



Planning & Transportation Commission Action Agenda: October 27, 2021

Virtual Meeting
6:00 PM

Call to Order / Roll Call

Approximately 6:03 pm

Chair Hechtman welcomed the Commissioners and Staff to the regular meeting of the Planning and Transportation Commission (PTC) for October 27, 2021.

[An automated voice recording begins to play disclosing Zoom procedures.]

Chair Hechtman requested that Mr. Nguyen call the roll.

Mr. Nguyen announced that all Commissioners are present except Commissioner Summa.

Oral Communications

The public may speak to any item not on the agenda. Three (3) minutes per speaker.^{1,2}

Chair Hechtman reminded that oral communications is the section where the public can address the Commission on any items that are not listed on the agenda.

Mr. Vinh Nguyen, Administrative Associate III, disclosed that there are no public speakers for oral communications.

Chair Hechtman moved to agenda changes, additions and deletions.

Agenda Changes, Additions and Deletions

The Chair or Commission majority may modify the agenda order to improve meeting management.

Commissioner Chang wondered how questions from the public that come in through email are handled.

Ms. Rachael Tanner, Assistant Director, answered that Staff does respond to questions that are sent in that are related to current practices. Some questions are policy questions and Commissioner can respond to those questions in writing, ask those questions during Commissioner comments, questions, and announcements or during the Director's Report.

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1
2 Commissioner Chang restated that some of the questions asked by the public should be
3 addressed by a different City department such as the Office of Transportation or Public Works.
4 She wanted to know if those questions are forwarded to the right department.
5

6 Ms. Tanner noted that the specific comment regarding traffic was responded to by the Office of
7 Transportation. She remarked that Staff will begin forwarding any Staff responses to public
8 comments to the Commission.
9

10 Chair Hechtman agreed that often questions that should be addressed to staff are misdirected
11 to the PTC understandably because of the name of the Commission. He recalled a few months
12 ago an email regarding a stoplight on Embarcadero that came in, staff responded to the
13 comment and the dialog was included in the PTC Packet. He noted that if there are questions or
14 comments raised by the public that a Commissioner is interested in discussing with the full
15 Commission, that discussion can be agendized.
16

17 Commissioner Chang concurred that it would be helpful to see the answers to the questions.
18

19 Chair Hechtman moved to City official reports.

20 **City Official Reports**

21 1. Directors Report, Meeting Schedule and Assignments 22

23 Ms. Rachael Tanner, Assistant Director, announced that Staff is recruiting new members for the
24 PTC, Architectural Review Board (ARB), Historic Resources Board (HRB), and the Parks and
25 Recreation Commission. She announced that enough applications were received for each of the
26 open positions. With respect to what is happening at the City Council level, she reported that
27 they reviewed and continued the discussion on the Objective Standards to November 8, 2021.
28 City Council will also be reviewing the work done by the PTC and the Human Relations
29 Commission (HRC) regarding renter protections on November 8, 2021. Also, the first quarterly
30 report was presented to Council and the Planning and Development Services Department has
31 hired a new Staff member to help in the Development Center. On November 1, 2021, Staff will
32 be presenting to Council the item from the Office of Transportation regarding advancing
33 parking initiatives. Council will also be discussing grade separations at one of their November
34 2021 meetings. She announced that Mr. Nguyen has accepted the Deputy City Clerk position in
35 the City Clerk's Office and she expressed her congratulations to him.
36

37 Vice-Chair Roohparvar thanked Mr. Nguyen for his hard work and dedication to the PTC.
38

39 Commissioner Templeton also congratulated Mr. Nguyen on his promotion.
40

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1 Mr. Vinh Nguyen, Admin Associate III, thanked the Commissioners for their support.

2

3 Chair Hechtman moved to the study session item.

4

5 **Study Session**

6 Public Comment is Permitted. Three (3) minutes per speaker. ^{1,3}

7 2. Study Session: Staff Recommends the Planning and Transportation Commission (PTC)
8 Conduct a Study Session Regarding Furthering the Electrification of Buildings in Palo
9 Alto by Amending the Municipal Code to Reduce Review by Planning Staff and
10 Thereby Streamlining Permitting Processes.

