



CITY COUNCIL
and
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AGENCY MINUTES

Tuesday, May 13, 2003

7:30 p.m.

The Menlo Park Council Chambers

801 Laurel Street

Menlo Park, CA 94025

Mayor Jellins called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

ROLL CALL - Jellins, Duboc, Collacchi, Kinney, Winkler

STAFF PRESENT - David Boesch, City Manager; William McClure, City Attorney; Audrey Seymour, Assistant City Manager; Silvia Ponte, City Clerk. Various department heads, and other City staff present.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

A. PRESENTATIONS AND PROCLAMATIONS

1. Recognition of outgoing Planning Commissioner Toni Stein.

Mayor Jellins presented Ms. Stein with a Certificate of Recognition for her four years of service as a Planning Commissioner. Mayor Jellins thanked Ms. Stein for her dedication.

B. COMMISSION VACANCIES, APPOINTMENTS AND REPORTS

1. Council Member Reports.

Council Member Winkler thanked the many volunteers who assisted with a traffic count in the Willows neighborhood. This effort took approximately five hours, and the whole Council expressed gratitude to all those involved.

Mayor Pro Tem Duboc reported on the second and final Library Visioning Needs Assessment. Ms. Duboc thanked Susan Holmer, Library Director, for her work and leadership in this process.

Mayor Jellins reported on a Joint Study Session with the Planning Commission, and stated that a number of methods were identified for these two bodies to work together. Mr. Jellins thanked the Commissioners for their expertise.

C. PUBLIC COMMENT #1 (*Limited to 30 minutes*)

Elias Blawie expressed concerns about recent Council processes, which affect residents. Mr. Blawie shared his opinion on Brown Act violations, and he believes there is lack of Public Comment on certain public issues.

Linda Jolley requested that Council visit a specific address in Menlo Park where the landscape is now bare and desolate. Ms. Jolley asked that Council pass an ordinance preventing realtors from decimating trees.

Horace Nash supports Consent Item D1 and the principles used to deal with the traffic situation. Mr. Nash suggested that the same principles be extrapolated to other problematic areas.

D. CONSENT CALENDAR

Item D1 pulled from Consent Calendar

1. City Council approval of (1) Middle Avenue Re-striping Plan; (2) installation of a new crosswalk on Middle Avenue at Cotton Street; (3) adoption of a Resolution No. 5445 for speed limit reduction on Middle Avenue to 25 mph and appropriation of \$36,000 from Measure A account for the implementation of the safety measures. *(Staff Report # 03-081)*
2. Adoption of a Resolution No. 5446 Approving the Second Amendment to and Re-assignment of the Gas Recovery Lease from Allied Gas Recovery Systems, LLC (Allied) back to Gas Recovery Systems, Inc. (GRS). *(Staff Report # 03-080)*
3. Community Development Agency (1) authorization of staff to amend the contract with Eler and Kalinowski, Inc. in the amount of \$47,000, resulting in a total contract of \$193,000 for environmental consulting services for environmental assessment for the Belle Haven Park and Housing Development, and (2) authorization of an increase in the overall budget of \$55,000 for a total budget of \$225,000. *(Staff Report # 03-082)*
4. Approval of pay periods 5, 6, 7 and 8 ending February 22, March 8, March 22, and April 5, 2003.

Item D5 pulled from Consent Calendar

5. Approval of the City Council Minutes of April 29, 2003.

M/S Kinney/Duboc to approve Consent Calendar items D2, D3, and D4. Motion passes by unanimous vote.

Discussion on Item D1

Mayor Pro Tem Duboc suggested that on this item the first two parts be approved but hold off on the third part, until a public hearing takes place. This action is due to public input that Mrs. Duboc has received.

M/S Duboc/Collacchi to approve item D1 (the first two items), but wait on the third item of the recommendation until there is a public hearing on the item. Motion passes unanimously.

Discussion on Item D5

Council Member Kinney explained that he would like to include some explanation on why he dissented on a motion at the top of page 5. Council Member Collacchi offered to assist, if there are questions on the brief paragraph that is to be included. Minutes to come back on May 20 for approval with an addition of the reason for dissention.

E. PUBLIC HEARINGS - None

F. REGULAR BUSINESS

1. Budget Workshop – balancing the City's General Fund Fiscal Year 2003-2004 Budget: A comprehensive set of recommendations for City Council consideration and direction. *(Staff Report # 03-083)*

Mayor Jellins began the workshop by saying that the goal of the budget workshop was to get a picture of the economic climate, then have questions by Council, followed by public comment, and have further Council discussion before giving staff direction. Mr. Jellins introduced Ms. Seymour,

Assistant City Manager, as the person who would summarize the ideas and opinions discussed throughout the evening.

David Boesch, City Manager made some opening remarks referring to how difficult this process is due to the structural nature of the problem, which doesn't permit an easy fix. Mr. Boesch's plan is intended to resolve the fiscal year 2003-2004 budget, but also create a strategy for the years ahead. Mr. Boesch asked the Council and the Public to consider this a work in progress, which will have changes and adjustments based on calculations of costs and mid-year figures: it is subject to refinement. Mr. Boesch requested that Council give direction on six particular issues listed under the staff recommendation of the Staff Report.

