



# CITY COUNCIL SUMMARY MINUTES

Regular Meeting  
January 8, 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, Veenker

Present Remotely:

Absent:

## Call to Order

Mayor Kou called all Council members to the dais and called the meeting to order.

Interim City Clerk Mahealani Ah Yun took roll and declared all were present.

Mayor Kou welcomed everyone and announced this was a ceremonial meeting in which Council would select the mayor and vice mayor for 2024 and express appreciation for the 2023 mayor, vice mayor, and Council. She acknowledged Council members and elected officials who were present – Council Member Lynette Lee Eng from Los Altos, Council Member Neysa Fligor from Los Altos, Council Member Sally Meadows from Los Altos, Council Member Linda Swan from Los Altos Hills, Council Member Margaret Abe-Koga from Mountain View, Council Member Emily Ann Ramos from Mountain View, Mayor Yan Zhao from Saratoga, Mayor Larry Klein from Sunnyvale, Council Member Russ Melton from Sunnyvale, Board Member Jennifer DiBrenza from PAUSD, Vice President of PAUSD Shana Segal, Representative Alex Kobayashi from Office of State Senator Josh Becker, Senior Field Representative Leslie Bulbuk from Office of State Assemblymember Marc Berman, Policy Aide Kilian Mallon from Office of County Supervisor Joe Simitian, Karen Holman former Council member and Mayor of Palo Alto, Council Member Hung Wei from Cupertino, former Mayor and Council Member Liz Kniss, and former Council Member and Mayor Betsy Bechtel. She thanked the many Palo Alto Board and Commission members who were in the audience.

## Special Orders of the Day

### 1. Election of the 2024 Mayor

Mayor Kou outlined the procedure. Nominations for the position of mayor would be collected from Council members. Four votes would be required. After the collection of nominations,

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Council Members who made a nomination and nominated Council Members would be invited to speak, then other Council Members could comment, and then there would be public comment. Public comments would be limited to the agenda topic. General public comments on items not on the agenda would be taken after Council completed the items on the agenda. After the vote, the Clerk would distribute an electronic ballot to Council members. After submission of all ballots, the Clerk would read aloud the name of each Council Member and who they voted for. The nominee receiving the majority of votes would be elected mayor. The new mayor would then conduct the election of the 2024 vice mayor in the same way. She opened the floor for nominations for mayor.

Council Member Lythcott-Haims thanked Mayor Kou for her leadership. She nominated Vice Mayor Stone for mayor.

Council Member Tanaka nominated Council Member Veenker for mayor.

Council Member Lythcott-Haims voiced why she thought a vice mayor should be elevated to mayor. However, her support for Vice Mayor Stone went beyond a procedural presumption of elevating a vice mayor. She detailed why she supported Vice Mayor Stone for mayor, which included the work he did for the City, his commitment to public service, his dedication to the City, his style of leadership, his values around equity, his work with youth, and his responsiveness to the community.

Council Member Tanaka voiced that it had been a pleasure working with Council Member Veenker, and he had been impressed with her fairness. He stated that the role of the mayor was to run efficient and effective Council meetings, and he thought her legal background would help in that. He described her as being thoughtful and caring.

Council Member Veenker thanked Council Member Tanaka for the nomination. She was flattered and humbled. She would be delighted to serve, but she respectfully declined the nomination and supported the nomination of Vice Mayor Stone.

Vice Mayor Stone thanked Council Member Lythcott-Haims for the nomination and her comments. He stated it was an honor to be nominated, and he humbly accepted. He thanked Mayor Kou for her leadership, mentorship, and friendship. He felt prepared to step into the role. He looked forward to working with Council members in 2024.

Council Member Burt supported Vice Mayor Stone for mayor. He commented that in addition to having the capability to serve in the role and lead the Council that he had the respect and trust of colleagues. He voiced that the role went beyond being ceremonial and included setting agendas; making appointments to committees and liaisons to boards, commissions, and community organizations, and City representatives to regional bodies; presiding over meetings; and leading the Council in productive, focused, inclusive, and efficient discussion. He added that the mayor was viewed as the political leader of the community.

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Council Member Lauing enthusiastically supported Vice Mayor Stone for mayor. He appreciated his work ethic, insightfulness, and humor. He hoped he would be a role model for the youth in the community. He regarded him as a good partner to Mayor Kou.

