

October 13, 2021 Neighbor Meeting Notes
6:30-7:30pm

Welcome and Introductions

Nora De Cuir, the evening's moderator from Kearns & West, shared the meeting format and explained ground rules for the evening.

Nanci Kauffman

- In the neighbor meeting this past June, there were many questions about COVID safety. We've had zero spread of COVID since opening campus. We are still conducting weekly testing. Always thinking about the neighborhood community.
- We heard from some of you on Opening Day, which is our busiest day of the year. We were excited to have it on campus, since we couldn't last year. We thank you for your forbearance on this special day for our community. Hope some of you were able to get breakfast at Douce France with the coupon Castilleja provided.
- We know we need to do a better job educating our new families. We appreciate forbearance on Opening Day. In the recent parent meeting, we continued to explain guidelines and provided admonitions.
- Lots happening indoors in classrooms. We are also utilizing our outdoor spaces, so you are hearing us a bit more and we are aware of that. When Castilleja was closed on Monday 10/11, you likely heard activity coming from Stanford and Paly. We are all hearing each other more as schools return to in-person learning.
- Back-to-School Night: We tested every parent on campus. This year, we are allowing essential visitors only. Only under certain circumstances will parents be allowed on campus.
- We are vaccinated. Many schools are not requiring masks outdoors. We are.
- Neighbors have asked why we don't have shuttles. We have had shuttles for years. On the website, we have a specific page dedicated to alerting parents of our parking expectations. There's a parking map, list of shuttle options, and a new program, CastiCarpool.
- We are trying to provide a somewhat normal school year
- Last meeting we heard the school operations update was too long. Hope it was better this year.

Kathy Layendecker

- In this presentation, I am going to ground us in the purpose of the proposed project. There are a lot of details, and they are important. It's also important to have a broad understanding of what we're trying to accomplish:
 - Extend mission by moderately increasing enrollment
 - Modernize campus, like all Palo Alto schools (private and public) have. And abide by current-day sustainability standards.
 - Improve neighborhood conditions.
 - We started these conversations in 2013. We recognize that events, noise, traffic, and parking are things neighbors really care about and they want us to really care about them too. It's always been at the center of the project that improving neighborhood conditions is a really important pillar.
- CUP Application submittal highlights:
 - It's been an interactive, responsive process. Made many submittals and re-submittals in response to neighbor input, the EIR, city staff, and city council.
 - The objective has always been consistent: with these changes, we are mindful of improving the neighborhood quality of life and moving as much activity to the center of campus while preserving as many trees as we can and adding many more trees.
- These conversations were part of an iterative process that resulted in 3 hearings before city council this past spring. This culminated in motions from City Council, which have been helpful in guiding our next steps:
- Since March 2021:
 - Based on the City Council's guidance, the City staff hired Dudek to study how to protect heritage trees. In response, we've made a series of submittals regarding how we can further protect the trees that are staying. The proposed solution includes: relocating the electrical transformer and modifying a stairway to the pool. We continue to be responsive to the City as they ask for more changes to the tree plan.
 - Aligned Square footage with permitted square feet. We did this by reducing square footage. The City Council asked for accounting of current square footage and the City staff is working on this. We are eager to hear results.

- Based on the City's question about how much underground parking is allowed, we responded with different scenarios. Some respond to 50% underground parking and others are designed to illustrate that the parking garage can be slightly bigger without impinging on trees *and* meets the objective of getting cars out of sight and off the city streets.
- This has all been submitted to date. We continue to be responsive to comments from the City about trees. We are waiting to learn about the timing and sequence of ARB and PTC hearing dates. We are sure you're eager to hear that as well.

Q&A

Bob Kocher

I appreciate the effort to accommodate the neighborhood. I would love to have more cars underground. Don't think school has been noisy. I'm tired of signs in the neighborhood that are making kids feel bad. I am happy we can go back to doing school and enjoying the neighborhood together. I'm pleased to add more students to the high school at Castilleja – allowing for richer classes and more activities for students. Thanks for bringing the neighborhood along in this process. Your work to include neighbor input has made the project better.

Nora

Thanks for that input. We welcome open dialogue if you have different point of view or questions about what Kathy and Nanci have presented to the group.

Barbara Hazlett

I've been a near-neighbor of the school for 40 years. Casti does an extraordinary job of communicating with neighbors. I'm hopeful the City Council approves the enrollment increase and revitalization of campus. Anything any of us can do to expedite the process, which has been slow, tedious, ridiculous. Castilleja is a historic treasure in our backyards like Stanford. We should appreciate and support it. I'm all in.

