

# Palo Alto City Council and Palo Alto Unified School District Board of Education



# **MINUTES**

March 14, 2013 6:00 P.M.

The Special Joint Study Session with the Palo Alto City Council and the Palo Alto Unified School District Board of Education met on this date at the Cubberley Community Center at 7:02 P.M.

City Council Present: Berman, Holman, Klein, Price, Scharff,

Schmid, Shepherd

Absent: Burt, Kniss

School District Board Present: Baten Caswell, Emberling, Mitchell, Tom,

Townsend

Absent: None

1. Guided Tour of Cubberley Community Center.

### AGENDA ITEMS

2. Joint Study Session of the Palo Alto City Council and the Palo Alto Unified School District Board of Education: Presentation and Discussion of Final Report of the Cubberley Community Advisory Committee, Including Recommendations Regarding: (a) the Cubberley Community Center Property; (b) Related Management, Finance, Contract and Property Matters; and (c) Strategies for Next Steps.

Mayor Scharff welcomed the public to the formal receipt of the Cubberley Community Advisory Committee (CCAC) Report, thanked CCAC for its time and hard work, and introduced CCAC members. Cubberley Community Center (Cubberley) was an issue of vital importance.

Dana Tom, Palo Alto Unified School District Board Member, recalled in November 2011 the City Council and the Palo Alto Unified School District (PAUSD) Board of Education voted to create CCAC to move toward a Lease Agreement and to discuss the use of Cubberley. The CCAC Report provided information, ideas, issues, and concerns. The next phase was collaboration between PAUSD and the Council.

Mike Cobb, Cubberley Community Advisory Committee Member, indicated the Report was the result of nine months of extraordinary effort. Cubberley was the final 35 acres of land owned by the public in the City proper. PAUSD believed Cubberley could be needed as the location for a high school. There was potential for shared use. Using the site efficiently would provide the equivalent of an additional 9 acres. The basic recommendation was to renew the Lease, and to utilize the first five years of a new Lease to plan long-term outcomes to serve community services and educational services.

Bern Beecham, Cubberley Community Advisory Committee Member, stated PAUSD would need Cubberley for a school site in the mid- to late-2020s. Issues affecting enrollment were demographics, new housing units, and possible technological advances. PAUSD utilized demographers annually to anticipate future needs; however, demographic projections ended in 2017. PAUSD policy was to estimate long-term growth of 1.8 percent for high schools. In the mid-2020s, capacity in high schools would be reached. PAUSD had to be certain enrollment growth would continue before investing in a new high school. Options to building a new high school were virtual classrooms, and extending the hours or months of school attendance. The Sub-Committee considered all sites owned or controlled by PAUSD, and no other 35-40 acre site was available or suitable for a high school. The existing two high schools were located on 45 and 50 acres. In addition, PAUSD would need to build new elementary and middle schools.

Diane Reklis, Cubberley Community Advisory Committee Member, reported the Community Needs Sub-Committee focused on understanding existing services, reviewed opportunities and options, and made recommendations. Cubberley should be a multi-cultural learning environment; support social, emotional, and physical health for all ages and all abilities; and provide flexibility for the ever-changing needs of the City and PAUSD.

Rob De Geus, Division Manager, Recreations & Golf, indicated hundreds of thousands of people used Cubberley for health, educational, and artistic needs and interests. Spaces were utilized from 6:00 A.M. to 10:00 P.M. and later. He estimated approximately 50 percent of participants were Palo Alto residents. The vision of the Cubberley Master Plan was to have a cluster of related programs, activities, and services. Cubberley remained an

educational center with an enrollment in all programs totaling more than Cubberley provided indoor sports and health programs with approximately 2,000 participants. Cubberley's athletic fields and tennis courts covered approximately half the campus and were used intensely yearround by 7,000 participants. The demand for athletic fields continued to grow. Seventeen studios and 22 artists in residence occupied three wings of the Cubberley campus. The program established a community of visual artists who supported, collaborated with, and exchanged ideas with one another and the community. Cubberley housed a theatre seating 317 people and provided a location for a variety of performance and lecture events. Accompanying rooms provided approximately 500 musicians of all ages with space to practice, rehearse, and perform. Dance programs covered all age groups and many dance styles. Cubberley provided meeting and office space for dozens of regular users. Cubberley was a vibrant, thriving community center that met the social, cultural, and educational needs of In response to outreach, 25 percent of programs thousands of people. reported they would go out of business if Cubberley was not available; the remaining 75 percent reported they would attempt to relocate outside of Palo Alto due to high rental rates.

