



**CITY COUNCIL  
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AGENCY  
MINUTES**

**Tuesday, October 16, 2007**

**7:00 p.m.**

**701 Laurel Street, Menlo Park, CA 94025  
Menlo Park City Council Chambers**

**ROLL CALL** – Fergusson, Cohen, Boyle, Cline, and Robinson

**Staff present** City Manager Rojas, City Attorney McClure and City Clerk Vonderlinden. Other staff were present in the audience.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**A. VACANCIES, APPOINTMENTS AND COMMISSION REPORTS - None**

1. Commission members and Chamber of Commerce reports

**B. PRESENTATION AND PROCLAMATIONS – None**

**C. PUBLIC COMMENT #1**

Frank Carney commented that just because trees can not be planted as part of the reforestation program, doesn't mean the City can't plant any trees. He stated that he understood the budget resolution might limit planting in parks, but that this could be changed allowing for flexibility as to where trees could be planted. Public Works Director Steffens responded that an inventory of trees is the first step in determining how many trees are of a species, age and condition that need to be replaced.

**D. CONSENT CALENDAR**

1. Approval of the minutes for the City Council meeting of September 11, 2007.

**Action:** Moved, seconded (Boyle/Cohen) carried unanimously to approve the minutes as corrected by Councilmember Boyle.

**E. PUBLIC HEARING – None**

**F. REGULAR BUSINESS**

1. **Council discussion and direction regarding the scope of work of possible study sessions.**

- a. **City Council review and approval of the scope of a possible study session regarding water issues, current practices, and policies.**

- b. **City Council review and approval of the scope of a possible study session on grade separation of the Caltrain mainline tracks with the roadways of Ravenswood Avenue, Oak Grove Avenue, Glenwood Avenue, and Encinal Avenue.**

The Public Works Director informed the Council that a study session on water issues would focus on the practices of the Menlo Park Municipal Water District and identified nine specific topics as outlined in the staff report.

The Public Works Director reported that the City completed a grade separation study in 2003; but that a study session would be an opportunity to bring the current Council up to date on the 2003 study and a recent Caltrain footprint study.

Council Member Boyle asked if staff would discuss what impact grade separations would have on the bike tunnel. Public Works Director Steffens responded that staff could look into this. Councilmember Robinson pointed out the importance of including representatives from Caltrain and the County to address questions, particularly those of a technical nature. Mayor Fergusson asked if staff could include information on the top down construction option. She stated that Atherton Council Member Janz expressed an interest in having a County representative present the footprint study at a joint meeting of the Atherton and Menlo Park Councils.

Vice Mayor Cohen questioned the likelihood of a bond measure passing for the California High-Speed Rail Project. The Public Works Director informed the Council that the bond measure is one way of funding grade separations; but that there is also specific funding earmarked by the San Mateo Transportation Authority for grade separations. He also noted that the City could seek other state and federal matching funds. Council Member Boyle suggested that there should be some discussion on whether the study session should include high-speed rail. The Public Works Director pointed out that even if one does not support grade separations, it is helpful to understand what they might look like so that if they are imposed on the City by an outside entity, the City is in a position to influence how they might be built.

Mayor Fergusson stated that she would like to include information regarding quiet zones. She also questioned how the tunnelling option could be handled in the context of a study session. The Public Works Director admitted that this is not an option that has been studied in detail.

Members of the public commented as follows:

Milton Borge stated that he didn't know how the Council could study grade separations without any knowledge of whether there is going to be high-speed rail, particularly when considering the 100-foot right-of-way that would be necessary. He suggested including property owners, that would be impacted by that right-of-way, as part of the study session.

Robert Cronin said that there have been five grade separations constructed and it would be appropriate to consider that experience including the disruption caused during the construction; whether the people affected would do it differently now; and whether they felt the disruption was worth it. He noted that there were also two bicycle/pedestrian tunnels that were constructed concurrently or in conjunction with the grade separations in San Carlos.

Fran Dehn, Executive Director of the Chamber of Commerce, encouraged the Council to hold a study session on grade separations prior to the study session on water.

Frank Carney stated that he attended the study session in 2003 and that the Council should become as informed as possible.

Council Member Boyle pointed out that they are not discussing the pros and cons of grade separations; but whether to hold study sessions at a future date at which these issues would be discussed. He reiterated the necessity of getting input from cities that have had grade separations done.

