



City/School Liaison Committee Special Meeting Minutes



Special Meeting
December 17, 2020

Chairperson Collins called the meeting to order at 8:31 A.M. on this date via virtual teleconference.

Present: City of Palo Alto Representatives
Greg Tanaka, Council Member
Lydia Kou, Council Member
Chantal Cotton Gaines, Deputy City Manager

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 November 19, 2020 Meeting Minutes.

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

MOTION PASSED: 4-0

Agenda Item Number 6 was heard at this time.

6. Project Safety Net Update.

Eileen Altman, Board Chair of the Project Safety Net, announced that Project Safety Net was no longer a City program. She introduced the new Board Members which included two young adults who had graduated from Palo Alto Unified School District schools.

Mary Cheryl B. Gloner, Chief Executive Officer of Project Safety Net disclosed that Project Safety Net started as a Task Force and over time evolved into a non-profit. The work of Project Safety Net was to facilitate ongoing

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collaboration, coordination, and communication; enhance evaluation and shared measures; and build a backbone of sustainability for collective impacts for youth suicide prevention and mental wellness. The most challenging issues that were causing hardship among youth was the Coronavirus Pandemic (COVID-19) and racial inequality. With help from the School District, the City, and Youth Community Services, Project Safety Net adopted the Collective Impact Framework 5-years ago which brought community leaders and stakeholders together, in a structured way, to achieve social change. Included within the framework were key principles of practice. Design and implement the initiative with priority placed on equity, including community members in the collaborative, recruit and co-create with cross-sector partners and use data to continuously learn, and build a culture that fosters relationships, trust, and respect across participants were among the key principles. For the year 2020-2021, the Collective Impact Priorities included being a convener and collaborator; education, training, and outreach; policy and advocacy; and evaluation and shared measurements. After separating from the City 6-months ago, Project Safety Net has accomplished securing the 501c3 IRS Tax exemption and the Project Safety Net Board approved a budget of \$281,000. For operations, the group has hired new employees who served as the backbone support and the group developed a 9-month scope of work. The City was committed to contributing \$100,000 annual to Project Safety Net for the next 5-years and the group continued to build partnerships within the community.

Meghan Singh, Board Vice-Chair of Project Safety Net disclosed that she had graduated from Gunn High School in 2019 and was now attending college at the University of Michigan. She gave a summary of how she became involved with Project Safety Net. In terms of Community engagement, Project Safety Net had signed a proposal with the County Behavioral Health Department to secure the Mental Health Services Act in hopes of launching a community-based mobile health crisis team as well as to conduct conversations among various groups to discuss a community-wide community mobile response program. For community outreach, a suicide postvention response was conducted in July of 2020 which promoted safe, consistent, and unified messaging from all stakeholders. In June of 2020, the group worked with a committee of youth to learn more about youth mental health in the COVID-19 environment, sources of support, and self-care tips. In October of 2020, a discussion was held with Gunn High School students and Palo Alto High School students to identify opportunities for youth advocacy and suicide prevention. In terms of nation-wide statistics, 1 in 6 adolescents experienced a mental health disorder each year and suicide are the second leading cause of death among ages 10-34. After a 3-year decline of suicides within Santa Clara County, the rates increased in years

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2018 and 2019 and during the current pandemic, 1 in 4 young adults have considered suicide.

Shashank V. Joshi, Project Safety Net, briefly summarized the formation of Project Safety Net from the formation of the task force to its now self-sustaining non-profit organization. The key focus of the early task force was to promote conversations among youth and highlight available resources which resulted in the formation of the K-12 Toolkit for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention. Through the City and School District partnership, the People Suicide Prevention Policy was signed into law that mandated that all schools have a policy that teaches about what stress is and how to deal with it. He invited Palo Alto Unified School District Trustees and City Council Members to attend future Project Safety Net meetings and collaborate, inform, and participate in high profile activities.

Board Member DiBrienza thanked Project Safety Net for their work within the community.

Council Member Tanaka concurred with Board Member DiBrienza's sentiment. He disclosed that there were discussions about using funding from Project Safety Net to fund the Palo Alto History Museum. He called for thoughts on that idea from the Project Safety Net group.

Kristen O'Kane, Community Service Director indicated that the City Council would have to make that decision.

Council Member Tanaka agreed but restated if Project Safety Net needed the funding from the City or if the group was financially sustainable.

Rob George, Treasurer of Project Safety Net expressed that there is a need for funding. Project Safety Net still needed to fundraise the remaining \$160,000 for the budget that was approved by Project Safety Net's Board.

Chair Collins wanted to know why Project Safety Net decided to become a separate entity from the City.

Ms. Gloner explained that after the second suicide clusters, the community had indicated that suicide prevention should be long-term work. The group's goals were not only to educate but to advocate and shape policies and under the City those efforts had constraints. Also, many Project Safety Net partners served youth not only within the City but outside the City as well, and becoming a separate entity provided flexibility to expand into other communities.

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Chair Collins noticed that the School District had no representation on Project Safety Net's Board and it did not provide funding to the program.

Ms. Gloner shared that former Trustee Terry Godfrey had served on the Executive Advisory Board and several School District Board Members attend meetings. The School District has provided small amounts of funding for community meetings in the past.

