



## CITY COUNCIL SUMMARY MINUTES

CITY OF  
**PALO  
ALTO**

**Special Meeting  
Friday, March 31, 2023**

### CALL TO ORDER

The City Council of the City of Palo Alto met on this date in the Council Chambers and by virtual teleconference at 4:00 p.m.

Present In Person:      Burt, Kou, Lauing, Lythcott-Haims, Stone arrived 4:39 p.m., Veenker

Present Remotely:      None

Absent:                    Tanaka

City Clerk Lesley Milton declared there was a quorum.

Mayor Kou noted there would first be interviews for the PTC, then the Historic Resources Board, and then the Utilities Advisory Commission.

### PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

### ACTION ITEMS

1.     Interview and Consider Appointment for Openings on the Utilities Advisory Committee, Planning and Transportation Commission and Historic Resources Board

Mayor Kou outlined the interview process and noted it would be about a 10-minute process for each candidate.

The Council interviewed the following candidates:

#### Planning & Transportation Commission

George Lu found lobbying awkward but the issues important and interesting. He thought he could offer valuable perspectives to the City. He spoke of his vision of Palo Alto. He addressed infilling parking lots with architecturally beautiful mixed-use buildings with open space and connecting the spaces with bike lanes, which was a vision to have all commercial and retail

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connectable with a 25-minute bike ride and which would fulfill the Housing Element with potentially room to spare. He discussed building affordable housing and promoting diversity in a politically feasible way with community benefits to reduce climate impact. He was here to promote and advance that mission and vision. His ulterior motive was to bring back parts of Palo Alto he had loved, like the Nut House, etc. He wanted make Palo Alto more dynamic, open, and capable of supporting community building and small businesses. He outlined his experience and had worked at Meta as a product manager working on policy initiatives and led the misinformation product covering critical elections. His scope in urban planning and transportation had largely come from being an enthusiast and a follower of urban planning principles. This all culminated in 2018 when he worked for Bird scooters, which related to how micro-mobility city policies, technical products, and transportation could improve communities. He felt a calling to make the city and community more livable.

Council Member Burt asked what transportation needs he thought were highest priority and most doable in the community.

George Lu thought there were levels to the highest priority and doable transportation needs. He suggested addressing what already worked. From there, he thought there was a level of more ambitious projects, and the project nearest and dearest to his heart was bike lanes. From there, he was interested in micro-mobility and the bus programs and thought an advocate on the PTC could raise issues up the chain. He would prioritize micro-mobility and mass transit.

Council Member Lythcott-Haims questioned what experience he had in bringing people on board with a vision they may not have been inclined to embrace.

George Lu commented that bringing people onboard had been part of his job for several years. He provided examples of his experience at Bird and Meta. He mentioned connecting bike lanes and using surface lots for affordable housing. He opined that issues needed to be addressed consistently and deliberately. In closing, he remarked that he fundamentally cared deeply about making the city more diverse and equitable and a more dynamic place to live. He would love to engage with the PTC and make that happen over the long term.

Arthur Keller had been on the Planning Commission previously. He was involved in the bike bridge over 101, so he had seen how working slow and steady around policies could make a difference.

Council Member Veenker inquired if he thought it was important to have a range of perspectives represented on the Commission and, if not, how he would ensure he heard and understood views of fellow residents on issues before the Commission.

Arthur Keller believed the Commission should represent a range of views and should also represent the views of various members of the city. He did not ride bicycles often but he did insist on building a bike bridge because it was important for those who did.

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Council Member Lauing asked if he could control the PTC agenda what he would rank as the top three most important issues.

Arthur Keller voiced the first issue should be the Housing Element, secondly transportation and figuring out where to put bike lanes and how to reduce the impact of traffic, and thirdly rezoning sites for housing required in the Housing Element.

Council Member Lythcott-Haims inquired if he could site a PTC decision he disagreed with.

Arthur Keller outlined why he disagreed with the policy of having built two lines on El Camino Real.

Council Member Burt requested his thoughts on the rezoning sites that were put in the element submitted to the State compared to his priorities.

Arthur Keller [inaudible] selecting those sites. The sites represented [inaudible]. He explained why he wanted more sites on Stanford Research Park, but that could not be done.

Mayor Kou questioned what he saw as the primary role of the Commission.

Arthur Keller remarked that the primary role of the PTC was to give advice to City Council on land use and transportation issues. He noted that the PTC was a very important body, which had a requirement to abide by the law and implement the Housing Element, but he thought there was leeway in terms of doing that. He would like to be on the Commission or give his vision in terms of the future of the city.

Allen Akin indicated that he was minimizing his personal introduction as he had spoken to many Council members recently. He entered this through interest in transportation issues, and then the connection to housing became a necessary part of that analysis. He had been involved with a couple projects with City staff, and electeds had asked him to contribute his experience to PTC. He noted that he did not come with an all-encompassing vision but with a dedication to get needed work done.

Council Member Lauing queried what he had learned from his personal experience of spending three years on an EIR.

Allen Akin answered that he had learned the importance of the relationship with staff and a respect for the abilities of staff under the constraints they operated, which was not a widely held skill but was a crucial role PTC needed. Having a personal background with EIR development provided him understanding of the process and limits of it.

Council Member Lythcott-Haims requested he choose one topic of the three on his application that he suggested needed attention and provide his vision and address how he would approach convincing whomever may not agree with him.

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Allen Akin stated grade separation was the low-hanging fruit and needed to be addressed first. He was persuaded by PTC meetings that the downtown area plan was not the highest priority of things to be considered. He opined that concentration on the San Antonio area should be next, and he outlined his vision.