Mayor Kou expressed that Vice Mayor Stone was ready to be mayor. She stated that it had been a pleasure working with him. She noted that he was mature beyond his years, an active participant at Council and committee proceedings, insightful, and provided sound advice and comments. She discussed him doing a very good job as the liaison to the San Francisco Community Roundtable addressing airplane noise and emissions. He was also a voice on the San Francisquito Creek Joint Powers Authority Board. She agreed with Council Member Burt's comments related to the role of mayor. She summarized that he was strong, fair, and a community leader. She looked forward to supporting him as mayor.

Public Comment:

Aram J. (Zoom) voiced that Vice Mayor Stone was capable, but he did not support his nomination. He wanted Council Member Veenker to be mayor.

Rebecca E. (Zoom), speaking personally and not as Director of Valley Water, was impressed with the statements that had been made by Council members. She supported Vice Mayor Stone for mayor and supported the tradition of vice mayor becoming mayor. She noted that she had worked with Vice Mayor Stone on the San Francisquito Creek JPA, and he had been a delightful, contributing, and positive member of the board and a leader. She hoped Council Member Veenker could be rewarded with the vice mayor role.

Lubnaq (Zoom) had comments related to PAUSD and COVID.

Mayor Kou asked that she make her comments later in the meeting.

**NOMINATION:** Council Member Lythcott-Haims nominated Council Member Stone for Mayor for 2024.

Interim City Clerk Mahealani Ah Yun took an oral roll call vote for mayor as there was only one nominee.

**NOMINATION FOR COUNCIL MEMBER STONE AS MAYOR FOR 2024 PASSED: 6-1, Tanaka no**

Mayor Stone thanked everyone for their support and trusting him to lead the City in 2024. He acknowledged Council Member Kou for her service as mayor in 2023. He voiced that he had learned much from her, and he would do his best to represent the City as honorably as she had. He thanked Council members for having faith in him. He was honored to lead the City and Council in 2024. He thanked his wife, parents, family, and friends for their patience and his parents for their sacrifices in making Palo Alto his home. He stated that being chosen as mayor was the greatest honor of his life. He believed that a title was honorary if it was not used to better the lives of the people served. He looked forward to working with colleagues, staff, and

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the community to address Palo Alto's greatest challenges, including housing, zoning, climate, electrification, the natural environment, economic development, supporting the business community, and youth mental health and wellbeing. He announced the formation of the Youth Mental Health and Wellbeing Blue Ribbon Taskforce comprised of key stakeholders in the nonprofit sector, medical professionals, educators, professionals, student representatives, a member of the PRC, himself, and Shana Segal, and the taskforce would work together to articulate key needs and goals, identify gaps in services, and recommend policies and programs to Council. He was pleased to work with his colleagues in service to the City and residents.

## 2. Election of the 2024 Vice Mayor

Council Member Burt nominated Council Member Lauing for vice mayor. He thought the new Council members would be able to lead Council in the next few years. He felt Council Member Lauing had the experience and understanding of the processes and the issues to step into the role.

Council Member Lythcott-Haims nominated Council Member Veenker for vice mayor. She respected Council Member Lauing's service to the City, but she was nominating Council Member Veenker because she had experience and readiness from serving regionally and nationally. She noted that she was an attorney, chaired boards, served as general counsel to boards, chaired meetings of various companies, and had a technical background, and she was innovative and analyzed every issue to ensure the right things were being considered and that it would be done justly. She mentioned that she came out in first place when Council members were last elected. She provided details related to the connections she had outside Palo Alto that were complementary, strong, and valuable. She voiced that she attended every event. She respected that she voted her conscious when a mediated outcome could not be reached. She discussed her having brought a wide array of Palo Alto groups together. She added that she would bring gender diversity to the role.

Council Member Lauing thanked Council Member Burt for the nomination, and he explained why it was meaningful to him. He congratulated Mayor Stone and stated he wanted to work with and support him. He accepted the nomination as a long-term public servant for Palo Alto residents. He noted that he had developed a very detailed understanding of the complexities of the City's protocols, staff, and processes. He promised to hit the ground running if elected. He detailed that his community service before his work for the City was in leadership roles. He was offering extensive prior experience in leading a group of colleagues to reach constructive solutions for the City. He thought he was chosen multiple times by colleagues for commissions because he was prepared in advance, balanced in approach, and treated all equally. He tried to lead out of stalemates and toward productive solutions. He was focused on addressing issues at hand for time management and other reasons. Solutions required more than what would occur at Council meetings and included pre and post briefings and debriefings, and staff, Council, and the public were critical components in addressing City issues. He outlined how group members could demonstrate leadership ability and interest by creating new, productive initiatives that were not on anyone's agenda. He commented that working with former Mayor Kou had been

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terrific. He noted that Mayor Stone had a legal background and was a renter, a teacher, and young, and he, himself, had extensive business and operating experience and was a homeowner, an executive recruiter, and older, and he stated that those differences were complementary to each other. He added that Mayor Stone was a busy teacher and that he, himself, had a flexible schedule, which would allow him to step in if needed. He wanted to focus on funding and executing top priorities.