Ms. Reklis stated Cubberley was a unique community center that served all of Palo Alto. Many programs and much space would be lost if Cubberley was replaced by the community center at Mitchell Park. The clusters of services supported and interacted with one another. Major tenants provided significant administration and scheduling services. A professional needs assessment was needed to identify community needs. The Sub-Committee believed services could be preserved and expanded while providing space for a high school. Benefits of the City's and PAUSD's joint use of Cubberley were enhanced programs, preservation of resources, and a joint vision. There was no place to which Cubberley could be moved. PAUSD would incur a large cost to purchase the City's 8 acres to build a high school. As a fallback alternative, the City could construct buildings on the 8 acres it owned, and provide the same square footage of Cubberley and parking. In the short term, the City and PAUSD should renegotiate a Lease to include planning a joint community center and school facility with site parking access, and perform a professional community needs assessment. Mediumterm recommendations were for the City to construct community buildings while most of the site continued to operate; for PAUSD to plan future schools; and for the City and PAUSD to plan shared spaces and negotiate a Long-term recommendations were for the City to continue to evaluate the best mix of tenants and a fee schedule for community space; for PAUSD to build a new school; and for the City and PAUSD to plan how to share space and energy. A more efficient layout of the site would provide space for all existing activities and meet potential school needs.

Jennifer Hetterly, Cubberley Community Advisory Committee Member, reported Cubberley was a prime location in the core of Palo Alto easily accessible to schools and neighborhoods. The supply of available parcels for public facility development was small and shrinking. No option compared to Cubberley's size and location. A cost-effective solution should be a high priority for the community. Key issues were determining whether the site could support both City and PAUSD needs without rebuilding; evaluating the cost and suitability of using the as-is site for exclusive PAUSD use; and examining efficiencies gained through redesign in order to meet both needs. The City's 8 acres included the bulk of classroom and administrative space and all tennis courts. PAUSD housed all other programs. Committee determined it would not be possible for the City or PAUSD to meet their services needs on their currently owned parcels without substantial redesign and development. Buildings located at Cubberley were old, costly to maintain, and poorly designed for modern programming needs. Significant investment was required to use structures for an extended period The PAUSD anticipated reclaiming the site as early as 2025. Without alternate facilities in place, users would experience a substantial gap Uncertainty about needed structures forced continued in services. investment in the entire facility. The City needed certainty about future community center use to justify significant infrastructure investments on the Analysis revealed significant inefficiencies in the design of horizon. buildings, circulation, site areas, and parking. The site area was comprised of narrow strips isolated between buildings, an amphitheatre, and singlefunction perimeter landscaping. Buildings were spread out in such a way that their footprint monopolized a large area, precluding more functional use of spaces between and around buildings. Circulation areas consisted of costly and impractical covered walkways. The sprawling design consumed valuable space and resulted in long travel distances between buildings. The site used more acreage for parking than for buildings. The most obvious method to gain efficiency was to move parking below-grade. building use ratio was at best 60 percent net building to 40 percent circulation. A ratio of 75 percent to 25 percent would be a good target ratio for a school and community site. Reducing circulation area would allow the retention of some on-grade parking. By changing amenity designs and building dual functionality into perimeter space, more usable outdoor space could be created on significantly less acreage. Half of site acreage could be recaptured to serve a different function, either indoor or outdoor. added to recaptured land over underground parking, 9.4 acres could be used for new facilities. By redesigning the site and constructing parking belowgrade, maintenance costs could be reduced, functional efficiency could be improved, and more usable outdoor space could be created, all while gaining 9.4 acres of land. With a modern design, Cubberley could accommodate up

to 475,000 square feet on a single story while improving the overall Stepped-back second stories for structures could efficiency of the site. easily provide an additional 100,000 square feet of building space without utilizing the 9.4 acres. Cubberley could accommodate both school and community use on 35 acres. Planning for phased development was the best method to accommodate divergent City and PAUSD timelines for investment and construction. The Sub-Committee recommended a short-term renewal of a renegotiated Lease reflecting a joint commitment to goals. The City and PAUSD should use the Lease renewal period to develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that guaranteed an ongoing community center function and defined the parameters of ongoing investment and cooperative planning. The renewal period should be used to develop jointly a long range master plan that would incorporate comprehensive assessments of current and forecasted needs. The City and PAUSD could jointly create a phased development plan that would identify a location on the site for a community center, would avoid a sizeable and lengthy gap in services, would engender commitments to design flexible programming space, and would provide taxpayers with a clearly defined long-term vision to explain and support fundraising initiatives. Such a plan could realize significant ongoing efficiencies for both agencies.

