



POLICY AND SERVICES COMMITTEE

Regular Meeting
September 10, 2009

Chairperson Espinosa called the meeting to order at 8:53 p.m. in the Council Chambers, 250 Hamilton Avenue, Palo Alto, California.

Present: Espinosa (Chair), Barton, Kishimoto, Yeh

1. Oral Communications

None

2. Recommendation for Approval of Changes to Council Procedures Related to the Council Meeting Agenda Order and Category Titles.

Assistant to the City Manager, Kelly Morariu said this item is part of Staff efforts to streamline the agendas and make them more user friendly for the public. Currently there are required categories such as Public Hearings, Reports from Officials, and Council Matters. All are actions of the Council. When they are listed individually on the agenda it presents some challenges to Staff regarding structuring the agenda in a way that is more accessible to the public and allows Staff to rearrange the order of the meeting to accommodate anticipated public comment. The recommendation is to make changes to Council Procedures that collapses all of those categories into one category called Action Items, which would include; Public Hearings, Reports of Committees/Commissions, Ordinances and Resolutions, Reports of Officials and Council Matters.

City Manager, James Keene said that under Action Items, Staff would still be able to identify if an item is a Public Hearing, or a Report from Committees/Commissions. He explained that often large numbers of the public will come to speak on an item, but Staff is locked into the sequence of the agenda delaying the public's opportunity to speak. Having this flexibility would allow the agenda to be rearranged based on anticipated public turn out. While the Council can change the order during the meeting now, this change would allow Staff to do it so the public gets some advance notice.

Herb Borock, City of Palo Alto, urged the Committee to adjourn the meeting immediately as it started two hours late. He stated that for years Council

agendas have been too packed and have had too much ceremonial process at the beginning. The Council meetings have a tentative starting time, but the public doesn't know when it will really start. He said that because this meeting is about procedures and making City business more accessible to the public he urged the Committee to adjourn the meeting immediately. He stated that approving minutes, and Special Orders of the Day are mostly action items as well. He stated that changing the Oral Communications time from five minutes to three minutes affects public participation. The agenda packet will change but it seems it will be without telling the public in advance.

Chair Espinosa apologized for being late. He defended the Council working hard to avoid such things. He said that he would prefer to continue with the meeting and not postpone it.

Council Member Kishimoto agreed that two hours is unforgiveable and thinks they should plan to not do this again.

Council Member Yeh suggested a real time communication with the members of the public that self select into a particular meeting with email blasts or some other form of communication.

Ms. Morariu said Staff has not looked at that but could consider it. A challenge would be collecting emails and getting notification out.

Chair Espinosa said the biggest problem would be having real time reporting. The City Clerk or another Staff member would have to predict events. A member of the public might be at home wanting to know if a specific item is coming up in 10 minutes or two hours so they can time their arrival. Staff can report on what has already happened but they have no way to predict when an item will be heard. Even that would take extra Staff as the City Clerk is busy transcribing the minutes.

Mr. Keene said that it might not be perfect, but some level of communication may be beneficial to the public. An update is better than no update. There are other methods of communication available as well, such as Twitter. The timing and pace of instant communication is uncertain, but Staff would be willing to try. He said that it would be inappropriate for Staff to get dinged for miscalculating future events such as the timing of a pending agenda item.

Council Member Yeh said that perhaps it's best not to start with individual items but rather study sessions having updates on when they might be ending. In regards to setting up updates on Twitter, that is a huge market with potential for millions of subscribers and should be looked into.

MOTION: Council Member Barton moved, seconded by Council Member Yeh to recommend the City Council approve changes to Council procedures related to the Council meeting agenda order and category titles.

Council Member Barton said that there is only so much the agenda structure can do. What goes on the agenda is up to Staff. How the Council handles it is up to them. Sometimes it's easy to stay on track, sometimes it's not. And then there are times when there are a lot of public comments. So these agenda changes are good, but all of us have some responsibility for how the agenda goes.

Council Member Kishimoto asked Staff about the Action Items.

Ms. Morariu said "Action Items" was only a naming convention and Staff is open to other suggestions. In recognition that there are other action items elsewhere on the agenda, Staff is open to another title.