Council Member Burt requested his thoughts for bringing vitality back to downtown and whether the greater downtown area should be a site for significant new housing.

Allen Akin indicated that answering that was tricky because no one knew what return-to-work would look like. He believed return-to-work would happen on a large scale, so there would not be freedom to drastically reorganize use of the built space downtown. The people not yet being back affected the freedom to make changes, for example consolidating properties and type of businesses. He was indifferent about the greater downtown being a site for new housing. He indicated that housing located with work would not eliminate transportation demands. He voiced that housing downtown was a good thing for the vitality of the city but would not be a cure for transportation issues or for the return of retail, and he spoke of systematic changes in retail due to online shopping.

Council Member Veenker inquired if he had thoughts on how to work in groups to move things forward efficiently and effectively and what returning something helpful to Council should look like.

Allen Akin stated he had read the HCD comments and found most of them to be reasonable. Civility in the operation of the Commission was very important in getting things done. In summary, he thanked Council for their consideration. He hoped to have a chance to make Council members' lives easier in the future.

Scott O'Neil spoke of his passion regarding housing, displacement due to housing costs, and the unhoused. He believed more housing needed to be built, jobs were needed, and economic development needed to be spurred while building out of the housing shortage. He stated the effects on people and human wellbeing needed to be considered by commissions. He spoke of his experience and background, including being president of his HOA and being on the Board for 8 to 10 years, which they had addressed some parking and transportation issues, etc. He has also sued a developer.

Mayor Kou asked his position regarding proper balance related to dense cities with entertainment, retail, parks, etc.

Scott O'Neil spoke of a study related to natural experiments around new high-rises and lowering rents.

Mayor Kou noted that Mr. O'Neil was speaking about the Freeman-White paper, and while rents went down, the lower income groups were displaced.

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Council Member Lythcott-Haims inquired how his goals for improving City processes could be accomplished.

Scott O'Neil noted the differences in how Palo Alto and a city like Redwood City operated needed to be investigated and that City planners, etc., needed to be involved in discussions. He gave an example of reducing time for lengthy re-entitlement processes that were needed for basically every project.

Council Member Veenker queried as to how the HOA Board got a good representation of residents, what was done if there was differing of opinion on the Board, and how they made sure all different perspectives were represented to reach consensus.

Scott O'Neil voiced the Board was very consensus driven, had very few split votes, and did not often meet controversy. They encouraged participation from the community. They had open and honest conversations. He spoke of suing the developer being difficult. As for different perspectives being represented and reaching consensus, everyone was heard. He spoke of installing security cameras and there being privacy concerns, and they tried to be respectful and responsive in balancing all concerns.

Council Member Burt queried as to his thoughts regarding allowed density of housing in R1 zoned neighborhoods.

Scott O'Neil thought it would depend on the neighborhood. He expressed there were places to build higher other than R1. He opined that density in certain R1 neighborhoods should be about six stories and suggested a sound wall be built to address noise from the train.

Forest Olaf Peterson stated the PTC would allow him to support the Palo Alto City Council. He worked in research and tech with a PhD from Stanford Engineering and School of Sustainability where he was an unprecedented four-time named fellow and supervised by a public policy medical doctor. He held a staff research affiliation and mentored doctoral students. During COVID, he was a public servant with the Division of Equity and Social Justice. He had taught courses in planning, law, economy, and integrated technology. He completed post doctorates in engineering and education. He was a reviewer for three academic journals and had authored 24 peer-reviewed publications, where his research had scored in the top 20% of international civil engineering research. He invited the Council to review his resume related to public policy, including education, nonprofits, infrastructure, etc. He held memberships with the ASTM Subcommittee on Water Use and planning, environment, and trade associations.

Mayor Kou questioned how he would handle the issue of turning park space into housing if brought before him on the PTC.

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Forest Olaf Peterson spoke of open space being important and needing to be protected, but there was also a role for housing. He spoke of policies to protect park space, but with housing needs, park space could be looked at, but he hoped to never get that question.

Council Member Lauing inquired how he would use his education and experience to work with others to create policy.

Forest Olaf Peterson worked with many in political spheres and had been successful in building coalitions, which was challenging and was why he became more interested in public policy.

Council Member Lythcott-Haims queried how he would apply his background to transportation problems.

Forest Olaf Peterson commented that he had in-depth expertise on large projects, which he outlined.

Vice Mayor Stone questioned what he saw as his role in balancing his personal views and working with the Board to advise the Council.

Forest Olaf Peterson expressed he enjoyed trying to understand people's positions and then representing those positions.

Council Member Burt requested his thoughts on location of higher density housing and location in R1 neighborhoods.

Forest Olaf Peterson spoke of a certain housing consideration being a problem due to there being only one rail stop, and he suggested housing be spread across multiple rail stops and public transportation access points. He specified that he lived in an apartment on California Avenue and commented why he did not think of it as a high-density area. In concluding, he remarked that civil engineers were educated in public policy and serving the public at the forefront and thought PTC would give him the opportunity to provide a service to City Council.

Alex Comsa spoke of working with the Council during the campaign last year. He was a father with two attending PAUSD, had 15 years' experience in local real estate, and had been involved in the IR process and in projects related to land acquisition, entitling, and selling. He had a good understanding of real estate and land use, which he believed could be an asset for the City. He was pro-housing and building to preserve Palo Alto's character. He was asked by many to get involved. He was here to serve and be a resource for the City.

Mayor Kou asked his position on the controversial laws related to dense cities and his thoughts for proper balance.

Alex Comsa supported preserving neighborhood character and getting input from all residents and thought there should be large-scale building where it made sense. He discussed Planning

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having a lack of resources related to processing individual applications. He discussed possibly working with Stanford, having retail and family dwellings, and converting parking into mixed projects.