Council Member Veenker humbly accepted the nomination but asked to hold her comments until after public comment.

Mayor Stone replied that she could comment after public comment.

Council Member Kou reserved her comments until after public comment.

## Public Comment:

Cari T., a Planning and Transportation Commissioner, spoke on her personal behalf. She congratulated Mayor Stone. She thought each Council member was capable of leading the body. She hoped the legacy would be to ensure the existence of a fair process for future Councils. She wanted there to be rotation based on objective criteria reflecting the will of the people. She supported Council Member Veenker for current vice mayor and Council Member Lauing for the position next year.

Kathleen F.H., founder and owner of Ada's Café, congratulated Mayor Stone and thanked him, former Mayor Kou, and Council members for their service. She supported Council Member Lauing as vice mayor. She viewed him as having leadership and consensus-building skills and to be hardworking, honest, a good listener, and transparent.

Bruce H., from Carbon-Free Palo Alto, enthusiastically supported Council Member Veenker for vice mayor. He remarked that her commitment to climate issues was solid, and focused leadership was needed. He stated that she had a proven ability to listen and bring together divergent viewpoints into a shared understanding of effective solutions.

Anne C. congratulated Mayor Stone and thanked former Mayor Kou for all she had done. She was in her third term as the Park and Recreation Commissioner. She supported Council Member Lauing as vice mayor. She commented that she had worked with him on the PRC, and he provided great enthusiasm and leadership, listened respectfully to various views, and encouraged thoughtful discussion while keeping focus on the goal. She added that he was good at running meetings and understood the importance of community and recreation parks and open space for all. She thanked Council for their work and commitment to Palo Alto.

Jennifer D., with PAUSD, spoke for herself. She congratulated Mayor Stone and thanked him and former Mayor Kou for their service. She was grateful to both nominees. She supported Council Member Veenker for the role as she was a model of civic diplomacy and was able to find the path to consensus. She had worked with her on the Sibling City events. She discussed

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the School Board's system for appointments, which she thought was a great systematic way to do it.

Liz K. hoped balance, gender, and global experience would be considered, which she explained. She thought Council Member Lythcott-Haims rightly described what was needed for the job.

Jackie W. congratulated Mayor Stone. She supported Council Member Veenker for vice mayor because she was a strong leader, aggressive on climate action and housing and met regularly with community leaders on these topics, and supported many organizations and community programs. She thought there should be diversity on the Council.

Max G., a junior at Paly, spoke of his experiences with Council Member Veenker. He had worked with Council Member Veenker and had learned a lot about Council meetings and agendas and how to organize events. He saw her doing work to make the community a better place and to help the City and its residents. He urged all to vote for her.

Winter D. voiced that the position required experience related to the job description. She supported Council Member Lauing because of his knowledge and experience, which she summarized. She wanted Council Member Veenker to be elected next time.

Bryna C., Vice Chair of the PTC, speaking as an individual congratulated Mayor Stone and thanked former Mayor Kou. She supported Council Member Lauing. She found him to be a great leader based on the many years she worked with him on the PTC. She was impressed with how strategic he was, and she appreciated his listening and facilitation skills. She thought his temperament was uniquely suited to working on City problems because he was patient, diplomatic, and service oriented.

Kaisa G., former Public Engagement Director for the City of Bloomington, Indiana, and a student at Stanford Law School, spoke in a personal capacity in strong support for Council Member Veenker for vice mayor because of her qualifications. She worked closely with her on the Sibling Cities USA Program and voiced that she was an exceptional ambassador for Palo Alto. She was dedicated and a talented attorney, mediator, and consensus builder. She noted that demographics, gender, race, and others should not be the primary factor in selecting leadership roles, but representation was important, and there should be diversity of perspectives in life experiences in leaders.

