City of Palo Alto
City Council Staff Report

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Summary Title: City Council Recess Summary Report

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From: City Manager

Lead Department: City Manager

Discussion
The following informational report provides a brief update on activities accomplished during the City Council’s July recess. The updates are organized by department. While the summary is not an exhaustive list of staff activities, it seeks to inform the City Council and the broader community about items completed since the last City Council meeting of the fiscal year or recent efforts underway. The report is transmitted with the August 3 City Council meeting packet.

Administrative Services Department

End of Fiscal Year and New Fiscal Year Activities: Over the past 6 weeks, ASD staff have been hard at work transitioning from one fiscal year to a new fiscal year, it is the “New Years” for financial staff. Not only has staff completed the normal review of contracts and revenues and expenses to begin the comprehensive annual financial report for FY 2020 and begin the FY 2021 fiscal year, they have completed the annual inventory of both warehouses at the Municipal Services Center and Regional Water Quality Control Plant (RWQCP) requiring the physical count of inventory with no material discrepancies; implemented the new employment contracts for payroll processing including the management and professional concessions such as the vacation limit and furlough adjustments as well as the new Family First Corona Virus Relief Act (FFCRA) with the sunset of the administrative leave provision on June 30, 2020.

Other Administrative Activities: Other staff activities included the submittal of certification for CARES Act funds as designated by the Governor’s Office of $845,000 as outlined in his May revise budget approved by the legislature in late June 2020. Processed and issued 48 small business grants to date totaling $477,000 with an cross functional team pulled together for this special project. Staff remotely processed over 360 parking permit renewals for the first time in the University Avenue and California Avenue districts. As well as completed configurations and preparations for a new pilot on-line parking permit program. As a smaller parking permit area, staff selected College Terrace as a testing opportunity to pilot the online system that will go live on Monday, August 3. Revenue Collections and Transportation staff training on the new system will conclude by July 31.

City Manager’s Office
Race and Equity Framework Progress: The City Manager’s Office continues to move forward several efforts focused on Race and Equity, including a series of community engagement opportunities. In addition, all Council Ad Hoc committees have met over the July recess and an update is tentatively scheduled for August 24 for further Council input and community feedback. Staff recently was accepted as a member of the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE) to take our race and equity efforts further through training, learning from other agencies and best practices employed.

Staff has begun implementing a series of ways for the community to join the conversation on race and equity and additional planning is underway. The approaches range from panel discussions, Q and A sessions, speaker series, and public forums, to digital conversations through a social media campaign and online forum over the next several months.

A brief description and timeline of the conversations and events are listed below:

Police Community Briefings began on July 1 and are a series of four learning sessions. YouTube comments are open for the public to comment. Police Department Introduction: July 1, Use of Force: July 8, Search and Seizure: July 15, and Transparency and Accountability: July 22

Q and A session with Kaloma Smith, City Manager Ed Shikada, and Chief Jonsen- completed on July 2 and available here. The recorded event is available on YouTube and community comments are still being taken.

8 Can’t Wait Panel Discussion, hosted by the Human Relations Commission – completed on July 9 and available here.

Panel included:

- Chief Robert Jonson – Palo Alto Police Department
- David Alan Sklansky - Co-Director of Criminal Justice Center Stanford
- Kenan Moos - Justice Vanguard Foundation
- Matthew Clair – Assistant Professor of Sociology, Stanford University
- Anand Subramanian - Managing Director, Policy Link

8 Can’t Wait Review with the Human Relations Commission and Public Forum- completed on July 22 and available here. Review by staff and HRC public forum took place. Recommendations and input received will be presented to the City Council during a study session tentatively scheduled on August 24.

Human Relations Commission Public Forum on the Current and History of Black and Brown Community Experiences: August 13. Discussion and public forum sharing experiences is planned. City social media campaign and online forum will complement this conversation by encouraging experiences sent via video or other digital mediums to share with the commission.