Council Member Burt asked if he agreed with the placement of the identified 6,000 sites in the Housing Element.

Alex Comsa noted he was not familiar with the developments in the Housing Element over the last three months. He indicated that hundreds of ADUs and single-family homes would happen naturally. He would focus on the Research Park, Stanford Shopping Center, and parking lots. He discussed why he was against building around San Antonio Shopping Center, Costco, and downtown other than parking lots.

Council Member Veenker inquired how affordable housing should be incentivized and funded and asked him to talk about how the City could approach all-affordable developments versus inclusionary housing.

Alex Comsa indicated the City lacked in-house resources regarding real estate. He believed there was an opportunity to partner with Stanford to create half the Housing Element units. To create affordable housing on a large scale, he believed underutilized City assets had to be considered. He recalled that a couple years ago a proposal was submitted for converting City-owned parking lots into housing, which he believed could create a mixed project.

Council Member Lythcott-Haims questioned which state law related to housing most excited him.

Alex Comsa stated the Housing Element was prompting cities to act, not react to housing demand and believed it should be a focus; although, it would be hard to achieve the numbers without a partnership with Stanford or using the City's assets. He spoke of SB 9 and 10 not getting traction. In closing, he was grateful for the opportunity and was here to serve and hoped his expertise would become a resource for the City.

Cari Templeton (Incumbent) had been on the PTC for four years. She spoke of the work they had done and the collaboration and discussions they had, which she believed provided helpful input to the Council.

Vice Mayor Stone queried what drove her to seek another term and what she hoped to accomplish that she had not been able to in the past.

Cari Templeton had accomplished what she wanted to with the PTC. They analyzed items, asked good questions, and made sure staff and the public had considered an issue before going to Council, which drove her to reapply. She touched on items that needed to be finished and thought she had more to contribute.

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Council Member Lythcott-Haims asked her what she thought people did not understand about PTC issues.

Cari Templeton thought people did not understand the slow pace of government. She claimed that patience and understanding perspectives took time and experience.

Council Member Veenker was intrigued by her reference to the March 2021 discussion by the PTC. She inquired if it was important to have a range of perspectives around the Commission table and, if there was not sufficient range, how she would go about getting the views of unrepresented residents.

Cari Templeton voiced that every perspective could not be represented on the dais, but there were public comments, and people were encouraged to participate. It was critically important to have diversity of opinions and backgrounds on the PTC. Having a variety of perspectives, etc., helped in providing information to Council.

Council Member Burt asked if she agreed with the placement of the identified 6,000 sites in the Housing Element and if she would support rezoning permitting higher density in certain neighborhoods.

Cari Templeton did not want to eliminate R1 zoning and put multiple units on every R1 lot. She appreciated and spoke of the way it had been done in certain neighborhoods. She thought it was interesting to think about how to build density while keeping different types of housing. Regarding rezoning permitting higher density in certain neighborhoods, she thought there was room in many neighborhoods for such diversity. She detailed why always doing it according to a formula was not always best. She thought it was important to have dense spots in more than one area, and those areas needed to be identified and zoned appropriately. She was not ready to blanket the whole city and thought there needed to be wise choices. In summary, she hoped to be reappointed to continue helping Council.

## Historic Resources Board

Christian Pease (Incumbent) just completed his first term on the HRB, which had been a good experience. He noted that the changing environment in Palo Alto made it a more important function than previously. He thought the most important thing to be considered this year and why he would like to have another term was the inventory for historic resources in Palo Alto, which had not been updated in about 20 years. He spoke of information he had learned from the California Preservation Foundation on the new housing laws, which an accurate inventory was key to compliance with the laws.

Council Member Burt inquired how he thought things were working as a Board and if there was anything City Council could do to enable the HRB to be more effective.

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Christian Pease commented that the Board had been in transition and that bringing in other perspectives might help. Everything presented to them was addressed through the Architectural Review Board and dealt with design issues. He spoke of preservation related to commercial and residential property being different and being incentivized in different ways. He mentioned not having an [inaudible] Act but stated it may not provide much incentive. He addressed why inventorying certain areas was important. He spoke of there being responsibilities and benefits of being on the inventory, which was confusing for folks, and he believed stakeholder meetings were not the right approach and that complicated questions needed to be asked.

Council Member Veenker requested he speak to streamlining approvals and motivating a net increase in historic resource protections and asked how he suggested resolving tension there.

Christian Pease indicated that the bedrock of preservation was the Secretary of the Interior's Standards, which was understandable but old. He indicated that things which could not be fully preserved had the most potential, and he outlined standards for that. He referenced emerging technologies and an industry standards group that could make things easier. He envisioned building data sets that could be applied in many ways.

Samantha Joy Rodman had been a resident of Palo Alto for over 22 years. She was a graduate of Gunn High School and UC Santa Barbara where she obtained a bachelor's degree in history. She had worked with some of Silicon Valley's respected tech companies for over a decade. She was pursuing her master's degree in public history with a specialization in California history. She resided in a 1926 cottage. She represented the student, small-business, and renting population. She was a preservationist and passionate about working with communities and telling their stories. She had experience in conducting archival research, examining biases, preparing research reports and presentations, and working with many California preservation programs. She wanted to serve on the HRC to preserve the distinct character of the city.

Council Member Lythcott-Haims inquired how the HRB could ensure the decisions of today would not replicate the inequities of yesterday.

Samantha Joy Rodman outlined there was an opportunity to ensure they did not replicate prior inequities. She believed the State had the opportunity to commemorate places and sites that historically had not been. She thought Palo Alto was due for another historic resources report and remarked that houses possibly without striking architecture should be protected.

