

**MINUTES FOR MEETING OF DECEMBER 16, 2009**

Opening

The School City Liaison Committee held a meeting in Room A, 25 Churchill Avenue, Palo Alto, California. The meeting was called to order at 8:15 a.m.

**City of Palo Alto Representatives Present:**

John Barton, Council Member  
 Larry Klein, Council Member  
 Steve Emslie, Deputy City Manager  
 Rob DeGeus, Recreation and Golf Director

**Palo Alto Unified School District Representatives Present:**

Camille Townsend, Board Member, Chair of Committee  
 Melissa Baten Caswell, Board Member  
 Bob Golton, CBO and Bond Manager  
 Carol Zepecki, Student Services Director  
 Betty Munoz, Secretary to Co-CBOs

**Others Present:**

Leif Erickson, YCS

Oral Communications

There were no oral communications.

Approval of Minutes –  
 September 2, 2009

MOTION: Townsend moved to approve the minutes from the November 18, 2009 meeting. Caswell seconded. Motion carried 4-0.

Upcoming PAUSD Parcel  
 Tax Election

Golton said the parcel tax was an item on the agenda at last night's Board meeting. Golton said as it relates to the election date, the District wants to do a stand-alone election. He said going in June will put them with interest on other issues. It turns out there is conflict of the election code and they cannot place the parcel tax on the April ballot. Golton said it is the case in a number of counties that a mail-in ballot is done. San Mateo is having a mail-in election. He said the Santa Clara Registrar of Voters said the options for the parcel tax election are the first Tuesday in March, the first Tuesday in May, and the first Tuesday in June. Golton said the District would like to have it on the first Tuesday in May. Golton said the District's attorney said they could sue the Santa Clara Registrar of Voters to try and have an April election, but there is no benefit to doing that.

Caswell asked Golton if he could clear up what the parcel tax is? Golton said the current tax is \$493 with an available senior exemption and it is about to expire. Golton said they are doing a renewal this spring and asking for an additional \$96 dollars per parcel with an available senior exemption and 2% COLA. Golton said during this particular time cost of living has gone down, but their costs have escalated more than 2%. Golton said other costs have increased as well. He said some districts have seen this escalation and others have not. This is a six year measure. Caswell said the District has been short more than 2% and has been pulling from the general fund to compensate for items that should be covered under the parcel tax.

Townsend said it is the first time the district has done a mail-in ballot. Barton said the City has typically arranged to have a drop off box for the ballots at City Hall. Klein said the City did have a mail-in ballot about 6-7 years ago. Caswell asked if just having a postmark was adequate? Klein said the ballot had to be there. He said it is the law that you have to have the ballot physically there. Barton encouraged the District to get the endorsement from City Council on the parcel tax.

Townsend asked if the City knew who will be on this Committee next year? Klein said it will not be known until the City Council reorganization takes place. Townsend said next year Dana Tom and herself will be on this Committee.

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### Update on Student Mental Health

Zepecki said they have been working with Dr. Marlene Wong from the University of California. She has been a professor at the University of California for 30-35 years. Zepecki said Dr. Wong recently presented to staff and parents. She has also met with the Community Task Force and then did a community presentation. Zepecki said her presentation is very informative and includes suicide efforts and what happens in a community and examples. Zepecki said they have also been working with Rich Lieberman who has worked with Marlene. Marlene is more the systems person and Rich does more of the psychological part. She said their resources are available to other districts in the County. Marlene and Rich will be coming on January 20<sup>th</sup> and the 21<sup>st</sup> for a workshop. Zepecki said they would like to bring Rich the evening of the 20<sup>th</sup> to their community, with just the Community Task Force present.

Zepecki said they continue to meet with HEARD (Health Care Alliance in Response to Adolescent Depression), Caltrain, and the Medical Foundation. HEARD members have also met with public relations people and have invited the local media, including high school editors to discuss protocols for reporting suicides. Greg Herman, from the City will be involved. HEARD also has a sub-committee of psychologists and psychiatrists who are looking at additional mental health support systems. Zepecki said they are also considering student screening and deciding whether they are going to screen students or not. They are looking at a 3 tier screening. Teen screen is the most commonly used screening assessment tool.

If a family has a particular mental health need, they refer them to the local medical professionals who offer mental health support at a reduced rate.

They would like people to know of this referral list so they are having an open house. Zepecki said it would be for the staff development day on the 11<sup>th</sup>.

Dr. Wong highly recommended there be a point person and they have appointed Wes Cedros, School Psychologist. Zepecki said he would only be the tip of the pyramid, he would know what all the counselors are doing. Zepecki said they will be asking for additional funding for training so they can have that additional knowledge. Townsend said she would like Zepecki and Rob to continue coming to the City School Liaison meetings with updates.

Zepecki said there will be training for teachers through the Gatekeepers program. It is a two hour training. She said the training will help teachers to recognize some of the areas that would require students to be referred for additional help.