Author Series – Palo Alto Reads: In partnership with Stanford University, the Palo Alto Library is hosting an author series in August and exploring other author talks for September focused on race and equity. Library youth and teen programming will be offered around this author series focused on inclusion and diversity.
**Expanded Communications:** Staff is currently working on a series of communications to engage and inform on race and equity. A few examples include a new website: [www.cityofpaloalto.org/raceandequity](http://www.cityofpaloalto.org/raceandequity), initial [Blog post](http://www.cityofpaloalto.org/raceandequity) and [Additional blog post](http://www.cityofpaloalto.org/raceandequity). Staff is also encouraging email input by emailing the City Manager’s Office here: [raceandequity@cityofpaloalto.org](mailto:raceandequity@cityofpaloalto.org).

**Summer Streets Program Progress:** Reopening and recovery work continues as we implement the City Council’s priorities of supporting our community and uplifting local businesses during this challenging time. Staff coordination includes one on one meetings, weekly check-in meetings with Cal Ave and University Avenue/Downtown core businesses. An online survey, direct email correspondence and site visits were also conducted to gain an ongoing understanding of how the street closures, signage, parklets and other efforts are impacting restaurants, retail stores and other business operations. Changes to the program continue to be made based on business input. In addition, we’ve offered community check-in meetings via Zoom and an online survey for the community to also provide feedback on their experiences. Print and digital advertising is underway to promote the program and encourage local and regional visitors to eat, shop and celebrate summer, supporting local businesses safely through the summer months. For additional details, go to [www.cityofpaloalto.org/summerstreets](http://www.cityofpaloalto.org/summerstreets).

**Community Services Department**

**Summer Camp Progress:** The Community Services Department launched virtual and in-person summer camps in July. Camps include music, dance and theatre (7 camps/11 sessions), art (4 camps/12 sessions), science (4 camps/11 sessions), and sports/recreation (13 camps/18 sessions). Special interest camps are also offered (7 camps/9 sessions). All in-person camps are following social distancing and hygiene guidelines in the most recent County Health Order.

**Community Programming Continues:** CSD continues to provide opportunities to engage the community through programming. Examples include a potter’s wheel rental program (Art Center), virtual theatre performances (Children’s Theatre), and a mural event for teens called “What Keeps You Afloat?” (Children’s Theatre).

**Public Art Installations Underway:** The Public Art program was busy with the Black Lives Matter mural initiative, a Public Arts Commission-led effort; installing the public art at the new Junior Museum and Zoo; and restoring The Boy with a Fishing Pole mural (Greg Brown) on the side of the downtown Post Office.

**Commission Coordination:** Staff are working closely with the Public Art Commission and Human Relations Commission to respond to Council referrals on Black Lives Matter and 8 Can’t Wait. The Human Relations Commission hosted two community conversations around police practices in July on July 9 and July 22. Go [here](http://www.cityofpaloalto.org/summerstreets) for their meeting details including recordings of the conversations.

**Parks and Recreation Commission Coordination:** Parks and Open Space staff assisted the Parks and Recreation Commission to host a panel discussion on July 28 related to Foothills Park access to nonresidents. The City Council will discuss this topic on August 3.

**Cubberley Coordination and Tenant Support:** Staff worked closely with Palo Alto Unified School District (PAUSD) to find suitable room assignments for each long-term tenant that was displaced from Cubberley
due to the new lease agreement. In addition, staff was recently notified that two tenants are closing due to impacts from COVID-19 and staff is evaluating space usage. Staff is also working on a prioritization policy for Cubberley hourly renters. PAUSD will also allow hourly rental use of several rooms to frequent past renters.

**Office of Emergency Services**

**Emergency Services Activities:** OES staff continues to monitor the ongoing pandemic emergency, participating in County EOC conference calls, coordinating with other regional partners, and tracking emerging trends. Staff is working with the County specifically on new opportunities to expand COVID-19 testing in Palo Alto in August and September.

OES is also continuing the mission to prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from all hazards. The threats of wildland fire, terrorism, cyber, and numerous other hazards continue, even as most people focus on the pandemic. See [www.cityofpaloalto.org/thira](http://www.cityofpaloalto.org/thira). OES has also made progress on the grant-funded Solar Generator Trailer project, with the RFP concluded, the vendor selected, and delivery expected in early 2021. OES is also continuing to conduct socially-distanced training for our Emergency Services Volunteers (ESV), a program that is continuing to add members during this pandemic.

