



CITY COUNCIL SUMMARY MINUTES

Special Meeting
April 30, 2024

The City Council of the City of Palo Alto met on this date in the Council Chambers and by virtual teleconference at 5:30 P.M.

Present In Person: Burt, Kou, Lauing, Lythcott-Haims, Stone, Tanaka (6:45 PM),
Veenker

Present Remotely:

Absent:

Call to Order

Mayor Stone called the meeting to order. The clerk called roll with six present.

Agenda Changes, Additions and Deletions

None.

SPECIAL ORDERS OF THE DAY

1. Interview Candidates for Vacancies on Boards and Commissions. CEQA Status – Not a project.

NO ACTION TAKEN

Interview schedule:

Architectural Review Board		
5:35 PM	Mousam Adcock	In Person
5:45 PM	Zachary Pozner	In Person
5:55 PM	Kendra Rosenberg	Zoom
6:05 PM	Geddes Ulinskas	In Person
6:15 PM	Ajay Mishra	In Person

Mousam Adcock, current Architectural Review Board member, provided a background of her experience as an architect.

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Council Member Lythcott-Haims asked what the hardest thing about being a member of the ARB is and what she would like to change about it.

Ms. Adcock stated the hardest thing is the amount of time required.

Council Member Burt asked Ms. Adcock to share any projects over the last year she found particularly vexing and why.

Ms. Adcock discussed a project that would have been better as a part of a process than on its own.

Council Member Veenker referenced a goal Ms. Adcock stated in her application and asked after being on the ARB if she had any more specific thoughts about how that could happen or if there are limitations in that regard that concern her. She questioned if she has other goals.

Ms. Adcock described how sustainability measures that are in the purview of the ARB are minimal. She talked about impacts the ARB can have on other projects.

Council Member Kou queried how ARB can guide in the design guidelines for Dark Skies and Bird Safety and if she felt it should be for the entire city or only in Open Space.

Ms. Adcock opined it should be for the entire city. She thought it was important for the built environment to be responsive to the natural environment.

Zachary Pozner, Director of Architecture at Stanford University, provided his background experience as an architect. He pointed out that because of his affiliation with Stanford, he would have to recuse himself from any projects related to them. He described reasons he felt he would be a good fit for the position.

Council Member Burt asked Mr. Pozner to share his thoughts about the differences and similarities between his roles at the hospital, Stanford, the institutional buildings he focuses on and the commercial and residential buildings in Palo Alto.

Mr. Pozner discussed the variety of input he has had on projects. He felt he was good at calibrating and understanding what the developer and architect is trying to do.

Vice Mayor Lauing questioned a project or role that stood out to him.

Mr. Pozner described an office building for the School of Medicine that was finished during the pandemic.

Council Member Kou asked how he felt about Dark Sky and Bird Safety policies and incorporating protective measures within the design element for the natural environment.

Mr. Pozner did not know if that was the role of the ARB. He recalled a project when an ARB member bordered on making it a condition of approval for the project that they approve bird

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safe glass. He remarked if Council or the Planning Commission make a rule, ARB should reinforce it but until that point ARB members needed to not overstep their bounds. He discussed things that could be done relative to sustainability.

Kendra Rosenberg, Vice Chair of ARB, provided a detailed background of her experience as an architect and as an ARB member.

Vice Mayor Lauing asked about the process is on both sides of the table.

Ms. Rosenberg described how it has been illuminating.

Mayor Stone wanted to know what she saw as the biggest challenge facing Palo Alto generally within the realm of ARB over the next several years and why she wanted to be on the ARB to address those issues.

Ms. Rosenberg thought the number one question was the increase in housing needed over the next eight years and making sure that growth is done in a thoughtful, sustainable and responsible way.

Council Member Veenker was interested in her identification of 3300 El Camino as a project that she found to be an example of good architecture.

Ms. Rosenberg described how that building would inspire and influence the rest of the development along that stretch of El Camino.

Council Member Lythcott-Haims asked if she had any guidance for the City's ARB based on her interaction with other jurisdictions that could be more efficient or effective.

Ms. Rosenberg advised to remember how much goes into the application. She described the success of the ARB.

Geddes Ulinskas, principal architect of his own firm, provided a background of his experience as an architect.

Vice Mayor Lauing asked for his view of the process of having historical homes.

Mr. Ulinskas discussed his experience in dealing with historical homes.

