



City of Palo Alto

Policy and Services Committee Staff Report

(ID # 11820)

Report Type: Action Items

Meeting Date: 12/8/2020

Summary Title: 2021 Council Priority Setting Process

Title: Policy and Services Committee Discussion and Recommendations for the 2021 City Council Priority Setting Process

From: City Manager

Lead Department: City Manager

Recommendation

Policy and Services Committee should discuss and consider making recommendations to the City Council regarding 2020 priorities and, potentially, format and facilitation for the Council's annual retreat in January or February.

Background

In October 2012, Council approved Priority Setting Guidelines (CMR [#3156](#)) and outlined the role for the Policy & Services Committee in this activity. Per the Guidelines (Attachment A), a priority is defined as a topic that will receive particular, unusual and significant attention during the year. Additionally, there is a goal of no more than three priorities per year, generally with a three-year time limit.

The 2020 Priorities, as selected at the City Council's Annual Retreat on February 1, 2020 (CMR [#11034](#), [Minutes](#)) are as follows:

- A. Housing, with special emphasis on affordability;
- B. Sustainability, in the context of the changing climate; and
- C. Improving mobility for all.

Previous years' priorities are found in Attachment B.

Discussion

Staff e-mailed current Council members and Council members-elect, requesting their suggestions for priority topics to be included, to be received by November 30 2020. These suggestions will be available At Places for the Policy and Services Committee's December 8, 2020, meeting. The community has been solicited for suggestions via Open City Hall. This will remain open and available to the community through mid-January 2021, for inclusion at the Council retreat, date TBD. Any responses that have been received prior to the Policy and

Services meeting in December will also be included in the At Places memo.

At the retreat itself we also invite citizens to attend and express their views in person. The purpose of this solicitation is to help inform the Council on priorities for the upcoming year. The Council preliminary priority suggestions will help organize ideas into groupings in advance of the retreat so staff and Council can prepare for a productive retreat. Council members are free to modify choices at the Committee meeting, Council meeting or retreat.

The National Community Survey, formerly known as the National Citizens Survey, is currently underway and it is planned that the vendor will debrief Council on the results as well as the open-ended responses either prior to or at the annual Council Retreat, to inform the priority setting process.

The Committee may make recommendations regarding the priorities as well as regarding the retreat format and process for selecting a facilitator.

Timeline, Resource Impact, Policy Implications (If Applicable)

No additional resource impact is expected at this time.

This discussion will inform the annual Council retreat, currently TBA, pending appointment of a new Mayor, but usually held in late January or early February of each year.

Stakeholder Engagement

Council members and the community have been solicited for their thoughts and topic suggestions. At the retreat itself we also invite citizens to attend and express their views in person.

Environmental Review

This is not considered a project as defined by CEQA and no review is required.

Attachments:

- Attachment A: Priority Setting 2012
- Attachment B: Past Palo Alto City Council Priorities, By Year

City Council Priority Setting Guidelines

Approved by City Council: October 1, 2012

Last revised: October 1, 2012

Background

The City Council adopted its first Council priorities in 1986. Each year the City Council reviews its priorities at its Annual Council Retreat. On October 1, 2012 the City Council formally adopted the definition of a council priority, and the Council's process and guidelines for selection of priorities.

Definition

A Council priority is defined as a topic that will receive particular, unusual and significant attention during the year.

Purpose

The establishment of Council priorities will assist the Council and staff to better allot and utilize time for discussion and decision making.