11

12 Ms. Rachael Tanner, Assistant Director, introduced Jodie Gerhardt and Sam Gutierrez who have
13 been working with her on the project. She mentioned that the City has a goal of reducing
14 greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 80 percent below 1990 levels by the year 2030 (80 by 2030)
15 to slow climate change and make the City more sustainable. The City has reduced emissions by
16 38 percent below the 1990 levels as of 2019. The largest area where the City will see more
17 reduction in GHG was reducing emissions produced by buildings and transportation. The City is
18 exploring several key technologies that will help buildings within the City shift to cleaner
19 energy. Those technologies included electric vehicle supply equipment (EVSE), solar
20 photovoltaic panels (PV), energy storage systems (ESS) and electric heat pumps. Through the
21 Sustainability Climate Action Plan (S/CAP), Council is considering policy changes and other ideas
22 to encourage the use of the technologies. TRC, a City consultant, identified areas where the City
23 can improve it's permitting to increase adoption of the technologies as well. The City has been
24 exploring SolarAPP+ which is automated home solar permitting app. It integrates with existing
25 government software, automatically reviews plans, provides permit approval, project tracking,
26 standardizes up to 90 percent of standard system plans, and provides a checklist verification
27 and final sign-off after installation. SolarAPP+ can approve a PV system up to 38 kilowatts, but
28 the system has to only be located on certain roofing materials. SolarAPP+ is working on their
29 next iteration where the app can review plans for both PV systems as well as ESS. This app will
30 allow the City to streamline the process for folks who want to install a PV System. When a
31 Building Permit is reviewed, at least four departments review the permit. The City prioritizes
32 clean energy technologies during the review process and the goal is to review all permits for
33 these technologies within 14-days or less. From May 2021 to August 2021, the City has received
34 142 applications, it took Staff 10-days to provide first-round comments, and the average
35 number of days from the Building Permit Application submitted to Building Permit issued was
36 38-days. Staff has been exploring two main paths in how to streamline the process further. One
37 was to reduce review by improving communication materials and creating a clean checklist for
38 applicants. The other way is to have policy changes and eliminate code requirements for the
39 height of PVs, allow equipment in the setback if it has low noise decibels, allow historic
40 structures to use solar panel shingles, automatic approval for interior garage encroachment of

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1 equipment, and explore possible changes to the tree canopy in terms of tree trimming and tree
2 removal in terms of trenching. Staff was seeking feedback from the PTC regarding the pros and
3 cons for each approach and if there are additional approaches Staff should explore.
4
5 Commissioner Lauing suggested that Staff explore the difference between EV versus PV. He
6 asked if all the changes are code changes or if some are policy and process changes.
7
8 Ms. Tanner answered that it is a mix of both. The reduced review approaches will be Staff
9 working on improving the process internally. For the other items, those would be accompanied
10 by Municipal Code changes.
11
12 Mr. Sam Gutierrez, Planner, noted that in terms of trees, several factors are to be considered.
13 There is canopy trimming either on private or public land and trees that are protected by a City
14 ordinance. It is easier if the tree is located on the subject property and is not a protected tree.
15 Folks are allowed to trim and/or cut down private trees. In terms of trenching, the Tree
16 Protection Zone may be violated and so those are times when the Urban Forestry Department
17 will have to review the project.
18
19 Ms. Tanner added that oftentimes trees are not shown on the plans that are submitted and
20 planners only discover that a tree is nearby using Google Maps. If those types of applications
21 come in, they may need a further review from the planning Staff or the Urban Forestry
22 Department.
23
24 Commissioner Lauing inquired when the item comes back to PTC, will it include both the
25 procedural changes as well as potential ordinance changes.
26
27 Ms. Tanner answered yes.
28
29 Commissioner Chang wanted to know if the City has a ton of carbon amount that it wants to
30 reduce through buildings.
31
32 Ms. Tanner could not recall what the percentage is for buildings specifically.
33
34 Commissioner Chang wanted to understand what 90 percent reduction meant in terms of
35 SolarAPP+.
36
37 Ms. Tanner explained that SolarAPP+ is a nationwide initiative and their pitch is that the app
38 can approve 90 percent of single-family home applications for PV. One of the constraints for
39 Palo Alto is that the utility is publicly owned and that makes the process longer. She noted that
40 one of the current trends is folks are installing PV along with ESS.

