



City/School Liaison Committee Special Meeting Minutes



Regular Meeting
April, 17 2014

The City School Liaison Committee held a Regular Meeting at the City Council Conference Room, 250 Hamilton Avenue, First Floor.

The meeting was called to order at 8:40 A.M.

Present: City of Palo Alto Representatives
Liz Kniss, Vice Mayor, Committee Chair
Nancy Shepherd, Mayor
Khashayar Alaei, Senior Management Analyst

Palo Alto Unified School District Representatives
Dana Tom, Board Member
Heidi Emberling, Board Member
Cathy Mak, District Chief Business Officer

Absent: Greg Schmid, Council Member

Oral Communications

None

Approval of Minutes

MOTION: Chair Kniss moved, seconded by School Board Member Emberling that the City School Liaison Committee approve the minutes of March 20, 2014.

MOTION PASSED: 2-0 Shepherd, Tom abstain

3. Review Recent City Council / PAUSD Board Meetings.

Heidi Emberling, Palo Alto Unified School District (PAUSD) School Board Member remarked that she was not able to attend the next scheduled City School Liaison Committee (Committee) meeting. A tour of the schools was scheduled in place of the next meeting; she suggested May 8, 2014.

WORKING MINUTES

Someone needed to check with Council Member Schmid for availability on May 8, 2014.

Khashayar Alaei, Senior Management Analyst agreed to check with Council Member Schmid.

Ms. Emberling remarked that May 8, 2014 worked for Dana Tom, School Board Member and herself.

Chair Kniss said that May 8, 2014 worked for her schedule.

Ms. Emberling confirmed that they would all meet at PAUSD Office.

Cathy Mak, District Chief Business Officer confirmed 8:30 A.M. at PAUSD Office.

Ms. Emberling noted that the PAUSD was reviewing their Bullying Policy on May 13, 2014 in the Board Policy Review Committee. She continued with updates and said there were many principals retiring at the same time. They had committees in place to search for replacements for the other schools. The Superintendent was leaving and the Chief Technology Officer was tapped by the Obama Administration as an Information Officer for the Environmental Protection Agency. The Director of Elementary Education was going to become the Director of Secondary Education for the Virginia School District in Virginia.

Chair Kniss asked when the last day of the Superintendent was.

Ms. Emberling remarked June 30, 2014.

Chair Kniss wanted to know if there would be a replacement by then.

Ms. Emberling noted Leadership Associates would be presenting candidates on April 30, 2014; PAUSD was scheduled to conduct interviews May 15, 2014.

Chair Kniss inquired of the hiring process.

Ms. Emberling replied that Leadership Associates performed two open forums at the town hall and met with every active group in the school

WORKING MINUTES

district. They put together the desired characteristics and the job description.

Dana Tom, Palo Alto Unified School District School Board Member remarked that the interviews were confidential.

Ms. Emberling explained that the confidentiality was because there were current superintendents that might be interested.

Chair Kniss noted that in the end, it was all public information.

Ms. Emberling continued on with updates and said there was a scheduled date to discuss Cubberley Community Center and the School Boards shared interest; there was direction that the Superintendent meet with the City Manager.

Chair Kniss did not think there would be any more discussions with the Council on the Cubberley Community Center.

Mayor Shepherd thought there would be more discussions because the School Districts interests were not yet discussed. There was a difference of issues regarding the Utility Tax being a General Tax and the Councils inability to discuss identifiable tax streams.

Ms. Emberling was not clear on this issue.

Mayor Shepherd clarified that the Council was not allowed to identify a dedicated expense on General Tax; this was a big part of the discussion for the School District. She was not sure how this topic would be discussed.

Chair Kniss clarified that a General Tax cannot be a specific tax, otherwise it required a different vote; this was the Attorney's advice.

Mr. Tom remarked that the direction of Superintendents was to explore additional collaboration. For example, the gyms were not made available for public use; he wanted to see if there was additional collaboration that could be done.

Mayor Shepherd said there was clear feedback from the Cubberley Committee and reiterated that the Council was not allowed to take tax that was general and specify it.