Keith R. mentioned that he had worked very closely with Council Member Lauing on the PRC, the Housing Element Workgroup, and the PTC. He found him to be very productive, capable, patient, and detail oriented and to have a collaborative style, which made others effective. He highly recommended him for vice mayor.

Hamilton H. (Zoom) supported Council Member Lauing for vice mayor. He worked with him when he was Co-Chair of the Housing Element, and he smoothly ran Zoom meetings with a diverse set of over 15 folks, and everyone had been granted equal speaking time, and he kept

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everyone on topic and the meetings to time. He found him to be engaged, smart, and thoughtful.

Aram J. (Zoom) supported Council Member Veenker for vice mayor. He noted that he had had a gentlemanly conversation with Council Member Lauing, but he did not know where he stood on Israel and a ceasefire, which he wanted to discuss with him in the future. He asked if the Housing Element had been approved. He noted that he had had many dialogues with Council Member Veenker.

Rebecca E., Council's elected representative on the Santa Clara Valley Water District, was speaking in a personal capacity and asked that Council Member Lythcott-Haims' comments be incorporated into her comments. She defined leadership as a combination of integrity and courage, and effectiveness was also important. Council Member Lauing deserved respect, but she supported Council Member Veenker. She spoke of her integrity and courage. She served on an environmental-related commission with her, and she voiced that she was extraordinary, brilliant, and the best ally.

Doria S. (Zoom), Chair of the Planning Commission, spoke as an individual, enthusiastically congratulated Mayor Stone and thanked former Mayor Kou for her great work, and she hoped it would continue. She noted that both nominees were wonderful people, Council members, and public servants. She had served for six years on the Planning Commission with Council Member Lauing, and she described him as being collegial, balanced, fair, a team player, respectful, and a problem solver. She thought it was important that he be vice mayor this year, and she looked forward to Council Member Veenker being vice mayor next year.

Julian H., the Student Body President at Palo Alto High School, congratulated Mayor Stone on his recent election and Council Member Kou for her years of service. He supported Council Member Veenker for vice mayor. He worked with her in Sibling Cities USA, and he found her to be a resolute community member and to represent Palo Alto's values and to encourage the development of Palo Alto's youth. He believed she would nurture the next generation of leaders. He stated that she tackled issues related to climate and race and belonging.

Goolrukh V. (Zoom), a local businessperson, congratulated Mayor Stone. She spoke of equality, fairness, and compassion, and she hoped the vice mayor would be female. She hoped the mayor, vice mayor, and Council would addresses the small business situation.

Council Member Veenker thanked Mayor Stone for allowing her to reserve comment until after public comment. She was humbled and heartened by the public comments. She remarked that she had fondness and respect for Council Member Lauing. She thanked the public for attending and sharing and Council Member Lythcott-Haims for her confidence. She was eager and ready to take on the role of vice mayor. She mentioned that she had convened a lot of meetings, and she elaborated on the Sibling Cities meetings, which included race and belonging, climate, and bridging regional divides. She voiced that it was a privilege to serve on this Council. She detailed why the City was special. She was eager to seek and realize the potential of Palo Alto, and she

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thought she was situated to do that. She would treasure working with Council no matter what capacity she did it in. She believed she could amplify the vision of Mayor Stone if she could become part of the mayor-vice mayor team. Related to Mayor Stone's teaching career, she noted that she had flexibility in her schedule, and she knew the struggles of owning a home versus the struggles of renting, and she thought there were complementary assets. She wanted to lift up Palo Alto, center it, bring in assets, and help Palo Alto iterate beyond its borders. She would be delighted and honored to have the opportunity.

Council Member Kou expressed that she had a lot of respect for both nominees. She remarked that Palo Alto Weekly referred to Council Member Lauing as a City Hall veteran. She added that he volunteered and contributed his time to support Council for over 15 years as a commissioner on the PRC and PTC and chaired the respective commissions numerous times. It was critical that the mayor and vice Mayor have a strong relationship, and she believed Mayor Stone and Council Member Lauing would work well together as they had already on the Housing Ad Hoc Committee and the Housing Element Ad Hoc Committee. She displayed the City Palo of Alto Organizational Chart and outlined how Council Member Lauing had represented the residents. She thanked all who spoke on behalf of Council Member Veenker and acknowledged they were heard, and she stated there would be opportunities for her. Regarding balance, gender, and global experience, she thought it was about the diverse community of Palo Alto. She felt that Mayor Stone and Council Member Lauing would provide balance. As for gender, she suggested there not be deflection from capabilities. She added that Council Member Lauing had a daughter and granddaughter. She supported the nomination of Council Member Lauing for vice mayor.

