) and Adam Howard (Supervisor of Recreation Programs for the Community Services Department) to the committee.

Mr. De Geus said he put together a two-page summary of groups, activities, etc. that the City of Palo Alto and the school district provides to various age groups.

Ms. Baten Caswell said this item initially was brought up at the last meeting because of concerns that the bowling alley would be closing.

Mr. De Geus said teens are predisposed to saying there is not enough to do where they live. He said that if there is a gap, it is associated with high school kids.

Mr. De Geus indicated there are three Youth Leadership Groups through the Community Services Department, which is established through the City's schools: the Junior Advisory Board (grades 6-8), the Teen Advisory Board (grades 9-12) and the Palo Alto Youth Council (grades 9-12).

Mr. De Geus said that while the Junior and Teen Advisory Boards work with city staff to identify gaps in the program, the Youth Council work on specific issues that they themselves must confront, such as drinking, stress, etc. The Youth Council then creates workshops that help teens address these issues.

Chair Burt asked Mr. De Geus to clarify the difference in the roles between the Teen Advisory Board and the Youth Council.

Mr. De Geus answered the underlying difference is that the Teen Advisory Board works on events and programs for teens, while the Palo Alto Youth Council focuses on community issues facing teens.

Ms. Baten Caswell asked if the Youth Council has regular interactions with the councils at each of the schools.

Mr. De Geus answered that there is a mix - there are a number of kids on the Youth Council who also participate in the leadership groups at their respective schools, but not all of them.

Mr. Howard added that members of the Youth Council have raised the issue of connectivity between all the boards and councils.

Chair Burt clarified these groups cannot interject themselves without the consent of the schools (since this is a City program). Mr. De Geus said yes.

Mr. De Geus said the Youth Council and City Council meet once or twice a year to talk about teen issues.

Mayor Klein stated there was very little interaction between the Youth Council and the student governments last year.

Chair Burt said the City Council conducts an annual Study Session with the Youth Council and results showed there is more interaction this year between the Youth Council and student governments.

Ms. Baten Caswell said Gunn and Palo Alto High School's student government groups met to try and collaborate on some issues/events last year.

Mr. De Geus next indicated that the Community Services Department has various Summer camps, including Coastal Adventures (collaboration of the City and PAUSD for middle school students, where a teacher would teach Marine Biology in the morning and recreation staff would take the kids out on a field trip in the afternoon that related to their morning session) and Camp Jive (summer enrichment program).

Mr. De Geus also said one of the bigger collaborations between the City and PAUSD is the Middle School Athletics program. 1,400 kids were involved last year. PAUSD provides the facilities, uniforms, and game schedules, while the City provides the coaches, training of the coaches, coordinating of the practices, etc.

Ms. Baten Caswell asked if it has been easier to find coaches, since it was quite challenging the last few years. She asked if this was the case, is that why CSD is adding golf and tennis to the program.

Mr. De Geus said no. It is still a difficult task. As of right now, the program is only three coaches short.

Mr. De Geus said both golf and tennis have been implemented into the program because Palo Alto has a great facility (Municipal Golf Course) and much interest was shown in these sports.

Ms. Townsend asked about any policies in place for training coaches.

Mr. De Geus said the City looked at guidelines used by high schools and applied them to their middle school coaches.

Mr. De Geus mentioned the Mitchell Park Youth and Teen Center as a place where kids have taken over for their enjoyment – dances, games, tutoring, etc. takes place here. However, this location is usually more filled with middle school children than teens.

Ms. Baten Caswell asked if there would be any plan to relocate when the Library Bond Measure passes.

Mr. De Geus said the Youth and Teen Center would temporarily move during construction for two years – maybe to JLS or Cubberley. This decision is being worked on.

Mr. De Geus talked briefly about the Teen Services Collaborative which was started by Kim Castro who now works for the City of Mountain View. He said representatives from the City, YMCA, PAUSD, YCS and ACS meet periodically to

discuss teen programs, what is being offered and ensuring that no programs are overlapping.

