



City/School Liaison Committee Regular Meeting Final Minutes



Regular Meeting
May 20, 2021

Chair Burt called the meeting to order on this date in virtual teleconference at 8:31 A.M.

Present: City of Palo Alto Representatives
Pat Burt, Vice Mayor (Chair)
Greg Tanaka, Council Member
Chantal Gaines, Deputy City Manager, Staff Liaison

Palo Alto Unified School District Representatives
Shounak Dharap, Board President
Jennifer DiBrienza, Board Member
Don Austin, Superintendent, Palo Alto Unified School District

Absent:

Oral Communications

Palo Verde Parent supported the goals of the Safe Parking Program but felt that the program contained shortcomings that directly impacted the school community. There was no statutory cap on the number of programs that are located in South Palo Alto. She was concerned about the increased number of cars there will be. Another concern was that the Safe Parking Program does not screen for sex offenders or recent violent felons. She stated that Palo Alto (City) is the only City that does not screen for those.

Grace Mah was concerned about the number of Safe Parking Programs located near schools in South Palo Alto. She encouraged the City/School Liaison Committee (Committee) to make recommendations to City Council (Council) to limit the number of programs allowed in South Palo Alto and facilitate a more equitable distribution.

Minutes Approval

2. Approval of Minutes From the December 17, 2020, March 25, 2021, and April 15, 2021 Meetings.

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MOTION: Chair Burt moved, seconded by Board Member DiBrienza to approve the minutes from the December 17, 2020, March 25, 2021, and April 15, 2021 meetings.

MOTION PASSED: 4-0

3. Updates
 - a. Superintendent's Comments and City Manager's Comments
 - b. Review of Recent City Council Meetings and PAUSD Board Meetings
 - c. Update on Cubberley Ad Hoc Group.

Don Austin, Superintendent, Palo Alto Unified School District reported that a COVID-19 vaccination site was well attended by students at Palo Alto High School. Graduations and promotional ceremonies are being planned with newly designed seating arrangements. The Palo Alto Unified School District (School District) is preparing to return to in-person teachings in the fall of 2021. Tentative agreements for all School District employees will be reviewed by the School Board on May 18, 2021. Included in the agreements were 2-year contracts for all teachers and non-contracted administrative positions. A crisis arose concerning a student recently but thanks to the Palo Alto Police Department, the student was found and the crisis was averted.

Chantal Cotton Gaines, Deputy City Manager remarked that the Director of the Planning and Development Service Department will be providing information to the School District about a wireless facility that is being installed approximately 530-feet away from a Palo Alto Unified School District (PAUSD) school. In terms of the Safe Parking Program, a pilot site is up and running. Staff will be collecting data on how that site is working and will return to City Council (Council) in the fall of 2021 with a long-term ordinance.

Board Member DiBrienza confirmed that the School Board continues to have discussions on school returning in the fall of 2021 and the school's budget.

Board President Dharap shared that the Classroom Refresh Project will update classrooms and integrate practices learned from remote learning.

Chair Burt inquired what concerns have been raised during remote learning that PAUSD now has to compensate for.

Board Member DiBrienza reported that the School District is exploring what has helped students who have thrived in remote learning and will try to

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integrate those components into school programming. Also, the School District is exploring ways to address the students who have struggled with remote learning.

Chair Burt asked when are the School Board break dates and the first day of school in the fall.

Board President Dharap shared there will be three more School Board meetings and then they will go on break in July of 2021.

Board Member DiBrienza added that the first day of school for the high school will be August 11, 2021, and for the elementary schools it is August 12, 2021.

Chair Burt reported that Palo Alto (City) had to make \$37 million in budget cuts in Fiscal Year (FY) 2021. Through the budget process for FY 2022, the Council focused on restoring essential services for youth and other social services that were cut during the FY 2021 Budget. He disclosed that the City is not in the same economic shape as it was in prior years, but the City is analyzing how long it will take to recover and discussing how conservative the City should be with its budget.

Board President Dharap shared that the Ad Hoc Committee for Cubberley Community Center discussed the framework on how the Committee will look, its purpose, and what the relationship will be. The Ad Hoc Committee is open to discussing and exploring the vision for Cubberley Community Center. The School Board has taken a position on three priorities that were voted on in 2019, but the School Board is open to revisiting those priorities in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Chair Burt shared that the City is on pace to make the Regional Housing Allocation Needs (RHNA) requirements for market-rate units but is below the requirement for moderate and low-income units. The City has spent all its resources to subsidize moderate and low-income housing unit projects. Council was exploring implementation of a Business Tax that will fund transportation and affordable housing projects as well as updating Commercial Development Impact Fees. He mentioned that all units are counted the same, regardless of size, which creates a disincentive to provide family housing units. There was concern that this will result in an imbalance of housing types. Also, it is easier for developers to include affordable housing units if the units are smaller which also added to the concern regarding family size housing units.

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Board Member DiBrienza was discouraged about the housing issues in Palo Alto.

4. City and Schools Collaborations Follow Up Discussion.

Penny Ellson remarked that she is a neighbor to Cubberley Community Center. Her first concern was related to the addition of housing on the Cubberley Community Center site. Her other concern was the increase in traffic and that there have been no discussions about mitigating traffic impacts the community center will impose on the nearby neighborhoods and school commute routes.