Council Member Kou was interested in hearing how he felt bicycle/pedestrian safety would fit into the natural environment including signage and design.

Mr. Ulinskas answered he would love to see Palo Alto's bike paths enhanced and expanded and ways to make them safer. He spoke about creative ways bike lanes are integrated into the cities in Europe.

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Council Member Lythcott-Haims queried what he thought the City was trying to convey through their architecture.

Mr. Ulinskas talked about his appreciation of the architecture mixture of the different zones of the City.

Ajay Mishra, remarked he is not an architect but is founder of Trisetra in the architectural field. He described his experience in that capacity and his potential contribution to the ARB.

Council Member Burt queried what he would see as the way he could take his perspective on architecture and enabling technologies and apply it to what the ARB is allowed to review today.

Mr. Mishra described ways he could inform decisions by physics simulations.

Council Member Lythcott-Haims commented that the City might want to be a customer of Trisetra and how there would be a conflict if he were on the ARB.

Mr. Mishra explained Trisetra is entirely in the residential space and the City is all about commercial. He described his goal to learn as much as he can in architecture and contribute what he knows. He felt confident there would be no conflict.

Mayor Stone asked how he saw his role in bringing that technology to an actual board meeting.

Mr. Mishra described how his knowledge would benefit the board but agreed he would be learning in terms of the pure architecture analysis.

Utilities Advisory Commission		
6:25 PM	Richard Craig	In Person
6:35 PM	Ambika Pajjuri	Zoom
6:45 PM	Sean Holman	In Person
6:55 PM	Abraham Bagherjeiran	Zoom
7:05 PM	Utsav Gupta	In Person

Richard Craig described living in Palo Alto for 35 years, having a PhD in electrical engineering, and his technology and business experience.

Council Member Lythcott-Haims wanted his thoughts about managing the transitioning from natural gas to all electric.

Mr. Craig described his thoughts on the process of transitioning from natural gas to all electric.

Council Member Kou asked him to share the difficult and interesting problems he commented they faced in his application and the solutions he offered.

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Mr. Craig thought he had the opportunity to provide critical feedback and learning. He described the questions he would pose with what makes it difficult. He expressed his desire to use his time to give back to the community.

Vice Mayor Lauing was interested in his thoughts about the process of debate of the UAC.

Mr. Craig commented he had not attended a meeting so did not have exact feedback on the process. He had read some minutes and looked at profiles of all the current members.

Ambika Pajjuri described her working experience to include product management leader at Amazon and working with smart meter networks. She described what she could bring to the table on the ARB. Her goal was to give back to the community.

Council Member Veenker asked if she had kept up on smart meter technology and her current thinking about the state of the market and how it could be used at the City. She wanted her thoughts on integrating this with an older grid.

Ms. Pajjuri thought the ability to do better demand forecasting would improve the possibilities with sustenance. She expressed her confidence that they were doing well from a technological perspective. She spoke about providing incentives in order to have more development projects. She expressed her hopes in learning from the ARB and understanding what it will take to grow their solar presence even more, getting energy produced back onto the grid or make homes self-sustained.

Sean Holman discussed his background in computer science and software engineering.

Council Member Burt was interested in how his professional background would inform his strategic thinking on where they should be headed on utility transformation.

Mr. Holman explained he would bring a sensitivity to how to think about engaging the community and technical expertise understanding how to evaluate creative solutions.

Council Member Lythcott-Haims asked Mr. Holman to expand on his statement of being interested in their electric grid modernization plan and wanting to be sure they have an equitable future grid.

Mr. Holman described experience in working with the City of Los Angeles where he learned how much of an impact infrastructure has on equity.

Council Member Veenker questioned his thoughts on other utilities.

Mr. Holman admitted there is a lot he does not know about other utilities but he is interested in learning.

Mayor Stone asked, if appointed, how he intended to fill those gaps in knowledge before being seated on the board.

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Mr. Holman stated he has spent time looking at past meetings and material and he would learn directly from fellow Utility Commission members.

Abraham Bagherjeiran shared his background in applied science, artificial intelligence, search and advertising. He admitted to having no experience working with utilities or city government.

Council Member Lythcott-Haims asked for his thoughts about lowering cost and improving the quality of service.

Mr. Bagherjeiran answered he did not have a specific plan, more of a general intent. He talked about looking into the metering process and the possibility of installing underground power lines and other ideas for improving service.

