

TO: Panelists, Blue Ribbon Panel on School Safety
FROM: Marissa Roy, Chief Consultant to the Blue Ribbon Panel on School Safety
RE: Minutes from the June 3rd Public Hearing

The seventh and final Blue Ribbon Panel hearing took place on June 3rd from 2 p.m. to 4:45 p.m. at Mendez High School in LAUSD District 7, represented by LAUSD Board President Mónica Garcia. Panel Chair Los Angeles City Attorney Mike Feuer opened the meeting by noting that this Panel said at the outset that it would hold hearings in all seven LAUSD districts, would compile a diverse panel, and would focus on school safety holistically; City Attorney Feuer announced that the Panel had met those goals and thanked all involved. The City Attorney then introduced Board President Garcia. Board President Garcia noted that every stakeholder—from churches to city agencies to families—should prioritize student safety. Board President Garcia noted that there are challenges to school safety: for example, community violence often threatens student safety and sometimes LAUSD may have helpful programs that are not yet to scale. Board President Garcia welcomed partnerships and cross-jurisdictional strategies to improve student safety. After Board President Garcia’s remarks, City Attorney Feuer introduced members of the Panel.

The hearing focused on “Making School Campuses Safer through Design and Infrastructure.” This hearing featured presentations from LAUSD’s Chief Facilities Executive Mark Hovatter, school architectural expert and panelist Michael Pinto, and representatives from the Coalition for Adequate Student Housing.

LAUSD’s Chief Facilities Executive Mark Hovatter gave the first presentation to the Panel. Mr. Hovatter noted that LAUSD has adopted design standards that apply to 131 new schools and every school modernization project. However, many older school buildings do not meet these new design standards, especially the 700 school buildings that are more than fifty years old. LAUSD requires that all schools be surrounded by a chain-link fence with one-inch mesh. Mr. Hovatter noted that emergency exit gates create challenges because they must facilitate easy exit yet prevent easy entry. Mr. Hovatter noted that LAUSD design standards require a single point of entry, but over 200 campuses do not have a single point of entry. Mr. Hovatter noted that LAUSD design guidelines provide for but do not require closed-circuit television (CCTV) systems in areas where there is no expectation of privacy like hallways or parking garages. Mr. Hovatter noted that the challenge with CCTV is that most systems are not monitored and are only used to view footage after an incident. Mr. Hovatter noted that not all interior doors in schools lock from the inside, but that double doors are required to have a welded removable jam to allow for internal locking. Finally, Mr. Hovatter noted that LAUSD recommends alarm systems to secure schools outside of school hours.

Following Mr. Hovatter’s presentation, panelists had the opportunity to question him in the style of a legislative hearing:

- **City Attorney Feuer opened questioning by asking what the top safety priorities are in the 870 schools that do not meet LAUSD’s design standards.** Mr. Hovatter responded that the districts priorities are implementing the single entry policy with a buzzer for visitors and installing security cameras in all schools.

- **City Attorney Feuer asked if LAUSD had data on the effectiveness of cameras in the 300-400 schools in the district with CCTV.** Mr. Hovatter said that LAUSD did not have that data.
- **City Attorney Feuer noted that cameras are in a minority of schools, and it has been difficult to tell whether they have been useful because they are not monitored in real time and may only be useful for post-incident analysis.** Mr. Hovatter agreed with that summary.
- **City Attorney Feuer asked how much it costs to install CCTV on campuses.** Mr. Hovatter said that CCTV cost \$1-6 million per campus.
- **Earl Paysinger, USC's Vice President of Civic Engagement, asked if this estimate included the cost of monitoring CCTV systems.** Mr. Hovatter clarified that this estimate only covered installation, not staffing or upkeep.
- **Los Angeles School Police Department Chief Steve Zipperman noted that many design measures like CCTV are meant to mitigate risk, but that personnel allow for response to emergencies in progress; Chief Zipperman asked how LAUSD should balance investing in risk management measures and crisis response measures.** Mr. Hovatter agreed that LAUSD needs to take a multilayered approach. Board President Garcia noted that individual schools also have great flexibility in deciding how they will invest in safety measures.
- **City Attorney Feuer asked if LAUSD had a method for prioritizing schools that needed facilities improvements.** Mr. Hovatter said that there is not a system for prioritizing schools and rather the approach for choosing schools for renovation is reactionary.
- **Michael Pinto, an architect and education expert, asked whether LAUSD had made sufficient budgetary provisions for maintenance of schools.** Mr. Hovatter responded that more money needs to be devoted to maintaining schools.
- **Former California Supreme Court Justice Carlos Moreno noted that doors that lock from the inside seemed more effective than cameras in an emergency situation.** Mr. Hovatter responded that LAUSD's goal is for all classroom doors to be able to lock from the inside within six years.
- **Justice Moreno asked how much it would cost to retrofit every door.** Mr. Hovatter could not answer this question.
- **Justice Moreno asked if installing indoor locks would be cheaper than installing CCTV in schools.** Mr. Hovatter responded that installing indoor locks would be cheaper than installing CCTV in schools, but that it would require buy-in from principals.
- **Daniel Barnhart, United Teachers Los Angeles Secondary Vice President, noted that he had visited some schools that feature a single entrance with a greeter and others that feel more like a prison; Mr. Barnhart asked to what extent LAUSD allows schools to design their entrances according to their preferences.** Mr. Hovatter noted that LAUSD aims to respect individual schools while implementing minimum standards.
- **Mr. Barnhart asked what can be done to facilitate a single entry policy at schools that are co-located with charter schools on the same campus.** Mr. Hovatter noted that schools with multiple entrances have greater vulnerabilities.
- **Former Los Angeles City Controller Laura Chick asked if LAUSD allows schools with an open design and a greeter to maintain that policy.** Mr. Hovatter said that

