



City/School Liaison Committee Special Meeting Minutes



Regular Meeting
August 21, 2014

The City School Liaison Committee held a Regular Meeting at the Council Conference Room, 250 Hamilton Avenue, first floor, at 8:36 A.M.

Present: City of Palo Alto Representatives
Liz Kniss, Vice Mayor, Committee Chair
Greg Schmid, Council Member
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:

1. Oral Communications.

None

2. Approval of Minutes.

Council Member Schmid noted that the Minutes ended by saying the Budget Item would be continued to this meeting and he did not see it on today's Agenda.

Khashayar Alaei, Senior Management Analyst replied that Item would be on the September, 2014 Agenda.

MOTION: Council Member Schmid moved, seconded by Board Member Tom to approve the minutes of April 17, 2014 and June 19, 2014, as presented.

MOTION PASSED: 4-0

3. Review Recent City Council/PAUSD Board Meetings.

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Dana Tom, Palo Alto Unified School District (PAUSD), Board Member remarked the new Superintendent began work; he was doing tours with stakeholders in the community, which included Mayor Shepherd and the City Manager.

Heidi Emberling, Palo Alto Unified School District, Board Member added that the School Board had their retreat in August, 2014. They talked about their goals for the year. There was a welcome back event for all the teachers.

Council Member Schmid inquired whether the new Superintendent was at the School Board Retreat.

Mr. Tom said yes.

Council Member Schmid asked where the retreat was.

Mr. Tom answered it was at the University Club.

Ms. Emberling added that it was open to the public.

Chair Kniss inquired if there were any more updates.

Ms. Emberling answered that their first meeting was going to be on Tuesday, August 26, 2014.

Chair Kniss felt that parking and traffic were high on the topics for discussion; Safe Routes to School was on the Agenda. She noticed that the traffic had increased significantly after school started; it was twice as heavy in comparison with summer traffic.

Ms. Emberling noted that PAUSD planned on discussing school start times and how they can stagger them; there was a lot involved in the scheduling.

Council Member Schmid stated that there was discussion on Traffic Safety. The first two weeks after their summer break Council discussed Our Palo Alto; there was a lot of discussion on long term growth and what density meant to Palo Alto, which was significant to the School District. The Regional Housing Mandate Committee identified 2,000 spots for housing; the growth rate was one percent per year, which was the highest it has been in 10 years.

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Mr. Tom inquired what the one percent growth referred to.

Council Member Schmid replied residents.

Mr. Tom wanted to know if this was the trend over the last 10 years and whether a census was released every 10 years.

Council Member Schmid stated that the census was the official number. From 1970 to 1995 there was very little growth in Palo Alto. Now the projections were about one percent.

Chair Kniss remarked that there was a jump from 57,000 to 64,000 people in 10 years.

Council Member Schmid agreed and said the School District did grow at a two percent rate, while the rest of Palo Alto grew at 1/5 of that.

Mr. Tom thought the influx was primarily families.

Council Member Schmid questioned if Palo Alto grew at one percent, was that due to families or others.

Cathy Mak, District Chief Business Officer interjected that this year was the first year that there was a decline in elementary and kindergarten enrollment.

Council Member Schmid thought part of that was due to the change in age for acceptance into kindergarten.

Ms. Emberling indicated that was fully phased out.

Ms. Mak confirmed and added that there was a decline in elementary enrollment this year.

Chair Kniss noted that from 1957 to 2000, the numbers barely veered from 57,000 or 58,000 people; at the turn of the year 2000 there was the big growth.

Council Member Schmid understood the community demographic to be people over the age of 65 and independent workers, rather than families.

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Mr. Tom noted that the school enrollment growth started before the population growth.

Council Member Schmid said it was 20 years ahead of population growth.

Chair Kniss pointed out another big difference was after Proposition 13 passed, the people's initiative to limit property taxation, people were hesitant to leave their homes. There were people living in very big houses that would rather live in smaller houses.

4. Update on School Traffic Safety (PCE/PAPD).

Jaime Rodriguez, Chief Transportation Official talked about the Safe Routes to School: it was a partnership between the City of Palo Alto, Palo Alto Unified School District (PAUSD), and the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) from various different schools. The Walk and Roll map process dealt with school safety, which was related to school traffic. He discussed improvements that were implemented around the City as a result of Safe Routes to School, the collaborative work between PAUSD and the City, and education programs that Staff was moving forward with.