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1
2 Commissioner Chang asked how many of the 140 applications were PV applications.

3
4 Ms. Tanner disclosed that heat pumps and EV chargers are becoming popular. She emphasized
5 that the City must massively increase the number of applications received for these
6 technologies to reach the 80 by 2030 goal.

7
8 Commissioner Chang appreciated the answer and disclosed that she was trying to understand
9 the magnitude of the issue. She mentioned that Council will be updating the existing Tree
10 Ordinance and she wanted to know how much of the update has taken into the City's goal with
11 respect to PV.

12
13 Ms. Tanner disclosed that is something that Staff will be working on between now and when
14 the Tree Ordinance is presented to Council in April of 2022. She shared that the initiative to
15 update the Tree Ordinance began in 2017/2018. It was delayed due to COVID-19 and is now
16 being revived. Staff will be exploring how to have the new technologies and the updated Tree
17 Ordinance live in concert with each other.

18
19 Chair Hechtman summarized that the data shown regarding the number of applications
20 received between March 2021 and August 2021 were all electrification project applications.

21
22 Ms. Tanner answered yes.

23
24 Chair Hechtman noted that the 38-day review was not only planning review but all departments
25 that had to review the application.

26
27 Ms. Tanner added that the 38-days included feedback and any revisions from the applicant.

28
29 Chair Hechtman inquired if the PTC is exploring how to reduce the Planning Department's
30 review or if the PTC is exploring how to reduce the process for all departments.

31
32 Ms. Tanner concurred that it could be both. Any code changes would be brought back to the
33 Commission for review.

34
35 Chair Hechtman rephrased his question to if the planning department review is ministerial,
36 would that save 11 days of the 38-day turnaround time?

37
38 Ms. Tanner confirmed that SolarAPP+ will reduce the number of days it takes to process the
39 applications. She emphasized that the applications are Building Permit applications, not

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1 discretionary planning applications. The applications are already ministerial and there are no
2 procedural challenges to them.

3

4 Ms. Jodie Gerhardt, Planning Manager, agreed that the applications are ministerial Building
5 Permits and that all the different departments review them concurrently. She noted that the
6 fewer departments involved in reviewing an application, the less coordination there is, and
7 there is savings in that regard.

8

9 Ms. Tanner agreed.

10

11 Mr. Gutierrez reminded the Commission that the Commission approved code changes for minor
12 encroachments for commercial properties to accommodate EV charges in parking lots. He
13 acknowledged that allowing equipment to encroach in the parking space inside a garage is
14 different than a commercial parking lot.

15

16 Chair Hechtman wanted to know if the discussion regarding the relationship between
17 electrification technology and the tree is theoretical or if it is practical. He asked if there have
18 been instances where there was a conflict between a PV and trees.

19

20 Ms. Gerhardt explained that a downtown church wanted to install solar carports into their
21 parking lot. That was along the perimeter of the property and there are several large trees
22 along the perimeter. There was a discussion about removing the trees but Staff denied the
23 request to remove the trees. The trees helped with the City's parking lot shading requirement
24 and only trees can be used to meet the requirement.

25

26 Ms. Tanner believed that the Urban Forestry Department would have a better understanding of
27 how many conflicts arise when PV installation conflicts with trees.

28

29 Ms. Gerhardt predicted that as installing PV systems becomes more common and as the
30 Building Code changes where it triggers more PV installs versus a planned PV system. More
31 retrofitting will happen which could possibly increase the conflict with trees. New residential
32 houses are often built with the assumption that the owner will install a PV system and are more
33 flexible in terms of planning.

34

35 Chair Hechtman requested that Mr. Nguyen call on any members of the public who wish to
36 speak during public comment.