Council Member Lythcott-Haims shared the City Palo of Alto Organizational Chart and noted that women had been underrepresented in the leadership of Palo Alto until recently. If there was an opportunity for gender parity when selecting leadership, it seemed logical that it should be advanced.

Council Member Veenker had been informed that Kaloma Smith had to leave the meeting and did not mean any disrespect to the Council.

Mayor Stone considered this an incredibly difficult vote. He commented that Council Member Veenker had greatly impressed him, and she was one of the smartest people he knew and one of the most accomplished attorneys. He would not have felt comfortable stepping into the position after a year, and he thought experience mattered. He mentioned that Council Member Lauing had 13-plus years' experience in service to the City as a Parks and Recreation Commissioner and as a PTC Commissioner, and he had served in leadership as Chair of those commissions 5 of the 13 years. He felt confident that Council Member Lauing would be able step in and Chair a meeting, and he had had the trust of colleagues. He imagined that in a year Council Member Veenker would be supported as vice mayor. He voted for experience at the City level.

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**NOMINATION:** Council Member Burt nominated Council Member Lauing for Vice Mayor for 2024.

**NOMINATION:** Council Member Lythcott-Haims nominated Council Member Veenker for Vice Mayor for 2024.

Interim City Clerk Mahealani Ah Yun outlined the voting process.

## **First Round of voting for the position of Vice Mayor with term ending December 31, 2024.**

### Voting For:

Ed Lauing Burt, Kou, Lauing, Stone

Vicki Veenker Lythcott-Haims, Tanaka, Veenker

**NOMINATION FOR COUNCIL MEMBER LAUING AS VICE MAYOR FOR 2024 PASSED: 4-3**

3. Adoption of a Resolution Expressing Appreciation for Outstanding Public Service to Lydia Kou as 2023 Mayor

Mayor Stone read the resolution. The City Council of the City of Palo Alto honored and commended former Mayor Lydia Kou for outstanding public service and recorded the appreciation of the Council, residents, and businesses for her meritorious service and commitment as a Palo Alto Mayor.

## Public Comment:

Lori M. remarked that former Mayor Kou led with empathy. She shared a story that occurred just after October 7 related to the Jewish community and Hamas, and she appreciated her taking her call and listening to her. She encouraged all to read former Mayor Kou's statement to City Council. She quoted a statement of Rabbi Jonathan Sacks concerning leadership. She congratulated Mayor Stone. She thanked every member of Council for all they had done, and she looked forward to working with them.

Lynette L. E., a City of Los Altos Council member, spoke as a community member. She stated that she had had the pleasure of serving with Council Member and former Mayor Kou at VTA committees, and she found her to be thoughtful and eager to listen and learn, which she appreciated. They had also worked on diversity, equity, and inclusion matters, and she thanked her for that. She appreciated her community approach and speaking up for the youth, seniors, and those with developmental disabilities. She appreciated her common sense approach based on reality rather than ideology and party lines. She expressed that Palo Alto had been fortunate to have her as a mayor and congratulated her on a job well done for 2023. She looked forward to working with Mayor Stone and Vice Mayor Lauing.

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Kilian M., from the Office of County Supervisor Joe Simitian, stated that Mr. Simitian sent his regrets for not being able to attend the meeting. He thanked former Mayor Kou and Council for their collaboration with the County in 2023 on a range of issues, and they looked forward to working with Council in 2024.

Mora O., Executive Director of Youth Community Service, congratulated Mayor Stone and Vice Mayor Lauing, and she thanked former Mayor Kou for her service in 2023. She was grateful for her service last year, and she provided three examples, which included volunteering during the flooding, inspirational messages, and youth mental health. She thanked Mayor Stone for continuing the work with youth and helping them through their academics. She added that the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service event would be on January 15.

Terry H. congratulated Mayor Stone and thanked him for teaching in the school district. He congratulated Vice Mayor Lauing. He described former Mayor Kou as one of the most sensitive and caring individuals ever to serve on Council, who worked diligently and was not afraid to challenge City staff, and he encouraged all to follow in those footsteps. He mentioned that former Mayor Kou believed in local government and democracy, and he noted that the City needed good local political representation.