currently fencing is not a requirement, but only five or six schools in the District are not enclosed by fencing.

- **Rocio Ramirez, a parent leader and PTA vice president, noted that design choices can affect students' mental health and perception of their school as safe; in light of this Ms. Ramirez asked if LAUSD's Facilities Division seeks input from mental health personnel in the district before making decisions.** Mr. Hovatter did not have an answer for that question.
- **City Attorney Feuer asked if decisions about minimum facilities standards are driven in part by mental health considerations.** Mr. Hovatter responded that the District tries to balance aesthetics with security.
- **Ms. Ramirez asked what kind of collaboration there is between Mr. Hovatter and mental health experts.** Mr. Hovatter noted that the District tries to make schools look less like prisons.
- **Krystal Torres-Covarrubias, Education Policy Manager at the Los Angeles LGBT Center, asked if there are other districts that have struck the right balance between aesthetics and security.** Mr. Hovatter said LAUSD was in conversation with other school districts.

Following the panelists' questions, members of the public were invited to comment on the presentation. **Three members of the public** called for increased mental health services in LAUSD schools rather than hardening measures that alienate students. **One member of the public** said that retrofitting classroom doors to lock from the inside should be a facilities priority. **One member of the public** called for a broader and sustained "See Something, Say Something" campaign that engaged students and parents. This concluded public comment on this presentation.

After Mr. Hovatter's presentation, panelist and school architectural expert Michael Pinto presented to the Panel. Noting that schools are still the safest places for children to be, Mr. Pinto stressed that schools should be designed to increase safety and foster children's educational development. Today, children are taught to collaborate and think critically, and thus schools should reflect those values. Mr. Pinto explained that there is a spectrum for school design from more traditional, closed models to flexible models that make open space for communication and collaboration. Mr. Pinto provided visual examples of schools designed in a more flexible model with collision spaces and open, transparent design. Mr. Pinto emphasized that school safety advocates can "have their cake and eat it too" through flexible design strategies. For example, rather than installing cameras for surveillance, schools can incorporate glass walls and open space to maximize natural surveillance, so that students cannot engage in bullying or illicit activity unnoticed. Mr. Pinto also emphasized that access to schools can be controlled naturally with a minimized need for fencing if school buildings are moved to the perimeter and community offices like parent centers are situated near the entrance or welcome area of a school. Mr. Pinto finally stressed that schools need to be centers for the community and for collaboration—welcoming parents and encouraging community involvement through joint-use of fields and libraries.

Following Mr. Pinto's presentation, panelists had the opportunity to question him in the style of a legislative hearing:

- **City Attorney Feuer opened questioning by asking what steps should be taken to retrofit schools.** Mr. Pinto responded that entries should be prioritized as welcoming spaces with parent centers and open space.
- **City Attorney Feuer asked if there are any urban schools that have adopted such flexible design guidelines.** Mr. Pinto pointed to Fremont High School as a good model for urban school design.
- **Dr. Garen Wintemute, Director of the University of California Firearm Policy Research Center, asked if data showed that school design can reduce instances of violence on campus.** Mr. Pinto said that there are studies showing that transparent environments reduce instances of bullying, which then equates to lower incidences of violence.
- **Mr. PAYSINGER asked if past school shootings could provide lessons for how to design school entries.** Chief Zipperman noted that school shootings all involve different scenarios, but that some shootings might have been prevented by restrictive access policies.
- **Chief Zipperman asked if the glass in school buildings that Mr. Pinto displayed were laminate ballistic.** Mr. Pinto did not know what grade of glass was used.
- **Ms. Ramirez expressed support for school environments that reduce bullying by emphasizing transparency and collaborations; she also noted that positive visual spaces can help brain development.** Mr. Pinto agreed and added that one of the predictors of student success is their engagement with school. He noted that by designing schools with care, students will have higher levels of engagement with their schools.
- **Julia Macias, President of the LAUSD Superintendent's Student Advisory Council, asked what other design strategies aside from transparency can help reduce bullying.** Mr. Pinto said that spaces for collaboration indoors and outdoors can encourage students to work together rather than resort to bullying.
- **Mr. Barnhart said that it was invigorating to see what is possible for school design, but saddening to see that this is not the reality. He asked if schools can be designed in a way that can adjust to the pressures of increasing class sizes.** Mr. Pinto responded that California needs to confront the fact that its funding for schools is inadequate and that reducing class size is an element of school safety.
- **Ben Holtzman, the student member of the LAUSD Board, asked how schools can achieve these flexible design goals when they are in struggling communities.** Mr. Pinto responded that the schools that had modernized were not necessarily resource-rich, but that schools needed to embrace a new design philosophy.
- **Gloria Martinez, United Teachers Los Angeles Elementary Vice President, asked: 1. How schools can be designed with special needs students in mind, and 2. Whether student services like counseling should be centralized on campus?** To the first question, Mr. Pinto emphasized that special needs students should not be marginalized on campus, but should be integrated on campus. To the second question, Mr. Pinto responded that some administrative services should be centralized, but that schools might want some services, like counseling, to be in more private or discreet locations.

Following the panelists' questions, members of the public were invited to comment on the presentation. **Four members of the public** emphasized that schools need more mental health services instead of hardening measures. **Two members of the public** said that constituencies

like parents and students should be involved in design decisions. This concluded public comment.

After Mr. Pinto's presentation, Tom Duffy a lobbyist for the Coalition for Adequate Student Housing presented to the panelists about how they could advocate for state legislative decisions to improve school infrastructure. Mr. Duffy noted that there are 10,000 school campuses in California with 300,000-400,000 classrooms. Yet, California builds the smallest schools at the highest price because of its regulatory environment. Mr. Duffy noted that California voters approved a \$7 billion bond for school infrastructure in 2014. While \$3.7 billion in bond projects had been approved, Mr. Duffy noted that the governor was reticent to issue bonds. This year's state budget has only made provisions for \$1.5 billion in school bonds. Mr. Duffy suggested that the Panel consider supporting the following bills in the state legislature: 1. AB 3205, which would require that all modernized schools have indoor locking mechanisms, and 2. AB 1747, which would require that all schools develop a safety plan with first responders in the district by 2020.

Following Mr. Pinto's presentation, panelists had the opportunity to question him in the style of a legislative hearing:

- **Ms. Chick asked why Governor Brown has been reticent to issue bonds for school facilities improvements.** Mr. Duffy responded that Governor Brown did not like increasing California's debt.
- **Ms. Chick asked what the budget increase would be.** Mr. Duffy responded that it would be \$100 million annually.
- **Chief Zipperman noted that the bond oversight committee had approved LAUSD's request related to CCTV. He also noted that California needs to increase funding for schools.**
- **Ms. Martinez noted that funds for schools need to be spent on more personnel in addition to facilities improvements. She pointed out that the District has \$1.7 billion in reserve.**
- **Mr. Barnhart asked whether charters have to follow all California regulations for building safe schools.** Mr. Duffy responded that charter schools must comply with regulations if they seek state funding to build facilities, but they do not have to comply with safe school regulations if they use their own operational funds (for example, to operate a school from a storefront).
- **Mr. Pinto asked if putting bonds on the ballot is the right way to fund school improvements.** Mr. Duffy responded that state bonds have been the crucial tool for building public schools and noted that the state would need another bond for schools in 2020.
- **Mr. Pinto asked if CASH had lobbied for state funding beyond capital improvements for schools.** Mr. Duffy responded that CASH had not, but might be interested in these efforts.
- **Ms. Ramirez noted that currently parents are supposed to be able to have access to school safety plans if they request them.** Mr. Duffy responded that schools are supposed to have emergency plans, but that AB 1747 would require these safety plans to

include provisions for an active shooter situation and would require active shooter drills in schools.

- **Ms. Ramirez asked whether the bill made provisions for including parents.** Mr. Duffy responded that parents are to be included in the school committees that develop the plans with first responders.
- **Mr. Holtzman asked whether the emergency plan would include situations where services are down.** Mr. Duffy responded that they would.

Following the panelists' questions, members of the public were invited to give general public comment. **One member of the public** commented that two years ago LAUSD had a peer counseling program in 300 schools; he noted that these programs were effective for giving students leadership training and transitioning students from juvenile hall back into schools, but that the programs had ended when he retired from the district. **One member of the public** said that parents need to become more involved with schools. This concluded general public comment. The meeting closed with information about the Panel's debriefing meeting on June 11th.