Heidi Emberling, Palo Alto Unified School District, Board Member inquired whether there was a list of people that worked on the School City Traffic Committee.

Mr. Rodriguez remarked that on the City side, it was Sylvia Star-Lack, Kathy Durham, and himself, along with the engineers that were involved in transportation. At the PTA level, every school had a representative that participated with the City School Traffic Safety Committee, which met once per month.

Kathy Durham, Coordinator of Transportation recognized Sargent Ken Kratt, in charge of traffic safety enforcement and Kathy Durkin, the Co-chair of the City School Traffic Safety Committee from PAUSD.

Mr. Rodriguez relayed that the Walk and Roll maps project began a little over two years ago. Staff evaluated each of the walk and bike routes to all of the schools throughout PAUSD and the City, which were all available on the City website now. Taking on this project allowed for a blueprint on how to move forward with safe streets for kids to walk and bike. This City Manager made mention of the release of these routes and they were handed out to parents before the school year started. There were not many

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opportunities to add capacity to the roadways but Staff wanted to make sure that the roads were safe and accessible. The only pending Walk and Roll map was for South Palo Alto, which serviced schools in Los Altos. He showed a map of the Walk and Roll map which highlighted all the stop controls, traffic signal controls, and bicycle lanes/boulevards. The dash lines on the map discouraged youth bicycle riding, but encouraged walking; there were grey lines that helped people indicate how long it would take to walk or ride their bicycle to school. It was quicker to ride a bicycle to school, as opposed to drive. There was safety information about wearing helmets and what to do on the road. Staff interviewed parents about their concerns and Staff developed a School Improvement Map, which was the blue print for where Staff thought they should add crosswalks, limit lines, or stop signs in front of the crosswalks; Staff performed about 48 intersection improvements around the City. Staff focused their improvements on where people told them they had concerns and identified simple things like crosswalk improvements and more bicycle lane facilities. Staff planned on putting in green bike lanes on California Avenue where it approached Middlefield Road. They were putting in sharrows, shared bike lanes, near Middlefield Road, in addition to green bicycle signage. There was going to be larger parking restriction signage, due to the traffic along the frontage of Jordan Middle School.

Ms. Emberling inquired about green lane sharrows.

Mr. Rodriguez answered that sharrows were the markings seen on the roadway; it was a green backing behind the marking. Sharrows were used because the roadway was not always wide enough to accommodate a bike lane or parking facilities. There were times Staff did not want to dedicate bike space only; they just wanted to encourage sharing of the road. Over the summer there were a lot of people that were concerned about implementing a crossing facility near Gunn High School and Terman Middle School. Since it was a busy vehicular area, Staff had to find the right balance and wanted to activate a new pedestrian activated flashing beacon to encourage people to yield to pedestrians. Although the City was busy, the School District has been encouraging bicycle riding, and good bicycle cages. The funding for the bicycle corals was the result of a grant that the City and the School District partnered on; the School District had 250-300 bicycle parking spaces built over the summer.

Chair Kniss relayed that it was possible to get more bikes in the bike coral when the bikes were organized.

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Mr. Rodriguez wanted to talk about the Recommendation Maps, how the suggestions went back to PAUSD, and how PAUSD responded to those concerns. A lot of the improvements referred to visibility, access for bicyclists, pedestrians and motorists, trying to organize and upgrade the bicycle parking facilities, as well as having more security measures.

Chair Kniss inquired how many schools had organized bicycle racks.

Ms. Durham answered that the schools that made improvements to their bike cage or had a bicycle U-Rack were Jane Lathrop Stanford (JLS) Middle School, Palo Alto High School, Terman Middle School, and Jordan Middle School.

Mr. Rodriguez noted that the transition point for bicycle riding happened at the Jr. High level, which was when kids wanted to walk or ride their bike.

Ms. Emberling mentioned that this project made things really clear and changed the community dramatically.