Council Member Cline commented that the grade separation study session is a higher priority than the water study session. Mayor Fergusson suggested having the grade separation study session first, the water study session following that, and the joint meeting with the Atherton Council some time in January.

Council Member Robinson asked for clarification on the right-of-way requirements for four tracks, which is 100 feet. He noted that while most of the right-of-way through Menlo Park is 100 feet,

there is a segment that is 80 feet. He recommended that the City rely on the outside experts for answers to the variety of questions that will come up.

Vice Mayor Cohen said that it is important to increase their knowledge on this issue, but expressed concern that council members never get told enough about the plans as was demonstrated by the Dumbarton Rail presentation. He expressed a desire to provide a forum for residents to voice their concerns.

**Action:** Moved, seconded (Boyle/Cline) and carried unanimously to schedule a study session on grade separations; to invite Caltrain to give a review of their footprint report as well as other assistance and information; to make it clear to the public that the study session in no way suggests that the Council is endorsing grade separations or will make any immediate decision or recommendation; to invite the Atherton Town Council to watch this study session and to schedule a joint study session with the Atherton Town Council in January or February; and to invite a representative from the Redwood City, City Council, to attend the grade separation study session.

Council Member Boyle commented that he believed the water study should take place later because of concerns of staff time. Mayor Fergusson stated that there are some very critical things happening in the water world in the coming months including the multi-year contract that is being negotiated with the San Francisco Utilities Commission and environmental review of the \$4.3 billion water system. Vice Mayor Cohen shared concern for moving too quickly to a decision on the water issues. There was consensus that the main purpose of holding a study session on water issues would be to obtain information, and that no action would be taken at the study session.

**2. Consideration of state and federal legislative items, including decisions to support or oppose any such legislation, and items listed under Written Communication or Information.**

Staff reported that Bill 1294, to allow general law cities to implement ranked choice voting, was vetoed by the governor. The governor did sign a bill to provide incremental funding to housing endowment and regional trusts, which is positive in that the bill earmarks more money for housing but negative in that it defines low-income and those in need of housing slightly differently than what is normally seen in San Mateo County.

**G. WRITTEN COMMUNICATION**

**1. Correspondence from Vice Mayor James Janz from the Town of Atherton requesting a joint meeting to discuss grade separations and quiet zones.**

This item was placed on the agenda at the request of Mayor Fergusson and Vice Mayor Cohen. It was discussed as part of Item F1.

**H. INFORMATION ITEMS**

**1. Memorandum from the City Manager to the City Council regarding the Park Theater.**

City Manager Rojas informed the Council that Mr. Howard Crittendon, owner of the Park Theater, requested Council's direction in terms of how he should proceed with the proposals presented to the City. The City Manager reported that Mr. Duncan has decided to not move forward until the proposal was reviewed with the City and the owner of the property. He stated that staff and the Council subcommittee plan to continue to follow the process defined at an earlier meeting, but that ultimately Mr. Crittendon is the owner of the property and it is his decision.

## **I. COUNCIL MEMBERS REPORTS**

### **1. Council discussion on holding City Council meetings on November 13, 2007 and November 20, 2007.**

**Action:** There was consensus to cancel the meeting of November 13, 2007 and to hold a meeting on November 20, 2007.

Council Member Cline said that he had toured the Stanford Children's Hospital and talked with them about their development project. City Manager Rojas stated staff has been coordinating meetings with Stanford, and would follow up with the City of Palo Alto.

Mayor Fergusson reported that the City Manager and she spoke before the NTC board to affirm the City's interest in pursuing the Dumbarton Rail Station Planning Grant. The contract will come before the Council in November with the objective of having it signed by the end of the year. There was also a presentation on high-speed rail. She also stated that the Green Ribbon Citizens' Committee will meet on October 24 at 6:30 p.m.

Council Member Boyle invited the public to the first of the Speaker Series on the El Camino Real Downtown Visioning process to be held on October 24 in Council Chambers.

Council Member Robinson said that there would be a community meeting on Wednesday at 6:00 p.m. at the Senior Center in Belle Haven.

**J. PUBLIC COMMENT #2** – None.

**K. ADJOURNMENT** – The meeting adjourned at 9:26 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Sherry M. Kelly, City Clerk

Approved at the Council Meeting of January 15, 2008