



CITY COUNCIL SUMMARY MINUTES

Special Meeting
March 25, 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 Stone called the meeting to order. The clerk called roll with five being present.

Closed Session

1. CONFERENCE WITH CITY ATTORNEY- EXISTING LITIGATION

Subject: Reinert v. City of Palo Alto Santa Clara County Superior Court Case No. 21-CV-391286 (One Case, as Defendant)

Authority: Government Code Section 54956.9(d)(1)

Public Comment:

1. Liz G. (Zoom) hoped to have more public transparency and discussion in the future.

MOTION: Council Member Veenker moved, seconded by Vice Mayor Lauing to go into Closed Session.

MOTION PASSED: 7-0

Council went into Closed Session at 5:33 P.M.

Council returned from Closed Session at 5:53 P.M.

Mayor Stone announced no reportable action.

Agenda Changes, Additions and Deletions

None.

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Council Member Questions, Comments and Announcements

Council Member Veenker congratulated Julia Zeitlin and her high school colleagues on the launch of the Green Team Coalition.

Action Items

2. Approval of the 2024 City Council Priority Objectives and Finance Committee and Policy & Services Committee Workplans (Item Continued from March 4, 2024, March 11, 2024, and March 18, 2024 City Council Meetings)

Council Member Kou expressed desire to add into Community Safety having the Transportation Department to start working with Stanford Research Park in terms of making sure there are safe routes from Stanford University residents crossing across Page Mill going toward Fletcher as well as Gunn High School.

City Manager Ed Shikada responded that would be covered under both Citywide Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plan and the Safe Systems project.

Philip Kamhi, Chief Transportation Official, agreed those items fall within both of those plans but also the existing work of the Safe Routes to Schools Team.

Council Member Kou wanted to make sure that this particular route going across Page Mill on Peter Coutts will be included into this analysis.

Council Member Tanaka wanted clarification from Staff on why Living Wisdom was denied renting extra space from Cubberley. He opined if there are empty rooms they should be rented to them at market rent.

City Manager Shikada answered there are a couple of classrooms next to the existing space being rented by Living Wisdom High School. Staff is currently looking at the appropriate term as well as terms that would be applicable. There are other requests for space at Cubberley so there is a question of how that space should be allocated. He stated they would provide timeline information to Council when available.

Council Member Burt touched on Item 76. He recalled discussion in the context of HISRAP funding at the last Finance Committee about certain valued programs that do not fit within the parameters of the HISRAP funding. The possibility of recognizing a fund that would break off the funding for certain special events was discussed. He also recalled having received notification of a federal earmark of an additional half million dollars for fencing along the Caltrain Corridor. He thought they should set as a capital improvement priority completion of the fencing on the west side and any other safety and security upgrades to technologies that can make the tracks safer and more secure. He added that Caltrain is currently moving in a direction

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of a multiyear period of quarter-wide best practices of safety and security throughout the corridor.

City Manager Shikada did not believe they yet have cost estimates for the fencing. He stated Caltrain believed that earmark would allow for the replacement of existing wrought-iron fencing along the west side of the tracks from University area through Churchill. The remainder of the west side of the tracks in Palo Alto is essentially adjacent to residential fencing so if the City were to undertake that as a project, it would be extending the installation of the wire mesh fencing adjacent to residential fences. Caltrain is currently working on the designs and cost estimates and should give a reasonable ballpark of what extending their fencing project would involve. They expect to have a meeting within the next week to discuss the status. The ongoing work that came up at the City school's meeting was the suggestion of the City school's liaison committee becoming more actively involved in the broader topic of youth mental health and what might be done in cooperation between the two agencies. He stated they are 30 days away from delivering the capital budget for next year in order to provide a sense of where the current planning for projects is and that may be the best venue for a discussion of what flexibility exists and what can be done going forward. He noted the question of what would be City versus Caltrain projects are still open questions.

Vice Mayor Lauing supported what Council Member Burt outlined. He would like to see it in the objectives.

City Manager Shikada plugged ongoing Mental Health First Aid training programs available to the community and provided details.

Vice Mayor Lauing asked if that would encompass Item 81.

City Manager Shikada answered that would allow both for the capital and ongoing programming support provided by the City and perhaps a placeholder for the Mayor's taskforce work.

Vice Mayor Lauing queried if he was not quite comfortable having a specific objective around either the fencing or taking actions to support safety.

City Manager Shikada thought what was on the line item would provide sufficient overall objective and a timeframe and they could advance all of the interests that have been expressed.