Council Member Tanaka was curious about his thoughts on opportunities that AI could be used to make utilities better in Palo Alto.

Mr. Bagherjeiran opined AI could be effective in collecting data to increase efficiency.

Utsav Gupta provided a background of his education and experience in patent litigation. He discussed a passion for fiber to the premises and water quality.

Council Member Kou asked about his investigation running fiber installation.

Mr. Gupta described his experience in running fiber installation.

Vice Mayor Lauing wanted his thoughts on how the water could be improved.

Mr. Gupta spoke about the Environmental Working Group who has a database of water quality and contaminants that exist in water supplies including Palo Alto. He thought research studies from academic institutions should be looked at.

Council Member Burt asked for Mr. Gupta's insight into energy transformation.

Mr. Gupta discussed his experience in creating a sustainability resource center.

Council Member Tanaka wanted Mr. Gupta's perception on Palo Alto's ability to be cost competitive and provide quality customer service on fiber to the premises.

Mr. Gupta gave his views on Palo Alto's ability to provide fiber to the premises.

BREAK 7:15 PM – 7:35 PM

Human Relations Commission		
7:35 PM	Marc Schoenen	Zoom

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7:45 PM	Uzma Minhas	In Person
7:55 PM	Don Barr	In Person
8:05 PM	Cara Silver	In Person
8:15 PM	Mary Kate Stimmler	In Person

Marc Schoenen talked about his family's involvement in the community and his experience working in Human Relations.

Council Member Veenker queried how Mr. Schoenen's personal background, activities in the community or other relevant attributes could give them confidence that he could help Palo Altoans get through the challenges of the war in Gaza with a sense of safety and belonging.

Mr. Schoenen commented that it is hard to delineate the difference between a protest versus antisemitism and there is opportunity to listen and understand issues people are having and how to intercede.

Vice Mayor Lauing wanted to know why Mr. Schoenen chose this Commission and why at this point in his career and family life.

Mr. Schoenen felt it was his duty and responsibility to serve and that the HR Commission was the one most aligned to his day-to-day expertise. He indicated a potential in bridging out to others down the road he could contribute to.

Council Member Kou inquired how he would promote keeping hateful or divisive messages from children.

Mr. Schoenen thought there were opportunities to ask children the best ways to engage in order to tailor messages, communications or strategies that will resonate with them.

Uzma Minhas provided a background of her experience in the technology sector within policy, her involvement in the community and her role as global lead for allyship and education for Muslims in the Employee Research Group. She described herself as the diverse voice in those spaces.

Council Member Lythcott-Haims inquired how Ms. Minhas' background, activities in the community or other attributes would give confidence that she would help Palo Altoans get through the challenging time of the war in Gaza with sense of safety and belonging.

Ms. Minhas declared a belief in focusing on shared values and being allies to each other. She outlined her skill in identifying hate speech and discrimination.

Council Member Kou asked how she would approach not putting adult thoughts and biases on the youth.

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Ms. Minhas thought acceptance was already being modeled at home. She believed there to be age-appropriate ways to bring up what is happening in the world in a way that fosters listening and mutual respect.

Council Member Burt was taken aback by a couple of repostings by Ms. Minhas on LinkedIn that alluded to divestment from Israel is divestment from whiteness and Zionism as being ethnic cleansing.

Ms. Minhas discussed her views on human rights and antisemitism and offered her willingness to discuss those views.

Don Barr discussed his background teaching a social inequality and health class at Stanford and experiences in the community. He talked about his focus on low-income housing.

Mayor Stone was curious how Mr. Barr's professional or personal background or community activities could give confidence that he would be able to help Palo Altoans get through the challenging time of the conflicts in the Middle East with a sense of safety and belonging.

Mr. Barr remarked about past experiences where he learned that listening and understanding is key to letting people speak while also saying there are certain things going on for certain vulnerable populations that should not be happening.

Council Member Burt wanted to know what Mr. Barr saw as what the HRC could do most meaningfully going forward in today's environment.

Mr. Barr thought that by understanding who the most vulnerable populations are the what their greatest needs are.

Council Member Veenker questioned if there were any polarizing posts they might need to talk about.

Mr. Barr indicated that he does not interact with social media.

Cara Silver discussed her background as a municipal attorney in detail and experiences in her capacity as a public attorney. She hoped to pivot to policy related issues in her retirement. She expressed interest in housing and youth issues.

