



# City/School Liaison Committee Regular Meeting Minutes



Regular Meeting  
August 19, 2021

Chair Burt called the meeting to order on this date in virtual teleconference at 8:30 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: None.

## Oral Communications

Carole Alvarado noted that her family has been impacted by the discontinuation of the City shuttle service to Palo Alto High School. The discontinuation of the City shuttle has encouraged more driving for neighborhoods that are closer to the freeway and from kids who would otherwise be biking in the dark after school.

## Minutes Approval

2. Approval of Minutes From the June 17, 2021 Meeting.

**MOTION:** Board Member Dharap moved, seconded by Board Member DiBrienza to approve the June 17, 2021 minutes as presented.

**MOTION PASSED:** 4-0

3. Updates

# SUMMARY MINUTES

- a. Superintendent's Comments and City Manager's Comments including COVID Updates
- b. Review of Recent City Council Meetings and PAUSD Board Meetings
  - i. CITY: Grade Separation; SCAP; South Palo Alto Bikeways Project; Homelessness/Unhoused; etc.
  - ii. PAUSD: Return to School; Enrollment; etc.

Board President Dharap reported that Palo Alto Unified School District (PAUSD) has started their 2021-2022 school year. The District has implemented mitigation measures to help stop the spread of COVID-19.

Superintendent, Palo Alto Unified School District, Don Austin announced that 98 percent of students attended the first day of school with 2 percent doing independent study. The environment on campus has changed with teachers and students feeling more comfortable. The School District expects there to be COVID cases. Each case will have contact tracing and each case will require quarantining based on the severity of exposure. Soon the School District will request voluntary vaccinations of students. School District staff are required to administer self COVID tests daily unless they have proof of vaccination. Staff are suspended without pay if they cannot provide proof of vaccination or have not taken a daily test. In terms of the surrounding fires and smoke, the District will not close due to poor air quality from smoke.

Chair Burt asked if the District will mandate that all staff be vaccinated and what are the testing requirements for staff and students.

Superintendent Austin noted that what happens currently may not be what happens next week. Currently, the School District provides weekly testing for all students and staff. Also, student vaccinations are not mandatory at the local, state, or federal level. Substitute teachers, contracted employees, and volunteers must have proof of vaccination or they cannot come on campus.

Chair Burt inquired if masks are mandatory indoors.

Superintendent Austin confirmed that indoor masking is mandatory for PAUSD schools, but is optional for outdoors.

Chair Burt was surprised to see the majority of students leaving Palo Alto High School wearing masks outside. He inquired if enrollment has increased or decreased this year.

Superintendent Austin acknowledged that enrollment has decreased, but the entire region has seen a decrease in enrollment.

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City Manager Ed Shikada noted that with the return of PAUSD schools, traffic has increased. There are new 20 mph speed limit signs placed around the schools and now, through the Adopt a School Program, patrol officers will be assigned near schools to monitor traffic. In terms of the Safe Routes to School Program, City Staff continue to work with parents on bicycling and driver behavior in the areas around schools. Also, all 6<sup>th</sup> graders will receive bike safety, middle schoolers are participating in back to school camp events, and bike safety virtual programs are available to all students and their families.

Superintendent Austin shared that the City's and Police Department's communication was superb throughout the event that took place on August 18, 2021.

City Manager Shikada acknowledged that Superintendent Austin is referring to a tragic attack that happened to a high school student in downtown Palo Alto.

Chair Burt asked where the City stands in terms of vaccinations and testing.

City Manager Shikada reported that the City is strongly encouraging that Staff receive a vaccination. The City continues to work on procedures and protocols around requiring mandatory vaccinations of all City Staff.

Council Member Tanaka thanked the Police Department and the citizens who helped in the event that took place on August 18, 2021. He acknowledged that there is a lot of concern among parents regarding student safety. He inquired what steps can happen at the City level to prevent another attack from happening.

City Manager Shikada emphasized that it is important to not draw any conclusions and the event was a random act. The District Attorney's Office will be investigating the case. He stated that the City of Palo Alto is a very safe community and the event should not be perceived as taking away from that.