Lanie Wheeler, Cubberley Community Advisory Committee Member, indicated the Sub-Committee provided the larger CCAC with a series of reports for use in making recommendations. The Sub-Committee focused on the short-term period of five to ten years. The first report was a financial analysis of the current overall conditions of the City and PAUSD. The second report was a primer for CCAC to use in making recommendations. The third report was a study of three joint-use facilities. The appendix for the third reported provided lists of joint-use projects throughout the U.S. The fourth report was a series of funding options. The fifth report concerned the use of joint powers agreements and formation of a joint powers agency. Additional work was needed regarding funding once the City and PAUSD made initial decisions regarding Cubberley.

Mr. Cobb asked the Council and PAUSD to give attention, creativity, and vision to continue and enhance Cubberley as a special place.

### ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

Alex von Resen noted increased housing requirements were the driver of increased growth. He questioned whether there were limits on increased housing and whether those limits, if any, increased the need for educational facilities. He asked when a final decision regarding Cubberley would be made public.

Alex Panelli reported he paid taxes to support PAUSD; however, his home was zoned for the Los Altos School District. The City's Lease Agreement was a subsidy of PAUSD. He suggested a City-wide vote regarding rededication of the Utility Users Tax (UUT) to fund infrastructure projects; the City assist PAUSD with crafting and passing a revenue measure to replace the subsidy; and renegotiation of the Lease such that the City Lease payment was approximately equal to net rents collected.

Jim Olstad advocated termination of the current Lease with future discussion of a new Lease if needed. A new Lease could have a fresh and rigorous review with balanced input from advocacy groups.

George Browning felt each report presented and defined problems such that the Council and PAUSD could easily make decisions. CCAC's efforts were worthwhile.

Karen Chin indicated Cubberley should continue to play a valuable role in shaping children into strong citizens for the future.

Joe Hirsch, President of the Cardiac Therapy Foundation, reported the Foundation would go out of business if it did not have the Cubberley site. He suggested utilizing three to four acres of Cubberley to build a wellness center to serve people aged 50 and older. He expressed concern that adults would not be allowed access to shared facilities during school hours.

Deirdre Crommie lived in Palo Alto but her children attended Los Altos schools. She was interested in how her tax dollars were spent. Cubberley was irreplaceable.

Barbara Mitchell, Palo Alto Unified School District Board Member, inquired whether CCAC discussed the need for athletic fields should PAUSD construct a high school.

Ms. Hetterly reported CCAC expected a high school would have full athletic activities, and fields would not be available for community use during high school sports seasons. With shared use, a gap for field uses remained.

Ms. Mitchell noted the report indicated the possibility of an additional field, and asked if an additional field along with a high school would serve community needs without a loss of services.

Ms. Hetterly stated CCAC did not evaluate the City's need for fields. Some of the 9.4 acres could be dedicated to fields.

Ms. Mitchell felt community service resources should grow with the population. With approximately 200 new housing units per year over the past decade, there was a need to find ways to preserve services and schools. PAUSD had a role in helping with that. PAUSD families valued Cubberley services as much as community families. School facilities should not trump community services. Through PAUSD's building program, PAUSD could expand joint-use opportunities. PAUSD was open to future scenarios at Cubberley and other school sites to support additional community service needs. A community needs assessment was an important first step. New construction should be corrective and utilize acreage better. If PAUSD should sell any land in the future, the City should have the right of first refusal to purchase, and vice versa. She looked forward to working with the City in ways that added value to current and future residents.

Council Member Berman inquired about PAUSD's use of a growth rate of 1.8 percent and whether that compared accurately with actual demographics. The current high school population seemed to be smaller than a 1.8 percent annual growth rate would forecast.

Kevin Skelly, Palo Alto Unified School District Superintendant, reported 1.8 percent growth had been PAUSD's experience for the prior 25 years.