37

38 [Staff worked through some technology issues]

39

40 Ms. Tanner called on Mr. David Coale for public comment.

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1
2 Mr. David Coale remarked that he has been installing PV systems in the City for over 20-years
3 and has been trying to improve the permitting process for the majority of that time. He strongly
4 encouraged the City to use SolarAPP+. He stated that the key highlights of using the app are
5 standardization and no plan review. He mentioned that the downfall is that the City has Palo
6 Alto only requirements and Staff is trying to incorporate those into the app. Those Palo Alto
7 only requirements, torque tests and a two-ground rod requirement, constrains folks from
8 installing a PV system. He shared that he has not seen any evidence that the Palo Alto only
9 requirements improve safety and going with the standard will reduce processing times. He
10 concluded that a PV with ESS application is taking roughly 4 months to go through the process.

11
12 Chair Hechtman closed public comment and invited Commissioners to discuss the topic. He
13 suggested that each Commissioner take up to 5-minutes to share their preliminary thoughts.
14 Then the second round of comments will happen if necessary.

15
16 Vice-Chair Roohparvar inquired if Staff has heard of Aurora being used for solar. She shared
17 that Aurora is a very popular program with the PV community. The program determines how
18 shaded a property is and if a PV would be beneficial or not.

19
20 Ms. Tanner answered that she has not heard of that program.

21
22 Vice-Chair Roohparvar mentioned that is a very easy program to use and suggested that the
23 City provide a link to it on the City's website for the community to explore and/or use.

24
25 Mr. Gutierrez explained that the Aurora app analyzes a home's roof using Google Maps aerial
26 photos. Then based on longitude and latitude, it determines the position of the roof forms
27 relative to the sun.

28
29 Vice-Chair Roohparvar asked if Aurora is free.

30
31 Mr. Gutierrez disclosed that he did not know but Staff can investigate.

32
33 Ms. Gerhardt agreed that the tool would be useful for the do-it-yourself type people. She
34 shared that solar companies also do a shading analysis and help homeowners understand what
35 fits for their house.

36
37 Chair Hechtman requested that Staff display the review issues and the six policy changes to
38 help the Commission focus the discussion. He asked how neighboring jurisdictions that have
39 adopted SolarAPP+ contend with the issues that Staff has raised regarding trees.

40

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1 Ms. Tanner confirmed that Staff has spoken with several southern California jurisdictions that
2 have adopted the app as well as several Arizona jurisdictions. They have all given positive
3 reviews about using the app. SolarAPP+ does not address trees. That impact comes when folks
4 want to maximize their solar potential and have to remove a tree to do that.

5
6 Chair Hechtman summarized that any issues with trees are a separate process outside of
7 SolarAPP+.

8
9 Ms. Tanner clarified that the issue regarding trees is to think globally about the role of trees and
10 the interconnection. Not that there is a specific conflict in the solar itself.

11
12 Ms. Gerhardt added that the single-family and multi-family commercial processes are very
13 different processes. For a single-family home, any tree removals would go directly through the
14 Urban Forestry Department and any PV installations would be processed by the Build
15 Department. For multi-family commercial properties, that is a coordinated process through a
16 planning application.

17
18 Ms. Tanner clarified that installation of a PV system may require tree trimming but the
19 installation of the other electrification technologies may require trenching. That is where Staff
20 would have to assess the trees and see how they may be affected by that.

21
22 Commissioner Chang found it hard to prioritize the proposed streamlining approaches. She
23 requested more information about the Palo Alto only requirements and if any streamlining
24 proposals would help with those requirements.

25
26 Ms. Tanner emphasized that the specific requirements that Mr. Coale mentioned are not Palo
27 Alto only requirements. They are requirements listed in the California Building Code and so
28 there are no changes that Staff can make to those requirements. Palo Alto does do more
29 rigorous inspections of solar installations than other cities and so the City has been working on
30 improving the inspection process. Also, there are several safety features that the City's Utility
31 Department requires that go beyond what PG&E requires.