Council Member Kishimoto said she was not sure why these changes are part of an Ordinance.

Mr. Keene said he has seen this convention used in four or five other communities. It is difficult for the public to be clear about what's going on in a Council meeting if they've never been. What they really want to know is when the item they are attending for is going to be presented. Giving Staff this bit of flexibility with the timing will get a 25-40 percent approval from the public.

Chair Espinosa asked Staff when they plan to come back with structural changes to the agenda.

Ms. Morariu said this is a first step. One of the next steps is changing the format of the Staff reports to make them more user friendly. The timing depends on how we can package it all together. It would be ideal to keep it all together, but sometimes it's easier to gain momentum with one small piece.

Chair Espinosa said that he would encourage all of it staying together rather than piecemealing it out. He supported waiting longer if needed and coming back with a vision for a combined set of changes in terms of citizen engagement, efficiency of meeting, and structure of discourse. It would be more beneficial than making small adjustments which over time people have a hard time seeing where they are going.

Mr. Keene said that there are two changes Staff is looking at. One is to address the requirement that agendas have very exact legal titles, which can be difficult to read. Staff is looking at including a short title in addition to the legal title to

offer some clarity. Secondly, Staff is trying to put together a type of Executive Summary of each agenda item. It would be more work for Staff, but it would be easier for the public.

Chair Espinosa said it would also be helpful, as a matter of public accessibility, to have on the outside door of the chambers a debrief sheet for members of the public that are new to Council Meetings. The sheet would welcome members of the public, and include information on how the meetings work, what Oral Communications are and how one participates in them, and what the agenda covers. It would help people that have never been to a meeting before.

MOTION PASSED 4-0

3. Recommendation to Council on Policy & Services Committee Workplan for Remainder of 2009 and Proposed Structure for Setting Future Year Workplans.

Assistant to the City Manager, Kelly Morariu spoke about having a strategic conversation with the Committee regarding the workplan for the remaining year and any topics the Committee feels Staff should put more energy into. Staff is suggesting a structure for setting workplans in the future years. Each year, in early January, the Council has a retreat to set priorities for the upcoming year. Staff suggests that the Committee hold a Study Session after the annual retreat to define some initiatives or key issues related to Council priorities. This will help guide Staff. At the last Policy and Services meeting the Committee asked about the See It site. The Committee could pick one subject from the site and request that Staff come back with information about what they are doing to bring the vision to life.

Chair Espinosa suggested they split the item in two. He suggested they discuss planning for the remaining year first. It would be helpful to come together and discuss what will be addressed for 2009. After that, he said they can look at what to cover for 2010.

Council Member Barton asked for clarification that they were discussing the next three months.

Chair Espinosa confirmed that he was referring to the remaining three months in 2009.

MOTION: Council Member Espinosa moved, seconded by Council Member Kishimoto that the Policy & Services Committee accepts Staffs recommendations for setting future year workplans after the January 2010 Retreat.

Chair Espinosa said that he is suggesting, through the Motion, that after Councils Annual Retreat the Policy and Services Committee convene and map out an Agenda for 2010 based on the Council priorities set at the retreat.

MOTION PASSED: 4-0

Chair Espinosa said it's only a few months, but we want to go through a few options to create a workplan for the remaining part of 2009.

Ms. Morariu said there are a few items that are still outstanding and may come back to the Committee by the end of this year. One is the Legislative Program. Staff will come back to Council with the award of contract later this month. The plan is to have a Study Session with the Council in October to introduce the Council to the Consultant and hold a discussion around the Federal Legislative Priorities. The Prevailing Wage study is also something that might come back to the Committee by the end of the year. In October, Staff might bring back some of the Agenda changes as well.

Chair Espinosa asked if the Committee had other items they would like to add to the list.

Council Member Barton said the idea of working from the Council goals set in January makes sense. With the Economic Health category, most items will fit with the Finance Committee. That leaves Policy & Services with Environmental Protection and Civic Engagement for the Common Good. He said the Civic Engagement for the Common Good item is the one with the most work that needs to be done. Under the Environmental Protection subcategory, he cited some studies, one in the New York Times the week of September 1, 2009, and one in the San Francisco Chronicle the week of September 7, 2009, that indicate green standards may not be working and may actually be counter productive. LEED Certified Buildings, according to at least one study, perform worse than standard production buildings in regards to energy efficiency. The Council needs to look at the Ordinance to see if it is counter productive.