Vice Mayor Lauing questioned taking off all three rail crossings not already underway on Item 93.

Mr. Kamhi said the next part of this process would be for the Churchill, Meadow and Charleston crossings. The Palo Alto Quiet Zone has already been initiated in last year's Council Priorities.

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Vice Mayor Lauing said they were committing in objectives to the first three in addition to the one that is already addressed to take action on that this year. He asked for a definition for initial analysis.

Mr. Kamhi countered the analysis would be a study that needs to be completed in order to define what is needed to accomplish a quiet zone to get it approved by the CPUC and Caltrain and community outreach. He said it was a more complex project than Palo Alto Avenue.

Vice Mayor Lauing brought up wording on Item 84. He surmised the objective was to implement a new hiring ahead program to achieve those objectives.

Assistant City Manager Kiely Nose stated one midyear ago, Council provided specific direction to authorize hire ahead of five officers beyond the current hire ahead authorization levels. This item speaks toward that more aggressive hire ahead program in order to fill vacancies.

Police Chief Andrew Binder discussed the process of adding officers to the force and the need for a constant pipeline of hiring to decrease the lag time in allowing them to start.

Council Member Veenker referenced Items 77 and 78. She reported that the PRC is considering sites for the Wellness Center including Cubberley. She wanted to see Cubberley remain in the mix for that. She reported that some of the Commissioners have expressed concern that Cubberley may never come through. She commented on the importance of Item 94 and hoped to continue aggressively pursuing it.

Council Member Lythcott-Haims commented on the pairing between Items 77 and 78. As Chair of the Cubberley Ad-Hoc, she encouraged Council to let the PRC know that their ad-hoc has been meeting expeditiously and the desire to reach an outcome with Cubberley. She also wanted to support Council Member Burt's statement about means restriction being a critical component of efforts to support those who struggle with mental health. She supported it being in the capital plan and also stated as an objective so the public knows it is a component of the issue they are paying attention to. She added a reminder that grade separation is also meant to be a means restriction ultimate achievement. Grade separation will take years so in the meantime there is an issue of better fencing and enhanced detection to bridge that gap. She described what she viewed to be five components tackling and addressing youth mental health issues. She referenced Item 81 and asked for an update from Staff on where they are in that objective.

Community Services Director Kristen O'Kane explained that a portion of the youth mental health item is for planning an event being coordinating with their partners at Youth Community Service, allcove, Project Safety Net and both Paly and Gunn Wellness Centers. The other piece is partly a placeholder for now. She plans to have a more vetted proposal when they come to Finance Committee with their budget. She gave examples of what that could include.

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Council Member Burt described a recent Rail Committee discussion about how quiet zones will contribute to a means restriction. He brought up teens and access to locations and suggested incentivizing riding versus driving.

Lupita Alamos, Assistant to the City Manager, asked for Council to discuss and identify adjustments on the Finance and Policy and Services Standing Committee Workplans.

Council Member Kou asked for a referral for the Fire Department to bring forward a discussion of what it will take to ensure Stations 2 and 4 are staffed and are able to respond with engines that have water.

Assistant City Manager Nose explained Staff expected to talk to the Finance Committee about a follow-up on the future of fire staffing both water as well as ambulance and medical services in the August-November timeframe. She said they would talk about it as part of the FY25 budget process in May with the Finance Committee as part of the broader discussion over funding, resource allocation, etc. Given the financial magnitude to stand up that level of staffing, Staff would recommend a phased approach.

Council Member Kou described Ability Path's services in the community and requested Finance Committee to consider a \$250,000 grant in order to move forward with their facilities in Mitchell Park Place.

Assistant City Manager Nose remarked the Finance Committee has started to talk about the types of requests that are coming forward and the programs they have. She said there is not a formal process that this would typically go through. The resource allocation of funding fits nicely with the Finance Committee's purview as they talk about the budget process in May and it is within the Committee's prerogative to make a recommendation in terms of funding for something like this. The conversation over the process of bringing these types of requests forward is part of the workplan they discussed with the Finance Committee as part of the follow-up associated with the Human Services and special events funding and how they would navigate these kinds of requests.

Council Member Kou wanted to find out if in the discussion on the criteria for these grants if it will take much longer and they might miss out on the opportunity for the FY25 budget.

Assistant City Manager Nose answered depending on the timing of the need of the funding as well as the desire of the Council, if there was an immediate need an allocation as part of the 2025 proposed budget process from the Committee would be the most expeditious way. If it can be fit into a more perspective looking format would have a longer timeframe.