WORKING MINUTES

Mr. Tom asked for clarification on "specifying".

Chair Kniss remarked that there were two types of taxes: General and Special Taxes. The Special Tax needed a two thirds vote and needed an indication of what it was for. There was no specification allowed for the General Tax, a variety of possibilities needed to be listed in the ballot statement. The Council was not able to legally specify where General Tax would go. She moved on to further Council updates.

Mayor Shepherd gave the Committee a list of the Council Work Plan and priorities and remarked that there were many that were leaving the City of Palo Alto. Quality of life was a big interest in Palo Alto, along with parking and mobilization. The City was trying to get a new shuttle system and was looking at school routes to see if it would be easier to get through some of the intersections.

Chair Kniss wanted to know what would happen if there was increased shuttles or school busses in the morning, as the traffic was bad in the mornings.

Mayor Shepherd noted that bussing was not happening anymore and the shuttles were needed when it rained.

Chair Kniss heard from younger parents that they preferred to use transit and wanted to walk their kids to school.

Ms. Emberling added that the Bicycle Safety Committee was just honored by the County for most bike friendly School District in the State.

Mayor Shepherd remarked that some families were not able to attend their neighborhood schools; they come from neighborhoods that were not walkable.

4. PAUSD Enrollment Survey.

Chair Kniss confirmed the discussion was about projections.

Cathy Mak, District Chief Business Officer noted that the Enrollment Report was submitted to the Board in September, after that they gave the data to the demographer and they produced the projection for the School District. This year's report was presented in December.

WORKING MINUTES

Chair Kniss inquired about who the demographer was.

Ms. Mak replied that it was Decision Insight. In 2011 a law changed the entry age into kindergarten to be five. This caused a decline in enrollment and the School District was in their second year of implementation of that law; they expect to see decline this school year as well.

Chair Kniss inquired whether this was the year they would catch up.

Ms. Mak replied that this year made 100 percent implementation but they still expected to see a continued dip in kindergarten enrollment, which they thought would pick up in 2015-16. Prior to 2011, the average enrollment growth was two percent. This year the kindergarten through grade 12 was .6 percent growth. The third, fourth, and fifth grade classes were still very large and they expected to see a lot of growth in the middle school over the next three years. Next year's elementary school growth was expected to be flat.

Mayor Shepherd wanted to know the projection for Jordan Middle School next year.

Ms. Mak replied it was slightly over 1,100 students. She added that enrollment at Terman Middle School was capped because it was a smaller campus; new students were overflowed at Jane Lathrop Stanford (JLS) Middle School.

Mayor Shepherd wanted to know the size of JLS.

Ms. Mak said JLS had over 1,000 students.

Mayor Shepherd remarked that middle schools were smaller.

Ms. Mak commented there was an increase of 54 students this year and next year there was a projected increase of 120-140 students; this would continue for the next three years.

Dana Tom, Palo Alto Unified School District (PAUSD) School Board Member explained that the growth would then inverse.

Ms. Mak said there was a small decline in middle schools, then the high schools picked up the middle school growth.

WORKING MINUTES

Chair Kniss recapped that there was 1,100 students at Jordan Middle School and over 1,000 students at JLS.

Ms. Mak reiterated that there were between 1,000-1,100 students at JLS Middle School.

Chair Kniss clarified that the cap at Terman Middle School was 745-750 students.

Mayor Shepherd stated the cumulative number was 2,950 students for the three middle schools. She asked how the numbers were distributed from Terman Middle School.

Ms. Mak said the new students were chosen to overflow.

Ms. Emberling remarked that the School District was still in discussions about trying to acquire Bowman International School, which was next to Terman Middle School.

Ms. Mak commented that Escondido Elementary School was expected to increase by 31 percent and there was a decline in enrollment in the schools in the north.

Chair Kniss wanted more information about Escondido Elementary School.

Ms. Mak remarked that various options still needed to be explored.

Chair Kniss questioned if a child was not accommodated at one School, and had to attend another, was transportation the responsibility of the parent.