Council Member Veenker asked how Ms. Silver's professional and personal background, activities or social media statements will give confidence would give them confidence she could help Palo Altoans get through the trying time during the conflict in the Middle East with a sense of safety and belonging.

Ms. Silver thought the listening sessions conducted by the HRC were brilliantly done and helpful and the action items the Commission will be forwarded to Council for consideration were reflective of the comments she heard from both communities.

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Council Member Kou queried if Ms. Silver is also an experienced mediator.

Ms. Silver explained that she was once a volunteer trial judge and mediator but she has not done any recent mediation.

Mayor Stone questioned what Ms. Silver saw as the most pressing issue facing the HRC and how her experience would benefit the Commission in that area.

Ms. Silver thought the Middle East conflict was something the HRC would continue to be involved in and that housing is a big issue the HRC can vet.

Mary Kate Stimmler shared her background and experiences as a social scientist and as an HRC member.

Council Member Lythcott-Haims wanted to know how Ms. Stimmler's profession or personal background, activities in the community, other attributes, social media or other public statements can give them confidence that she will be able to help Palo Altoans get through the challenging time of the conflict in the Middle East with as great of a sense of safety and belonging as possible.

Ms. Stimmler opined that her experience on the HRC listening to the powerful stories shared was the number one thing she would bring back to the Commission. She described her background as a social scientist as a skill that would be helpful in looking at these issues.

Vice Mayor Lauing wanted Ms. Stimmler's views on what has worked, next steps and constraints in dealing with the issues involving the conflict in the Middle East.

Ms. Stimmler described creative ways to bring mediation into the situation, to preserve the culture of inclusion in Palo Alto and to reinvigorate the Committee.

Public Art Commission		
8:25 PM	Hsinya Shen	In Person
8:35 PM	Harriet Stern	In Person
8:45 PM	Tara de la Garza	In Person
8:55 PM	Claude Ezran	In Person
9:05 PM	Yuri Chang	In Person
9:15 PM	Allison Huynh	In Person
9:25 PM	Amber Smith	In Person
9:35 PM	Sonia Patwardhan	In Person

Hsinya Shen sought reappointment to the Public Art Commission of Palo Alto. She discussed her vision to support ways to create inclusive spaces, encourage participation and celebrate the

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rich cultural heritage and spoke about her experience on the Commission and her goals if she is reappointed.

Mayor Stone asked if there are places in Palo Alto other than the Fry's site where Ms. Shen could see public art expanded to tell stories.

Ms. Shen talked about how public art is represented in as many places as possible in Palo Alto.

Vice Mayor Lauing wanted to hear Ms. Shen's thoughts on the process the Commission should follow to prioritize expenditures and how it got back to Council for the right kind of decision making process.

Ms. Shen spoke about how the public art program has put in more governance in how they invite artwork into the public art portfolio and where to deaccession a piece of artwork that is no longer viable.

Council Member Kou wanted Ms. Shen to share lessons she has learned regarding the murals in Midtown.

Ms. Shen talked about how the City manages and maintains murals and the process of deaccessioning.

Harriet Stern stressed her desire to serve on the Public Art Commission. She described public art projects she has brought to the City.

Council Member Lythcott-Haims wondered if Ms. Stern had any further thoughts regarding her comment about Palo Alto maintaining subsidized artists studios somewhere within the City limits if Cubberley were to be used for something else in the future.

Ms. Stern spoke about the artwork being produced at Open Studios at Cubberley a couple of weeks prior which impressed her that Palo Alto is drawing artists of a high caliber due to the fact they have these subsidized studio programs so she thought it imperative to provide that for the artists and the community.

Council Member Burt asked if Ms. Stern had any thoughts about opportunities of having those artists using walls at Cubberley as a canvas.

Ms. Stern thought that would be a tall order and it would be necessary to have architects and engineers come in to fix Cubberley up. She opined the artists involve themselves in the community in different ways.

Council Member Veenker wanted to hear more about the specific goals she had listed.

Ms. Stern talked about how she would love to see communities more involved in the arts and creating art that can be displayed publicly.

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Tara de la Garza described how she became an American citizen last year specifically so she could join the Public Art Commission. She detailed her experience as a curator and being active in the community. She spoke about her vision for Cubberley as far as public art. She described a nonprofit that she runs called Inventurous.

Council Member Lythcott-Haims asked Ms. de la Garza to address how the Public Art Commission might address stimulating retail and using Third Thursday in that capacity.