Zepecki said one of the questions that have come up is whether to do a psychological investigation of the student deaths. Cyndi Ainsworth with the KARA organization has volunteered for the investigation piece. The Community Task Force and Cyndi will investigate the value and process for doing psychological autopsies. It might guide the community regarding things that they might do differently, family issues, alcohol issues. Zepecki said upon reviewing past deaths, one thing that has come up were catastrophic events in the students' lives. She said these catastrophic events might not seem catastrophic to others, but they might have been to the student. DeGeus said some families are interested in the psychological autopsy and some are not. DeGeus said there are two of the local families that would like to participate. Townsend said there was a young woman who committed suicide that was not in our schools and said that might be a family that they might want to bring in.

The media group has recommended they have a consultant, Singer Associates, who may provide talking points.

Zepecki said Rob DeGeus had the idea to name the website "Project Safety Net" and Dr. Wong picked up on that and used it. DeGeus has done a great deal of work on the website and PAUSD will link to that website.

DeGeus passed out a handout and said the website is listed ([www.cityofpaloalto.org/custom/familyresources/safetynet](http://www.cityofpaloalto.org/custom/familyresources/safetynet)) Degeus said the website is an effective way to communicate. He said one thing he has noticed is that some community members are not aware of all their efforts. Project Safety Net developed a website and has the different strategies,

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and if you click on the link, it opens a new page and gives an objective. DeGeus said the website will be updated every week. They think the website will be very informative. Rob the other thing on the website is when you click on the strategy and it will tell you the person in charge. Caswell said this is great and the PTA will make sure the parents know about it. Caswell asked what strategy do they have so the community is aware? Rob said it has a lot on there and getting the information to them

DeGues said they recently added the ability to donate through PayPal and have received \$1500.00 for the Trackwatch. Townsend said there are two sites with security: one is East Meadow sponsored by the police department and the other is Charleston formed by the community. Townsend thought security was there until at least one o'clock in the morning. Rob said security is there for 18 hours during the time the train is on schedule. Rob said they have moved to the other 2 crossings, and they are not there the whole time; training and vests are provided by the police department. Rob said the fundraising is for the security guards services. Caswell asked how long did they recommend these efforts take place? Rob said they recommend at least four months. He said New Jersey had a cluster of suicides and so they had it for 10 months. DeGeus said they will have them in place for one year. Zepecki said they want to make sure and pass the anniversary dates.

DeGeus said someone recommended they write something for the weekly. Townsend said that during the holidays the girls scout groups visit some of the elderly homes and people are asking how are the schools doing, how are the students doing? She said there is great concern from the grandparents/great grandparent's age group. Caswell said maybe Alameda could help with that.

Barton said this was great work and maybe they could have a few of their slides presented under the city manager comments on the Council agenda. Barton said this is all good but he still thinks there is some work to be done at the schools and the City to get to the root cause. He said he has had a couple of talks with Janet Dickson, mom of the most recent suicide, who would really like to be involved. She has several ideas and floated those over to Noreen Likins, Principal at Gunn last Thursday. Barton said she would like to put together an advisory program at Gunn where the students would have access to a teacher or a professional just a place to touch base and for students to call home. He said the other idea was the notion of a memorial for the students at Gunn and Paly. Klein said he has trouble with that idea and feels this is just a reverse of what they are doing. Barton said he understands but the kids are feeling that they are told not to think about it, and if they killed themselves and no one remembered them because they were told not to talk about it. Caswell said she thinks talking about it and a memorial would make a big difference.

Townsend said she is glad the community has reached out and she thinks people have complained those people lives have fallen away. We do what we can do, and understanding why and she is so glad the community has HEARD of this. Zepecki said they will do a Q & A. They were thinking of a Q & A that focused on some of the things they are working on and in talking with some of the parents including those that children who have died, they asked them to also include information on what happens when a student is at school and says they are going to harm themselves? What does the school do and what happens to the list of students that you are watching? How does the parent know what is happening? What is the parent involvement there? Zepecki said they are going to expand the information of the Q & A to include some those things. She said it is always good to hear because they assume other people know what they know and it always reminds them how difficult it is for a parent to find out that their child has a particular need and where they can go for help. Caswell said she has HEARD those questions as well particularly, if my child goes to ask for help at school, does anyone tell me and how does that happen. Zepecki said they meet with small groups of individuals and each time they learn something new about what they should be doing to help parents to know what is happening at the schools. This topic will return to the agenda in January.