Mr. Rodriguez noted that Palo Alto was recognized internationally for their Safe Routes to School program. There were visitors from the League of American Bicyclist in the spring who surveyed the innovative bicycle communities. They were amazed to see all the kids commuting to school on their bikes; they suggested that Palo Alto put in their application for a higher platinum level rating. Talking about partnerships between the PAUSD and the City, there was a new Performing Arts center at Palo Alto High School; it caused some impact on a loss of parking. The School District created some support parking during the construction. The City did a lot of work in making maps and advertising them. During the first week of school at Palo Alto High School, City School Staff were not letting students cross on the south side of Embarcadero Road, which loosened traffic and made things safer.

Mr. Rodriguez mentioned that Staff was having a Study Session with the Planning and Transportation Commission on August 27, 2014 to discuss traffic modifications at intersections for Palo Alto High School and their pedestrian crossing.

Dana Tom, Palo Alto Unified School District, Board Member felt it was faster to bike to school.

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Chair Kniss discussed an area on Churchill Avenue where there was only a left or right turn allowed for 45 minutes; she suggested that intersection be enforced more often.

Mr. Rodriguez discussed outreach, education, and encouragement and noted that the Police Department helped to register bicycles, helped students fit their helmets, and they checked the safety of bicycles.

Mr. Rodriguez said last year there was an Eagle Scout stationed at a school that serviced bicycles.

Ms. Emberling asked about bike registration at the Fire Station on the first Saturday of the month and whether that information was in the Walk and Roll map information.

Sylvia Star-Lack, Management Specialist replied no, but it was online.

Ms. Emberling suggested that information be put in the materials.

Mr. Rodriguez said Palo Alto was one of the few communities that registered bikes. There was going to be more improvements online and the Public Works Department was working on making streets more walkable.

Ms. Emberling inquired whether the Walk and Roll maps were on the PAUSD websites.

Ms. Star-Lack noted that Staff was working to get them up.

Ken Kratt, Police Sargent for the Traffic Division remarked that the Police Department was preparing for the opening of School. In 1999 the Traffic Team had seven motorcyclists and car position, now it was very small; their ability to address concerns in a timely manner was difficult. During the week, patrol consisted of him, a Police Officer on a motorcycle, and one Officer in a car. There were two Police Officers assigned to the Patrol Division by car, but a lot of the time they covered minimum staffing, which was also the case with the Traffic Officers assigned to the Traffic Division. The Traffic Teams focused mainly on the middle schools and the high schools. There was a program where a day shift Patrol Officer was assigned to an elementary school, when time permitted. If a Patrol Officer identified any issues, they notified the Traffic Division and worked on the problem. The Police Department had a new program that allowed for a traffic

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complaint to be entered into a system that a Police Officer could access in their beat. Last year the Police Department reinstated a Juvenile Diversion Program, a program for a person under the age of 18 who received a violation for a non-motor vehicle related citation. The cited person was able to attend the class taught by a Police Officer where they would be educated about the law; the child was not allowed to attend without their parent. If the student received another citation, it went directly to Traffic Court. He remarked that helmet compliance was high.

Chair Kniss thought kids did not stop at stop signs. She felt their perception was that if there was no traffic, they would not stop at stop sign.

Mr. Kratt explained that bicyclists had to follow the rules of the road. He noted that 15 minutes prior to school starting, there were a lot of students running stop signs. He instructed his Traffic Safety Team to think more about safety because one student would see the Police Officer, come to a stop, and cause a bicycle pile-up. During that time the Police Department was not actively enforcing because safety was more important. The Police Department focused their efforts in other areas. When bicyclists received citations, they have complained to the City Council and the Mayor.

Chair Kniss was worried about the safety aspect of bicyclists and suggested avoiding certain intersections in the morning.

Ms. Emberling inquired whether there was a Bill in process regarding bicyclist not having to stop fully at intersections.

Mr. Kratt was not familiar with that; some States had a "slow down and look" type of law but Palo Alto did not have that type of law.

Mr. Rodriguez explained that the Idaho Law was where bicyclists did not have to stop at stop signs. Staff took a strong stand against that because it went against everything they taught at the school level.

Ms. Durham announced that the first sixth grade "Drive that Bike" event would be happening at Terman Middle School today.