Mayor Shepherd answered yes.

Chair Kniss wanted to know how long it had been since the boundary lines were changed.

Mr. Tom remarked that minor changes were made within the last year. When a 13th elementary school was finally chosen, there was going to be significant planning.

WORKING MINUTES

Ms. Mak noted that due to the slower growth at the elementary schools, the plans for another elementary school were postponed.

Mr. Tom understood there was going to be discussion next year.

Ms. Emberling relayed that the discussion for next year's enrollment was, if the Toddler-Kindergarten (TK) Expansion Bill came through, how to accommodate all four year-olds.

Chair Kniss inquired where the Bill was now.

Ms. Emberling verified the TK Expansion Bill was out of Committee and in the Main Body.

Chair Kniss inquired whether it was moving forward.

Ms. Emberling said yes.

Chair Kniss wanted to know Senate Bill (SB) number.

Ms. Emberling answered SB 837, Senator Steinberg and Senator Hill. There was a lot of attention paid to this Bill because it meant funding to accommodate another year of students; it was called "Expansion", not a new program.

Ms. Mak added that this Bill included significant facility changes.

Chair Kniss thought it was possible for the Bill to be signed this fall and asked how the children at Jordan Middle School were going to be accommodated.

Ms. Mak replied that they have portables.

Chair Kniss wanted to know if the portables were empty.

Mr. Tom answered that before Terman Middle School, the numbers were up 1,200 students and said Jordan Middle School just received new classes.

Chair Kniss inquired about different Middle Schools going back to different configurations, grouping of different grades together.

WORKING MINUTES

Mr. Tom replied that Staff operated in a way that made them capable of accommodating different configurations, which had a lot to do with facilities decisions.

Ms. Emberling remarked that the transition from elementary school into middle school was seamless.

Mr. Tom said there was a nice bridge from being in one class to several classes.

Mayor Shepherd relayed Council noticed that Property Tax receipts were going up in the next 10 years and the School District benefited from Property Tax receipts. She suggested that PAUSD have discussions with Lalo Perez, Director of Administrative Services and Chief Financial Officer because there were a lot of Property Tax exchanges that were happening at the commercial and residential level.

Chair Kniss confirmed that this discussion was about the basic aid status.

Mayor Shepherd thought alignment or methodology could be looked at.

Chair Kniss officially suggested that the School District sit down with the person handling projections for next year.

Mayor Shepherd said the Transient Occupancy Tax was going up because more hotels were being built and there were a lot of people buying property in Palo Alto.

Ms. Emberling noted that many people come to Palo Alto for the schools.

Chair Kniss wanted to discuss high school enrollment.

Ms. Mak projected that high school enrollment had a modest increase for the next two years.

Chair Kniss clarified that was for 2015.

Mr. Tom explained this was a conservative number, the moderate projection was higher.

WORKING MINUTES

Chair Kniss wanted to look at the moderate projection.

Ms. Mak explained for the next three years there was modest growth under the moderate projection. In 2017, the growth picked up and there was the capacity to accommodate more students at the high schools.

Mayor Shepherd wanted to know what the capacity of the high schools was.

Ms. Emberling answered that the capacity was 2,300 students at each high school and said they were building up to that number at each high school. It was estimated that there would be a need for a new high school in 2025.

Mayor Shepherd clarified that was 11 years from now.

Ms. Emberling said it took five years to open a new school.

Mayor Shepherd remarked that many people discuss a year-round school and wanted to know why this was not considered.

Ms. Emberling noted that it was hard to predict.

Chair Kniss commented that many communities dealt with not having sufficient amount of land, which gave Palo Alto options that other communities did not have. She wanted to know if Gunn High School was built out as it was now.

Ms. Emberling replied that it was possible to build up. There was a process in place right now to approve a schematic design to build up at Gunn High School.

Chair Kniss remarked that two story buildings could be viewed as negative.

Ms. Emberling noted that most of the new buildings were two story buildings.

Chair Kniss observed that it was better use of land.

Mayor Shepherd said some of the old landscape from the 1920-30's were between eight and ten stories; now buildings were capped at four stories.