**Fire Department**

**Hog Fire Strike Team Redeployment:** On the morning of July 21 the Palo Alto Fire Department received a mutual aid request from Contra Costa County to join a strike team responding to the Hog Fire located west of Susanville near the Hog Flat Reservoir in Lassen County. The Palo Alto four-member crew assigned to the event includes a Captain, Engineer, Firefighter Paramedic and Firefighter. PAFD Engine 365 returned from their strike team deployment to the Hog Fire on July 29. As of July 30, the Hog Fire is currently 9565 acres and 82% contained.

**Human Resources Department**

**Human Resources Activities:** As a result of fiscal challenges and revenue shortfalls reflected in the adopted budget, HR staff completed position reductions and layoffs impacting up to 7 full time employees and 53 hourly employees. Staff are continuing to facilitate the redeployment of impacted employees to help minimize employee separations. Staff was able to work with union leadership to defer 15 public safety employee layoffs, through a combination of a Public Safety early retirement program, salary concessions and other measures. Staff also assisted with implementing furloughs and salary freezes for Management and Professional Employees. At the same time, staff supported critical recruitments to ensure stable staffing in critical services including planning and building inspectors. Human Resources staff also partnered with Community Services to hire and on board approximately 30 hourly employees to launch this year’s summer camps. Staff is leading evaluation of the newest County protocols related to COVID-19.

**Library Department**

**Recent Library Award Announced:** Palo Alto Library’s **Robotics in Libraries** has been selected to receive an Outstanding Achievement in Local Government Innovation Award from the Alliance for Innovation!
**Sidewalk Service Continues**: The library began Sidewalk holds pickup services at Mitchell Park and Rinconada branches from June 26. More than 14,000 items have been picked up by community members.


From August 15 to September 15, free copies of *The Color of Law* will be available at Mitchell Park and Rinconada Libraries during Sidewalk Service hours. We hope that Palo Alto joins in this community read and conversation. We will be offering a series of events for all ages during this time, including a virtual conversation with author Richard Rothstein on Thursday, August 27 at 7 p.m. This author event is sponsored and hosted by The Bill Lane Center for the American West of Stanford University. Palo Alto Reads is joint partnership with the City of Palo Alto and its Race & Equity Initiatives. Many thanks to the City, Stanford University and the Friends of the Palo Alto Library for their support!

**Library Book to Action Program Launched**: Palo Alto Library was chosen out of a competitive field of applicants to participate in Book to Action, a California Center for the Book/California State Library program that takes the book club concept and expands it into a series of events for adults and intergenerational groups. For our program, we selected the adult graphic novel *Wrinkles* by Paco Roca, and have put together a series of events designed to generate empathy and inspire connection with the Seniors in our community. Starting this week, we will be making copies of *Wrinkles* available to patrons (for free!) while supplies last.

**Library Virtual Events and Other Programming**: The Library hosted 29 live/interactive events with 2367 attendees virtual events. Virtual Storytimes started on July 6 and run Monday-Friday at 11 AM on Facebook Live. We’ve had 12 events with 1816 views. Summer Reading Program launched on July 1 with 817 signups so far. Our 3 Wacky Wednesdays have attracted 408 attendees and our special SRP videos (First Chapter Fridays and Saturday Crafternoons) have attracted 880 views.

**Planning and Development Services Department**

**Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) and Plan Bay Area 2050**: The City Council received an informational report regarding these two regional planning processed. City Council will hold a public meeting on August 3. Public comments on the Plan Bay Area 2050 draft Blueprint are due on or before August 10.

**Summer Streets**: The Summer Streets program, kicked off by Council adoption of a resolution and interim urgency ordinance, has been well-received by businesses and community members. On California Avenue and University Avenue, dining al fresco has become the new modus operandi. In addition, over 20 applications for parklets have been received, reviewed, and/or issued. Five parklets have been constructed and are currently serving patrons. Likewise, several private and public parking
spaces have been repurposed as outdoor dining or retail areas. The Council will receive an update and consider program modifications on August 10, 2020.