Mr. De Geus also stated the Jr. Museum and Zoo offers many science programs for kids.

Mr. De Geus stated that if there are any gaps, it is with high school teens. It is a harder population to program, interests become more and more diverse, etc. Some feedback they have received from teens indicate teens would like to see a "Teen Boot Camp."

Mayor Klein asked what this boot camp would entail.

Mr. Howard answered it would be a competitive natured exercise class strictly for high school students. Teens would not feel comfortable in a class like this with adults.

Ms. Townsend asked when this would take place.

Mr. Howard said that it might be held in the mornings before school started and/or at other suggested times.

Chair Burt asked Mr. De Geus if there were any thoughts on addressing the summer/evening time gaps, since they have been identified 10-12 years ago.

Mr. De Geus said teens do not feel welcome as they used to be and there is definitely a need there. He said he would bring this up with the Teen Advisory Board and Youth Council.

Mr. De Geus said the Community Services Department puts on movie nights in Foothills Park during the summer and that a teen-specific movie night might be a good idea to pursue.

Chair Burt asked how the Community Services Department is effectively communicating all this information out to the public. He asked if PTA newsletters (eNews) were being utilized.

Mr. Howard said yes. Everything is published in the eNews. Mr. De Geus added the best communication at this age level is from student to student.

Ms. Baten Caswell emphasized how connected youth groups need to be – she said it would be good for kids to talk to other kids about these programs and spread the word.

Chair Burt asked how all this channels up to the administration level.

Mr. Golton said these methods are not a problem to achieve.

Chair Burt asked if there were any overriding comments about how PAUSD and the City are working together or if there were any suggestions.

Mr. De Geus answered it is a good collaboration, but there are still plenty of opportunities to further advance these programs.

Ms. Baten Caswell asked if Mr. De Geus had any emphasis on the “Looking Ahead Items” on his two-page summary (Teen Boot Camp – 9th through 12th grades, Fairs – Downtown/Midtown, Day on the Green – live music, Pool Night – at Rinconada for teens, Trampoline Class – Olympics, Tournaments – dodgeball, High School Band Nights, Talent Show/open mic, High School Dances) in terms of the PTA investing in some programs (fiscally or with resources).

Mr. De Geus said these are all preliminary right now. The Community Services Department is looking for computer lab volunteer support and tutors.

Ms. Townsend suggested the City collaborate with college and career counselors at the high schools since juniors and seniors need 1,000 volunteer hours before they graduate.

Ms. Baten Caswell thanked Mr. De Geus and Mr. Howard for sharing all this information.

Chair Burt suggested the Palo Alto Weekly could publish a comprehensive list of these activities.

Mr. Golton said it is extremely difficult being a teenager, but at the same time, Palo Alto is an optimal place to be a teenager – access to nationally recognized schools and a community that values support for activities that surround the school day.

Chair Burt thanked Mr. De Geus and Mr. Howard for coming in and presenting this information to the committee.

5. Town & Country Traffic Impacts

Gayle Likens passed out a map/plan for the Town & Country project.

Ms. Likens stated the Town & Country expansion project, essentially the “new Trader Joe’s” project, is the third phase of modernization upgrading of the Town & Country Shopping Center. The first two phases already occurred with the refurbishment of the center.

Ms. Likens said these plans went through the Architectural Review process last fall. A traffic study was conducted and examined: 1) traffic issues on Embarcadero

Avenue, and 2) safety issues at pedestrian crossings and how that traffic pattern will be managed.

Ms. Likens said the results of the study suggested a significant impact at the driveway intersection on Embarcadero Avenue – one solution would be to signalize the driveway on Embarcadero Avenue. Signalization would also provide opportunities for better access to Palo Alto High School as well.

Ms. Townsend asked for clarification.