Council Member Kou asked that the Finance Committee consider the cost of hiring a biologist. She discussed ways the City would benefit from this.

City Manager Shikada commented that Council Member Kou identified a specific position and raised interest in a topic area. He suggested it would be better to focus on the latter such as

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where there is an interest in increased resources for that particular function. He thought if it were referred to the Finance Committee, he thought it would be a discussion in the context of budget recommendations as to how best to respond to the concern raised. He envisioned something of Staff responding to this question of how they are resourced to address these issues and re-engaging in a discussion with the Finance Committee if there is an impression that is not sufficient and what additional resources might enable them to do. He added that they are not looking at adding significant staff to this budget given the expectations of revenues for the upcoming year.

Council Member Veenker thought it would be helpful to have a referral to explore how they are resourced with respect to issues like this. She suggested it could include explaining whether having a dedicated staff member to help them on a variety of issues would be cheaper if they could avoid retaining certain external resources.

Council Member Burt was not supportive of a focus on what it would cost to do it but he did think they needed an understanding of how they currently address those issues and go from there on what gaps or needs there may be. He was not convinced a single individual would have the expertise in the range of issues.

Deputy City Manager Chantal Cotton-Gains discussed the proposed Policy & Services Committee 2024 Workplan.

Council Member Lythcott-Haims queried if it would be possible or someone to find the workplans for the past five years so she could have a greater sense of the context of what this committee typically covers.

Deputy City Manager Cotton-Gains offered to provide the committee with the actual items that went to committee over the past five years. To the point of gaps, she added there are a few items that will be coming in the gaps for the auditor.

Council Member Veenker wanted to know where they are on the seismic ordinance update on the pending referrals list.

Deputy City Manager Cotton-Gains said she knows that Staff is following up based off of the conversation they had with Policy and Services last year in context of other projects they have going in that department. The follow-up from Committee is that they are still moving forward with it. She expected an update from the department within this calendar year.

Council Member Burt stated under “the Council action needed to retain”, they have an item from November 2021 to look at strategies to support and strengthen neighborhood programs, do a gap analysis, etc. He asked for an update why that has not proceeded and why they need to have a Council action to get it moving again.

Deputy City Manager Cotton-Gains answered there as a presentation that came to the committee in 2021 to get more context around what the committee was interested in

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discussing based off this referral. With the amount of Staff time required for the follow-up, they have not had that item higher prioritized in the time sense.

City Manager Shikada believed this was brought forward by a colleague's memo including a proposal to establish a neighborhood ambassador's program. He thought the magnitude of work involved that did not allow it to move forward at the time. Given that they have progressed on the neighborhood townhalls and related programs, Staff is suggesting that they need an affirmation from Council whether they want to keep this on the plate.

Council Member Burt concurred that the specific proposal of this ambassador program was a particular approach to how they could strengthen their relationships with neighborhood groups and help support them. He thought it was well taken that the townhalls have been a valuable step in addressing this broad objective. He was interested in referring back to the Policy and Services Committee for consideration of what they should do in addition to what they are doing. He asked what the CalCHA followups meant.

City Manager Shikada explained CalCHA. He recalled the committee had extensive discussions on the topic and it was challenging to move forward.

Deputy City Manager Cotton-Gains added when the committee heard that there was a question of the amount of resources it would take to implement such a program in Palo Alto, it was deemed not the correct fit based off the summary at Committee.

Council Member Burt recalled they have referred Affordable Housing ways to resource that to the Housing Ad-Hoc. He wanted to refer working on having templates for annual repeat agendas for Policy and Service Committee, Finance Committee and Council to Policy and Service Committee.

Council Member Lythcott-Haims did not see Council's direction for P&S and staff to work on an ordinance on CEDAW in the workplan. She asked if it is because it would be going directly to Council.

Deputy City Manager Cotton-Gains responded their plan was to bring it to the full Council unless their work veers from what was previously discussed with Policy and Services. She explains that there have been some questions regarding Boards and Commissions and maybe reviewing the timeline of chairperson selection as well as workplan coming to Council as well as discussion of some sort between the Commission and City Council. They are going to draft some ideas to bring to Policy and Services this year related to that. She said it is fine to add it to the workplan.

Council Member Kou wondered if the nonprofit services contracts that are expiring in 2025 would be able to be reviewed by Policy and Services for its scope and performance.

Assistant City Manager Kiely Nose answered there is an outstanding audit with recommendations that Staff is going to pick up that work in the coming months of this year.