Council Member Schmid commented on the new street awareness signs that pointing out where students might be. The cooperation of the City and the School District was impressive in how they dealt with each neighborhood separately, with regard to Safe Routes to School. The City Council spent time discussing future-oriented topics and the first discussion dealt with how

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people used to walk to school but now people lived further away. He understood that a much larger group of students were attending non-neighborhood schools and that number has risen dramatically.

Cathy Mak, District Chief Business Officer did not think the number was dramatic. Some students had to be redirected to another school because of emersion programs, and overflow. When there were not enough seats for students in their neighborhood school so the School District overflowed them.

Council Member Schmid wondered if there was a general share of students that were beyond the boundaries.

Ms. Mak commented that there were about 100 students that were overflowed every year.

Council Member Schmid questioned whether that number took alternative schools into account.

Mr. Tom relayed that the percentage of enrollment in the Choice Program had not grown, the numbers were about the same.

Ms. Mak added there were no new programs.

Council Member Schmid expressed concern about population growth, especially in the Ventura neighborhood because there was no school in that neighborhood. Crossing Alma Road or El Camino Real was of particular concern because both of those routes were important north/south routes. The north/south routes were counted on to absorb some of the traffic; there was going to be increased housing and an increased number of students that had to cross those streets. He wondered if the School District was thinking seriously about how to deal with that issue.

Mr. Tom wanted to know the status of the bus service in the Ventura neighborhood area.

Ms. Mak answered that bus servicing was not provided in that area.

Mr. Tom recalled that bus service was provided at one time.

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Kathy Durkin, Transportation Coordinator, Palo Alto Unified School District noted that there were crossing guards to help students cross El Camino Real. This was the first year that PAUSD stopped transportation for that neighborhood because the school bus ridership was very low.

Ms. Emberling added that Barron Park Elementary School enrollment declined but the school had the capacity to accommodate growth.

Council Member Schmid repeated that a problem was getting children to school because students had to cross El Camino Real or Alma Street. As the number of students increased in those areas, the more this became an issue.

Ms. Emberling remarked that she was School Board Liaison for the Housing Board Committee and learned that when a Housing Element was being planned, schools were not taken into consideration because schools followed where housing was.

Council Member Schmid remarked that was true in terms of pointing to a site and said Cubberley Community Center discussions included the Ventura neighborhood sites.

Chair Kniss confirmed that there was lower enrollment this year.

Ms. Mak added that there was growth at the middle schools and at the high school level.

Chair Kniss inquired how long it would take to know whether growth was a trend.

Ms. Mak referred that question to the demographer; it was impossible to predict.

Council Member Schmid remarked that the Planned Bay Area, which was the planning document accepted by the many organizations, predicted that Palo Alto's population, which was currently around 65, 000 people, was going to be 83,000 people by the year 2040. That was a 20 percent increase in the total population. These were the numbers that all the regional agencies were using.

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Chair Kniss relayed that was why there was so much anxiety. A neighboring city tried not to comply with the Housing Element and there was a lot of difficulty with the State over it.

Ms. Emberling said in the Housing Element discussion there was talk about adding a 13th elementary school. The School District was trying to prepare as much as possible but wanted to examine what the trigger point was. They were having the discussions they needed to have along the way, which involved discussions about neighborhoods, programming, and how that affected everything.

Chair Kniss inquired whether there was a trigger that helped decide when to open an elementary school.

Ms. Emberling answered that was what the discussion was about.

Chair Kniss confirmed that PAUSD did not know what the trigger was.

Mr. Tom stated that the challenge with predicting growth was there were people that were uncomfortable with the amount of students that were in the schools, but it was not really clear when the 13th school should be opened. The process was deferred a number of times due to enrollment not being at the right level.

Chair Kniss recalled that many of the schools were relatively small. Educational practices changed dramatically over time: there were larger elementary and high schools. She inquired whether the elementary schools had around 600 students now.

Ms. Emberling replied no, it was only Ohlone Elementary School that had that amount of students.

Council Member Schmid stated another factor was the increase of rentals in Palo Alto. Families used to be able to stay in one place for a long period of time, but were now targeting living spaces for the schools specifically; it was harder to have a demographic model.

Mr. Tom felt it was surprising to have a drop in elementary enrollment. This meant that the trend could cause middle school or the high school enrollment to either plateau or drop at some point. If a school was to open and the need went away, then there was a large expense made.