Mr. Boesch clarified that the public hearing is scheduled for June 3, 2003 and adoption is scheduled for June 24, 2003. However, the purpose of the workshop was to get input and receive Council direction for the next phases. Mr. Boesch also elaborated on the fact that management staff worked with three different scenarios: 20%, 15%, and 10% reduction scenarios. Mr. Boesch complimented staff for the variety of approaches in order to meet these tough scenarios. The current budget shows cuts on the average of 15% per department.

Council asked questions of Mr. Boesch related to updated figures of revenues, positions that are vacant, property taxes, particular projections, and the assumptions made to sustain the plan. The City Manager stated that some stabilization is visible on the sales taxes figures. The Police Department was mentioned as one situation where the challenge is to maintain the same result measures, with less resources. Issues such as payroll, benefit charges, and certain insurance costs that are going up make the situation even more difficult.

Mr. Boesch then lead the Council through the reductions for each department, and the challenges created by each of these situations. The Council discussed the early termination of contracts for landscape maintenance in order to better understand options at hand. Kent Steffens, Public Works Director explained that with this approach the City would save money. Mr. Boesch also explained that due to budget cuts the City has a very limited Capital Improvement Projects list.

During the discussion, Ms. Seymour created a list of the issues raised, and the relative level of interest in each one ([see attachment A](#)).

Council asked questions of staff to elucidate certain issues such as impact on Police services, traffic, and elimination of positions that are vacant. Council expounded on the need to support our residents and maintain current service levels, and analyzed the pros and cons of touching the current reserves to maintain jobs. Mr. Boesch provided comparative figures for Peninsula cities.

Mr. Boesch stated that these prudent financial practices allow the City to have a high credit rating. Concerns about cuts at Belle Haven were shared, and Council stated that it had received feedback from the public on the proposed cuts. The merging of the Belle Haven and the Onetta Harris programs were explained by staff because Council asked for more details. Curtis Brown, Parks and Recreation Director, explained that the Burgess model was used, because it has worked so well. Staff also stated that this merger is viewed as an improvement to the Onetta Harris Center, and as a structural change to meet the required cuts. Council asked for clarification on the process used to make personnel cuts at the Belle Haven Center. Staff responded that senior managers made recommendations based on the merging of the programs, and then bumping rights kicked in.

Public Comment

Patricia Mendoza opposes the proposal to relocate the Belle Haven after school program, and the laying off of the two best teachers she has ever met. Ms. Mendoza believes the focus should be on the kids.

Dawn Platt wants to keep the program at Belle Haven where it is now, because it is too hard for kids and parents to walk to Onetta Harris. The play structure at Onetta Harris is not acceptable.

Silvia Mora wants to support the Belle Haven program, and hopes it stays there because the children benefit from this program.

Roberta Roth spoke on behalf of the Library, and how important it is to keep the positions. Ms. Roth shared concerns about staff reductions since it will alter the fact that the Library is considered #1 in Menlo Park.

Brian Fallon expressed his appreciation for the services at Belle Haven Program, and is very sad about the choices and solutions proposed. Mr. Fallon believes that the current reserves should be used in order to maintain this program for the kids.

Linda Lopez with local SEIU 715, spoke on the issue of process. Ms. Lopez stated that the City Manager, the Unions and the teams have not been able to form a partnership. Ms. Lopez stated that the preferred approach is for the Unions and the City to jointly work towards possible solutions. Ms. Lopez stated that in her opinion there hasn't been a participatory process.

Shelley Kessler, Executive Secretary Treasurer of the San Mateo County Central Labor Council, representing 110 Unions, requested that the Council reconsider the option of laying off people because the market is very hostile. The current unemployment benefit is \$330 per week, and that is not enough to live in this area. Ms. Kessler opposes the lay offs and hopes the City makes a statement to value its employees by using the surplus and maintain positions.

Vanessa Carlisle reiterated how much the budget affects the community. Ms. Carlisle asked why the east side of the City is more affected than the west side when it comes to lay offs? Ms. Carlisle stated that with the recent fee increase families are already struggling to pay for the programs.

Janet Butler, has been with the City for 14 years, and is one of the positions that is being laid off. Ms. Butler requested that Council find other ways to deal with the budget crisis, instead of laying off people.

John Ross, has worked for the City for 23 years, and believes that we should try to work together. Mr. Ross hopes the City Council will find another way to resolve the problem.

Jo Ann Hunter asked the Council to not move the Belle Haven program because her two children attend this program and it has been very successful. The playground is a great addition for kids, and begged the Council to maintain the program.

John Cunningham donated his time to Linda Gregory.

Harry Williams thanked the Council for the process and appreciates the opportunity to speak. Mr. Harris has been with the City of Menlo Park for 23 years, and shared concerns about racial imbalance when it comes to lay offs.