32
33 Commissioner Templeton emphasized that it is important that the City work reduce its impact
34 on the environment. She asked if there are any reasons why Staff should not improve
35 communications materials and draft a checklist for applicants.

36
37 Ms. Tanner answered that there is no problem with the height of PV systems right now but it
38 could be a problem in the future.

39
40 Commissioner Templeton clarified that she was talking about communication materials.

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1
2 Ms. Tanner apologized and said that there is no reason why Staff should not improve
3 communications materials and draft a checklist.

4
5 Commissioner Templeton acknowledged that some community members have strong opinions
6 about some of the approaches proposed under the policy changes and eliminated code
7 requirements. She wanted to hear more from them before policy and code requirements are
8 changed. Regarding noise and allowing equipment in the setback, she agreed that with more
9 flexibility more electrification equipment would be installed. Regarding the height of solar
10 panels, she expressed concern because the panels may encroach into the daylight plan and she
11 suggested that Staff explore the impacts further before implementing it. She asked if the height
12 of solar panels is a primary obstacle or a secondary obstacle.

13
14 Ms. Gerhardt concurred that most solar panel applications propose the panels be close to the
15 roof. She acknowledged that further discussion needs to happen on how to define what is
16 considered close to the roof. She noted that SolarAPP+ allows the panels to sit up to 10-inches
17 off the roof.

18
19 Mr. Gutierrez added that the height of the solar panels depends upon the system, the efficiency
20 of the system, and how the system will be used.

21
22 Ms. Tanner stated that Staff rarely receives complaints about solar panel placement and
23 heights.

24
25 Commissioner Templeton noted that the City should explore and incentives ways that
26 homeowners can make their homes more energy-efficient. She mentioned that her neighbors
27 enjoy gardening and any obstruction of the sun would decrease their quality of life. She wanted
28 to understand what the marginal gain would be by allowing folks go to closer to the edge of the
29 property with elevated panels. She acknowledged that the technology for solar shingles is
30 changing rapidly and she wanted to understand how to make those technologies work within
31 the city. Regarding interior garage space, she noted that many folks use their garages for the
32 storage of things other than vehicles. She mentioned that it makes sense to allow equipment to
33 encroach in the interior space, but then the City must review and possibly amend the definition
34 of what a garage is. She asked if there is any reason why the City would not allow such
35 encroachments.

36
37 Ms. Tanner answered no and that it makes sense to have an EVSE located in the garage. She
38 predicted that many folks would be cognizant of if their car will fit in the garage with the EVSE.
39 She inquired what the Commission thought of having a heat pump or an ESS system in the
40 garage; or should the City only allow EVSE.

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1
2 Commissioner Templeton shared that her family has an electric vehicle but the car is not
3 housed in the garage. She mentioned that it would be nice to see an organizational chart of
4 how these electrification technologies would be arranged in a garage, but she acknowledged
5 that the City would only be guiding that process.

6
7 Commissioner Lauing concurred that the reason there are inspections is to address the safety
8 issues and there could be collateral damage if there are no inspections. In general, he
9 suggested that Staff start with proposals that are less technical and less problematic. He
10 suggested that Staff bring forward details about those and move quickly on them. Other
11 concepts such as tree canopy and tree removal, need further study. After the technologies are
12 installed, he recommended that the City do audits to make sure that it is installed correctly.

13
14 Commissioner Chang agreed that streamlining electrification is very important and the
15 proposals listed are areas that constrain folks from installing the technologies. She concurred
16 that Items One and Two listed under reduced review are easy to implement. With respect to
17 policy changes, she requested more information on the items except for allowing equipment in
18 the setback and garage encroachment. She felt that the City should allow equipment in the
19 setback if the noise it produces is lower than a certain decibel. She supported allowing EVSE in a
20 garage because they occupy a much smaller space. With the other technologies such as
21 batteries and heat pumps being placed in the garage, those need to be explored further. She
22 acknowledged that there is a lot of debate about whether if the tree is more important than
23 the savings in carbon emissions from PV systems. She encouraged Staff to explore those topics
24 more.

