



City/School Liaison Committee Final Minutes



Special Meeting
August 20, 2020

Chairperson Collins called the meeting to order at 8:30 A.M. on this date via virtual teleconference.

Present: City of Palo Alto Representatives
Greg Tanaka, Council Member
Lydia Kou, Council Member
Monique le Conge Ziesenhenne, Assistant City Manager, Staff Liaison

Palo Alto Unified School District Representatives
Jennifer DiBrienza, Board Member
Todd Collins, Board President (Chair)
Don Austin, Superintendent, Palo Alto Unified School District

Oral Communications

None.

Minutes Approval

2. Approval of the June 25, 2020 Meeting Minutes.

MOTION: Board Member DiBrienza moved, seconded by Council Member Kou to approve the minutes as presented.

MOTION PASSED: 4-0

3. Superintendent's Comments and City Manager's Comments.

Don Austin, Superintendent, Palo Alto Unified School District (PAUSD) reported schools were open and, based on feedback, greatly improved. Over the summer, 93 percent of teachers completed ten-plus hours of training. There were two new principals at the high schools. Stanford University's layoffs and remote learning impacted the number of families PAUSD served. Approximately five percent of elementary school families selected distance learning only for the entire school year. PAUSD families were to have another opportunity to select distance learning. PAUSD facilities were not available for rental. The PAUSD Board of Education

FINAL MINUTES

(Board) had placed a measure to renew the Parcel Tax on the November 2020 ballot. If voters did not approve the measure, PAUSD was going to have to lay off 120 employees.

Council Member Kou requested additional information about the Parcel Tax.

Mr. Austin explained that in the spring, the Board approved a \$48 increase to the base Parcel Tax amount. The Board reconsidered the increase and approved the base amount. The two percent increase applied to the base amount, rather than the base amount plus \$48.

Council Member Kou asked if there was an expiration date for the Parcel Tax.

Mr. Austin replied six years.

Chair Collins clarified that the ballot measure was a renewal of the existing Parcel Tax.

Council Member Kou inquired regarding the nature of teacher training.

Mr. Austin indicated training topics included use of technology and anti-bias and anti-racism.

Ed Shikada, City Manager advised that the Fire Department and Office of Emergency Services were monitoring wildfires, and Fire personnel had been deployed to wildfire locations. A cooling center was open at Mitchell Park Community Center, and shelter was provided for those affected by air quality. In September 2020, the Council was going to discuss tax measures placed on the November 2020 ballot.

4. Review of Recent City Council and PAUSD Board Meetings.

Council Member Kou reported the Council had reviewed procedures for their virtual meetings, adopted an Ordinance prohibiting the sale of flavored tobacco products; discussed renaming Foothills Park to Foothills Nature Preserve, approved a pilot program to allow nonresident use of Foothills Park, and directed Staff to return in 2022 with a ballot measure allowing nonresident use of Foothills Park. She inquired whether the name change for Foothills Park was going to return to the Council before it was implemented.

Ed Shikada, City Manager believed the Council would have another opportunity to discuss the name change.

FINAL MINUTES

Council Member Kou indicated the Human Relations Commission (HRC) was exploring Black Lives Matter and the history of African-Americans in Palo Alto. The Council planned on discussing the HRC's findings on August 24, 2020.

Board Member DiBrienza advised that the Palo Alto Unified School District (PAUSD) Board of Education (Board) met five times in July and twice in August 2020 to receive COVID-19 updates. The Board committed to beginning the school year with remote learning and on October 12, 2020 reviewing conditions for implementing a hybrid mode of learning. The Board discussed teaching children with severe special needs in person, implementing PAUSD-Plus at one site when schools were able to open, and allowing children with unreliable internet access or with limited parental supervision to use libraries. The Board adopted a Resolution in support of Black families and directed staff to develop actionable items.

Chair Collins added that the Board met frequently to respond to a chaotic regulatory environment. In the prior week's press conference, the Governor mentioned the idea of children with acute special needs returning to school. He inquired whether Superintendent Austin had received any regulations or guidance from the State on that.

Don Austin, Superintendent, Palo Alto Unified School District replied that the Governor's press conference scheduled for the prior day was canceled.

Chair Collins explained that his comments were not intended to criticize the Governor, but constituents needed to be aware of ongoing changes. The driver for in-school learning was whether the County remained on the watch list. When Santa Clara County was off the watch list for 14 consecutive days, the Board was able to decide whether to return to in-school learning.