Council Member Berman noted the 1.8 percent growth rate applied to grades K through 12, but not solely to high school grades. He requested an explanation of the City's decreased Lease payment as a result of the land swap between the City and PAUSD.

Donna Hartman, Real Estate Division, explained the amount was the rent PAUSD received from the Jewish Community Center (JCC) for Terman Middle School.

Council Member Berman was open to joint use of Cubberley, and supported phasing of projects.

Council Member Price liked all recommendations. A professional needs assessment seemed a critical step. If the City and PAUSD seriously considered joint use, PAUSD had resources and expertise for educational programming. The City and PAUSD had a joint responsibility to have a written response to the Report, and responses for the City and PAUSD should have a similar format. Determining key questions regarding next steps, initial reactions to recommendations, and observations regarding process were important.

Council Member Schmid stated from the City's perspective, schools were critical to the health of the City. Schools were dependent upon a healthy City. The City and PAUSD would benefit from working cooperatively to create a win-win situation at Cubberley.

Camille Townsend, Palo Alto Unified School District Board Member, indicated the Report provided relevant information and a starting point for discussion. The community-wide nature of the CCAC was an invaluable tool in seeking input from a new host of citizens. Having a well-defined problem with well-defined goals would help achieve an outcome. She was interested in the number of services provided at school facilities outside of the school day.

Heidi Emberling, Palo Alto Unified School District Board Member, believed Cubberley provided an important community service and was an integral part of the community. The CCAC's Report provided a roadmap for future discussion. The opportunities between school and community enhanced both schools and communities.

Council Member Holman supported performing a community needs assessment. Collaboration was important. She could not discern from the Report where the basic and broad visions occurred or would occur. Marrying a broad vision with needs would prevent lost opportunities. The Report mentioned joint use but not flexible use of buildings, which made buildings sustainable. She was interested in how Cubberley connected with the neighborhood and adjacent sites. The statements contained in pages 32 and 33 needed to be asked and answered; however, they were premature in the absence of vision. She suggested inclusion of traffic analysis to prevent future problems.

Melissa Baten Caswell, Palo Alto Unified School District Board Member, felt there should be a vision of what services to provide and how to provide them. This was an opportunity to ensure services met community needs. She questioned how joint use would work, including issues of traffic and parking. Surveys and focus groups could help determine community needs and wants. Structured responses to the CCAC Report would be helpful. It was also important to consider parts of the site that could have longer lives with investment.

Council Member Klein related the history of the Cubberley Lease Agreement. The CCAC Report provided a roadmap to create new land. Cubberley was a wasting asset and needed large investments in the near future. The City and PAUSD had nine months to work through many issues. Importantly, Cubberley provided key services for adults and senior adults.

Vice Mayor Shepherd provided a brief explanation of housing requirements. The Lease expired in 2014; however, the Council had to provide notice by the end of 2013. This resulted in a sense of urgency. The CCAC Report provided a strategic plan for the Cubberley site. She suggested both the Council and PAUSD independently review the Report and recommendations. A community needs assessment was a good next step.

Dana Tom, Palo Alto Unified School District Board President, inquired whether the CCAC considered a high school's need for outdoor space.

Ms. Hetterly explained that was the reason for indicating the availability of space and inefficiencies.

Mr. Tom asked if the recommendation accounted for unnecessary outdoor space in the rest of the plan.

Ms. Hetterly answered yes.

Mr. Tom noted the Sub-Committee's concern that schools generally took the lead in joint-use projects, and inquired if there were particular challenges when schools did not take the lead.

Ms. Wheeler answered yes. Possibilities depended on Council and PAUSD decisions and the timing of decisions. The Sub-Committee felt a ballot measure would be more attractive to residents. A mix of funding sources and resources would likely be used at various times. Many current uses would be eligible for funding through a 55 percent bond.

Mr. Tom appreciated the CCAC's recognition of the disjointed time horizons of the City and PAUSD. Phased development could address some of that. It was difficult to commit to high school facility needs 15 years into the future.

Mayor Scharff was interested in a win-win situation. He did not want to foreclose PAUSD's ability to have a third high school. The Report seemed to indicate a high school was possible while preserving uses at Cubberley. The City and PAUSD needed to review shared uses and their challenges. There was a sense of urgency. He expressed optimism that the City and PAUSD would work together to reach a good solution for the community. He presented certificates of appreciation to CCAC members.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 10:02 P.M.