Process

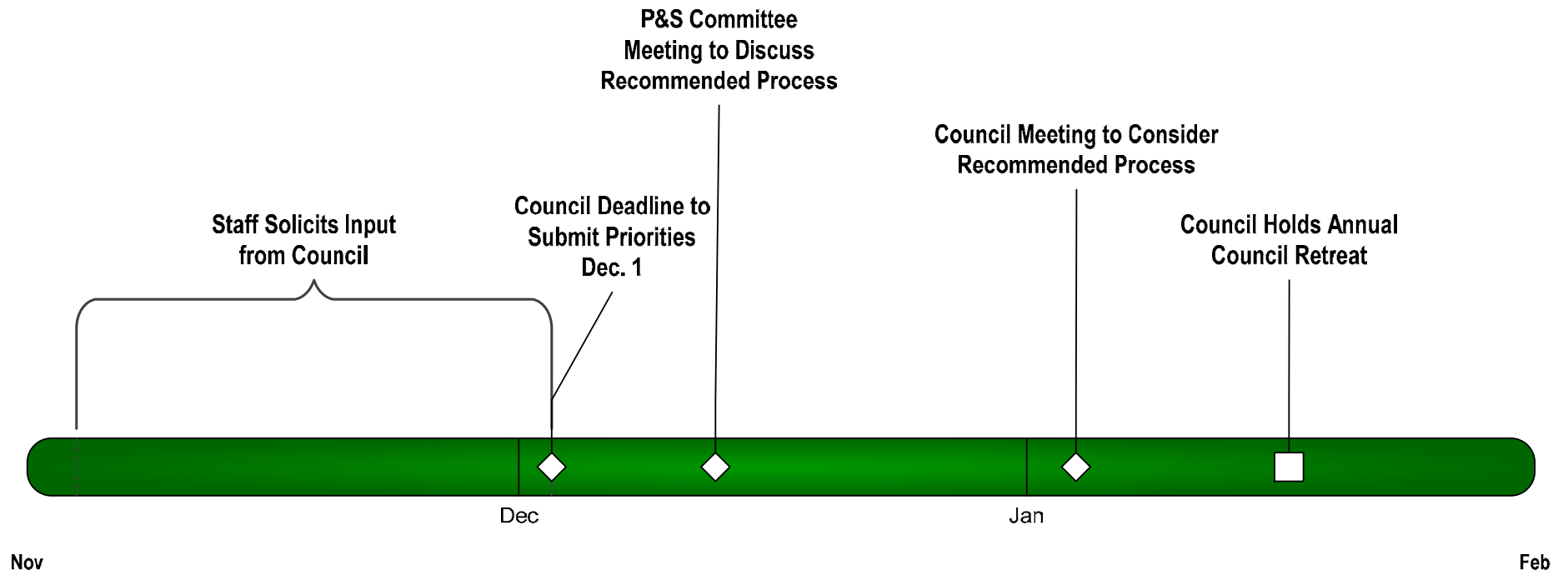
1. Three months in advance of the annual Council Retreat, staff will solicit input from the City Council on the priorities to be reviewed and considered for the following year.
 - a. Council members may submit up to three priorities.
 - b. Priorities should be submitted no later than December 1.
 - c. As applicable, the City Manager will contact newly elected officials for their input by December 1.
 - d. The City Clerk will provide timely notice to the public to submit proposed priorities by December 1. The Policy and Services Committee shall recommend to the Council which suggestions if any shall be considered at the City Council retreat.
2. Staff will collect and organize the recommended priorities into a list for Council consideration, and provide to Council no less than two weeks in advance of the retreat.
3. The Policy and Services Committee, each year at its December meeting, shall make recommendations about the process that will be used at the Annual Retreat paying particular attention to the number of priorities suggested by Council members. The recommended process is to be forwarded to Council for adoption in advance of the Council retreat.

Guidelines for Selection of Priorities

1. There is a goal of no more than three priorities per year.
2. Priorities generally have a three year time limit.

Attachment A
City of Palo Alto

City Council Priority Setting Schedule



ATTACHMENT B

Past Palo Alto City Council Priorities, By Year

A list of past Council priorities by year, for the last five years:

2020

- Housing, with special emphasis on affordability
- Sustainability, in the context of the changing climate
- Improving mobility for all

2019

- Climate Change
- Grade Separation (choose preferred alternative by end of the year)
- Traffic and Transportation
- Fiscal Sustainability

2018

- Transportation
- Housing
- Budget and Finance (create an infrastructure funding plan)
- Grade Separation (choose preferred alternative by end of year)

2017

- Transportation
- Housing
- Infrastructure
- Healthy City, Healthy Community
- Budget and Finance

2016

- The Built Environment: Housing, Parking, Livability, and Mobility
- Infrastructure
- Healthy City, Healthy Community
- Completion of the Comprehensive Plan 2015-2030 Update