Winter D. thanked former Mayor Kou for founding and supporting the diversity events in Barron Park Neighborhood and for being the pioneer and the foremost advocate for greater renter protections in Palo Alto. She thanked her for having brought a great deal of heart to being mayor and for being warm and sweet to people. She congratulated Mayor Stone and Vice Mayor Lauing.

Aram J. (Zoom) congratulated former Mayor Kou for her service and spoke of her graciousness toward him. He thanked her for her work in emergency services in the City. He requested she apologize for her comments related to the NAACP. He was disappointed in her actions concerning a ceasefire in Gaza and asked for her support.

Darlene Y., President and Cofounder of Aviation-Impacted Communities Alliance and Concerned Residents of Palo Alto, congratulated Mayor Stone and Vice Mayor Lauing. She was thrilled to have worked with former Mayor Kou over many years, and she noted that she did many spectacular things behind the scenes, and she thanked her.

Rebecca E. commended and thanked former Mayor Kou for her hard work. She attested to her integrity, courage, and kindness. She explained that she welcomed their disagreements on certain issues. She thought her life experiences and being a woman and a person of color guided her perception in a positive direction. She thanked her for her stance in support of Jewish Palo Altans.

Council Member Burt thought everything had been said but not everybody had said it. He echoed many of the public comments. He commented that former Mayor Kou led with empathy and caring for community members, which guided everything she did. He thanked her for her service.

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Council Member Veenker admired former Mayor Kou's heart, empathy, compassion, sincere caring for the community, and her work ethic. She appreciated and thanked her for the way she had gracefully led Council and for her support and service.

Vice Mayor Lauing appreciated former Mayor Kou's Organizational Chart. He believed she was very resident focused and fought for them. He remarked that the City benefitted from her sacrifices and all the work she did. He believed she had led the Council with grace, courage, and a strong gavel at the right times under some very difficult circumstances. He was proud that she had been mayor and that he worked with her, and he thanked her.

Council Member Lythcott-Haims joined her colleagues and the residents in the accolades for former Mayor Kou. She felt welcomed by her when she was sworn in as a Council member. She stated that her leadership encouraged Council to be a congenial group and to prioritize doing what was best for the City. She saluted and appreciated her and was grateful for her leadership.

Council Member Tanaka thanked former Mayor Kou for her service. Despite disagreements, she always tried to give people equal airtime, which he felt was important. He believed her heart was in the right place. He saw her as a hard worker. He thought the City was better off because of her having been mayor.

Mayor Stone stated that former Mayor Kou's leadership spoke volumes to who she was. He felt safe with her leadership when the Zoombombing occurred a couple months ago, which she handled with grace and courage. He spoke of the massive storms about a year ago and her filling sandbags, etc., and then after the storms, she (in person) checked on residents impacted by the floods, and she did not contact the press or make social media posts for political advantage. He declared that she did it because she was a good person. He was grateful that she would be on Council for another year. He thanked her for her leadership.

Council Member Kou thanked everyone for attending the meeting and for the wonderful comments. She discussed that she started her position as mayor with the storms that led to flooding, which was a realization that all had a part in ensuring safety of lives, homes, and businesses. She spoke of work being done by Public Works and residents to address the flooding in the neighborhoods to ensure safety and health. She voiced that with the addition of new Council members she had to incorporate their different work styles, which involved a lot of listening, observing, and learning, and she thanked Council Member Veenker, Vice Mayor Lauing, and Council Member Lythcott-Haims for that opportunity. She addressed the extremely high utility bills for gas and electric, and she spoke of having attended the National League of Cities conference in Washington, D.C., to advocate and lobby, and she had asked for an investigation with regard to the City's experience with natural gas price hikes, and the investigation could take over a year, and she would continue to monitor that. At that conference, she also discussed the City's funding and policy priorities, including the City's congressionally directed spending request for infrastructure funding to help in redeveloping the Buena Vista Mobile Home Park, which would be forthcoming, and grade separation projects and airplane noise issues impacting the City, and she had shared the City's priorities and

