

LOS ALTOS HILLS MAY FORM ITS OWN K-8 SCHOOL DISTRICT
PAUSD FAQ: Reorganization Resolution
from Los Altos Hills Town Council

Q: What is the redistricting resolution approved on June 8 by the Los Altos Hills Town Council?

A: The LAHTC resolution seeks to create a new Los Altos Hills K-8 school district that may feed into both the PAUSD and MVLA for grades 9-12. Such a plan would affect attendance in Palo Alto Unified School District (PAUSD), Los Altos School District (LASD), and Mountain View-Los Altos Union High School District (MVLA)."

Q: How would this redistricting plan change public education in Los Altos Hills?

A: This plan would change the public schools that Los Altos Hills students attend. Specifically, Los Altos Hills elementary and middle school students would attend a new K-8 school district in Los Altos Hills and would no longer be a part of the PAUSD or LASD attendance areas. The possible changes for high school students are less clear.

Q: Where would students in Los Altos Hills attend high school?

A: The resolution recommends that Los Altos Hills' high school students feed into the PAUSD and MVLA, similar to current attendance boundaries. However, with the formation of a new K-8 district, there is no legal basis for sending Los Altos Hills' students to PAUSD's high schools. The County Committee on School District Organization may determine that Los Altos Hills students should attend high school in the MVLA high school district.

Q: Do the three school districts (PAUSD, LASD, MVLA), support the Los Altos Hills Town Council redistricting proposal affecting the Los Altos Hills students they currently serve?

A: No. Representatives of all three affected school districts have publicly expressed serious concerns about the proposal. Whatever the outcome, a contentious and expensive battle will leave scars in the Hills as well as other affected communities. That is a result no one wants. PAUSD does not want to disrupt the expectations of those families who selected their homes to attend our schools. PAUSD considers the Hills families to be an integral part of the district and believes that the students receive an excellent education. Hills families are a vital part of the educational communities in the schools that their students attend.

Q: What is the status of the resolution?

A: A resolution was filed with the Santa Clara County Office of Education (SCCOE) on June 22. The County Committee will hold a public hearing to consider the proposal.

Q: Can residents submit input to the County Committee?

A: Yes. Residents can speak at the public hearing. Written input can be submitted to the SCCOE, with a request to distribute the input to the eleven members of the County Committee.

Q: What is the process for creating a brand new district?

A: The timeline from SCCOE follows this Q&A. There is no specific date by which the process is completed, but if it is not outright rejected by the County, it is likely to take years.

Q: Who would vote in such an election?

A: The State Board of Education would determine the "area of election."

Q: Is redistricting off the table if the County Committee denies the request?

A: Not necessarily. A redistricting effort may also be initiated by a petition signed by 25% of the voters in Los Altos Hills.

Q: How would a redistricting determination be made?

A: The California Department of Education has an extensive handbook outlining the standards and procedures: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/re/lr/do/>, including criteria for the initial evaluation: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/re/lr/do/documents/dochap6.pdf>

Q: How long does it generally take to comply with the redistricting process?

A: The process for reviewing a redistricting proposal in California can take many years. The LAHTC resolution optimistically seeks a vote by June 2008. Under state law, a reorganization approved in a public vote takes effect in the calendar year following the vote. After a June 2008 election, if reorganization were approved, the students would start in their new district in fall of 2009.

Q: Has the Public Education Committee of the LAHTC previously proposed a redistricting plan to PAUSD?

A: Yes. In 2004, members of the Public Education Committee of the LAHTC met with PAUSD and requested support for a redistricting proposal in which PAUSD would "take over" all K-12 public education in Los Altos Hills from the LASD and MVLA school districts.

Q: What was PAUSD's response to the proposal?

A: PAUSD had concerns about the financial and enrollment impact on PAUSD, LASD, and MVLA and did not view the proposal as an optimal solution to bringing back a public elementary school to Los Altos Hills.

- Q:** Without a current school board member from the Hills, does PAUSD represent the interests of Los Altos Hills parents and students?
- A:** *Yes. The legacy of academically successful Los Altos Hills students is valid testimony to PAUSD's long-standing K-12 commitment and accountability to all district families. We cannot think of a more significant Los Altos Hills interest to represent than the expectations of PAUSD families in Los Altos Hills who selected their homes to attend PAUSD schools.*
- Q:** Did PAUSD close the Bullis Elementary School in Los Altos Hills?
- A:** *No. The Bullis site is owned and controlled by LASD. Decisions on closing Bullis and the location of BCS were not discussed with PAUSD.*
- Q:** Does LASD plan to reopen Bullis as an elementary school in Los Altos Hills?
- A:** *Yes. LASD voted to reopen the Bullis site as a public elementary school in 2008.*
- Q:** Would reopening Bullis as an elementary school in the LASD resolve many of the concerns identified by the Los Altos Hills Town Council?
- A:** *Hopefully, yes. According to a public opinion survey conducted in 2004 for the Los Altos Hills Town Council, 70 percent of Los Altos Hills respondents supported reopening Bullis Elementary as part of the LASD.*
- Q:** How did Los Altos Hills residents respond to a redistricting option that would create a new K-8 grade elementary school district to serve Los Altos Hills?
- A:** *According to the same survey, only 35 percent Los Altos Hills respondents supported redistricting to create a new K-8 school district in Los Altos Hills.*
- Q:** Thirty years ago, did PAUSD close schools in Palo Alto and Los Altos Hills?
- A:** *Yes. When school enrollment plummeted throughout California in the 1970's, PAUSD closed 12 elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school. Of these, 13 were located in Palo Alto and 1 in Los Altos Hills. Most of the school sites were sold off, but one elementary school site was preserved in each neighborhood "cluster," for future enrollment needs – including the Fremont Hills site, the one school that PAUSD closed in Los Altos Hills.*
- Q:** Did PAUSD recently reopen an additional elementary school serving a neighborhood that already had a sparsely attended, easily accessible elementary school, as the LAHTC resolution states?
- A:** *No. In 1998, PAUSD reopened a twelfth elementary school to accommodate increasing district enrollment and relieve neighborhood congestion at Juana Briones Elementary, which was serving 431 students at the time – well beyond the enrollment capacity of 366 students.*

Q: Did PAUSD fail to notice its re-lease of the Fremont Hills site in 2002?

A: *No. While redistricting supporters complain that the proposed closing was not announced until after the November 2002 election, the Fremont Hills lease was on PAUSD public agendas at least six times from January 2002 to June 2002.*

Q: Did PAUSD reject a bid from the BCS to use the Fremont Hills site?

A: *No. PAUSD discussed, conducted bidding on, and ultimately re-leased the Fremont Hills site to Pinewood School in June 2002, before the LASD announced plans to close Bullis Elementary School. PAUSD nonetheless evaluated enrollment projections and inserted a clause in the bidding criteria to allow the site to be taken back by PAUSD for public education if necessary – even though this take-back clause decreased the likely rent.*

Q: Does PAUSD recognize its obligation to provide the same level of educational service to Los Altos Hills students that it provides to children in Palo Alto, Stanford, and Portola Valley?

A: *Absolutely. PAUSD believes that it is providing equivalent educational services to all students, which does not necessarily mean a neighborhood school, and invites feedback from all Los Altos Hills residents on the educational services they receive.*

Q: How can we stay informed and communicate our perspectives?

A: *Watch for regular FAQ updates at www.pausd.org and contact your elected officials on the Los Altos Hills Town Council, Palo Alto Unified School District, Los Altos School District, and Mountain View-Los Altos Union School District.*

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