WORKING MINUTES

Mr. Tom was interested in the traffic impact of areas where the schools contained 600-800 students.

Mayor Shepherd added that a strategy was to create public transit riders as the schools grew. When the Residential Parking Permit came out, students were impacted, and there needed to be a conversation on how to improve transit needs.

Ms. Emberling remarked that there was a study about parking being provided. People that parked in certain neighborhoods had their cars keyed and their tires slashed.

Chair Kniss clarified this was because students were driving to school and parking in residential neighborhoods.

Mayor Shepherd remarked that sophomores did not have a parking permit.

Ms. Emberling said only seniors and juniors had permits.

Mayor Shepherd said one of the outcomes of Measure D, a Palo Alto Measure in support of affordable housing for seniors, dealt with the traffic at Gunn High School and how people were not able to get out of their driveways.

Chair Kniss remarked that there was probably not going to be another high school in the future because Schools were able to build more stories. Over the past ten years there was an evolution on how the School Board handled the land and expansion, which included the libraries. There were changes in technology and the adaptation that took place.

Mayor Shepherd remarked that getting rid of classes like fifth year French were offerings that parents were gearing their children for. These classes were eliminated because high schools shrunk and funding was difficult due to lack of students. She thought a situation like this needed to be documented to show what the perks were to having a larger school.

Ms. Emberling relayed that this was the problem with middle schools having fewer options of electives.

Mayor Shepherd mentioned that parents voiced at School Board meetings that they did not want particular classes eliminated.

WORKING MINUTES

Chair Kniss thought two important things were how the evolution in buildings changed and how smaller schools gave up offerings in a community that felt like it should have due to anticipation of the children doing phenomenal things.

Ms. Emberling remarked that the Mandarin Emersion was offered at Ohlone College and in high school, but there were not enough sign ups at the middle school level.

5. Property Tax Ballot Initiatives – Evolve.

Mayor Shepherd noted that Council Member Schmid and she were talking about signing a Colleagues Memo on the Property Tax Ballot Initiative. The Evolve representative was there to convey the evolution and promise of getting Proposition 13, an initiative that limited property taxes, to change.

Dana Tom, Palo Alto Unified School District (PAUSD), School Board Member mentioned that Proposition 13 was on the front page of the Mercury News in support for change.

Chair Kniss clarified it was change regarding Property Tax.

Mr. Tom mentioned that it was unclear whether people knew what they were being asked.

Courtney McDonald, Evolve Representative began working with Evolve last year. She was active in politics and in the four years she was in school, her tuition doubled. She was told by lobbyists that the budget cuts were not going to stop, there was not enough revenue and there needed to be a long term solution to bring back funding for the State of California (State). Evolves mission revolved around public education funding. In 2012 people worked to pass Proposition 30, a Sales and Income Tax increase, which passed because people wanted to fund education, but this was seen as a temporary solution. Evolve felt that they needed to tackle the root of the problem by means of Proposition 13. For 36 years, California lost \$6 billion every year due to commercial property owner's rarely changing ownership. There was an influx of funding because there was a transfer of property but that was rare.

Mayor Shepherd remarked that property was protected until the next exchange.

WORKING MINUTES

Ms. McDonald relayed that Evolved started their campaign with the California Democratic Party, which had a super majority at the time. Evolve asked them to pass a Resolution stating the reform; it was a victory. Even though the political will did not exist today, it existed at the grass roots level, so Evolve wanted to start at the local level to build support. They took the momentum and moved to organize local elected bodies. They did outreach to School Boards and the reception was great. She noted that Proposition 13 funding was going to expire in a few years.

Mayor Shepherd confirmed it expired in 2017.