Chair Collins felt that it was a missed opportunity to not have the School District formally involved with Project Safety Net. He suggested having an Ex-Officio seat on the Board for a School District member.

Mr. Joshi declared that the School District was on the leadership team as well as the stirring counsel before Project Safety Net became a 501c3. He indicated that the group called Partner's Council was an avenue that could be used to engage the School District more.

Ms. Gloner agreed that the School District should be involved more and suggested that involving the School District more formally should be a priority for Project Safety Net.

Chair Collins felt that there were governance, direction, and role in the community relationship that required more engagement.

Council Member Kou agreed with Chair Collins that the School District should be more engaged. She predicted that the intention all along was to transition Project Safety Net to a separate entity.

Ms. Gloner confirmed that was correct.

Council Member Kou shared that not focusing on politics was very important and she wanted to know how that would be handled.

Ms. Gloner explained that the Collective Impact was not a mental health model but a social community organization. She mentioned that the Collective Impact was to foster discussions with different opinions rather than have sidebar conversations among different groups.

Council Member Kou advised Project Safety Net to reach out to the program called Screen Agers as well as have discussions and education with specific ethnicities who struggle with mental health stigmas.

Mr. Joshi added that several initiatives were studying the impacts of screen time across a person's lifespan. Santa Clara County had initiatives regarding cultural engagement and adaptation.

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3. Superintendent and City Manager Comments.

Monique Ziesenhenne, Assistant City Manager highlighted that Foothills Park Reserve has opened to all members of the public.

Kristen O’Kane, Community Services Director added that the City has been working with other partners to ensure that the park was opened successfully under current pandemic conditions as well as ensuring the protection of the natural resources.

Ms. Ziesenhenne announced that free COVID-19 testing will continue through February of 2021 and that the testing site will be moved to the El Palo Alto Room at Mitchell Park starting January 8, 2021. Upcoming testing dates were January 8, January 22, February 5 and February 26, 2021. California Avenue, as well as University Avenue, have been reopened to vehicular traffic. City Hall was closed on December 24, 2020 and reopened on January 4, 2021 due to the holiday season.

Chantal Cotton Gaines, Deputy City Manager disclosed that a meeting will be held with the School Board regarding the easement request from Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E).

Don Austin, Superintendent of the Palo Alto Unified School District reported that the Palo Alto Unified School District was the only school district open to students in the entire Santa Clara County. On January 25, 2021, middle and high schools will begin to bring students back to campus for in-person teaching.

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

Chair Collins shared that the Palo Alto Unified School District Board meeting was an organizational meeting that resulted in the election of a new President and Vice President of the Board as well as farewell to Deputy Superintendent Karen Hendrix.

Board Member DiBrienza added that the meeting also focused on equity issues and concerns.

Council Member Tanaka disclosed there were discussions at City Council regarding the overcharge to residents on their utility bill. The Council had passed an Ordinance regarding Firearms Safety. He asked if the School District was tracking how kids were performing in distance learning.

Chair Collins explained that the School District had a report called the DF Report that tracked how many students were going to receive a D or an F in

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a class. The report that was received in late October/early November of 2020 did not indicate any substantial changes when compared to the prior year.

Don Austin, Superintendent of the Palo Alto Unified School District agreed and disclosed there is still work that needed to be done to capture the small percentages of students who were struggling.

Council Member Kou expressed the Palo Alto History Museum was a topic of the last City Council meeting and that the museum will provide many benefits to the community. The Palo Alto History Museum has put together a program that will involve youth within the community.

5. COVID-19 Coordination Update.

Council Member Kou urged the community to support local businesses and retail.

7. Updates on Ongoing Matters.

a. Connecting Palo Alto (Grade Separation) Update

Chantal Cotton Gaines, Deputy City Manager shared that the Expanded Community Advisory Panel (XCAP) expected to finish their final report in January of 2021 and present it to City Council in February of 2021. Staff plans to bring another update to the February 2021 Committee meeting. The City has sent a letter to Santa Clara County Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) regarding their proposal to not provide funding from Measure B for grade separations. Due to the overwhelming push back from other cities as well, VTA drafted a process with assistance from the cities to determine the region's priority.

Chair Collins believed that the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) Counsel had sent a communication to the City regarding their perspectives on grade separations.

Ms. Gaines confirmed that the City/School Traffic Liaison Committee will be discussing the topic at their meeting.

Don Austin, Superintendent of Palo Alto Unified School District confirmed that the School District had sent a letter to the City Manager.

Chair Collins emphasized that the process the City was following had been a difficult process for the School District to engage in. He felt that the School District would have strong opinions regarding grade separations.

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Ms. Gaines articulated that another opportunity for folks to weigh in on the topic will be when the final report is presented to Council and that the process is nowhere near completion.

Chair Collins said that with the current circumstances of the pandemic and school closures, the School District did not have the bandwidth to provide comments earlier in the grade separation process.

Future Meetings and Agendas

Chair Collins announced that Alcove will be presenting to the Committee in the new year of 2021 and there will be no meeting in January of 2021.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 10:00 A.M.