Vice Mayor Stone queried if she had an opinion regarding the City proactively identifying houses to be on the historic registry without owner consent.

Samantha Joy Rodman spoke of houses being misrepresented by listing agents related to properties possibly being a historically designated property. She supported the City taking a stance on historic properties and voiced that another inventory would further the cause.

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Council Member Burt requested her thoughts on tension between the aspiration for high density housing and the cottage cluster sites being candidates and the value they provided being close to market rate affordable in addition to having social values.

Samantha Joy Rodman did not feel that taking parkland to build multi-tenant housing was the answer nor was turning cottage courts to higher density housing. She remarked that cottage courts retained a unique character and were assets.

Mayor Kou questioned what she thought was missing in historic preservation education and what more the Commission could do.

Samantha Joy Rodman would love to see historic walking tours and a partnership with the Museum of American Heritage and the Palo Alto Museum to make history accessible. As a public historian, she was dedicated to outreach and education. In concluding, she believed there needed to be a balance between protecting historic resources while allowing freedom to owners and believed Palo Alto could be a renowned historic preservation community and hoped the HRB could forward that.

Alisa Eagleston-Cieslewicz (Incumbent) had served on the HRB since early 2022 when she filled a vacant partial term and was now applying for a full term. She valued the opportunity to serve the City. Her appreciation for Palo Alto's history began as a child. She grew up in Palo Alto and graduated from Gunn High School. She continued her education at Stanford University majoring in art history and minoring in archeology. She pursued graduate studies in conservation and art history specializing in the conservation of three-dimensional objects. She also held an MBA from the Haas School of Business at UC Berkeley. She was the conservator at SFO Museum and previously held positions at the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. She had worked as a consultant on architectural preservation projects. Through her background in conservation, she thought she had a good understanding of many historic preservation issues that would come before the Board. She also understood historic preservation from a homeowner's perspective.

Vice Mayor Stone asked what she would like to see the City do to get more active in Palo Alto's history.

Alisa Eagleston-Cieslewicz thought the Palo Alto History Museum would be phenomenal, and she was looking forward to its development and engagement with the community. She claimed that Palo Alto had a lot of great stories without a centralized venue to tell them and thought the museum had potential in that regard. Regarding historic preservation, she would like to see more general outreach in appreciation of historic resources in people's day-to-day lives.

Council Member Lythcott-Haims asked what could be done to draw attention to the past and tell it more fully.

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Alisa Eagleston-Cieslewicz noted that telling a wide variety of stories was imperative, and she hoped the Palo Alto History Museum would incorporate stories about groups that had not been included before. She opined that it was essential to incorporate cultural history of sites into plans and to tell those stories through signage also.

Council Member Burt was interested in the HRB proposing a broadening of their purview.

Alisa Eagleston-Cieslewicz thanked Council for the opportunity. She had enjoyed the experience of serving on the HRB and hoped to continue.

[The Council took a 10-minute break]

## Utilities Advisory Commission

Rachel Croft had been a Palo Alto resident for 12 years and had lived on the Peninsula her entire life. She studied industrial engineering at Stanford and had an MBA in finance from University of Pennsylvania at Wharton School. She had been in investment banking for 5 years followed by 25 years in medical devices in which 12 of those years were focused on behavior change for health. She had experience in behavior change theories and implementation. She had become passionate about sustainability in the last few years and wanted to take a personal role in identifying solutions. She addressed the supply and demand sides of utilities. She felt she could contribute her experience to motivate and help people adopt sustainable energy and water usage. She considered herself practical, ethical, and financially adept, so reliability and fairness in financial impacts would be high considerations as well as her sustainability interest.

Vice Mayor Stone asked what she saw as the UAC's role in accomplishing the City's S/CAP Plan and the 80 X 30 goal.

Rachel Croft had seen the work plan to get to the goals, which a huge part fell on Utilities. She thought there needed to be concentration on electrifying everything possible, decreasing gas usage, sustaining the water supply, and where energy would be sourced. She believed incentive programs played a role.

Council Member Lythcott-Haims inquired how she would apply her experience in motivating behavior change to try to reach the 80 X 30.

Rachel Croft discussed her experience in motivating people to quit smoking, which she thought was relevant to motivating behavior change related to 80 X 30. She noted that there first had to be a conversation with residents and that they needed to see their data, so advanced metering was important. Short of having the metering in place, there was data available to help people make changes and lower costs.

Council Member Burt queried if she had been following the UAC meetings and how she envisioned the initiatives she referenced being actualized through the UAC.

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Rachel Croft had watched a few UAC meetings and previously reviewed the agendas. She had not seen agendized items related to incentives, which she thought was important. She also did not see the AMI work in a packet. It was not easy finding the information, and she was interested in a dashboard of goals. Asking for presentations from City staff on the progress of the issues could dovetail with incentives and data. In closing, she stated she was motivated and would be honored to serve on the Committee.

Greg Scharff (Incumbent) had been on the UAC for three years. He had been on the Finance Committee seven years, on the NCPA eight years, and had been involved in Palo Alto Utility since about 2010. He thought experience was important in enabling continuity.

Council Member Burt queried, related to the Resource Management Plan, what he thought the role of a distributed generation in storage was versus utility scale supplies and storage and what the City's approach should be on carbon neutrality.

Greg Scharff indicated that historically distributed solar and storage within the city did not make economic sense comparable to doing a power-purchase agreement. He thought putting up solar in the city would send a message to people but would not solve the issues. He opined there needed to be less solar and more base resource or a counteraction to solar, such as wind. The 24/7/365 renewables were aspirational, which he was not implying that could be done, but he recalled staff having difficulties monitoring it.

