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COURTESY OF ANDREW YEE

A TWO-WHEELED COMMUTE

Bike to Work day on May 12 brought out bicyclists on the Stevens Creek trail bridge over Evelyn Avenue. Mountain View Voice reader Andrew Yee, who took this photo, said it was great to see so many people riding along the trail.

LOCKER ROOM

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said the student had been tied down to a table with straps when he was allegedly assaulted with the hammer.

The interviews by the student reporters were enough to prompt an investigation by school and Mountain View-Los Altos High School District administrators — and then the Mountain View Police Department — prior to the story going to print.

When the story ran in early April, high school district officials kept quiet about the investigation, prompting parental concerns that an alleged sexual assault incident had gone unreported.

Some parents voiced concerns that school and athletic staff may not have done their due diligence in reporting the assault, and were nonchalant in their response. Athletic Director Shelley Smith is quoted in the story as saying he did not investigate the incident further after “conversations with players and parents,” and that the alleged victim told school administrators he was fine, and that the incident was a “joke.”

In a letter addressed to Smith, Principal Dave Grissom and Superintendent Jeff Harding, Kris Peterson, a parent, wrote that

there is no excuse for the apparent “abdication of responsibility” to report the incident to police immediately.

Requirements for reporting child abuse and neglect are contained in both the California Education Code and the penal code. Almost any campus staff member is a “mandated reporter,” and has an obligation to make a report to the local police department or sheriff’s office if there’s a reasonable suspicion of child abuse or neglect. The report must be made within 24 hours.

Superintendent Jeff Harding defended the district’s response, and told the *Voice* that a juvenile officer got involved immediately once administrators caught wind of the student interviews. He said the district notified the Mountain View Police Department soon after hearing the interview recordings.

“Police were involved within hours of us having any knowledge of what had happened 18 months before,” Harding said.

The subsequent Mountain View Police Department investigation started in late March, but police were not able to provide an exact date. Police have since concluded the investigation and did not make any arrests, according to police spokeswoman Katie Nelson.

Harding said he believes the claims in the story that ran in the *Oracle* were mostly unfounded,

based on the student interviews he reviewed, and that the police investigation affirmed that. He added that bringing attention to the allegations with a school or district-wide statement would have been unnecessary.

“I think these two (reporters) got it in their mind that it happened in a way that was not reflective of what the boys on the football team described,” Harding said. “There just wasn’t any suggestion that that’s what happened.”

Peterson, who is a marriage and family therapist at El Camino Hospital, told the *Voice* in an email that the district should have used the alleged incident as an opportunity to “clearly articulate to the student body that sexual assault will be addressed swiftly and aggressively by administration.” By burying the investigation, she said, the seniors this year will be heading into college with the message that sexual assault is both minimized and dismissed by school officials.

“The theme of the Mountain View High School winter formal this year was ‘consent,’ but the impact of this message has been summarily extinguished if the student body is not informed that this incident was, in fact, responded to thoroughly and appropriately,” Peterson said. ▀

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