Cindy Chen

I've heard many discussions about the pros and cons of expansion and I am one of the neighbors. I have an observation from today with a data point about traffic. We walk the neighborhood a lot with our dogs. One observation: at the beginning of the school year, there was a short period of time when PAUSD was in session and Castilleja was not.

During that time there was an impact of traffic on Emerson, Bryant, Kellogg, and Churchill. I saw a dramatic increase in traffic, but because Castilleja was not open yet, I knew that the dramatic increase in traffic was due to Paly High not Castilleja. As you're thinking about analysis, how can you separate those things out?

Nora

Can we answer that question?

Kathy

I can't answer now. We don't have data on background conditions in relation to counting our trips.

Nora

We don't seem to have many questions. This may not be the right forum for everyone to share. Please email Kathy if you prefer to share or ask questions that way.

Mary Sylvester

How are neighbors defined? Especially for tonight? Having lived on Melville for 44 yrs and knowing people within 600 ft radius of school, I don't know Mr. Kocher or Miss Chen. Are they nearby or far away neighbors? Beyond 600 ft radius, a person is not defined as a neighbor of the school in the eyes of the City. Barbara certainly is. I'm out three times a day walking my dog and have never run into Mr. Kocher or Miss Chen. Please define this. Are people referring to themselves as neighbors far beyond the 600 ft radius?

Nanci

I don't know the answer. Don't know exactly where they live.

Kathy

People who are invited live within a few blocks of the school.

Nora

Looks like we may have lost Mary. Along with ground rules, we are not making personal attacks or asking people for personal information.

Mary

In the future, it's important to define who is a neighbor. I know people who live within a couple block radius but within 600 - Gamble Gardens, who see students parking and dropping off. Important to factor into traffic calculation, neighbors are counting that.

Kathy

We send out, per city guidelines, 300 letters of invitation to this meeting. That would certainly include Gamble Gardens. If people live within the area and aren't receiving a letter, email me and we'll be sure to send a letter. We send to every registered address in the range.

Nora

So reach out to Kathy if not getting notice of these questions. I will come back to Bob's question since he already spoke.

Soo Jung Kim

I joined late. I live very close to campus. I'm new to the neighborhood, so I don't know the situation before. I moved in before the pandemic, and now I'm noticing that many teachers and students park right in front of my house and neighboring houses. Why? Is this because of lack of space in the property? They want to walk less or more? I know you're planning to expand campus, so does your expansion plan include additional parking structure because of lack of space?

Kathy

Your question is reminiscent of one asked by other neighbors a few years ago: how can we get more parking on campus so there is less parking in the neighborhood? This is exactly why we proposed underground parking on campus. It solves two problems by taking parking off City streets AND putting it underground to avoid noise and so that no one will have to see the cars. At that time, the solution was supported by many neighbors. Many support it, some do not. I'd like to add one point of contention. The original plan had 120 underground and 26 at surface. Some objected to this original plan so we reduced parking to 104 total on campus. Now we are potentially asked to do less than that and we strongly believe that's not in the best interest of the neighborhood.

Nanci

Welcome to the neighborhood. If you're having people park in front of your house, we can address that so please reach out to us. Earlier I showed a map that outlines for our community where they should not park. If you're not on that map we can make sure that you are, so that our students and employees know that they cannot park on your street.

Nora

Bob, I see your hand is down. Any more questions? Want to respect people's time. If I'm not seeing other hands going up we'll wrap up early . I see Rob's hand up.

Rob Levitsky

There have been discussions recently about Nueva- a private school that split into two campuses. When they got their permits from San Mateo, the City made clear that they had a nonstarter unless the students did not drive to school. If Castilleja had to do the same, we wouldn't be talking about parking garages and parking in front of neighbors. I never drove when I went to Palo Alto schools; I always walked or biked. That's the environmentally superior solution.

Soo follow up

For the person who just talked, that is an interesting question. What is the school's stance on students driving to campus?

Nora

Rob was giving an example from a school in San Mateo.

Nanci

We are open to working with the City on rules they want to make when we have a CUP. It's worth noting that Nueva didn't split their campus - they added a high school. They are also fortunate to be adjacent to a train station. We have good transportation to and from the train station and we have many many shuttles. We are prepared to hear what kinds of conditions would work best. The parking requirements we have are based on staff not students. We have to be able to park our staff on campus.

Conclusion

Nora

We don't want to keep anyone longer if there are no further questions or comments. Last call for hands before we wrap up for next mtg. As a reminder, we hold these meetings annually in June and October. We appreciate everyone joining virtually. Nanci and Kathy, do you have any final words?

Kathy

Thank you for joining us this evening. Don't hesitate to email with comments or questions.

Nanci

One of us will respond. Thank you, everyone.