Vice Mayor Stone queried why he wanted to continue serving on the UAC.

Greg Scharff commented that electrification was being embarked on, but the grid needed to be updated. He voiced there needed to be fair processes and funding needed to be addressed. He thought AMI would help in understanding the benefits, and that behavioral change data would make a difference. He wanted to be on the UAC to keep rates low and to ensure a smooth transition. He did not want a political disaster. He wanted to move forward in a way that was not negative but in a way that residents would appreciate.

Mayor Kou questioned how he saw the natural environment fitting into sustainability and climate change.

Greg Scharff expressed that he had seen people moving toward natural plants, less water usage, etc. He supported planting more trees and protecting the canopy.

Council Member Lauing asked if there were priorities that Council, the City, or UAC were not emphasizing that should be.

Greg Scharff agreed with everything that had gone to Council in the last three years. He opined that planning electrification, addressing the cost, and preparing the public needed to be the focus. If the gas utility was going to be shut down, he also felt it was important to determine

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how that would be done. In summary, he stated he had enjoyed being on the UAC and enjoyed the challenges.

Siyi Zhang had been a Midtown resident for over seven years, after she graduated from Stanford. She was the Lead Product Manager at Lunar Energy and was diligently working to launch their first home battery system together with the nation's largest solar installer, Saran. She started in the energy field after graduation and was a dedicated technologist. At Tesla she focused on C&I energy storage, utility scale storage, and AI software. She joined a start-up in EV charging and helped customers operate their EV charging stations. She was an active community organizer and was the Director of Marketing at the Volta Foundation, which was a nonprofit to help advance battery technology. She volunteered with SunWork, which was active in Palo Alto with the Heat Pump Water Heater Program. She was passionate of the work being done and thought Utilities needed to be deeply engaged with the transition and DER to help the customer.

Mayor Kou asked how she would consider implementing reliable energy.

Siyi Zhang mentioned that implementing reliable energy should be a mixed approach. She had the opportunity at Tesla to work on utility solutions. For a resilient grid, she believed energy needed to be procured from utilities as well as having consumer participation.

Council Member Burt inquired if she had watched Utility Commission meetings. He wanted her thoughts on how her experience and vision would fit into a governing role and how she would motivate fellow commissioners and staff to move forward with issues she thought should be advanced.

Siyi Zhang had seen clips from the meetings. She was very imbedded in the technology landscape and had experience in energy storage, solar, and smart circuits, so she could provide insight. She would not yet push for procurement of a long-duration storage project without first addressing technology, a time frame, and the audience being considered.

Council Member Veenker queried what suggestions/solutions/approaches she had for alleviating the type of situation she had faced with CPAU, as mentioned in her application.

Siyi Zhang addressed what was blocking it. She noted that the city inspection side may be lacking information regarding technology; therefore, the Utility Commission could more involve the Building Permit Department. She remarked that the right stakeholders should be invited.

Mayor Kou questioned if she could commit to the time required for the UAC.

Siyi Zhang explained that she could commit to the time required. It was her mission and career goal. She wanted to make things happen. In concluding, she stated she wanted to leverage her industry and technical experience to help residents transition to a more sustainable future; make programs accessible to all customers, not just homeowners; bring the right technology to

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the city; make sure the right benchmarks would be used for energy consumption/efficiency; and use her product background to improve the customer experience. She remarked that there were many ways she could contribute to the Commission.

Natalie Geise had a bachelor's degree in chemistry from West Virginia University and earned her PhD at Stanford working at SLAC, the DOE National Lab related to battery and energy storage materials and their degradation. After graduation, she was employed by Powerhouse, an innovation consulting firm that worked with utilities, etc., looking for start-ups in clean energy. She understood program and rate design, project development, and other issues related to energy, water, and sustainability. She was excited to possibly lend some of her experience to the UAC.

Mayor Kou questioned where natural environment fell into sustainability.

Natalie Geise commented on the water utility aspect of natural resources that needs to nurture the natural environment as well as provide water to homes and plant life. She specified that park space was needed.

Vice Mayor Stone requested that she speak about the PhD program at Stanford and how it would relate to the UAC.

Natalie Geise was a chemistry PhD student and looked at battery materials, next generation solar facilities, long-duration energy storage, and EVs, which she explained was less relevant to the UAC versus something like a BPA procurement. She spoke of SLAC and using facilities to pinpoint degradation modes in different materials, which tied it to overall efficiencies. During her time there, she served on the User Executive Committee for the user facility, which looked at long-range planning of their facilities, what users needed, and the capabilities needed in the next 10 years. She was exposed to different energy technologies at the DOE, which was why she wanted this role in translating technologies, looking at innovation and getting it to a market.

Council Member Lythcott-Haims asked what kind of experience she had in translating the scientific necessities to people not as experienced as she but whose cooperation was required.

Natalie Geise expressed not everyone's priority would be decarbonization. She noted that utility bills and reliability were high priorities for many, which needed to be balanced with sustainability goals, and behavioral changes needed to be discussed, which could include financial tools. To gain acceptance by the consumer, she noted that it was important they have Project designs and data.

Council Member Veenker requested she address what she did as cofounder and leader of The Chemistry Association in the Interest of Minority Students and her values with respect to serving the interest of equity on the UAC.

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Natalie Geise explained that the program was within the Chemistry Department, and they ran programs, had independent meetings of themselves so students could have a community, and they had seminars. Twenty percent of students in the department signed up for some programming and 80 to 100 individuals attended the seminar at the end of the year. Related to equity and more broadly, she had taken a course on racial equity in energy, which related to looking at financial tools that could give people the ability to transition.

Council Member Burt inquired if she thought demand management was a key part of the modernization and how she would go about moving staff toward a complementary approach.