Ms. McDonald conveyed that 56 School Boards passed their Resolution. The next step was to do outreach to City Councils, which was received well. Evolve's goal was to gain the support of 100 elected bodies in order to send their message to Sacramento and to the public. The most recent Public Policy Institute of California poll stated that 59 percent of voters supported the reform, which was the regular reassessment of commercial property values. There was a lot of community outreach and she felt that people thought it was the best and most fair way to bring back revenue to the State. Next, Evolve was starting community outreach to County Supervisors and to try to introduce a Bill. The States requirement to pass the Bill was to gain a two thirds super majority. The Bill was not expected to pass but it gave Evolve something to organize themselves with; this paved the way to get it on the ballot for 2016.

Mayor Shepherd questioned whether there would be signatures.

Ms. McDonald said yes; there was a Bill being introduced first, then they used the momentum to collect signatures. It was a step-by-step process to raise awareness and to identify new supporters at different levels of government. They needed to win the public before it went on the ballot.

Mayor Shepherd wanted to know if it was a simple majority.

Ms. McDonald clarified to win on the ballot they needed a simple majority.

Chair Kniss wondered if people would understand what happened in 1978.

Ms. McDonald said there was a new generation of voters that only saw the negative impact of Proposition 13, but there were also people that were in school when Proposition 13 passed and were benefitted as home owners. Most people understood how Proposition 13 devastated the State.

WORKING MINUTES

Mayor Shepherd remarked on a documentary called "First to Worst".

Heidi Emberling, Palo Alto Unified School District, School Board Member replied "First to Worst" was about how California used to be the number one education system.

Mayor Shepherd remarked that there has been a slow degradation.

Ms. McDonald remarked that California schools used to be a model but after Proposition 13 passed, no other state wanted a Proposition 13 of their own. Evolve was able to engage people and they wanted to make sure the reform made the most sense. They did not want to wait until a Bill was introduced or until funding for Proposition 13 expired.

Chair Kniss wanted to know the first four points to understanding what the results were because one point was to maintain the Proposition projections. It made sense to revamp Proposition 13, unless a person was the recipient of low taxes. Another point was how commercial property could be reexamined. She wanted clarification on what the proposed reassessment for commercial property was.

Ms. McDonald answered that every other state used the range of one to five years. Evolve was still discussing how often it needed to be reassessed.

Ms. Emberling noted that it was good to note that Proposition 13 had not been reassessed in 35 years and most States reassessed between one to five years.

Chair Kniss recollected that no one could recall by 1982 or 1983 why business were not reassessed. Related was a famous case that dealt with Macy's and when they were up for reassessment; the case was appealed to the Supreme Court. From that time in 1986, this Proposition was not discussed. Palo Alto did not vote for Proposition 13 because they foresaw what would happen long term.

Ms. McDonald remarked Howard Jarvis, one of the Bill writers owned commercial property himself.

Mayor Shepherd relayed that when a person requested a decline in their reassessment value because they bought at a high price, the two percent

WORKING MINUTES

started at the reassessment value, not at what the property was bought for. This was the first year there was not an increase of two percent.

Mr. Tom clarified that was one to two years ago where the Consumer Price Index was below two percent.

Mayor Shepherd remarked that the increase of tuition burdened families and graduate students.

Ms. McDonald noted that Evolve had a campus organizer that worked with the University California (UC) and community college systems because students felt the repercussions.

Mayor Shepherd remarked that along with Proposition 13, there was a super majority vote for a Bond; she wanted to know if it was a possibility to relate that with this Initiative.

Mr. Tom said that made things more difficult.

Mayor Shepherd remarked that this coddled the Palo Alto community to risk new initiatives in order to get a new revenue stream, assuming the voters voted for things that only businesses were taxed on.

Chair Kniss inquired whether the Evolve was statewide.

Ms. McDonald replied yes.

Chair Kniss asked where Evolve was located.

Ms. McDonald remarked San Francisco.

Chair Kniss inquired whether Evolve operated as a 501 (c), a non-profit organization.

Ms. McDonald answered yes, a 501 (c) (4).

Chair Kniss wanted to know where the operating funds came from.

Ms. McDonald said they came from memberships.

WORKING MINUTES

Mayor Shepherd explained that the City School Liaison Committee (Committee) was not able to vote to support Evolve, but could put it on the next Legislative Agenda. Palo Alto had a State Lobbyist, once this Bill was ready for the State Legislature, it needed to go to the Policy and Services Committee.