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Chair Kniss was interested in an Informational Report being done on the different enrollment status at each of the schools.

Ms. Mak remarked that there will be a report on this year's enrollment.

Chair Kniss thought this topic was agendized in the past and wanted to know what the total enrollment was now.

Ms. Mak recalled it was over 12,600 students.

Chair Kniss wanted to know what the enrollment was when Council Member Schmid was on the School Board.

Council Member Schmid remarked that it reached around 8,000 students.

Ms. Mak agreed and said the lowest point of enrollment was 8,500 students.

Mr. Tom thought the peak enrollment was 16,000 students.

Council Member Schmid remarked that the number schools that opened dropped by half.

Mr. Tom added that class size dropped and then grew over the past few years, as the State Budget crunched and more classrooms were added per grade level at many of the schools.

Chair Kniss wanted to know how many were enrolled in the K-3 classes.

Ms. Mak noted that the staffing ratio was 22-1 for kindergarten through first grade, 23-1 for second and third graders, and 24-1 for fourth and fifth graders.

Chair Kniss inquired whether that was State Law.

Ms. Mak said no.

Ms. Emberling said the State Law standard was a lot higher.

Future Meetings and Agendas

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Heidi Emberling, Palo Alto Unified School District, Board Member inquired what was going to be on the Agenda for the next City School Liaison Committee Meeting.

Khashayar Alaei, Senior Management Analyst answered that Property Tax was the only Item on the next Agenda, which was a carry forward from the July, 2014 meeting.

Council Member Schmid noted the Property Tax Item came from the Budget discussion.

Ms. Emberling wanted to discuss Enrollment at the next meeting.

Dana Tom, Palo Alto Unified School District, Board Member thought the next meeting was going to be late September, 2014.

Mr. Alaei explained that the next Committee meeting date was set for September 19, 2014 and noted that the discussion of Enrollment was usually around October or November.

Mr. Tom clarified that the next Committee meeting was on September 18, 2014.

Mr. Alaei agreed and remarked that the Property Tax Item was about how Property Tax was approached during Budget discussions, the predictability, and how that affected the General Fund and the Bond Program. The City's Budget Department was going to come to the next Committee meeting and continue that discussion, the School District was going to add to that discussion.

Cathy Mak, District Chief Business Officer offered to discuss what the assessment growth was for 2014.

Council Member Schmid recalled that the discussion last time was that there was a dramatic difference in the forecast for the future between the City and the School District.

Mr. Tom questioned whether the Deferred Budget Item was going to be placed on the September or the October, 2014 meeting.

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Mr. Alae answered that the Committee started with a Budget conversation, which led to a focused conversation about Property Taxes; that was the part of the discussion that was going to be agendaized in the September, 2014 meeting. Future Agenda Items were an update on Project Safety Net, the City District Technology update, Enrollment Report, Emergency Preparedness, and Sustainability Programs.

Ms. Emberling inquired about the libraries being put on the Agenda.

Mr. Alae said he would add that and asked if the Committee wanted an update.

Ms. Emberling clarified that she wanted to discuss opportunities of partnering between the City Libraries.

Mr. Tom suggested having information about the Teen Center.

Council Member Schmid remarked that the Mitchell Park Library was targeted to open in December, 2014.

Chair Kniss understood the soft opening of the Mitchell Park Library was going to be the last weekend in September, 2014.

Mr. Alae needed to confirm that information with the City Manager.

Council Member Schmid added that people were able to use the Library beginning November or December, 2014 and thought the Teen Center would be ready by then.

Ms. Emberling announced that there was going to be a ribbon cutting on August 21, 2014 at 4:30 P.M. at the new Palo Alto High School Media Arts Center.

Mr. Tom clarified that the ribbon cutting was at 5:00 P.M.

Mr. Alae inquired whether the Committee would like to do a tour of the Teen Center.

Chair Kniss agreed.

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Mr. Tom wanted to know if it was possible to have the next meeting at the Teen Center.

Mr. Alae noted that the Finance Item for the next meeting might not be accommodated well at the Teen Center; he suggested October or November, 2014. He was going to check into it.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 9:58 A.M.