Jeremy Erman encouraged Palo Alto (City) and the School District to keep the Palo Alto Children's Theater Outreach Program. He mentioned that there has been a huge push to restart athletic programs but that there are many children and youth who prefer art programs.

Chair Burt advised the City/School Liaison Committee (Committee) to identify which programs and initiatives are being provided to the community and which are not. He commented that all funding has been restored to the Safe Routes to School Program.

Sylvia Star-Lack, Transportation Planning Manager clarified that there were cuts to some Staff salaries but the City has obtained grant funds to restore those cuts.

Philip Kamhi, Chief Transportation Official added that the program was cut by \$100,000 and that was not restored.

Chair Burt assumed that because there was no in-school training for students in 2020. The Safe Routes to School program will have to provide education for those students and upcoming students. He moved to the school crossing guard program and reported that Council decided to fully restore funding for the crossing guard program. The shuttle bus program has been suspended for another year as discussions commence between the City and Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) about VTA providing funding for the shuttle program.

Ed Shikada, City Manager requested Mr. Kamhi provide an update on the shuttle program.

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Mr. Kamhi reported that the City has received a \$2 million grant that allows the City to create a new on-demand micro-transit type service.

Chair Burt understood that that type of program was more oriented toward folks who are reliant on public transportation instead of students.

Mr. Kamhi clarified that students can use the program. He noted that remote education did occur for the Safe Routes to School Program and so all students have taken the course.

Ms. Ellson reminded the Committee that the City shuttle program was partially funded by Caltrain. She asked if the shuttles that served Palo Alto High School and Greene Middle School will be coming back. The VTA 280 bus service that serviced Gunn High School has been temporarily cut due to lack of use by students. She asked if there has been any news from VTA about restoring that service. She mentioned that federal grant funds are traditionally tied to dedicated bus services and she wanted to understand how that will impact the proposed micro-transit service. She encouraged the City to continue to fight for bus services.

Mr. Kamhi reported that VTA will be restoring the 280 bus service. He confirmed that one shuttle route was partially funded by Caltrain but currently, the City does not have the resources to restore the shuttle route. In terms of the micro-transit pilot program, 2-years was the longest that VTA awarded funding for and because the program is not federally funded, the program does not require paratransit service. However, the new program will provide paratransit services.

Chair Burt advised to include Youth Community Services (YCS) under youth mental health and in particular, the Youth Connective Initiative (YCI) Program. The YCI Program is co-funded by a Santa Clara County grant and Council has proposed to restore its portion of the funding. He requested a status update on Project Safety Net.

Kristen O'Kane, Community Services Director reported that Project Safety Net was successful in receiving their 501c3 determination and is now an independent corporation. She disclosed that the City contributes \$100,000 to Project Safety Net annually as well as provides space to them at the Cubberley Community Center. The program continued to focus on increasing funding resources to facilitate its stability as a nonprofit.

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Chair Burt inquired if Project Safety Net was able to expand in their geographic scope with the resources that were provided by Santa Clara County.

Ms. O’Kane confirmed that is correct.

Chair Burt asked what initiatives was the School Board taking in terms of youth mental health.

Board President Dharap confirmed that the School Board was interested in discussing where the School District initiatives overlap with the City’s initiatives. He questioned what rationale was behind the School District providing funding for a City mental health initiative when PAUSD provides a similar services.

Chair Burt agreed with that point and he emphasized that laying out all the initiatives will help the School Board and the City determine where the duplications are and how to use resources more efficiently.

Board President Dharap suggested that the School Board expand on the initiative document and include all the programs the School District already provides.

Mr. Shikada noted that the Superintendent and himself have been having similar conversations. He acknowledged that the City provides services to a broader constituency of kids that are not associated with the PAUSD.

Board Member DiBrienza reminded the Committee that the idea behind the list was to see if the City and the School District have missed anything. She advised the list of initiatives be separate from the list of who provides funding.

Chair Burt emphasized his goal was to have the Committee review the strategic relationships, understand them, and inform the public on the entire relationship between the School District and the City. He agreed three discussions were happening. One was on what was historically provided by the City, what is currently being provided by the City, and funding. He supported the idea of the School District incorporating its initiatives into the list regarding transportation for students. He shared that the list also facilitates a discussion on what is the best strategy to provide teen leadership programs as well as middle school athletics. He requested a status update on the school’s playing fields.

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Ms. O’Kane answered that the City did extend the agreement with the School District for the maintenance of the school’s playing fields.

Chair Burt mentioned that the City has partially opened the City’s libraries. He asked if the Maker’s Space Program was restored and if the drop-in teen center is funded.

Ms. O’Kane believed that the Maker’s Space program was never cut. She shared that the drop-in teen center is funded but has reduced the number of days that it is open.

Future Meetings and Agendas

Chair Burt restated the School District will incorporate their initiatives into the outline of the different programs provided by the City. He announced that the next meeting of the City/School Liaison Committee will be on June 17th, 2021.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 9:56 A.M.