25
26 Commissioner Alcheck stated that the City has to update the Municipal Code to encourage
27 electrification in every way possible. He recommended that Staff approach electrification by
28 first looking at all electrification rules within the Bay Area and then highlighting the differences
29 between those rules and the City's rules. Then identify which Cities are leaders in the process
30 and then reach out to local providers to find out what those providers do not like in the leading
31 City's programs. He reported that Council reviewed the tree canopy rules early in the week and
32 they are considering making the rules more strict. He confessed that he did not watch the
33 Council meeting but wondered if the conversation discussed the impacts trees will have on
34 electrification. He noted that the Staff report stated that the first few inches for a solar panel
35 installation on a roof are not reviewed and he wanted to know how many inches that is. He
36 suggested that rules regarding the height of a PV system should be liberal and state that as long
37 as the system is within the daylight plan. Then Staff will not do an extensive review. He strongly
38 encouraged Staff to identify what lead Cities are doing before making any changes. He
39 mentioned that there may be an article discussing PV systems and neighbors' trees. He wanted
40 to understand that more in detail before recommending any changes. He mentioned that new

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1 development is required to be constructed to handle electrification technologies. He
2 acknowledged that newer equipment does not produce as much noise but wanted more
3 information.

4
5 Vice-Chair Roohparvar agreed that Items 1 and 2 under reduced review are straightforward.
6 She also agreed that additional information is needed for the policy change concepts. Especially
7 for trees and she wanted to understand the tradeoffs for that approach. With respect to
8 equipment in the setback, she suggested that Staff investigate the size of the equipment and if
9 the size will impair access.

10
11 Chair Hechtman recognized that the discussion is a launch point for Staff to pursue the
12 proposed concepts. He predicted that the next step is that Staff will investigate all the
13 proposals and bring back recommendations and information on what Staff believes will be the
14 most helpful proposals to encourage electrification. He liked the idea of the City being able to
15 facilitate as many over-the-counter, same-day permits as it can. He indicated that there cannot
16 be a one-size-fits-all process, but there can be a dual process. He envisioned there being two
17 paths a person could go. They could either follow the Objective Standards set by the City and
18 have less review time, or they could have a unique system that is outside of the Objective
19 Standards which would require a longer review period. He suggested that Staff draft Objective
20 Standards that are broad and a clear checklist for folks to follow. With those in place, he felt
21 that any of the policy changes proposed by Staff could be addressed. If an installation has a
22 conflict with trees, then the application would have to follow a longer review period. With
23 respect to solar shingles and historic structures, he recommended that the shingles be placed
24 on the portion of the roof that is not visible from the right of way. If that can happen, then the
25 project can go through a streamlined process. He agreed that many folks in the City do not use
26 the garage to house their cars. He asked Staff if the Commission has provided enough feedback
27 to move forward.

28
29 Ms. Tanner found the conversation extremely helpful. She predicted that each item will come
30 back to the Commission individually with a more detailed report. She recommended that the
31 tree canopy and tree removal discussion be incorporated into the discussion regarding the new
32 Tree Ordinance.

33
34 Chair Hechtman moved to Committee items.

35 **Committee Items**

36
37 Not seeing any, Chair Hechtman moved to Commissioner questions, comments, and
38 announcements.

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1 **Commissioner Questions, Comments or Announcements**

2
3 Chair Hechtman announced that he attended a meeting with the Mayor, Vice Mayor and the
4 Chairs of the City’s Boards, Commissions, and Committees. The Vice Mayor asked if the PTC
5 would be interested in being included in the discussion of re-envisioning California Avenue.

6
7 Commissioner Templeton answered yes and felt the PTC would have a lot to contribute to the
8 conversation.

9
10 Commissioner Alcheck asked if the suggestion is to have a cross Commission Committee.

11
12 Chair Hechtman understood it would be a stakeholder group that would include
13 representatives from the Boards and Commission that want to participate as well as individuals
14 who are not on a Board or Commission.

15
16 Commissioner Alcheck inquired if the goal is to create a specific plan or concept for California
17 Avenue.

18
19 Chair Hechtman agreed that it sounded like a planning project.