Ms. Likens answered a four-way signal would relieve congestion, as well as a driveway entrance into the Trader Joe's parking lot. She said the current pedestrian signal would have a larger island going from Palo Alto High School to the Town & Country Shopping Center. This traffic pattern would in turn create a safer environment, as well as a more direct pedestrian pattern. Additionally, in order to improve circulation within the shopping center, a signalized exit would be created onto Embarcadero Avenue, toward El Camino Real, near the Trader Joe's site. This would prevent everyone from filtering back through the main driveway.

Ms. Baten Caswell asked if there would be a pedestrian crossing at the main entrance on Embarcadero Avenue.

Ms. Likens said no.

Ms. Likens said there is a need for railings along Embarcadero Avenue toward the tunnel for pedestrians due to the oversized curb.

Chair Burt showed concern that this railing is adjacent to the bike lane and people would have to be careful not to get clipped by handlebars.

Ms. Likens said there is current consideration to install signalization on Encina Avenue/El Camino Real intersection as well. If this would be done, it would be a separate project.

Mayor Klein showed concern for kids that would be walking from Palo Alto High School to Town & Country and back during the construction phase.

Ms. Likens said the Planning & Transportation Department would address that issue.

Mayor Klein asked what the schedule looks like for this project.

Ms. Likens and Mr. Williams said construction plans are going through the building process and that there is substantial funding contributed by the shopping center – approximately \$200,000 for the construction.

Ms. Baten Caswell asked when the project would begin if everything else goes according to schedule.

Mr. Emslie answered some time in 2009, maybe even 2010.

Chair Burt stated these are new buildings and was concerned that certain retail uses do not generate certain levels of traffic. In this case, Trader Joe's renders much higher levels of traffic compared to typical retail use.

Mr. Williams said there is a code for these processes.

Chair Burt confirmed with Ms. Likens that the formulaic analysis did not drive a need for signalization at Encina Avenue.

Mr. Emslie said it is a matter of looking at the Capital Improvement Project (CIP) – a lot of rear end collisions occur at the particular left turn in question.

Chair Burt asked about the tradeoff with the Shopping Center regarding some of the frontage road land.

Mr. Emslie said that was part of the negotiation. In turn, the Shopping Center would provide more money for the project.

Chair Burt asked if there would be signage to direct bike riders.

Ms. Likens said there would be better signage installed.

Chair Burt said that in the Embarcadero Avenue underpass, there is a combined bike/pedestrian road that is not wide enough for users to know which side they should be on. He stated there should be additional signs and stenciling implemented for users to clearly understand what side of the path they should be on.

Ms. Likens said Planning and Transportation would look into that.

Chair Burt asked about the expansion of the sidewalk of the roadway.

Mr. Emslie and Ms. Likens said the City did get it – it will be expanded with a permeable surface.

Chair Burt asked about metal gratings for the tree wells in the area.

Mr. Emslie and Mr. Williams said they would look into that issue.

Mayor Klein asked if the Town & Country Shopping Center project has all the necessary approvals.

Mr. Emslie and Mr. Williams answered yes. No Council meetings will be necessary regarding this project.

6. Future Meetings and Agendas

Chair Burt said the agenda for this meeting was originally supposed to cover Emergency Preparedness.

Chair Burt said certain City representatives and grassroots organizations should present regarding Emergency Preparedness. He asked Mr. Golton if the school district could make a presentation.

Mr. Golton answered yes.

Chair Burt said the County of Emergency Services had a good newsletter on countywide emergency plans – a very aggressive ambition.

Mr. Golton said Victoria Geenlew is the point-person for the PAUSD on this topic.

Ms. Baten Caswell suggested agendizing 11th day enrollment of the PAUSD.

Chair Burt said legislative mandates that are trickling down to cities show no sign of letting up – it is very important that the district understand long-term pressures and impacts that this will have.

Ms. Baten Caswell said to agendize this issue for the next meeting.

Chair Burt confirmed the next meeting (September 24) will cover Emergency Preparedness and 11th Day Enrollment.

Chair Burt said to tentatively move the November and December meetings to the weeks before the set dates (November 19 and December 17).

Meeting Adjourned at 9:30 a.m.