**Inspection Services:** The City has received numerous complaints about the delay in scheduling inspections for construction projects. While recruitment is underway for two new inspectors (one is limited term) authorized by the City Council during the budget process, staff has onboarded additional consultant inspectors using salary savings. Efforts to reduce the backlog have been successful. The waitlist has been reduced from 6 weeks to approximately 1 week. The City’s inspection manager and even our Chief Building Official have conducted inspections to help better serve our customers.

**Online Permitting Services System:** The Online Permitting Services System began as a temporary measure to respond changes in the shelter in place protocols. It has enabled many customers to submit plans and review comments electronically. Staff review of the system is underway to address customer issues raised and staff is creating a series of online tutorials to make the system more accessible. The Online Permitting Services system is moving from a temporary tool to one that can sustain us over the duration of the pandemic and through recovery. This year, the department will issue a request for proposals for a more permanent online solution.

**Castilleja School:** The Final Environmental Impact Report for Castilleja was released on July 29. Public hearings on the project will begin with the Architecture Review Board on August 20 followed by the Planning and Transportation Commission on August 26. A significant amount of public engagement is anticipated, and it will take several meetings each of these bodies and the HRB before the project advances to the City Council in November (tentative).

**High Speed Rail Project Draft Environmental Impact Report Released:** The California High Speed Rail Authority has released a DIER/EIS for the project section between San Francisco and San Jose. The public comment period ends August 24, 2020. City staff led by the Office of Transportation, are reviewing the document and anticipate sending a comment letter. More information and access to the document is available [here](#).

**340 Portage (Former Fry’s Site) Application Filed:** An application was received requesting a zoning text amendment to allow more flexible use of the space vacated Fry’s Electronics. The applicant indicates Target has a strong interest to occupy about 30KSF of the building and requests code language precluding the expansion of other land uses, including office, be removed. The property is zoned RM-40 but is allowed to maintain commercial uses through a provision written into the City’s zoning code. No hearing dates are scheduled at this time.

**788 San Antonio Housing Project Application:** This application for 100 units and possible extension of the Housing Incentive Program along portions of San Antonio is schedule for hearings before the Planning and Transportation Commission on August 12, 2020 and Architectural Review Board on August 20, 2020. This is a legislative and quasi-judicial project that will also be scheduled before the City Council tentatively in October.

**North Ventura Coordinated Area Plan (NVCAP):** The NVCAP Working Group has continued virtual meetings, which started in May 2020. The Working Group has used small, subcommittee meetings to work towards consensus on several important topics. The Working Group will continue meeting in August. In September and October, staff and the consultant team will translate the outcomes of the
subcommittee meetings into at least 2 draft alternatives that will be presented to the Planning and Transportation Commission, and ultimately City Council.

**Wireless Ordinance:** Prior to the coronavirus pandemic, staff was on schedule to present this ordinance to Council in April. Early cancellation of the PTC meetings and need to shift staff resources to other priorities resulted in delays to the schedule. Staff anticipates bring a draft resolution to the PTC following its request to meet with industry officials and make some adjustment to the ordinance. Those hearings will resume in September/October and be presented to the City Council around November.

**East Palo Alto University Avenue Office Project:** City staff responded to a Notice of Preparation to prepare an Environmental Impact Report for the University Circle Phase II Office Project proposed at the corner of University Avenue and Woodland Avenue in East Palo Alto. The project proposes to redevelop an existing parking lot located in the southeast corner of the project site with a six-story, approximately 180,000-square-foot office building above three levels of below grade parking. The tenant(s) for the office space are not yet known.

City of Palo Alto Staff anticipates that the project will result in both construction and operational traffic impacts that would affect residents within the City of Palo Alto and has requested that a traffic analysis be prepared to analyze these local traffic impacts. The City also requested that the City of East Palo Alto identify and address other impacts that may affect the quality of life of residents within Palo Alto as a result of construction or operation of the proposed project. They include but are not limited to: air quality, aesthetics, noise, and parking.

The Notice of Preparation is the beginning phase of an environmental review process. There will be additional opportunities to provide public input in the future. Staff anticipates that the City of Palo Alto will review and provide a formal comment letter on the Draft Environmental Impact Report once it is published.