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City Manager Shikada confirmed that is a part of the Staff workplan. It has been referred to as follow-up to the audit on nonprofit agreements. The plan is to come back to City Council with a study session as soon as the work is underway.

MOTION: Council Member Burt moved, seconded by Council Member Lythcott-Haims to approve the 2024 Proposed City Council Priorities and Objectives: Community Health, Safety, Wellness & Belonging section with the following additional objective:

1. Enhanced Caltrain safety and security.

MOTION PASSED: 7-0

MOTION: Council Member Kou moved, seconded by Council Member Burt to refer the following to the Finance Committee 2024 Workplan:

1. Consider a \$250k grant for Ability Path to move forward with their facilities at Mitchell Park Place at 525 East Charleston Road for services.

MOTION PASSED: 6-1, Tanaka no

MOTION: Mayor Stone moved, seconded by Council Member Veenker to approve the Finance Committee 2024 Workplan with the additional referral:

1. Consider a \$250k grant for Ability Path to move forward with their facilities at Mitchell Park Place at 525 East Charleston Road for services.

MOTION PASSED: 6-1, Tanaka no

MOTION: Council Member Burt moved, seconded by Council Member Kou to approve the Policy & Services Committee 2024 Workplan and refer the following to the Policy & Services Committee Workplan:

1. Review of an annual schedule of repeat items that occur annually on agendas for Policy & Services, Finance Committee, and City Council along with the approximate month they occur; and,

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2. Establish a frequency for joint City Council meetings or Policy & Services meeting with Boards and Commissions, Youth Council, and meetings with Boards and Commissions Chairs; and,
3. Retain the November 2021 Council referral on neighborhood programs, to request Policy & Services to review and make recommendations for any initiatives to support and strengthen neighborhood programs.

MOTION PASSED: 7-0

3. Policy and Services Recommendation to the City Council for the creation of a Citizens Advisory Committee on a Potential Charter Amendment on Council Member Compensation (Item Continued from March 11, 2024 and March 18, 2024 City Council Meetings)

Council Member Kou read the parameters Policy and Services have recommended for City Council to consider.

Public Comment:

1. Liz G. (Zoom) informed that it did not sit well with her that the stipend Council receives is compared to a minimum wage job. She added that she believed City Council should talk about how artificial intelligence is impacting minimum wage jobs.
2. Aram J. (Zoom) thought an advisory committee with a cross section of the community would make sense. He did not like that Council Members are elected district wide and thought they should instead have district representatives. He suggested the wealthy Council Members decline the stipends and benefits and have Council Members be full time employees.

Council Member Veenker asked what the rationale was around the number of 15 members. She commented that there is only one category of people and she wondered if it should be reduced to 11 or add another category. She wondered if the bullet point “no one currently in the pipeline to run again” could be better articulated by something akin to what is used with the Redistricting Commission which she explained.

Council Member Kou answered the number 15 would bring in more diverse voices.

Vice Mayor Lauing recalled discussion about a five-person committee made up of people with expertise with one suggestion being to have some HR experts and a suggestion of having former Council Members being on there because of their experience. He believed this large number would take a long time and process to put together. He gravitated back to a 5-person committee rather than 15 made up from prior Council Members. The process could be that the

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Mayor could select a diverse group and they could get started immediately to give them a shot of getting a recommendation to Council this year to possibly make the August ballot deadline.

Council Member Lythcott-Haims spoke to her support for the motion.

Council Member Burt talked about reasons he did not support the motion. He encouraged his colleagues to think about other considerations.

Council Member Tanaka explained his issues with the motion.

City Manager Ed Shikada wanted Council to be aware that the effort contemplated by this motion is not on their workplan, the Policy and Services Committee is currently following up on the referral from the Council to look at an expense reimbursement and two other ballot measures the City may be sponsoring in November for Quarry Road parkland undedication and a directly elected mayor.

Council Member Kou suggested limiting what the income level is for those that will get a salary in order to have a wider variety of people serving.

MOTION: Vice Mayor Lauing moved, seconded by Council Member Lythcott-Haims to create a Committee of seven (7) members, four (4) of which are former City Council members, with each Council Member appointing one (1) member, to consider future increases in Council Member salaries above the guidelines in SB329 (which for a city the size of Palo Alto is \$1600/month). Committee Members must agree not to run for Council for at least 5-years following the issuance of a recommendation.

- a. If the Committee supports an increase, make a recommendation to the City Council on amount and timing to be considered by Council.
- b. If the committee recommends no increase, provide to the City Council rationale for the decision.

MOTION PASSED: 4-3, Burt, Kou, Tanaka no

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 P.M.