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obtained information about available resources for transportation infrastructure projects as a result of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. On behalf of the City of Palo Alto, she thanked Townsend Political Agency for helping her arrange the meetings she attended at the conference. She addressed mourning those who lost their lives in mass shootings, and encouraged better control of gun laws. She thanked the natural environmentalists who advocated for the Bay and marshlands to act as the critical barriers between rising tides and homes to protect against flooding, etc. She discussed the privilege of meeting President Joe Biden. She noted that a picture had been taken after the meeting, and President Biden made certain that she was included in the picture. She mentioned that he was observant, kind, thoughtful, and intelligent. She thanked Neighbors Abroad for the opportunity to work with them. She thanked John St. Clair III for accompanying her to events, who was a perfect first gentleman. She asked that assistance be given to the new first lady. She was grateful that La Comida had a space at Avenidas, but she would continue to be involved in ensuring unbiased treatment of all seniors. She believed there was work to be done in economic development, especially developing a strategic plan. She stated the City's Organizational Chart was a reminder that the work being done was for Palo Alto's residents. She thanked the neighbor associations, Palo Alto Neighborhoods, and all associations in the city. She remarked that the residents were building the community, and she would continue to fight for people's voices and be a fierce advocate to preserve democracy or a foe of Sacramento's overreach. She thanked the City Clerk and her office, the City Manager and his office and departments, the City Attorney and her office, and all the lead department chiefs and directors for their support of her mayorship. Concerning hate speeches and divisiveness, including tragedies and atrocities happening in the world, she reminded all of the resolution introduced and passed on December 12, 2016, to reaffirm Palo Alto's commitment to a diverse, supportive, inclusive, and protective community, which she recited. She thanked all for the honor of being mayor in 2023 and for trusting her.

**MOTION:** Council Member Burt moved, seconded by Council Member Lythcott-Haims to adopt a resolution expressing appreciation to Lydia Kou as 2023 Mayor.

**MOTION PASSED: 7-0**

Mayor Stone suggested a photo be taken of City Council with former Mayor Kou displaying the resolution, and the photo was taken.

[The Council took a 10-minute break]

Mayor Stone announced that speaker time would be limited to 1 minute per speaker due to there being 46 speakers. He also declared that the agenda did not include a ceasefire resolution or any resolution related to the conflict, nor did any future agenda. He recognized it was an emotionally charged subject. He respectfully reminded everyone that peaceful expressions of opinions were allowed, but he would not tolerate bullying or jeering, and if anyone disrupted the meeting, they would be asked to leave. To ensure that everyone felt safe and not intimidated, he asked that there be no applause or jeering after speakers. He declared this would be a safe space for expressing views.

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## Public Comment

Rebecca S. thanked Council Member Kou and Council members for their service and congratulated Mayor Stone and Vice Mayor Lauing. She discussed building community and suggested there be a resolution for a ceasefire in the Hamas-Israel war. She encouraged there be no proposals moved forward that could fracture the community.

Noel S. thanked Mayor Stone for the ground rules. He asked that a motion for a ceasefire in Gaza be put on the agenda.

Thomas T. begged Council to enact a ceasefire resolution now.

Michelle H. provided names of some of the Palestinian children who lost their lives. She asked Council to urgently agendize and pass a ceasefire resolution.

Talha B. thought it was important that Palo Alto send a message that it did not support the war but instead supported humanity.

Lori M. mourned the life of innocent people. She explained why she was grateful that no action had been taken by Council related to a ceasefire, and she asked that Council continue what they were doing.

Allyson R. was grateful for the Council Member Kou's statement about the October 7 events. She did not support a ceasefire. She noted that federal government was responsible for foreign policy, not city government. She looked forward to the leadership of Mayor Stone and Vice Mayor Lauing.

Soneida D.C. pleaded that Council pass a resolution for a permanent ceasefire in Palestine. She stated that criticism of a government was a healthy sign of democracy, not a threat. She asked Council to use their influence until those who could end the cycle of trauma used theirs.

Zach M. urged Council to not introduce any resolution related to a ceasefire in the Israel-Hamas war. He asked that the focus be on the business of Palo Alto.

Sheree R. thanked Council for their work in keeping the city safe, clean, and friendly. She trusted that Council would continue to focus on City business and avoid foreign policy issues, such as a ceasefire resolution, which she felt would create division.

Brian L. urged Council to call for a ceasefire in Gaza.

Jessica K. indicated that calling for a ceasefire was not radicle but was the bare minimum, and she begged Council to open a resolution for a ceasefire now.

Sabah I. urged Council to call for an immediate and permanent ceasefire in Palestine.

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Pamela M. asked Council to pressure Congress to demand a permanent and immediate ceasefire by adopting a local ceasefire resolution. She begged Council to act on their words of racial and social justice.

Layan S. quoted from a plaque she had seen when she walked into chambers, which she expected Council to uphold – Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. She urged Council to pressure Congress to demand a permanent ceasefire to allow all humanitarian aid to enter Gaza.