Townsend said YCS is losing its space at Mitchell Park. Mr. Leif Erickson said next year will be the 20<sup>th</sup> year of YCS. He said a few years they were invited into the space at Mitchell Park as part of the

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City. A lot of their programs that are based in Palo Alto are down at that space and prior to that they were at Cubberly; prior to that they were at the City Teen Center downtown and prior to that they were hosted by the Palo Alto School District. Caswell said that YCS does not charge for its programs to the City or the District, but as a result they have had their office space donated. Erickson said they were founded 20 years ago as a partnership not only with the City and the District, but also Ravenswood School District and other partners. This was a collaborative effort that called on YCS to lead for the purpose of bringing the two communities closer together so most of the programs are based in the schools. Mr. Erickson said they have a summer program at Ventura Community Center and do registration through the City. Everything they do is supported by this network through the City and schools. Ms. Townsend asked: if you are at Ventura in the summer and the after school at Mitchell park, which site would you prefer? Is it one site or two sites that you are looking for? Mr. Erickson said what they are looking for when Mitchell is shut down is office space for their staff. They have classroom size space the 600 sq. ft. and they have 6-7 folks working in cubicles there. Mr. Emslie said the City runs the Teen Center separately from YCS. Townsend said YCS is 9-5 office space. Mr. Erickson said it is business hours office space. Caswell said they have a club at each of the District's secondary schools and they have 400 students signed up at Gunn. Mr. Erickson said the percentage of students with YCS has increased. Townsend said Caswell is on the board for YCS. Caswell said yes and she asked for this to be brought to the table because this is one of those sleeper programs the school district is getting programming for our students in community service. Community service hours go into the students transcript so this is programming that they are getting and the District does not invest into this except for saying they support YCS. She said the City also gets youth programming as a result of this as well. There is leadership training, community services programming, and there is also curriculum for teachers. Barton asked if Erickson has talked to Jim Baer? Erickson said no. Barton said they have open space downtown that they might have available. Barton will place a call to Jim Baer and make the connection. Caswell said her concern is she doesn't want the District to say they don't have a way to support this but we still want this program so if they want this program they need to help this program continue to exist. Barton said JCC has empty spaces that are not used up and maybe they are interested in having you there for a while. Townsend asked when is the deadline for Mitchell Park? Emslie said it this spring in April or May. Townsend said Melissa will let us know what the process is. Klein asked Emslie if when the community center at Mitchell Park is completed, will they will have space there for YCS? Emslie said it is possible and but their preference is to get YCS into a more permanent location that wouldn't part of Mitchell Park. He thinks in September the City would take the lead on making sure there is space provided for and the City will work with the District to find a location. Klein said they should focus on that. Townsend said Barton will call Jim Baer. Golton said he and Emslie talk on a regular basis outside of this meeting and will track this down from their end and will not let it fall through the cracks.

### Traffic Light at Paly

Emslie said Trader Joes opened December 4<sup>th</sup> and it went quite well. Townsend said some of the small businesses who were afraid about Trader Joes opening have more business because it is attracting more people. Emslie said a new signal was warranted because of Trader Joes and they couldn't put more traffic there without a signal light at Paly. The problem of that signal was timing and one of their key pieces of equipment was not delivered on time and that is the traffic controller which is a state of the art inter-connectable that coordinates the testing signal at Paly, the new signal at the driveway, and the signal at El Camino. Emslie said the City lent them an old fashion one that works on a clock that is set for different commute times. He said the new controller is set to come in next week and it takes about a day to install. It will be very similar to the Middlefield signal. Emslie said once it is in it should be functioning a lot better. It should be finalized by the New Year. Townsend asked there is a motion detector as a part of that? Emslie said yes there is. Caswell said here is something and she doesn't know if it is going to get better with the traffic light, but if you are coming from Trader Joes and want to make a left it is confusing and is concerned there could be some accidents. Emslie said he thinks it will get better with the signal, but will bring it back to the traffic engineers. Townsend said it is a little confusing if you are by Trader Joes there is two exits and if you go on the outer exit it takes you onto to Embarcadero towards El Camino so you have to take the

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inner driveway in order to come around to the light in order to go east and there a lot of confusion and there is no signs. Emslie said there is some need for some signs and the reason for that is so the pedestrian traffic is protected. Emslie said there is some information on the website and Townsend said the Paly principal put out an e-mail to the parents.

### 2010 City School Calendar of Meetings

Barton said at the next meeting they could highlight some things they believe should carry over. He said a budget discussion could take place in January or February. In March or April they could have a conversation about the closing down of Mitchell Park and the after school programs. Barton said student mental health issues will continue of the agenda. Another is the parcel tax. Traffic safety is discussed sometime in the summer before school starts. Caswell said they committed to talk about online resources for students at the libraries. Emslie said the housing element information would be available in June. Klein said it would be a good idea to talk about what the City is doing for the high speed rail. Barton said a good agenda item for January is the high speed rail. Klein said the District is listed as one of the major stake holders. The Committee agreed they would discuss agenda items for 2010 at the next meeting.

### Future Meetings and Agendas

Items recommended for the January 27, 2010 meeting were:

- Update on Student Mental Health
- High Speed Rail
- PAUSD Parcel Tax Election
- 2010 City School calendar of meetings

### Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:40 a.m.