Ms. de la Garza suggested getting the word out about Third Thursday and discussed her experience with the No Longer Empty program.

Council Member Burt asked if Ms. de la Garza had any thoughts about integrating Code/Art Festivals with empty store fronts or other locations to have ongoing for some time.

Ms. de la Garza suggested building a cadre of volunteers that can be in those spaces and having a simple insurance policy to indemnify the landlord and temporary tenant. She described her bigger goal of a unified idea of what Silicon Valley is.

Claude Ezran described how he successfully organized Palo Alto World Music Day for years and his deep appreciation for art. He revealed that he is a jury chair for UNAFF. He talked about goals of bringing a wow factor to the City's art.

Vice Mayor Lauing wanted to know how Mr. Ezran would convince his colleagues which art did or did not have a wow factor.

Mr. Ezran agreed that was subjective but discussed his previous experiences collaborating with colleagues.

Mayor Stone queried how his prior service on the HRC would help him in a role on the Public Art Commission.

Mr. Ezran answered that taught him how the City functions and how to collaborate with City Staff.

Council Member Kou questioned Mr. Ezran's thoughts on any place that Palo Alto might be missing opportunity for art work.

Mr. Ezran described places he felt could be used for public art.

Council Member Veenker asked if Mr. Ezran had thoughts about more intentional ways art could be integrated with some of the work of other commissions and City projects.

Mr. Ezran said he would look at funding and if they could get additional money from private citizens. He mentioned taking opportunities on new buildings to install art.

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Yuri Chang talked about her experience as an art historian specializing in government funded exhibitions and public art programs. She outlined the expertise she would bring to the Public Art Commission. She described her passion in advocating and teaching diversity, equity and inclusion.

Council Member Lythcott-Haims wondered how Ms. Chang would take all the knowledge she has acquired and apply it to a small city.

Ms. Chang described what she learned from her thesis project about culture identities and how she would apply it to a role on the Public Art Commission.

Council Member Burt asked if Ms. Chang had ideas about additional forms of art that could become more accessible to the community or locations where the community would benefit from those forms.

Ms. Chang described how interactive art is the most accessible form of art to older or disabled community members, especially people with developmental disability.

Council Member Tanaka questioned Ms. Chang if great art only comes with lots of money.

Ms. Chang talked about forms of art that could be created with a limited budget.

Allison Huynh spoke about her experiences and passion for art and her background in a tech career and as president of Palo Alto High School Team.

Vice Mayor Lauing asked Ms. Huynh how she would suggest creating a fund for public art projects and who would be the beneficiaries of that.

Ms. Huynh described how she thought the process would be executed.

Council Member Veenker queried how to support the ones who might be gifted but overlooked.

Ms. Huynh talked about ways to spot gifted artists.

Amber Smith described her experience as an emerging artist and her activity in the community.

Council Member Veenker wanted more detail about Ms. Smith's Cuppa Joe project and how it was received.

Ms. Smith described the process of putting her project together and how it brought her neighborhood together. She expressed how art can symbolize changes society needs to make.

Council Member Kou asked what other things besides the utility boxes she has been waiting for.

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Ms. Smith wanted to see a mural that celebrates Silicon Valley and making the train stations friendly. She liked involving children and families in public art.

Council Member Lythcott-Haims wondered what the Public Art Commission could do to get involved with the schools to bring the creativity of floats back to the Mayfete Parade.

Ms. Smith believed it was just not organized or asked for. She suggested making it a competition.

Sonia Patwardhan described her experience as an art gallery owner in Palo Alto and her previous experience working in marketing and advertising.

Mayor Stone asked for Ms. Patwardhan's thoughts about the greatest need in Palo Alto as far as public art and how she would bring her background experience to the Commission.

Ms. Patwardhan indicated she would put high quality art from different parts of the world in key places in Palo Alto.

Council Member Veenker wanted to know if there were places other than the fire department that one might not immediately think of as locations for public art that Ms. Patwardhan would suggest they might get more creative about.

Ms. Patwardhan described places where a lot of people come together consistently as key places for art.

Council Member Tanaka queried if Ms. Patwardhan had an opinion on an art piece in the City that she thought was not right.

Ms. Patwardhan provided a basic ground rule for art in that it has to work well across multiple age groups, be appropriate for kids and be politically correct. She thought it would be helpful to run public art pieces by a few members of ethnicities.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 9:50 P.M.