Natalie Geise understood the demand management programs allowed upgrades to be put off, which sounded like a good investment to provide more control over the grid than currently existed. She mentioned bringing some of those insights and guidance into where to look and how to think about what can be declined as a trade-off.

Bob Wenzlau was interested in bringing capacity in the area of water resources to the UAC. He addressed water being a core element and had judged there was not a focus or engagement related to water. He served on the Stormwater Advisory Commission and wanted to introduce more consideration of a resource-based organizational model to water and energy. He observed much interest as to the volume of water but questioned if there had been enough attention to water quality. He was excited to have heard from younger applicants.

Council Member Burt queried as to his perspectives on the energy transformation issues and the relationship for the needed grid transformation.

Bob Wenzlau did not have perspectives to the depth of the UAC. He supported hot water heat pump conversion on the S/CAP. The prospective he brought was to organize by appliance category rather than focusing on a whole-house model. He offered skills in being able to observe patterns and contribute organizational structure to those types of initiatives.

Mayor Kou questioned how he saw sustainability fitting into the natural environment. She stated the carbon footprints and the delivery of biowaste needed to be measured and views needed to be examined birth to grave.

Bob Wenzlau spoke about Measure E and parkland balancing in with the need for infrastructure. He opined that within an urban environment, sustainability required land. He was torn with the environmental justice concerns of natural land versus land needed so the climate impact could be lower, and stated care should be taken in not creating a false view of pristine nature. The Council and the community needed to be sensitive to the environmental justice issue. He spoke of his work with solid waste management and indicated that he had previously brought to Council's attention the huge climate footprint related sending paper overseas. Cradle to grave had been his motto, and he hoped to always contribute the true carbon footprint in all decisions made. In closing, he thought it was important for the UAC to focus more on water. He observed that there was not a water skill base on the UAC. He alleged

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that work needed to be done to balance out the water issues with the one-water strategy. As for climate, he was very interested in the interchange between water and power. He mentioned it was important for the community to examine what could be done in terms of generating local water resources and storage strategies and to focus on enhancing water quality. He hoped he had, at least, brought thoughts for Council this evening.

Jason Titus was interested in the UAC because of significant need of transformation and transition across most of what the UAC oversaw – energy, water, solid waste. He discussed doing that with reliable service. He felt he could bring skills to the UAC. He had experience working in organizations to make shifts and transitions. He spoke of his time at Yahoo Mail related to goals, metrics, technology, etc. He had been in Palo Alto for over 20 years. He spoke of installing solar and there being challenges with vendors and cost. He discussed his time on the Comprehensive Plan Committee years ago. He spoke of priorities to address transitioning to renewable energy, electrification, and water usage.

Council Member Burt asked if he had been following the UAC and if the Commission should be more aggressive regarding various areas of the UAC's scope.

Jason Titus affirmed he had watched a number of meetings and had taken part in some of the Sustainability Subcommittee meetings. He mentioned he had seen some improvements in metrics, etc. He discussed demand management, prioritizing, and efficacy.

Council Member Lauing asked him what differentiated him from the other candidates.

Jason Titus answered that he would bring experience of assembling different parties, vendors, customers, etc., to understand motivations and align them. He spoke of his experience at Google in running the developer ecosystem. He thought residents were not clear as to how to transition.

Council Member Lythcott-Haims requested he give an example of his arguments when being on a body that did not agree with him.

Jason Titus described being VP of Engineering at Google, where most were engineering majors, and he studied philosophy and political science, which related to his people skills. In summary, he specified he had quit his job a year ago to focus on climate change. Full transparency: part of what that entails is investing in heat pump companies, deep geothermal drilling, etc., personally, and he was advising start-ups. He understood the dynamics involved in committees dealing with overhead work.

Max Rayner had an education in computer science and systems engineering and an MBA in finance. By trade, he co-owned a management consultancy focusing on hospitality and travel all over the world. His trade was to solve problems for clients. He had been in Palo Alto since 2009 and before that in Mountain View. He applied because he thought it was time to contribute.

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Mayor Kou queried, with regard to Measure L, how he would address utility rates and the hiding of a secret tax by using excessive charges and asked if he had been following the UAC, Finance Committee, and Council meetings regarding this topic.

Max Rayner voiced that good governance was about well-informed citizenry, so he found that to be a mistake, and he would have flagged it as a problem. It appeared that the policy put forth was middling deceptive, and he found it objectionable. He had sporadically followed the meetings and noted he was not an expert.

Council Member Burt asked him what was deceptive and not transparent about Measure L.

Max Rayner understood that surplus from utilities charges was recycled for general City purposes, which he did not find transparent. He asked to be informed if his understanding was incorrect. He opined that it was not transparent because he did not believe the majority of citizens knew of a hidden tax. He defined a hidden tax in economic terms.

Mayor Kou questioned if the natural environment should be part of the solution for addressing climate change and how he would ensure utility rates would be reasonable and not excessive.

Max Rayner addressed technology, people having a concern for the natural environment, there being less than complete cooperation between Planning and Utilities, and the difficulties for consumers. Regarding utility rates, transfer costs and needed future capital investments should be considered. He provided a personal experience related to possible improvements regarding the Commission in cooperation with other parts of town administration.

Council Member Burt questioned if he was aware that the increase in panel sizes was triggering a crisis in the ability to accommodate electrification, which triggered transformer upgrades; if he understood why panels were not to be greater than the need; and if he thought Measure L was not transparent even with there being community debates, editorials, etc.

Max Rayner discussed upgrading and future benefits. He indicated why he not think Measure L was transparent.