20
21 Commissioner Alcheck found it odd that the Vice Mayor would invite the different Boards and
22 Commission into a discussion. If a stakeholder’s group is formed, he encouraged one of the PTC
23 Commissioners to be involved.

24
25 Commissioner Templeton envisioned California Avenue as being more than buildings. It could
26 be a park or a place that has arts and safe sidewalks and streets.

27
28 Ms. Tanner announced that there will be a joint study session with PTC, ARB, and City Council
29 on November 15, 2021.

30
31 Chair Hechtman expressed his disappointment, but excitement, that Mr. Nguyen is moving on.

32
33 Commissioner Lauing recommended that the meeting be adjourned in Mr. Nguyen’s honor.

34
35 Chair Hechtman adjourned the meeting in Vinh Nguyen’s honor.

36 **Adjournment**

37 **8:15 pm**

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CITY OF
**PALO
ALTO**

Planning & Transportation Commission Action Agenda: October 27, 2021

Virtual Meeting
6:00 PM

Call to Order / Roll Call

Approximately 6:03 pm

Mr. Vinh Nguyen, Admin Associate III: Chair Hechtman, we're on live so we can begin at any time.

Chair Hechtman: Thank you, thank you. Good evening fellow Commissioners and members of Staff. We don't have any public with us yet to welcome and I welcome those of you who are present to this regular meeting of the Planning and Transportation Commission for October 27th, 2021. Mr. Nguyen, will you roll the tape, please?

[An automated voice recording begins to play disclosing Zoom procedures.]

Chair Hechtman: May we have a roll call, please?

Mr. Nguyen: Chair Hechtman?

Chair Hechtman: Present.

Mr. Nguyen: Vice-Chair Roohparvar?

Vice-Chair Roohparvar: Present.

Mr. Nguyen: Commissioner Alcheck?

Commissioner Alcheck: Present.

Mr. Nguyen: Commissioner Chang?

Commissioner Chang: Present.

Mr. Nguyen: Commissioner Lauing?

Commissioner Lauing: Present.

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Mr. Nguyen: Commissioner Summa is absent. Commissioner Templeton?

Commissioner Templeton: Here.

Mr. Nguyen: We have a quorum. Thank you.

Chair Hechtman: Thank you, Mr. Nguyen. We are now moving on to oral communications.

Oral Communications

The public may speak to any item not on the agenda. Three (3) minutes per speaker.^{1,2}

Chair Hechtman: This section is for the public to speak on items not on the agenda; which would mean anything other than the electrification project tonight. Please raise your hand if you wish to speak. On the Zoom App, there is a raise hand button on the bottom of your screen. If you are dialing in from a phone, please press *9. Mr. Nguyen, are there any public speakers for oral communication?

Mr. Vinh Nguyen, Admin Associate III: Chair Hechtman, we do not have any speakers.

Chair Hechtman: Then we will move onto City... actually before we do that, agenda changes, additions and deletions.

Agenda Changes, Additions and Deletions

The Chair or Commission majority may modify the agenda order to improve meeting management.

Chair Hechtman: Commissioners, are there any of those that any of you would like to bring up? Seeing none we will move to City official reports. Ms. Tanner, do you have a report for us? Oh, I'm sorry. Commissioner Chang?

Commissioner Chang: I don't... thank you. I don't know where the right place is for this because I'm still not entirely familiar with protocols. But I had a question and if we can... if you want to delay it till later, that's fine.

I was just wondering, for the public comments that come in that are asking questions of us. That are not necessarily questions for us but might be directed at Staff, or might be more appropriately directed at Staff who would have the answers. How do we handle that because there were two comments that came in and I didn't know how we as a Commission handle that? Maybe it should be delayed till after the meeting that we discuss this or I mean at the end of the meeting? I'm not quite sure.

