



City/School Liaison Committee Regular Meeting Minutes



Regular Meeting
April 15, 2021

Chair Burt called the meeting to order on this date in virtual teleconference at 8:32 A.M.

Present: City of Palo Alto Representatives
Pat Burt, Vice Mayor (Chair)
Greg Tanaka, Council Member arrived at 9:20 A.M.
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:

Chair Burt announced that Agenda Item Number 5 will be heard before Agenda Item Number 4, and Agenda Item Number 2 will be heard after Agenda Item 6.

Oral Communications

Rebecca Eisenberg requested that the School District address the matter of Castilleja School. She urged the School District to provide comments regarding the underground garage that Castilleja School was proposing to install. She concluded that the School District needs to address the matter of Town and Country Shopping Center converting retail space to office space.

Minutes Approval

2. ~~Approval of Minutes From the December 17, 2020 Meeting.~~ (This item is continued to the May 20, 2021 meeting.)

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

Ed Shikada, City Manager acknowledged that there are three projects ongoing near Churchill Avenue. One was the grade separation project. The second project was a bikeway project located between Castilleja Avenue and El Camino Real that required property acquisition from the School District. The third project was a traffic safety improvement project related to the rail crossing at Churchill Avenue and Alma Avenue.

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Chantal Cotton Gaines, Deputy City Manager added that the City released its Workplace Reactivation Plan which addressed how the City plans to open back up.

Board President Dharap announced that the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) has followed the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines and revised the social distancing requirements to 3-feet. The School District can return to in-person teachings for 5-days a week with these social distancing requirements. The School District has taken a phased approach to in-person teaching so grades three through five will return first, then K through second the following week. Sixth graders are already on campus 4-days a week and grades 7 through 12 are in a hybrid model. As of March 2021, 90 percent of Palo Alto Unified School District (PAUSD) faculty are partially or fully vaccinated. Also, the Bay Area Air Quality Management District granted PAUSD \$800,000 to purchase two new electric school buses and supported infrastructure.

Rebecca Eisenberg clarified that PAUSD was currently operating on 60 percent of instructional minutes. In terms of grades 7 through 12, students were allowed to be at school twice a week for a few hours each day. She expressed that PAUSD was still among the most closed district in terms of high schoolers. She voiced frustration that the money that the School District received from the federal government was spent on books and building improvements, not mental health professionals that students most desperately need.

5. Status Report on Crossing Guard Program.

Benjamin Becchetti, Police Lieutenant reported that the City has had crossing guards staffed by All City Management Services since 1999. Throughout the City, 30 locations staffed with crossing guards are being managed. Guard locations are determined through collaboration and there have been challenges with school times and schedules.

Chantal Cotton Gaines, Deputy City Manager mentioned that the item was before the Committee because there was interest from Committee Members to discuss the different collaborations between the City and the School District.

Board Member DiBrienza asked, what is the biggest challenge.

Mr. Becchetti restated that scheduling is the biggest challenge and providing coverage for the middle portion of the day. The additional hours have affected the budget but those costs were being offset by savings that were collected when school returned in October of 2020.

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Board Member DiBrienza mentioned that the School Board anticipates full-time, in-person teachings in the fall of 2021.

Mr. Becchetti acknowledged the City's Office of Transportation and the Safe Routes to School Team and how helpful they have been.

Ms. Gaines asked Staff if they wished to provide any information regarding safety education that was provided to students.

Sylvia Star-Lack, Transportation Planning Manager shared that Safe Routes to School Staff have had to convert all in-class education to virtual education.

Board Member DiBrienza inquired what grades receive online education from the Safe Routes to School Staff.

Ms. Star-Lack shared that 3rd grade received one in-person class but there will be an opportunity during the summer for them to participate in a Safe Routes to School Rodeo. Middle schoolers also received virtual lessons.

Chair Burt emphasized that outdoor interactions carry a lower risk of catching the Coronavirus and he anticipated there being very few restraints on outdoor activities moving forward.

Ms. Gaines noted that another reason to share the information regarding the crossing guard program was to bring awareness that the item will be discussed at the City's budget hearings.

Chair Burt confirmed that the City will have to balance programs and funding when the budget comes before Council.

Rebecca Eisenberg disclosed that the City has chosen not to enact an emergency Business Tax which has resulted in the City having a deficit. She wanted to know why the police were reporting on the crossing guard program.

Chair Burt clarified that the police department oversees the crossing guard program.

4. Review of Recent City Council and PAUSD Board Meeting.
 - a. CITY: Recent City Agendas Recap
 - b. PAUSD: Recent Board Agendas Recap

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Board Member DiBrienza stated that the focus of discussion has been on how much Palo Alto Unified School District (PAUSD) can open currently as well as in the upcoming 2021-2022 school year. PAUSD has sent out a survey to poll parents on who would be interested in returning grades 7 through 12 to 4-days a week of in-person teaching.

