



Dear Mayor and Council Members:

On behalf of City Manager Ed Shikada, please find below the staff responses to questions made by Councilmember Dubois and Councilmember Cormack regarding the [Monday, September 12 Council Meeting](#) consent, action, and informational agenda items:

**Item 10, Adoption of a Park Improvement Ordinance for Renovation of the Mitchell Park Dog Park as Recommended by the Parks and Recreation Commission**

**Item 13, 215/217 Alma: Retail Preservation Waiver for Animal Care Use**

**Item 14, Adoption of a Resolution Confirming the Weed Abatement Report and Ordering the Cost of Abatement to be a Special Assessment on the Respective Properties Described Therein**

**Item 16, Semiannual Update on the Status of Capital Improvement Program Projects**

Staff responses are below:

**Item 10, Adoption of a Park Improvement Ordinance for Renovation of the Mitchell Park Dog Park as Recommended by the Parks and Recreation Commission**

1. **Could you please provide a map similar to Exhibit A that shows the original staff recommendation for the fence line, the one that reflects the community feedback received?**  
**Staff response:** Staff's original proposed fence alignment can be found in the July 28, 2022 Parks & Recreation Commission (PRC) meeting At Places Memo (<https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/files/assets/public/agendas-minutes-reports/agendas-minutes/parks-and-recreation-commission/agendas-minutes/2022-agendas-and-minutes/07.2022/attachment-b.at-places-memo.dog-park-pio-07.25.22.pdf>). In the At-Places Memo, a map is shown with the PRC approved fence alignment in red as well as the original staff proposed fence alignment in black.

**Item 13, 215/217 Alma: Retail Preservation Waiver for Animal Care Use**

1. **This is a blanket waiver, correct?**  
**Staff response:** No.
2. **If the animal care provider does not move in, could this building be rented as office space or other uses with no further involvement of the city?**  
**Staff response:** The waiver would only allow for animal care use and only for the 4,200 square foot tenant space on the site. There are two types of waivers that may be granted under the retail preservation waiver ordinance (PAMC Section 18.40.180); one is for economic hardship, and one is for an alternative viable active use. In this case, the property owner requested approval for an alternative viable active use (animal care use). This is reflected in the conditions of approval of the project. The space cannot be rented for office use. It can only be used for retail or retail-like uses currently. The property owner has attempted to rent the space for approximately 7 years without success. The site has been vacant since April 2016.

3. **Why wasn't a CUP considered and used to enable the animal care provider to lease the space?**

**Staff response:** A CUP was not considered because it does not provide a waiver from the retail preservation ordinance. Animal care is listed as a permitted use within the zoning district, so a conditional use permit would not be required. But because the site is subject to the retail preservation ordinance, a waiver from that ordinance is needed.

**Item 14, Adoption of a Resolution Confirming the Weed Abatement Report and Ordering the Cost of Abatement to be a Special Assessment on the Respective Properties Described Therein**

1. **Tangential question, but what is needed to get Caltrans to do weed abatement on the 101 interchanges into Palo Alto at Oregon Expressway (in particular) and Embarcadero? The weeds there are quite high and extend into the roadway in some places.**

**Staff response:** As you noted, these areas are maintained by Caltrans. Caltrans' Division of Maintenance uses an online customer service request form as their main tool for reporting maintenance needs. Staff submitted a new request for the 101 interchanges area on September 6 and was notified by the reporting tool that multiple requests have already been submitted for the area. We also received an acknowledgement of the request, but a timeframe for responding was not provided. Staff will contact Caltrans staff to discuss the current regular maintenance frequency and its adequacy.

**Item 16, Semiannual Update on the Status of Capital Improvement Program Projects**

1. **Are the two gyms that are out of commission at Cubberley on the capital project list?**

**Staff response:** Cubberley Gyms A & B are not included in the current five-year plan. Staff has not included significant capital improvements for Cubberley into the five-year plan pending the Cubberley Community Center redevelopment plan with the school district.

As previously provided to Council, Public Works staff will begin the bid process for hazardous materials remediation, which includes mold, asbestos, and lead paint remediation, removal and disposal of the gym floors, removal of damaged wall sections, and removal of piping systems in the water damaged areas of the gyms only. The cost of hazardous material remediation in the space confined to the water damage only is estimated at \$540k. A claim will be submitted to the City's insurance carrier for site remediation and any subsequent restoration and repair work. Staff is working to share an update on the immediate longer-term closure of Gyms A and B with past renters and tenants, some of which have relocated to other City facilities.

2. **Is the Mayfield soccer site on the capital project list?**

**Staff response:** The Mayfield soccer site (also known as the Stanford/El Camino Real playing fields) is not included in the current five-year plan. The artificial turf was replaced in 2016 and the turf typically has a lifecycle of 8-10 years. CSD staff is working diligently on identifying a solution, including communicating with other artificial turf field owners such as Stanford and other municipalities, and is coordinating with Purchasing and the Budget Office to identify next steps. Staff will provide updates to Council, the Parks and Recreation Commission, and community when new information is available.

**3. Do we have a mechanism for emergency repairs of these kinds of facilities when disaster strikes?**

**Staff response:** The City has two Capital Improvement Program (CIP) projects specifically intended to handle unforeseen repair issues – Parks and Open Space Emergency Repairs (PG-09002) and Cubberley Repairs (CB- 17001). Funding can also be used from other recurring CIP projects to make repairs that fall within the particular project scope. However, these CIP projects do not generally have sufficient funding to cover large repair expenses such as those expected at the Cubberley gyms and Mayfield.

**4. We have several utility underground districts on the capital plan to be rebuilt with no new areas being undergrounded.**

**Staff response:** Utilities staff and Council need to have a conversation on how to structure the cost of any new undergrounding project that will involve AT&T. AT&T recently lost its ability to collect new funds from its customers to move forward with undergrounding of its facilities.

**a. I have heard this question come up a lot lately - is there a plan to underground the whole city?**

**Staff response:** There is not a current plan to underground the entire City. Undergrounding has been proceeding in specific areas where we still have the cooperation and contributions to the undergrounding from AT&T.

**b. I believe the answer is no that we are only rebuilding old districts to keep them running well but can you confirm?**

**Staff response:** At this point in time, Utilities engineering is working on designs for areas where cable and equipment are currently reaching their end of life. Staff is currently designing approximately 10 miles of an undergrounding project in the foothills to reduce fire risk.

**c. If we were to underground all utilities, is there a rough ball park of what it would cost? Order of magnitude? 10's of millions? 100's of millions?**

**Staff response:** Looking at the last underground cost to construct, a rough estimate to underground the entire city is \$400,000,000 to \$500,000,000.