**Police Department**

**Police Community Briefings:** For the first time, the Police Department delivered four separate live presentations to the public via Zoom and YouTube during the month of July to share department details. The series of one-hour online community briefings offer insight into the Police Department and some aspects of law enforcement. The community briefings are loosely based on the curriculum provided in the Police Department’s popular Basic Citizens Police Academy and takes community members on a deep dive into law enforcement topics as a foundation to upcoming broader community briefing sessions.

Chief Robert Jonsen, Assistant Chief Andrew Binder, and Acting Captain James Reifschneider each hosted at least one of the sessions, all of which can be watched on the [PAPD YouTube channel](#): **Overview of PAPD, Use of Force Policy and Use of Force Investigations, Laws of Arrest and Search & Seizure, and Accountability Within PAPD.**

**Participated in Ongoing Race and Equity Conversations:** Led by Chief Robert Jonsen and joined by other members of the PAPD executive staff, the Police Department spent much of July participating in the ongoing race and equity conversations occurring in our community. PAPD participated in multiple meetings of the four City Council Ad Hoc Committees, made presentations and addressed questions at two public meetings of the Human Relations Commission, and participated in two community
roundtable discussions on racial and social injustice in America hosted by the Mid-Pen Media Center. The Police Department looks forward to continuing to participate in these important conversations as we move into August.

**Response to Fireworks Complaints:** During the shelter-in-place period, there has been a rise across the United States in the number of illegal fireworks, and the Palo Alto area has been no exception. Our officers routinely responded to fireworks complaints from residents, but unfortunately the fireworks were only heard or seen in the sky, and the location from which they were being launched was most often in adjoining cities. The Police Department joined other City departments in launching a public education campaign targeting the illegality of fireworks and the ramifications and dangers that illegal fireworks bring to communities. For more information, see the City’s new web page dedicated to this ongoing problem [here](#).

**Public Works Services Department**

**Bike Bridge Construction Continues:** The construction contract for the Highway 101 pedestrian/bike bridge was approved in November 2019 and construction started this year in February. During July, utility relocations that required a new joint trench were completed on the West Bayshore side. On the East Bayshore side, construction of all 16 foundation piles was completed, and column construction is in progress and is visible. Fabrication of the main span steel bridge over Highway 101 and the smaller Adobe Creek bridge is underway.

**California Avenue Garage Progress:** Steady progress has continued over the summer and we expect the garage to be completed by late September. The remaining work includes the grand staircase facing Birch Street, terra cotta exterior architectural elements, elevators, parking stall striping, landscaping and signage, the parking guidance system, and the garage’s 32 EV chargers.

**Deconstruction Ordinance Began July 1, 2020:** A new Palo Alto Deconstruction Ordinance became effective on July 1, requiring that certain large projects separate materials as a building is taken down, rather than demolishing it in the old-fashioned way. Deconstruction, rather than demolition, allows for more salvaging and recycling; reduces landfilling; conserves materials and resources; and helps implement the City’s Zero Waste and Sustainability/Climate Action Plans. The July 1 date is the first phase of this initiative and includes projects that are taking down an entire building, where the Building permit is applied for after July 1. Staff expects about 115 projects per year; maybe less this year with COVID-19 induced delays. Since July 1, there have been five Building permit applications submitted which will trigger deconstruction; all of which are single family residential. Palo Alto is one of the first cities, nationally, to implement this program. Additional information, outreach materials, and resources are available on the City’s website, by emailing [Deconstruction@CityofPaloAlto.org](mailto:Deconstruction@CityofPaloAlto.org), or by calling (650) 496-5910.

**Office of Transportation**

**Transportation Data Counts:** Transportation conducted data counts to determine detour traffic due to Summer Streets closures on University Avenue. Staff also conducted ongoing parking counts to evaluate the impacts of summer streets closures on parking demand and led pedestrian and bicycle data counts in the Cal Avenue and University Avenue areas to determine related impacts. Data collected will be
presented to the City Council as part of the August 10 City Council meeting item on the Summer Streets program.

