

Baumb, Nelly

From: Pat Burt <patburt11@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, November 30, 2020 12:51 PM
To: Council, City; Minor, Beth
Cc: gstone22@gmail.com
Subject: Noc 30, 2020 CC Agenda Items 2 and 10 - City Board and Commission Appointments

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Beth,

The below comments are from Greer and me.

Pat

November 30, 2020

From: Greer Stone and Pat Burt

Subject: Items 2 and 10 - City Board and Commission Appointments

City Council,

City Boards and Commissions have long been critical to advising the City Council in roles that are complementary and different from the functions of city staff and consultants. To best fulfill their responsibilities, Commissioners should work respectfully and constructively with Staff, the public, and their colleagues. They should provide thoughtful, critical analysis along with offering community context-based points of view. They should represent the range and balance of perspectives of the community. The BCC Handbook is a valuable addition to meeting those objectives.

However, the Council should not act to contradict and undermine the very policies they are adopting the same evening.

The timing of Planning and Transportation Commission appointments. Planning and Transportation Commissioners serve an exceptionally important advisory role. They have a broad responsibility to recommend on matters that make up the City's built environment and its mobility. In addition to reviewing whether and how projects comply with policies and regulations, they review the Comprehensive Plan, and they are often asked by the Council and staff to provide recommendations on how to fulfill policies that the Council has adopted or intends to adopt. Because Commissions are advisory to the Council, rather than being decision-making authorities or political counter-forces to the Council, they are expected to work within Council policy guidance.

For many years, the PTC represented an approximate balance of perspectives about the pace and types of development in the community. However, in more recent years, the Commission has too often been more imbalanced and sharply divided in their views. At times, that division has resulted in a politicized Commission philosophically opposed to the Council majority's direction with Commissioners acting as political opponents of the Council rather than constructive and valued advisors. In those circumstances, the Commission became less effective and less valued by the Council, Staff, applicants, and the public.

The PTC currently includes five of seven members who were appointed by the Councils of the last four years and could be fairly described as being philosophically aligned with those Councils. One of those appointments was made vacant in early November 2016, yet the outgoing Council decided unanimously to allow the new Council to fill that position despite a different political majority in the incoming Council. Today, the intention of the outgoing Council majority to make lame-duck appointments in their very final meeting will be seen as a transparently political intended to further stack the PTC and undermine the incoming Council. The result would be a less valued and less productive PTC.

Many of us have rightly condemned similar actions coming out of a lame-duck administration in Washington DC as heightening partisanship and undermining the integrity of government, yet we are on a similar path with corresponding damage to community faith in our local government. That's not what Palo Alto residents and businesses expect from their elected officials.

Now is the time to work productively rather than worsen the partisanship of our politics. We have real challenges ahead that require our city government to have the trust of the people and we need the City boards, commissions, and city staff to be effective. There is no legitimate reason to force through these commission appointments just three weeks before the new council takes office. None of these commissions will meet during that time. The justifications for last-minute appointments are not persuasive to the public or the incoming Council.

Councilmember Kniss stated that by making the appointments in December, there would be less pressure on the incoming council and Councilmember Cormack similarly argued that it would be best to make the appointments in December to not overwhelm the incoming council. Although we appreciate those concerns, we bring with us approximately 25 years of combined experience on local commissions or elected bodies and do not require such help in easing our transition.

We request that the Council defer the open appointments of board and commission appointments until after the newly elected Council takes office.

Sincerely,

Greer Stone and Pat Burt

Baumb, Nelly

From: Beth Rosenthal <bbr550@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, November 29, 2020 8:52 PM
To: Council, City
Subject: Fwd: Agenda Item 10

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Be cautious of opening attachments and clicking on links.

> Dear Mayor Fine and Council Members:

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> I am writing regarding Agenda Item 10, consideration of recommendations by the City Council on Boards, Commissions and Committees. It is shocking to me that the Council majority would develop rules for appointing individuals to serve on Boards, etc. but feel no compunction about not having this process apply to themselves. It is difficult to accept the rationale that this is a practical rather than a political move. It seems apparent that the pro-growth faction of the Council wants to continue their policies through PTC appointments even though two members of this group, Adrian Fine and Liz Kniss, will no longer be Council members. The fact that originally this vote was taken late at night further suggests that it was done during a time when the pro-growth group thought that few observers would be watching. To make rules for others which do not apply to the rule makers strikes me as an incredible breach of ethical principles of good governance.

Sincerely,

Beth Rosenthal, PhD