

**MINUTES FOR MEETING OF OCTOBER 27, 2009**

**DRAFT**

<p><u>Opening</u></p>	<p>The School City Liaison Committee held a meeting in Room A, 25 Churchill Avenue, Palo Alto, California. The meeting was called to order at 8:19 a.m.</p> <p><b><u>City of Palo Alto Representatives Present:</u></b>          John Barton, Council Member          Larry Klein, Council Member          James Keene, City Manager          Greg Hermann, Management Fellow          Steve Emslie, Deputy City Manager          Greg Betts, Community Services Director          Dennis Burns, Chief of Police          Rob DeGeus, Recreation and Golf Director          Diane Jennings, Director of Libraries          Daria Walsh, Parks and Recreation Commission</p> <p><b><u>Palo Alto Unified School District Representatives Present:</u></b>          Camille Townsend, Board Member, Chair of Committee          Melissa Baten Caswell, Board Member          Kevin Skelly, Superintendent          Bob Golton, CBO and Bond Manager          Carol Zepecki, Student Services Director          Ann Dunkin, IT Director          Nancy Pang, Ed. Technology Coordinator          Tina Allen, Secretary, Superintendent's Office</p>
<p><u>Oral Communications</u></p>	<p>There were no requests to address the Committee.</p>
<p><u>Approval of Minutes – September 2, 2009</u></p>	<p>MOTION: Barton moved to approve the minutes from the September 23, 2009 meeting. Baton Caswell seconded. Motion carried 4-0.</p>
<p><u>Update on Student Mental Health</u></p>	<p>Zepecki said she had been working since Spring on suicide prevention and student mental health. She had been in contact with the Centers for Disease Control, and research and efforts were continuing. She said a number of experts had been consulted and some of them would be coming to the area to consult. Zepecki said experts had been telling her she was already doing all the things they recommended, however she wanted to do more. Her continuing efforts include meeting with a number of groups such as interfaith, CalTrain, and the City/District group. She said that it was found that suicide, for some students, became an answer after other students had used it. The culture needs to be changed to tell students that suicide is not OK and is not a solution to problems. Other options needed to be considered in a crisis and students must learn who they could talk to. Gunn was working with KARA, a local grief agency, and work with support groups would be increasing. Information would be made available on an ongoing basis on the District's website (<a href="http://www.pausd.org">www.pausd.org</a>), as well as other avenues. Betts said the City was getting more engaged in the situation and meetings with concerned groups began in September. In addition to suicide, another topic of discussion in these meetings was student mental health. Townsend asked if anything was being done about the CalTrain tracks where some of the tragedies had occurred. Betts said issues like this were being discussed, in addition to creating a smaller group out of this task force in order to make decisions and ensure coordination. DeGeus presented the structure of the community task force, adding that it was still evolving and that about 40 people usually participated. Currently the groups involve: Palo Alto Police, parents, PAUSD, Adolescent Counseling Services, PTA, Palo Alto Community Services,</p>

KARA, Interfaith Community, YMCA, County Mental Health, PADACC, SHARE, community support groups, Palo Alto University, Palo Alto Youth Council, Stanford Hospital, HEARD, and teen representatives. Zepecki said that a couple months ago, there were 14 strategies, and there were now more. She added that there was no perfect answer, but these were ideas that should help. DeGeus said there had been a 300% increase in referrals to mental health services. The Police Chief said the plan would take time to develop and would hopefully be long term. It was believed that there should be an interim plan to modify the intersection, and longer term strategies such as police and community patrols, lighting, trimming trees, and possibly adding technology. Baten Caswell asked Zepecki about support groups and if they were being offered to the Palo Alto High School community as well, because Paly students know Gunn students. Zepecki said students, parents, and teachers at Paly were being notified of the support groups available to them. Additionally, an application for funding from the Safe and Drug-Free Schools Division of the California Department of Education had been submitted. Three teacher sessions were also scheduled in the District. Barton said it was important that the location was being considered right away, as was the development of a task force. He noted that Gunn and Paly were very welcoming to some types of students, but not as much to other groups. He asked if the high schools were working to become more welcoming to the rest of the students who are now being left behind, and to redefine "success". He said that just finding an adult to connect with can be of great importance to a struggling student, and his sense was that this did not happen. Townsend said this was a major goal in the community, and that work toward this goal was continuing. Klein said that people frequently jump to a conclusion as to the cause of each suicide, but they really do not know the individual situation of each student. He suggested developing some data on the students who had committed suicide, while maintaining confidentiality and sensitivity, to determine what their situations were. Betts said there was a methodology in these situations, and more information was needed on each case to determine whether or not there were recurring themes, and to determine whether or not there was an especially susceptible population. Townsend asked if there were any clues in any of these cases, because other parents are wondering what to look for and if there was anything they could do for their students. Baten Caswell said experts reported studies had shown that people who tried to take their lives often had ongoing mental health issues. DeGeus said upcoming events approached this topic, as well as what to watch for. He said it was important to understand that no one had all the answers, and that the mother of one of the suicide victims told him she had no clue this was about to happen. Zepecki said research from other areas that had experienced clusters of suicides was also being studied. She said the one issue people kept bringing up was how to remove the train as a focal point for distressed students. She also noted that the student who most needs to link up with an adult to talk is weakest in the social skills that would help him or her find the link. More effort was occurring to look at individual students, and parents were contacting psychologists with concerns about their students.

Townsend suggested this topic be brought back early in 2010. Baten Caswell and DeGeus suggested the Committee ought to get a brief update at each meeting. It was agreed another discussion would occur at the November 18, 2009 meeting.

#### Update on Library Bond Implementation

Jennings gave a brief presentation focusing on: Bond projects (Measure N) and City Infrastructure Funds, and how they were being used to upgrade and renovate some of the City's libraries. She also presented a timeline for each of the four projects: College Terrace, Downtown, Mitchell Park Complex, and the Main Library. She said this information was available on the City's website ([www.cityofpaloalto.org](http://www.cityofpaloalto.org)) as well. Green Building standards were being considered, however windows were not being replaced. Barton noted that the Mitchell Park Library and Community Center had been inverted, so the library was on the street in order to make it a more integral part of the community. Jennings said a number of community discussions would be occurring in the near future and would be publicized. An oversight committee had been organized to oversee the bond money expenditures. Barton said the City had very strong community support on these projects. Klein said work was on schedule and construction downtown was expected to start in the spring and take about a year. Baten Caswell asked where community programs would be housed during construction. DeGeus said they would utilize spaces at sites such as Cubberley, and Youth Community Services

was still looking for a location.

Staff Updates on  
Technology and Libraries

This topic was postponed until the November meeting.

Future Meetings and  
Agendas

Items recommended for the November 18, 2009 meeting were:

- Staff Updates on Technology and Libraries
- Update on Student Mental Health
- Upcoming PAUSD Parcel Tax Election

Adjournment

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