5. COVID-19 Coordination Update.

Ed Shikada, City Manager reported the City continued to focus on COVID-19 testing, and pop-up testing started August 14, 2020 and was scheduled for August 28, 2020. On August 14, 2020 more than 600 people were tested. Kaiser received attention for being difficult in getting their members tested. The County of Santa Clara (County) increased pressure on private healthcare providers to increase the availability of testing.

Don Austin, Superintendent, Palo Alto Unified School District (PAUSD) advised that the County Public Health Department was especially harsh on Kaiser. PAUSD was going to have some testing requirements, potentially, when in-school learning began. There was an opportunity for PAUSD to work with the City on that.

FINAL MINUTES

Chair Collins added that Palo Alto Medical Foundation (PAMF) was not providing testing unless their patients were symptomatic.

Board Member DiBrienza indicated Menlo Medical Clinic tested her daughter when she had a confirmed exposure. The County was opening a testing site at the fairgrounds.

Mr. Shikada related that the County opened a larger-scale testing facility at the fairgrounds.

Board Member DiBrienza noted the County would administer flu vaccinations at the facility as well.

Council Member Tanaka believed there should be more randomized testing and contact tracing in order to get a sense of the spread of COVID. He was looking into wider access to faster internet because of remote work and learning. Hopefully, the City was able to facilitate this.

Board Member DiBrienza concurred.

Mr. Shikada reported the City was working on a Fiber to the Premises Project, but the Project was not going to be complete in the short term. The pandemic increased the value of and interest in Fiber to the Premises. Increasing the number of cell sites was a method for increasing bandwidth throughout the community, but the community raised concerns about cell sites.

Chair Collins noted schools had exceptional internet access, but students currently were not allowed in or on school sites.

6. Updates on Ongoing Matters.
 - a. Cubberley Update

Kristen O'Kane, Director of Community Services reported the new lease for Cubberley began in July 2020. The City was leasing fields, the gym and Pavilion and the theatre. The Junior Museum and Zoo (JMZ) was going to remain at Cubberley until their new facility was open. City and Palo Alto Unified School District (PAUSD) Staff were working to find new spaces for displaced Cubberley tenants and renters. All tenants and most renters were relocated. Some City spaces had become available due to tenants closing their businesses, and the spaces were to be used as rental spaces. The next challenge was communicating issues to the appropriate Staff. The relationship between the City and PAUSD Staff had grown stronger.

FINAL MINUTES

Don Austin, Superintendent, Palo Alto Unified School District advised that issues had occurred, but Ms. O'Kane had proved invaluable in working with PAUSD to resolve issues. PAUSD staff came to rely on her.

Ms. O'Kane indicated her PAUSD counterpart was a great addition to the team.

Board Member DiBrienza believed communications improved within PAUSD and between the City and PAUSD.

Ed Shikada, City Manager stated the experience fostered a new level of cooperation.

Penny Ellson inquired regarding the tenants that closed, including ways the City was able to ensure those kinds of services could resume after COVID-19. She was particularly concerned about afterschool arts and maker programs.

Ms. O'Kane reported The Art of Living and a school program had closed. Locations for both organizations were open in the area. The City deferred rents through June 2020 and Staff was exploring a continuation of rental deferral. Dance and music programs continued operations, some with virtual lessons.

Council Member Kou hoped Staff was considering incremental repayment of deferred rents.

Ms. O'Kane advised that the agreement with tenants stated the repayment of deferred rents was to occur over 12 months beginning in January 2021.

7. Transportation Presentations.
 - a. Connecting Palo Alto (Grade Separations)

Philip Kamhi, Chief Transportation Official reported his presentation focused on the Churchill Avenue crossing due to its proximity to Palo Alto High School and the Palo Alto Unified School District (PAUSD) office.

Council Member Kou asked about the change in the Agenda.

Monique le Conge Ziesenhenné, Assistant City Manager advised that the Bike Path and Intersection Safety Improvement Project was to be placed on a future Agenda.

Mr. Kamhi requested the City School Liaison Committee (Committee) discuss presenting this item to the PAUSD Board of Education (Board). Caltrain was working on an Electrification Project to increase the frequency and capacity

FINAL MINUTES

of trains. Consequently, gate down-time was to increase and cause more delays for all modes of transportation. Nine alternatives were currently under consideration. The Expanded Community Advisory Panel (XCAP) recently eliminated both South Palo Alto tunnel alternatives from consideration. The XCAP was scheduled to begin their deliberations for final alternatives on August 26, 2020.