Mr. Tom reached out to the Lobbyist of the Association of Basic Aid Districts and said there was an organization that started when Governor Davis was trying to eliminate all Basic Aid Funding. The goal was to advocate for the preservation of funding; if this was not done in the right way, an organization could become more of a target. Evolve did a good job of documenting the inequities and distortions as a result of Proposition 13. The Lobbyists' recommendation to the Basic Aid districts was the question of what happened to the funds and said there were ways the funds could be handled that would be detrimental for Basic Aid recipients.

Chair Kniss clarified potential funds for businesses.

Mr. Tom added that the discussion was also about the way funds were generated because there were differing effects due to some communities that were not Basic Aid and some being mostly commercial, causing all real estate would get a larger influx. The overall recommendation was until there was more information, it was better to not take a position.

Mayor Shepherd felt the situation was changing, and when it went to the Legislature, it was going to change more; she was going to advocate for the Resolution when it was brought before the City Council.

Mr. Tom thought there was a possibility that it would eliminate all Basic Aid Funding.

Ms. McDonald did not think voters would vote for that.

Mr. Tom reiterated that it still may mean no more equitable funding.

Mayor Shepherd agreed and said this was still a way to be part of the dialogue. She hoped that the School Board would put this Item on their Agenda.

Chair Kniss wanted to know how many Basic Aid School Districts there were in California.

WORKING MINUTES

Mr. Tom replied there were 100 Basic Aid School Districts. There used to be 60, but Districts were cut into Basic Aid.

Chair Kniss thought it was good for the Evolve Representative to hear this conversation and to get the opinion of a Lobbyist. She wanted to know who the leader of Evolve was.

Ms. McDonald remarked that Michael Bornstein was the Executive Director.

Chair Kniss wanted to know how long Evolve was in existence.

Ms. McDonald replied since 2011.

Chair Kniss asked how long Ms. McDonald had been working for Evolve.

Ms. McDonald said almost six months. When she started working with Evolve, 20 School Boards passed the Resolution, and now the numbers were tripled. Mr. Tom's brought up points that Evolve needed to consider. With all the different stake holders, it was important to engage people.

Mayor Shepherd wanted to know who would carry the Bill.

Ms. McDonald said they were still weighing their options. Evolve sent a questionnaire to all candidates running for office last week; they now had them on record saying they supported the reform.

Mr. Tom said there was someone trying to fix the loophole of staying within the 50 percent ownership change, while still not have a reassessment.

Mayor Shepherd remarked that since Proposition 13, there were no more Assessors, which meant added expenses.

Chair Kniss understood that the question was whether Basic Aid was going to affect Palo Alto.

Mr. Tom thought the question was how.

Mayor Shepherd remarked that her hope was that people would look at what was needed to educate a child and that PAUSD would be a model for other School Districts.

WORKING MINUTES

Future Meetings and Agendas

Heidi Emberling, Palo Alto Unified School District (PAUSD), School Board Member remarked that May 8, 2014 was a possible date for the School tour. The City School Liaison Committee (Committee) needed to discuss what was going to be on the Agenda for June, 2014.

Chair Kniss wanted to know if Khashayar Alaei, Senior Management Analyst was going to be the new Committee Liaison.

Khashayar Alaei, Senior Management Analyst said yes. Jim Keene, City Manager needed to restructure the Department but he was going to make sure the Committee was moving forward.

Chair Kniss was unclear about what was going to be discussed in June, 2014.

Mr. Alaei said that he could find the list of Agenda topics that was produced last year, have the Chair review it, then discuss what they would like to talk about at the next meeting.

Dana Tom, Palo Alto Unified School District, School Board Member confirmed that the School District met in June, 2014.

Chair Kniss verified that PAUSD was off in July, 2014 and wanted to know when the students began their break.

Ms. Emberling remarked the last day of school was May 29, 2014.

Chair Kniss asked when the students began school in the fall.

Ms. Emberling answered August 18, 2014.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 10:17 A.M.