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To: [Council, City](#)
Cc: [Shikada, Ed](#); [Horrigan-Taylor, Meghan](#)
Subject: Council April 4 Agenda Item 15
Date: Sunday, April 3, 2022 6:08:31 PM
Attachments: [Town Hall Meetings PAN.docx](#)

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Please find our letter to Council regarding Agenda Item 15 that includes Council Priority of Town Hall meetings.

Thank you.

Dear Mayor Burt and Council Members,

We are writing regarding Agenda Item 15 - Council Priority of Town Hall meetings.

As we've said before, it is NOT community engagement if it is driven solely by the City. To make the Town Halls as effective as possible, PAN once again suggests that you work directly with the neighborhood leaders.

In the memo Meghan Horrigan-Taylor sent out at the end of the day Friday (which, by the way, is rather late to expect feedback), she asked for feedback from the leaders. To this end, here are our comments and suggestions.

In response to *Neighborhood Town Hall Goals and Format* (pages 224-225 of staff report)

Note that the definition of a Town Hall is "an event at which a politician or public official answers questions from members of the public." As opposed to a Community Meeting where a project or issue is presented and public comment made.

Work with Neighborhood leaders to find an appropriate time and location for the meetings

The proposed schedule includes the third Thursday at 5:30 p.m.-7 p.m. in the months of May, August, September, October, November and December as the schedule of the neighborhood town hall meetings.

- We don't believe it is necessary to try and fit in all Town Halls this year. Some neighborhoods have more pressing issues and challenges than others.
- We suggest spreading the town halls out, and have them every other month, starting after council break.
- We recommend any town halls start at an appropriate time of day for residents, such as 6:30 PM. A 5:30--7:00pm timeframe simply excludes too many people, particularly those with jobs.
- Work with each neighborhood grouping to see what works best for both them and council attendees.
- Work with neighborhoods to see what meeting places are available in their area, rather than having people have to travel across town.
- Finally, consider holding a hybrid meeting, the way City Council does. Many people are still wary of attending group meetings.

Please Use Our Proposed Neighborhood Groupings

Note that the neighborhoods described in the city's suggestions are real estate designations, not actual neighborhoods.

Including Nextdoor groupings is misleading as many of these are a single block or an apartment complex within a neighborhood, or not a neighborhood at all, such Embarcadero-Bayshore.

Proposed PAN Neighborhood Groupings

There does not need to be an equal number of households in each grouping. Rather the organization should be based on commonality, particularly due to location. Given this, there are eight logical groups.

1. Crescent Park, Duveneck/St. Francis, Community Center, Triple El
2. Downtown North, University South, Sand Hill Corridor
3. Old Palo Alto, Southgate, Leland Manor
4. College Terrace, Evergreen, Mayfield, Ventura, Palo Alto Central
5. Midtown (including the areas referred to as South of Midtown and St. Claire Gardens), Palo Verde
6. Barron Park, Barron Square, Greenacres I, Greenacres II, Palo Alto Orchards, Monroe Park
7. Greenmeadow, Greendell, Walnut Grove, Fairmeadow, Charleston Meadows, Charleston Garden, Charleston Village, Adobe Meadow, Meadow Park, Greenhouse
8. Palo Alto Hills, Esther Park, Miranda

And by the way, in the document *Palo Alto Neighborhood Areas* that Meghan sent to the neighborhood leaders, Monta Loma, which is listed on page 5, is actually in Mt. View.

Also we recommend 8 town hall meetings, not 6, due to the commonality of issues that we know of among neighborhoods. Two examples to illustrate this: the issues in Midtown ARE NOT ALIGNED to those of Ventura. College Terrace does not face the same issues as Old Palo Alto or Triple El.

Partner with Neighborhood Associations as Co-sponsors

- Have neighborhoods distribute the town hall to their lists
- Have one or two of the neighborhood leaders be the **moderators**.
- Work with neighborhood leaders to select topics of interest to their area. The staff report suggested (page 224) that:

"We would work with Palo Alto Neighborhoods representatives in six identified areas of Palo Alto on the specifics of each neighborhood town hall."

Please use the neighborhoods on the Palo Alto Neighborhoods site.

- We suggest more time be allocated for questions. Having neighbors talk about their concerns, is preferable to having staff talk to issues not of interest.

City-proposed Town Hall agenda would include:

- City Updates (30 minutes) - generally 2-3 updates
- Neighborhood Representative Community Items (30 minutes) - 2-3 items*
- Community Questions and Comments (30 minutes)

Our preferred format for these initial Town Halls would be:

- Introductions and explanation of meeting format – (10 minutes) by neighborhood leader
- City Updates (20 minutes) – perhaps a brief overview of the four city priorities
- Neighborhood Representative Community Items (10 minutes) -- 2-3 items*
- Community Questions and Comments (50 minutes)

City Suggested Council Participation (page 225)

"City Council feedback on their participation at the neighborhood town hall meetings varied. Staff is seeking clarification as to City Council role and attendance.

"While there are several options for participation, a few options were discussed at the study session. As noted in the staff report, the neighborhood town halls are envisioned to be hosted by Councilmembers. This format would seek Councilmember assignments to the meetings with two Councilmembers involved with the planning and attending each neighborhood town hall, as well as the Mayor. Alternatively, previous town hall events pre-pandemic was posted pursuant to the Brown Act and all City Council Members attended."

Our preference

These meetings should be co-hosted by the Councilmembers and the neighborhood leader(s). Otherwise, it gives the appearance of the city controlling the agenda.

Thank you for considering our concerns.

Becky Sanders and Sheri Furman

PAN Co-chairs