Ripon Bhatia, Senior Engineer of the Office of Transportation indicated the three alternatives for Churchill Avenue were closure, a viaduct and a partial underpass. The closure alternative had two options, one for a bike/pedestrian pathway along the railroad tracks and one for a bike/pedestrian pathway perpendicular to the railroad tracks. The length of the pathway complied with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements. Based on a Traffic Study, the City's consultant recommended improvements to nearby intersections to address traffic impacts caused by the closure. The viaduct alternative raised the rail above the intersection, and the viaduct structure was able to extend from Embarcadero to Santa Rita Avenue. Option 1 of the partial underpass alternative separated bicycle/pedestrian movements from Churchill Avenue and Kellogg Avenue. The intersection was to be depressed to accommodate additional movements in the eastbound and northbound directions. Through movements on Churchill were not to be affected by the underpass.

Mr. Kamhi noted the XCAP would provide their report to the Council in the fall and a virtual Town Hall was available at vrpaloalto.com for the public.

Ed Shikada, City Manager reported the XCAP expressed a desire to obtain the Board's feedback regarding the alternatives.

Penny Ellson strongly encouraged the Board to distribute links to the virtual Town Hall to parents and to encourage parents to comment. School campuses were not able to accommodate additional parked cars if students commuted via car to schools. The alternatives for the East Meadow and Charleston crossings were equally important to PAUSD and school commutes.

Libby Lungren asked if Safe Routes to School staff and the City/School Transportation Safety Committee reviewed the plans and suggested future presentations include routes for school commuters to navigate new infrastructure.

Chair Collins noted Rachel Kellerman submitted comments via email.

FINAL MINUTES

Board Member DiBrienza concurred with Ms. Ellson's comment regarding obtaining parents' comments. She inquired about a PAUSD representative for the City/School Transportation Safety Committee.

Mr. Kamhi understood the PAUSD representative's position was eliminated due to budget cuts, and a new representative was not yet designated. The City/School Transportation Safety Committee continued to meet.

Don Austin, Superintendent, Palo Alto Unified School District believed a PAUSD staff person was assigned to the City/School Transportation Safety Committee.

Board Member DiBrienza inquired regarding the width of the roadway in the partial underpass alternative.

Mr. Kamhi explained that the roadway would be wider and extend into the right-of-way on both sides. The landscape strip was going to be affected.

Mr. Bhatia clarified that only the ramps would require property acquisitions.

Council Member Tanaka requested the current frequency of trains.

Mr. Kamhi indicated the frequency during peak periods remained the same, but the frequency during off-peak periods was reduced.

Council Member Tanaka noted the cost and extent of construction was greater if construction occurred while trains operated. With ridership currently at low levels, perhaps construction of grade separation was able to begin now. He supported Ms. Kellerman's comments.

Chair Collins asked if the review process included a study of pedestrian and bike traffic that was as thorough as the study of car traffic and accommodated pedestrian and bike traffic.

Mr. Kamhi related that grade separation improved the safety of all transportation modes. All modes of transportation were considered in reviews of the alternatives. Some alternatives functioned better for vehicles than for bikes and pedestrians.

Chair Collins wanted to thoroughly understand the impact of grade separation on pedestrian and bicycle traffic at each intersection and nearby intersections. School commuters approached Palo Alto High School through the Embarcadero and the Churchill corridors. Rerouting traffic from Churchill to Embarcadero was going to impact bicycle and pedestrian safety at Embarcadero.

FINAL MINUTES

Council Member Kou inquired whether bicycle access would be available from Kellogg and Seale to the bike path.

Mr. Kamhi advised that bicycle access pertained to the closure alternative and one of the partial underpass options. Kellogg was considered as an alternative route. He said Seale could be considered an alternate route in future bicycle and pedestrian improvements.

Mr. Shikada requested comment regarding City Staff providing a presentation to the Board or distributing information to parents as the best way to solicit comments from a school perspective.

Chair Collins suggested Board Member DiBrienza, Mr. Austin and he discuss the issue and provide comment at a later time.

Mr. Kamhi reiterated that the virtual Town Hall was available to the public at vrpaloalto.com through September 7, 2020.

Chair Collins asked about decision dates.

Mr. Kamhi indicated the XCAP would provide their Report and recommendations to the Council in the near future.

Chair Collins remarked that school families were struggling with distance learning and constant change and engaging their attention was going to be difficult.

Board Member DiBrienza suggested efforts to engage parents had to be made.

Future Meetings and Agendas

Board Member DiBrienza requested an update from Safe Routes to School.

Council Member Tanaka left the meeting at 10:07 A.M.

Council Member Kou suggested a presentation from Alcove about youth mental health. Supervisor Simitian scheduled a Safe Parking Neighborhood check-in for August 31, 2020 to gather information.

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