Board President Dharap added that the School District will be purchasing modular furniture to facilitate different teaching and learning.

Chair Burt shared that the Council discussed the Castilleja School expansion project at the end of March 2021. Council did not accept the proposal and provided several modifications to the proposal. The project has been sent to the Architectural Review Board and Planning and Transportation Commission for further review. Council also discussed updates to Impact Fees for parks, libraries, and community centers. After discussion, Council adopted the proposed fees but opted to have another update later in the year. Council appointed members to the Community Advisory Committee for the Housing Element Update. The City has been assigned 6,000 additional housing units for its Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA). In terms of the City's last Housing Element, the City was on pace to meet the market-rate allocation but below pace on low- and moderate-income housing. He mentioned that the City has depleted its affordable housing resources.

Board Member DiBrienza inquired if there is a plan to build more low-income housing and what must happen to facilitate that.

Chair Burt answered that zoning changes, resourceful land availability and funding are all components that facilitate low-income housing development. He mentioned that the state is mandating many new subsidized units to be funded. Council has expressed a strong interest in exploring higher Impact Fees and a Business Tax to help replenish affordable housing resources. He concluded that even if the City triples its affordable housing funding, the City would still fall short of the state mandates.

Board Member DiBrienza mentioned that the Cities of Mountain View and Redwood City have built far more affordable housing than Palo Alto.

Chair Burt disclosed that the Cities of Mountain View and Redwood City fund their affordable housing projects through development agreements which added a significant amount of new commercial development. He shared that Palo Alto has a far greater absolute number and percentage of housing units that are affordable than any other nearby City. He stated there is no representative from PAUSD on the Community Advisory Committee for the Housing Element Update. In upcoming Council meetings, the Sustainability

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and Climate Action Plan will be reviewed, a follow-up on the grade crossing project, and a discussion regarding economic recovery.

Council Member Tanaka mentioned that Council Member Kou and himself are organizing an antiracism rally on May 2, 2021. He encouraged all Committee members to attend.

Board President Dharap proclaimed that the School Board has formed an Equity Committee who will be meeting within the next few weeks. In terms of PAUSD not being represented on the Community Advisory Committee for the Housing Element Update, he suggested that the City/School Liaison Committee agendaize a discussion on process and how processes differ between the Council and the School Board.

Rebecca Eisenberg clarified that Chair Burt voted for no School Board members to be on the Community Advisory Committee for the Housing Element Update. In terms of the new Fee Schedule, it is designed to inhibit affordable housing. She emphasized that the City has only completed 4 percent of its very-low-income housing for the current RHNA. She concluded that neighboring City's tax their businesses to pay for their affordable housing projects. In terms of the School District, there has been no movement to hire more teachers and there has been no push to provide more mental health services to teens.

Chair Burt clarified that Council Member Tanaka, Cormack and himself opposed the Motion that was adopted regarding the Community Advisory Committee for the Housing Element Update

6. Update on Ongoing Matters:

a. Cubberley Update.

Kristen O'Kane, Community Services Director provided a brief update on the Cubberley Concept Plan that was previously called the Cubberley Master Plan. The Concept Plan has been completed but during the drafting of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) document, the laws that govern how transportation and traffic impacts are assessed were changed. Staff had to reassess the traffic impacts using the new method which resulted in an additional \$18,000 charge to adjust the scope with the City's CEQA consultant.

Board President Dharap announced that the Cubberley ad hoc committee met and the first true meeting will be held on May 5, 2021 with City Staff and School District Staff present.

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Rebecca Eisenberg requested that reports be attached to the agendas. She commented that the Cubberley Community Center is a wasted asset and is draining funds from the City and School District. She suggested the City use money from the Home Key Program and install temporary shelters at Cubberley.

Council Member Tanaka left the meeting at 9:34 A.M.

Future Meetings and Agendas

Chair Burt affirmed that there will be a follow-up on the strategic relationship of City and School District initiatives. He asked if all Cubberley-related issues should go to the Cubberley Community Center ad hoc committee.

Board President Dharap agreed that the Cubberley ad hoc committee should handle all Cubberley Community Center-related issues.

Board Member DiBrienza wanted a standing item on the agenda that discusses formation of City and School District committees. So, that the City/School Liaison Committee can discuss what benefits there are to have either Staff or PAUSD members serve on those committees.

Chair Burt agreed.

Chantal Cotton Gaines, Deputy City Manager informed the Committee that a third of the Community Advisory Committee for the Housing Element Update are parents.

Board Member DiBrienza confirmed that the elimination of the City's shuttle has impacted students.

Chair Burt stated that the next City/School Liaison Committee meeting will be on May 20, 2021.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 9:41 A.M.