Council Member Tanaka appreciated City Manager Shikada's comments. He commented that communication is really important to parents to address the concerns that are rising. He shared that he has taken tours with concerned residents of the downtown area and they have indicated that there is aggressive behavior among unhoused patrons on University Avenue. He encouraged the City to communicate to the community what the City is doing to make folks safe.

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Board Member DiBrienza also acknowledged the quick action taken by the citizens and the Police Department during the event that happened in downtown. She relayed that unhoused and mentally ill people are more likely to be the victims of violent crime than to perpetrate. She remarked the importance of investigating to keep people safe but not vilify the mentally ill.

Chair Burt announced that the City Council (Council) has announced support for moving forward aggressively on a transitional housing center for homeless folks. Those folks will reside at the housing center for 3- to 6-months before transitioning to permanent housing. The center is proposed to be located at the former Los Altos Waste Water Treatment site. The City is collaborating with LifeMoves and the project will be funded by the state's Home Key funds. Council received an update on moving forward a potential Business Tax and continues to discuss what form the tax will take. Also, a community advisory group has been formed to help with the City's Housing Element update. New to the Housing Element update is a requirement that if Cities do not construct housing in the different income categories. That City will lose local control over the approval process for development. The City of Palo Alto has received a Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) of 6,000 housing units that must be constructed over an 8-year period. He mentioned that the law is set to discourage family housing because units are counted as one-unit regardless of size. Recently, the City enacted upon an agreement between the City of Sunnyvale and the City of Mountain View on the allocation of the Santa Clara County Sales Tax for transportation from 2016 and the dollars towards grade separations in those communities. The amount was roughly \$700 million and it was split up among the three Cities in proportion to the number of grade separation each community has. Council will be discussing the Charleston/East Meadow grade crossing at an upcoming meeting and Council encouraged the School District to be engaged during the discussion. Council will also be discussion how to address the downtown street closures and discussing if California Avenue will be permanently closed. In terms of bicycle and pedestrians, the 101 bike bridge is nearly complete, the Charleston/Arastradero project continues to move forward, and the next phase of the South Palo Alto Bike Plan has begun. After having discussions with Valley Water, the City has not been required to implement drastic water cutbacks, and Council will be receiving an update regarding the Foothills Fire Protection Plan at a future meeting.

Council Member Tanaka acknowledged the Fuki Sushi incident that happened and he expressed gratitude to City Staff for their thorough investigation.

Chair Burt mentioned that on August 22, 2021, the Barron Park and Ventura Neighborhoods are holding an event at Bol Park to embrace diversity in the

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community. He noted that the event is not a political event, but a community event to show support for diversity. Also, on August 22, 2021, State Senator Josh Becker will be hosting a webinar on school indoor air safety.

## c. Update on Cubberley Ad Hoc Group

Chair Burt disclosed that Board President Dharap and himself are working together on developing a framework for the programs that the City and the School District overlap on. Board President Dharap and himself will be meeting again prior to the Committee's September 2021 meeting. He acknowledged that the City shuttle was part of a whole series of programs and services that the City had to cut as a result of the current budget crisis. Many programs that were cut were not felt by the community until recently.

City Manager Ed Shikada reported that the Cubberley Ad Hoc group has not met since the Committee's last meeting.

Council Member Tanaka agreed that other parents have expressed concerns to him regarding the City shuttle. He stated that he has attended many stop Asian hate rallies and for Chair Burt to say these rallies are done for political benefit is an out of place comment. He encouraged Staff and Council Members to be more sensitive when making those types of comments.

Chair Burt emphasized that there was absolutely no implication that his statement had nothing to do with a lack of recognition of the issue.

## FUTURE MEETINGS AND AGENDAS

Deputy City Manager Chantal Gaines announced that the next City/School Liaison Committee meeting will be held on September 16<sup>th</sup>, 2021. Agendized was a discussion about the School District and City of Palo Alto (City) collaborations.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 9:28 A.M.