Sofia S. H. asked if her elected officials stood for human rights and if they would use their platform to do so. She requested there be a resolution calling for ceasefire.

Leila T. requested there be a ceasefire resolution agendized for the next City Council meeting.

Rupini demanded a ceasefire resolution now. She discussed hearings that would begin in the ICJ related to South Africa and Israel. She asked that Council not remain silent.

Estee G. asked that Council not introduce any resolution related to a ceasefire in the Israel-Hamas war. She indicated that it was a complicated geopolitical issue. She suggested Council address issues in Palo Alto.

Kunal S. asked Council to oppose the war.

Avroh S., a representative of PASSC, appreciated Council's work toward 80% GHG emissions reductions. He requested climate change for sustainability be the number-one priority for 2024.

Julia Z., Cofounder of the PASSC, thanked Council for their leadership and care for the community. They honored and appreciated the sustainability work that had been done in the past year; approval of the S/CAP through the workplan and a carbon neutrality by 2030 goal; the progress made on the Heat Pump Water Heater Program; and the continued leadership of Council Members Veenker and Burt on the S/CAP Ad-Hoc Committee. She asked Council to reinforce prioritization and support bold climate action for 2024 and to create new timelines.

You-lo Z. voiced that he had witnessed racial hate and asked what would be done about it.

Regina S. requested Council pass a ceasefire resolution. She read a statement she received from a neighbor that she considered to be a threat.

Boris indicated that any calls for an absolute ceasefire would cause more conflict.

Alina D. congratulated Mayor Stone. She requested a ceasefire resolution.

Fred B. congratulated Mayor Stone and Vice Mayor Lauing. He stated that he would post comments in *Town Square* in response to an article that was in *The Weekly*. He thanked Council for allowing so many speakers, and he was happy they were here.

# **SUMMARY MINUTES**

Sebastien D. explained why he was asking Council to not call for a ceasefire resolution. He requested that Council help Palo Alto continue to be a diverse, inclusive community.

Lynn (Zoom) discussed why she urged Council to not call for a ceasefire resolution. She indicated that, per Council's charter, Council was tasked with acting on matters only when necessary and appropriate for the general welfare of Palo Alto residents, and opining on a war was outside the Council's charter and purview.

Aram J. (Zoom) suggested a ceasefire resolution be put on the agenda for a discussion and a decision.

Makenzie H. (Zoom) opposed Council remaining silent concerning a ceasefire. She asked that Council stand by the values of the HRC and the City of Palo Alto and agendize a ceasefire resolution immediately.

Rsm (Zoom) explained why she felt Council could be considered racist in relation to the war.

Deborahlise M. had a doctorate in post-traumatic and indigenous medicines, and she thought current events were causing trauma. She wanted to support Mayor Stone in some type of work to help the community.

Syed (Zoom) spoke of Resolution 7715 and asked for a ceasefire resolution.

Lubnaq (Zoom) congratulated Mayor Stone and Vice Mayor Lauing. She asked if time had been taken to consider what the children of Gaza were experiencing, including hunger, mental health, etc.

Ceasfire (Zoom) indicated there was a moral obligation to call for a ceasefire now, which she elaborated on. She requested that a ceasefire be supported now.

Herschel (Zoom) asked that a ceasefire resolution not be introduced. He indicated it would not be inclusive or unifying but would cause more division. He thanked Council for their service and congratulated Mayor Stone and Vice Mayor Lauing.

David Z. (Zoom) claimed that a statement by Council in support of a ceasefire was a statement in support of humanity.

Sarit S. (Zoom) asked that Council not bring a ceasefire resolution to Palo Alto. She claimed that it would have no impact on the war but would sow hatred and division locally. She thanked Council for leading with empathy and continuing to build inclusion and unity in Palo Alto.

CC (Zoom) requested an immediate ceasefire resolution.

Mm238 (Zoom) asked Council to not call for a ceasefire. He opined that it would have no impact on the war in the Middle East but would sow hatred and division and possibly create an unsafe environment.

# **SUMMARY MINUTES**

Mo H (Zoom) did not know why a ceasefire resolution might cause controversy or divide opinions. He urged Council to add a ceasefire resolution to the agenda.

Fatima A.W. (Zoom) would attend every meeting to speak about humanity and justice. She asked that the Muslim and Jewish people be fought for equally in Palo Alto and to keep the community safe.

Rebecca E. called for common ground. She grieved for every lost life.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 9:36 P.M.