Chair Espinosa agreed that the Civic Engagement category should be the one the Committee works with.

Council Member Kishimoto said she wanted to add the City Recruitment Strategy to the table, but she prefers to think of it as a Restructuring Services. She said that Economic Development should be tied with the Environmental Goals as well. She also said the Comp Plan discussion has been pushed off.

City Manager, James Keene said that the Comp Plan has had phases that have been extended. But there is some timeliness and there are some broad strategy questions that need to be addressed.

Council Member Kishimoto asked if there are any discussions planned on the Housing Element.

Mr. Keene said that the Planning Staff is working with the Planning and Transportation Commission on vision statements that go beyond the elements. It was decided that there isn't enough time on the schedule to get this discussion to Council. A conversation like that might be a good start with the new Council in January because of the way the timing works.

Council Member Kishimoto recapped that her priorities would be restructuring services, Economic Development with an emphasis on Green Economy, and getting started on the Comp Plan discussion.

Chair Espinosa asked if there is a particular component to the Comp Plan that she wants the Policy and Services Committee to look at.

Council Member Kishimoto said that the Comp Plan is something the whole Council should be involved in unless there is some vetting the Committee can do.

Council Member Yeh said that Economic Development Strategy should be an open discussion about how the City can position itself to be attractive to businesses, whether through land use or taxes and fiscal policy. Regarding the recruitment strategy he said that it would be illuminating to have a better understanding of what brought workers to the City. He was interested in how Council Members can support the City Manager with the recruitment process.

Chair Espinosa asked Staff to advise the Committee on which components of the Civic Engagement workplan they would like the Committee to offer input or direction on.

Mr. Keene said a good role for the Committee might be to serve a priority vetting role for Staff. They could help Staff determine priorities when they have ten issues and no way to get them all completed. Council Member Barton has a point regarding the great need for progress in Civic Engagement, but the City is doing a lot more than ever before. It has been difficult to gain any traction though, with the strategy presented as is. Staff needs to be able to have those conversations with the Council. He said it doesn't have to be a standing item on the Agenda. It would just be a way to know he can come to the Committee when he gets word from Staff that things aren't going to get done. He spoke

with 500 employees recently at the Town Hall meetings. Some feedback he got was that they have all these things that they have to do, with no mechanism to stop doing them, yet they always manage to get new work to do as well. There should be a process to reprioritize mid-year, not just in January.

Chair Espinosa asked Ms. Morariu if there was something else she feels a discussion with the Committee could add value to.

Ms. Morariu suggested the City's use of social technologies would be a place to strategize with the Committee.

MOTION: Council Member Espinosa moved, seconded by Council Member Barton to approve the three month plan outlined: In October, Staff will come back with two items, 1) the Economic Development Strategy, or Revenue Generating Strategy, and 2) the Structure of a Sounding Board for Staffing, Option Weighing, and Priority Setting. In November Staff will come back to the Committee with, 1) Prevailing Wage, and 2) the Legislative Program Structure. And lastly, in December, Staff will present 1) the Restructuring Plan, and 2) the Social Technology Plan.

MOTION PASSED: 4-0

4. Discussion of Upcoming Meetings and Topics.

Assistant to the City Manager, Kelly Morariu said that the next meeting is currently scheduled for October 13, 2009. She had some concern because Council Member Kishimoto had a meeting in the Council Conference Room.

Council Member Kishimoto confirmed that her meeting would be over by 4 p.m.

Ms. Morariu said they can then proceed with the regularly scheduled Policy & Services Committee meeting on October 13, 2009 at 7:00 p.m.

Chair Espinosa asked if Staff would confirm the remaining meeting dates for the year.

Ms. Morariu said the remaining three dates are October 13, November 10, and December 8.

Chair Espinosa asked if she would double check with relevant Staff to make sure they attend the meetings.

ADJOURNMENT: Meeting adjourned at 9:43 p.m.