Robert Phillips had been a resident of Palo Alto since 1982. He appreciated the general reliability and reasonable cost of the utilities and the work of staff and crews. He had a PhD in management science and engineering from Stanford University. His career had been in analytics and data for government agencies and companies. He was a consultant many years ago and worked with multiple electric utilities on planning and pricing in the U.S., U.K., and South Korea; a lecturer and senior scientist at Stanford; professor at Columbia University Business School; head of Marketplace Data Science for Uber; and head of Pricing Analytics for Amazon. He indicated the linking concept was his passion for systems combining technical, environment, human, and economic points of views and thought the UAC was a great forum for doing that.

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Mayor Kou questioned how he used his mathematical background in his work of price optimization.

Robert Phillips explained that most of his work with electric power involved planning, scheduling generating capacity, design, etc.

Council Member Burt asked how his professional background would translate to the UAC and to what degree he understood the relationship between level of grid transformation and load management measures.

Robert Phillips commented there was a need to transform the grid to accommodate local sources of power, particularly solar, while maintaining reliability. He would like to see community education regarding metering, charging, etc. He had not entirely looked at the transformation of the grid. He addressed power from wind and solar.

Council Member Veenker asked for his opinion related to the pricing profiles during the utilities transition.

Robert Phillips discussed pricing being a problem for the City, which needed to be recognized, and he had not heard it directly recognized.

Council Member Lythcott-Haims inquired if there was a natural point for the consumer to realize the need to electrify and how the City might manage that.

Robert Phillips noted that high gas prices triggered people to think about electrification, which would be a heavy-handed way of doing it, and the least affluent needed to be considered, which may include going beyond the UAC. In concluding, he believed in goals of providing reliable and low-cost service with long-term sustainability and minimizing environmental impacts. He could contribute to reaching goals. He thought utilities costs needed to be considered. He looked forward to working with Council, etc., in these challenges.

Benjamin Piiru was a Bay Area native who had been in Palo Alto since August 2022. He went to Berkeley for undergrad, majored in English and minored in math. The first 10 years of his career was in energy policy. He had been a junior advisor to a commissioner on the California PUC. At Southern California Edison, he focused on infrastructure policy and solar interconnection process. He then worked for a solar company doing interconnection policy. He explained interconnection being related to solar. He then went to law school and focused on energy regulation and law, environmental law and policy, and climate change law and policy. His internships were energy focused, and coursework was energy policy minded. After graduation, he worked for a company doing energy efficiency policy. He was currently the Director of Grid Innovation at a solar company related to interconnection and working with utilities and regulators across the country.

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Council Member Burt requested insight as to how he would translate his experience to address working with other agencies, grid modernization and capacity, the issues faced, and mitigation of demand through smarter systems, etc., in local distribution and generation.

Benjamin Piiru stated he was now working in the Northeast, and they had the same issues as Palo Alto. There were lessons learned that could be brought to Palo Alto from all over the country. He thought distributed generation, energy efficiency, and demand management should be explored. He addressed the opportunity to get renewable developers through incentives and having the right regulatory framework. He thought there were many opportunities to achieve Palo Alto's goals.

Council Member Veenker inquired if his work at Nexamp was within California or other entities governing or interacting with Palo Alto Utilities.

Benjamin Piiru noted his work at Nexamp did not include California. He felt learnings from his work would translate to the UAC. With him listening to different perspectives from different states, he could bring lessons learned and what might be working elsewhere. He commented how his work in relationship development would be helpful, and he believed in finding consensus.

Council Member Lauing inquired as to what he could do to upgrade the grid.

Benjamin Piiru remarked that renewable resource developers were interested in a place with the correct regulatory framework, low cost to interconnect, etc. He touched on grid-enhancing technologies that could prevent costly upgrades.

Greg Hood mentioned that he brought a basic conversation regarding energy. He had been a contractor for over 45 years, licensed in California since 1993. He attended Berkeley and received a master's in construction engineering and management. He had had many projects, including having been the electrical project manager for the spillway at Folsom Dam and had been involved in a DARPA project at Fort Irwin and eventually went to Afghanistan as part of the project. He was applying because he lived in Palo Alto. He commended Council and the Commission in this being one of the few truly public utilities. He voiced why he thought the conversation around natural gas was interesting and discussed how it related to hydrogen. He had not heard conversation about microreactors, which he thought worthy of consideration. He claimed the challenge was storing power, not sourcing power. Privatization did not excite him. He thought all would come down to revenue. He noted there were many issues to address in this appointment, such as water, waste disposal, etc. He would be honored to serve the community.

Vice Mayor Stone asked how he saw his background as a contractor informing his work on the UAC.

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Greg Hood stated he was also an electrical contractor. He could discuss implementing systems, such as AMI, as an example.

Mayor Kou requested he share his experience when contacted to put in a heat pump water heater and asked where the natural environment fit into sustainability and climate change.

Greg Hood noted price was an issue. He experienced the Building Department being supportive, which was important. He spoke of the importance of having a consultant before installation. Regarding the natural environment fitting into sustainability and climate change, he addressed his concern with the water treatment plant and the challenges with protecting watersheds, open space, and marshland. In closing, he thanked Council for the opportunity. He welcomed being part of the Commission and saw himself offering a different perspective.

Chris Tucher was new in his interest in the energy future with electricity, battery storage, and grids. He had deep roots in the community and an interest to serve. He had been in Palo Alto for 50 years, although he went away to college and worked in Europe for several years with a U.S. consulting firm. He attended Harvard Business School and had been a reporter in South Africa and New York City. He returned to Palo Alto in 1995 and had been with Netscape. He had worked in healthcare and health tech for the last 12 or 15 years. He was now doing consulting work with grid scale battery company. He coached soccer and moonlighted as a marketing professor at De Anza College. He was aware that the UAC had a broad purview of utilities, such as paying for the wastewater facility, gas prices, etc. His key focus was grid modernization, which was a challenge, especially related to community acceptance.