Rafaela Maravilla spoke about maintaining the Belle Haven After School Program because of the high quality of service. Ms. Maravilla asked the Council to avoid this merge because the program and the staff are really good.

Sasha Eisner, with local SEIU 715 and partnering with AFSCME, opposes the proposed cuts. Mr. Eisner gave specific examples of how other cities are handling this same problem, referring specifically to Redwood City as a city that is using its reserves to deal with the downturn. According to him, the City of Burlingame is also using the same process. Mr. Eisner stated that the news of

lay offs are very recent and that the City has not volunteered to talk to the Unions about this. He believes the Council needs to treat the employees as a family.

Linda Gregory, Associate Director of AFSCME #829, presented a one-page proposal prepared by the two Unions ([see attachment B](#)). Ms. Gregory stated that the two Unions support the four points outlined in this document, and it is their goal to reach a solution. Ms. Gregory asked the Council to use a one-time dip into the reserves, and not lay off anybody. She stated that the goal of the proposed plan is to make sure the process is correct, and those who remain can still have meaningful relationships. Ms. Gregory advocates working together, and is asking the City to set a pattern for that relationship.

Judy Fagerholm works at the Belle Haven Library and explained that this site is a cooperative effort with the School District, as well as the After School Help Program. She stated that many families use this program, and they walk to the program and to school, consequently the location is ideal.

Nelson Gutierrez, works for the City of Menlo Park, stated that he is on the list of people to be laid off, expressed concerns because his wife is also being laid off and he has serious concerns for their future.

Mayor Jellins thanked Ms. Seymour for keeping track of the list of comments previously made ([attachment A](#)). Mayor Jellins enumerated the items captured in the list.

Mayor Jellins announced a five-minute recess.

Council Discussion

Council's discussion targeted addressing the six questions posed by Mr. Boesch, and included asking questions of staff on particular areas that needed clarification.

Council asked questions about the cuts in the Library, and Susan Holmer, Library Director explained how the Library reached its current proposal. Ms. Holmer stated that the furlough and the reduced hours were attempts to keep the position cuts to a minimum. Ms. Holmer clarified that the weeks for the furlough have not been set. Council also asked questions about finding other funding sources to avoid the cuts.

The Council discussed the elimination of the Traffic Unit, and Chris Boyd, Police Chief, answered questions clarifying that crime is up. Mr. Boyd explained that with the elimination of these positions there would be less traffic and speed control.

Ms. Seymour answered questions in regards to the Activity Guide and its reduced distribution. People will be notified of the availability of the Guide via a postcard and the Internet, and hard copies will be available at City Hall for pick up. The mailing out, the quality of paper, and the number of pages will be limited. Staff is encouraged to work with teachers on advertising their classes, since the content of the Guide will be reduced and the focus will be mainly on the recreational classes available.

Certain Council Members expressed their belief in not starting the lay-off notification procedure, but instead they welcomed the oral proposal made by the AFSCME Union to find a solution that accommodates all parties. Council thanked the City Manager for his approach, and the structure provided to address this budget situation. Some Council Members shared concerns about spending the reserves without considering all the projects that are in line to become a reality. Some of these include the joint M-A Theater, the Bayfront Park, Santa Cruz Streetscape program, and other projects that have been earmarked. Additionally, it was stated that as these projects become a reality the City is creating jobs for the community. Other concerns expressed included that when the General Fund is touched to balance the budget, we aren't really balancing the

budget. Council suggested that in the future and for the budget process, a four or five-year goal or plan might be a better way to approach this matter.

Council agreed to proceed by exploring the proposal submitted by the Unions, with the understanding that this transition includes reductions in FTE's (full-time equivalent positions).

Council requested additional information on the inter-fund transfers at the time of the Public Hearing on June 3rd. In regards to the Belle Haven merger, the Council asked staff to consider the issues that were raised by the Public Comment, and get a response from staff on the issues brought up. Council supported the proposed approach of having more work done in-house in regard to field and park maintenance. Mr. Steffens specified that this plan is to include the addition of one position in the area of Parks to support the added tasks. Council agreed on allocating funds to create a new position titled Business Development Specialist, as part of the program, to identify and increase revenue generation, instead of reprogramming current staff from Community Development to meet this need.

Council concurred that the input received from the public was sufficient and significant, and that further opportunity for public input will be available at the Public Hearing of June 3rd. The City Manager was encouraged to update the Council at the meeting of May 20, if there is anything new to report. If Council has any particular thoughts or concerns about the budget, they might approach staff directly with suggestions. Council echoed an interest in having an infrastructure maintenance budget.

2. Consideration of state and federal legislative items or items referred to in Written Communications or Information Items, including decisions to support or oppose any such legislative, written communication or information item.

Mr. Boesch informed Council that at the next meeting there would be a few of these items.

G. WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS - None

H. INFORMATION ITEMS - None

I. PUBLIC COMMENT #2 (Limited to 30 minutes) -

None

J. ADJOURNMENT - the Mayor adjourned the meeting at 11:59 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Silvia M. Ponte, City Clerk

Approved at the City Council of Menlo Park at the Meeting of June 3, 2003