**Rail Virtual Town Hall:** Office of Transportation, AECOM, and the City Manager’s Office is working to develop a virtual Town Hall to discuss grade separation (Connecting Palo Alto) that will occur in mid-August. This online opportunity will catch up the community on what’s new and provide a new opportunity virtually to inform and engage on the City’s Grade Separation conversations in advance of moving to the next phase of this initiative.

**Rail Expanded Community Advisory Panel (XCAP) Meeting Progress:** XCAP meetings have continued through the summer. The XCAP is starting to draft their final report and nearing deliberation of grade separation alternatives. XCAP plans to provide an update to Council in September.

**Caltrain Fiscal Challenges:** Staff has been tracking Caltrain fiscal challenges including the potential placement of an 1/8 cent sales tax measure on the November 2020 ballot. This topic is added to the August 3 City Council meeting to consider and discuss next steps.

**Parking Updates:** Staff has renegotiated contract parking enforcement with a significant cost savings, as described in the budgeting process. The contract with SP+ has been terminated and is in the process of switching the Residential Preferential Parking (RPP) permit process to a new vendor (Duncan) for virtual permitting. Staff is preparing to switch to the virtual permits using License Plate Recognition (LPR) technology and will return to Council with more details. Parking programs policy review is underway and will return to Council for review. In addition, the new Cal Ave garage will be opening this fall, and staff will return with plans for permit distribution and potential changes to the neighboring Residential Permit Program. Automated Parking Guidance Systems will be implemented in the new Cal Ave garage and the process for implementing a similar system in downtown is being developed.

**Transportation Planning:** Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Ordinance development is underway, and the Planning and Transportation Commission recently reviewed the proposed ordinance during a study session. Staff plans to return to PTC with the TDM ordinance in the first half of the year and to the City Council afterwards. The Safe Routes to School program has developed online resources and provided virtual lessons and trainings. Currently staff are preparing to re-align typical plans with the school districts plans. Due to COVID-19, the bike/scooter share program has not initiated. Staff plans to request Council to extend the pilot.

**Transportation Engineering:** Staff is working on contracts to continue Capital Improvement Projects and will return to council for approval of contracts. The Crescent Park neighborhood traffic calming pilot project will go to the Planning and Transportation Commission for review, followed by Council. Staff expects to bring a contract award to Council for approval for the Alma/Churchill Rail safety Section 130 grant-funded project soon.

**Utilities Department**

**Utilities Staffing:** Approximately half of the Utilities department staff have returned to work and half of the staff continue to work remotely. Almost all Operations staff are physically reporting to work to carry out field maintenance and operations projects and respond to emergency service calls. Customer Support Service staff rotate in and out of the office. Staff in the Administration, Resource Management
and Engineering divisions are mostly working remotely, although some are choosing to return to in-person work. Utilities had suspended reading meters in backyards and behind locked facilities in accordance with the shelter in place requirements but resumed all meter reading at the beginning of June once some of the restrictions were lifted.

**Modifications to Utilities Programs:** When the County lifted restrictions on construction activities, some energy efficiency projects resumed this summer, including commercial energy efficiency projects, solar installations, EV charger installations, and other work that does not require staff or consultant visits inside occupied residential dwellings. The County’s construction protocol requirements continue to be in effect. Since all visits inside occupied residential dwellings are temporarily on hold, staff are modifying programs to offer virtual services.

**Saving Energy and Water While Sheltering in Place:** Utilities launched an outreach campaign with energy and water efficiency tips to help keep bills low while people are working and studying from home. A new “Summer Sustainability for Kids” e-newsletter series aims to educate younger Palo Alto community members and provide family-friendly activities for children as they spend more time at home this summer.

**Utilities Projects Progress:** Each year Utilities performs a routine inspection of the gas distribution system to check for leaks and contractors are currently walking residential areas for this inspection. Staff are replacing utility poles in various areas of the city. In addition, the utilities meter audit project continues and is expected to wrap up in the fall.

**Timeline, Resource Impact, Policy Implications**

N/A

**Stakeholder Engagement**

N/A

**Environmental Review**

This report is not subject to environmental review.