Council Member Lythcott-Haims questioned how he would begin conversations with the community related to the grid.

Chris Tucher opined that conversations with the community would have to begin with expressing the benefits of the utility. He noted that Palo Alto Utility pricing was lower than others and opined there needed to be better communication on bills. He outlined many challenges with communication. He noted it was the UAC's job to work through staff.

Council Member Veenker asked what he would bring to the table if he was advising the Council and the Board on "building the grid for tomorrow," which he had referenced in his application.

Chris Tucher had deep roots in the community and knew a lot of people, and noted it started with that. He had worked as an executive presenting to Boards and knew about best practices in board meetings. He expressed that boards needed to work with staff. He had observed ways to improve relationships with staff, which he explained. He felt that metrics should be front and center at every meeting to track progress.

Council Member Lauing queried as to why he wanted to be on the UAC versus other commissions.

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Chris Tucher referenced his interest in justice and his passion to have a robust grid, which was a problem that needed solving.

Meagan Mauter was a faculty member at Stanford University. She held several appointments, including in the Civil and Environmental Engineering Department, where she worked on water and infrastructure policies, particularly related to water and energy interactions, and in the Department of Global Environmental Policy where she worked on some of the same topics. She was the Research Director for the National Alliance for Water Innovation, which was a DOE energy water hub focusing on sustainability and water reuse. She had a 15- to 20-year career in the water space and worked closely with water utilities, which had been exciting and fun and where she had the greatest learnings. It would be an honor for her to contribute to Palo Alto by serving on the UAC.

Council Member Burt inquired how great of a grid modernization was needed and in what time frame and if there were measures that may mitigate demands.

Meagan Mauter noted there were three pillars for transformation – energy efficiency, grid modernization and enabling decarbonization solutions through generation and storage, and energy flexibility broadly and thinking about when and where electricity was consumed – which needed to be integrated coherently. She did not work specifically on rolling out grid modernization plans. Her expertise was in how water utilities could help provide flexible loads to the grid. She was eager to work closely with the Utilities Commissioner and Director to push forward ongoing efforts and seek understanding for all residents.

Council Member Lythcott-Haims requested she speak about desalination and if it was viable, feasible, and affordable, when it might be available, and how she would join the Commission's conversation about desalination.

Meagan Mauter commented there were about 15 desalination plants in California. She spoke of the differences in seawater desalination and desalination as a unit process. Her work was focused on using desalination processes as a tool for water reuse. It would be an honor for her to work with the UAC and others related to reusing wastewater and evaluating contracts to understand how it could benefit Palo Alto.

Mayor Kou asked if she found it feasible to find federal funding for the transition to clean energy.

Meagan Mauter noted that the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act had several features focused on providing support for utilities in advancing a water infrastructure and the Inflation Reduction Act addressed energy policy. She was more familiar with the water elements than the energy elements of those bills but she was eager to work with the UAC to understand how to access those resources effectively. In summary, she noted she had technical expertise in water reuse, energy/water system integration, and decarbonization of the water sector. She did not know particularly about some of the other aspects of the UAC, but she was eager to learn.

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In addition to bringing technical expertise, she brought expertise in working on committees and experience in collaborating with utility operators, which she would be committed to building that relationship. She would also bring humility to the Committee. She understood when decisions crossed from a technical to a policy realm. She saw the UAC as advising on the technical elements and bringing the political decisions to Council.

Mayor Kou appreciated that humility included understanding affordability.

Claude Ezran believed he had skills to be a strong contributor to the UAC. He was not a specialist in a specific field but was a well-rounded individual with depth in critical areas. He was motivated to be part of the UAC and had time to do it being retired. He had a master's in science in electrical engineering and had learned a lot about energy, electricity generation, transport, and other technicalities, so he understood what the UAC and Utilities were doing. He also had an MBA. He had worked in corporate finance at Intel, so he was comfortable with financial statements, etc. He had been on the HRC for six years and had been selected by his peers as Vice Chair and Chair and worked in collaboration with peers. He had worked in green energy with a fuel cell company. He was involved in the community and had been for many years.

Vice Mayor Stone asked how his experience on the HRC would apply to the UAC.

Claude Ezran understood how commissions worked, how to work with the City and the community, and how to deal with important issues, and there had been relationships with nonprofit organizations.

Mayor Kou inquired of ways he thought the electric utility could be more reliable; how utility rates increasing could be mitigated as certain utilities had less usage; and where he saw the natural environment fitting in to sustainability and climate change.

Claude Ezran noted that reliability was a concern. He addressed many things causing outages. Undergrounding could be considered. He believed transformer failure needed to be investigated and weak links identified. He provided an example of utility rates increasing due to certain utilities having less usage and stated having plans for reserves to address that was key. As for the natural environment fitting in to sustainability and climate change, he opined that the City was doing the right thing in the conversion of gas to electricity. He noted that City Utilities could better show the financial aspects for customers.

Council Member Burt addressed the City subsidized heat pump water heaters program being similar to what Claude Ezran had discussed. The next challenge was having something similar on furnaces.

Claude Ezran suggested providing the community information early in the process.

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City Clerk Lesley Milton declared the remaining two Board interviews were scheduled for April 24. On Monday, April 3, the Council would vote on the candidates interviewed today.

Council Member Lythcott-Haims asked about the wellbeing of Council Member Tanaka as he was absent.

City Clerk Milton would follow up with him.

ADJOURNMENT The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m.