Ms. Rachael Tanner, Assistant Director: I can offer maybe some insight. So, a couple of things, we do, as Staff, try to get back to folks when they have questions that we can answer. Some questions are often... sometimes things can be posed as questions that are policy-related. And

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1 so, if it's a policy question, then the Commissioners may give their opinion on what they think
2 the policy direction should be. But we, as Staff, can answer current practices and current
3 policies that have been adopted by the City Council. Commissioners may also choose to ask
4 those questions of Staff if they feel oh, that's an interesting question that we should discuss or
5 even that you want to know what your fellow Commissioners think on that matter. Again, if it's
6 kind of more maybe policy or future practice kind of oriented. So, I hope that helps a little bit,
7 but we do try to get back to the members of the public when they have questions that we can
8 answer. But we can also have them incorporated into the discussion as the members of the
9 Commission want to have them incorporated. So, I don't know if that helps Commissioner
10 Chang or if other (interrupted)

11
12 Commissioner Chang: It does sort of generally but I'm just wondering... so for example, there
13 are some... a member of the public wrote in about a traffic, I think it... suggestion to add a
14 mirror. And that's something that would traditionally be handled and probably directed to Palo
15 Alto 311 for example. But I'm wondering did somebody ever get back to this individual and tell
16 him that?

17
18 Ms. Tanner: I do know that the Office of Transportation Staff did see and respond to that. So, I
19 can see what was the response and one thing that we can also do is to try to make sure that
20 you all get those responses. Especially when it's not related to an agenda item. Like if it's an
21 agenda item, I think it's easier to incorporate but if it's just kind of a comment. Then it is a little
22 bit harder sometimes.

23
24 Commissioner Chang: Right, so that's... and then there was one about are we going to publish
25 some... a guide to ADUs the way Sunnyvale does. And again, that's probably best answered by a
26 Staff member and I assume some... you know, you guys saw it. But I... you know, I just want to
27 make sure we're getting back to people with the answer to something that's truly a question
28 and not. I mean there is some policy in there too but yeah.

29
30 Ms. Tanner: Yeah, I think... and I would just welcome the Commission to also, to the degree that
31 you want to bring it up during Commissioner comments and questions; or even as part of... if
32 you want to ask it as my Director's report. We're happy to do that because I know also
33 sometimes it can be mystifying for the public too. Just like how do I get my question answered,
34 where do I go, and we want this to be... you know, Commission [unintelligible] I think can
35 sometimes be a little stiff just cause of our protocols. Which is fine but I can make some
36 limitations that can not always be as public-friendly maybe as we would want to be.

37
38 Commissioner Chang: Great, thanks, that's... so now I know where to bring... were to ask those
39 questions. Thank you, I appreciate it.

40

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1 Ms. Tanner: Yeah, of course.

2

3 Chair Hechtman: Sometimes in this situation, questions are misdirected to the Planning and
4 Transportation Commission understandably so because of the name of our Commission, where
5 the starting point is really with our Transportation Department or our Planning Department,
6 but maybe that's not as clear. I have seen... I think it was maybe 3-months ago, we had a similar
7 traffic email from somebody wanting to know about a stop light on Embarcadero. They
8 perceived an uncomfortable condition and that email came in early enough in the cycle that
9 Staff not only responded to it directly as you'd expect, but they also included that dialog in our
10 public comment. So, by the time we got to our meeting, we could also see that not only was the
11 question asked, it had been answered. But I think there are times where some... a question like
12 that could come up and if it's of interest to a Commissioner, then what we want to talk about is
13 do we want to bring that back... are we interested in that? Should that come back to us in a... as
14 an agenda item and that's a dialog we can have on these sorts of things.

15

16 I thought initially your question was about what to... how do we respond when questions are
17 asked during oral comments because we have a... but... sorry.

18

19 Commissioner Chang: No, my question was just wanting to make sure that some of these... so
20 some of these questions that came in, into our in box, where things that would be better... you
21 know, the member of the public would be better served if it went straight to, as you said, the
22 Transportation Department or the Planning Department. And I just wanted to make sure that
23 somebody was... I just didn't know what the process was for those and it sounds like Staff is
24 just... Staff answers those then. Yeah, it would be helpful if we saw it as in the prior example
25 just so we know. Thanks.

26

27 Ms. Tanner: Yeah, that's great. We can also work to incorporate that in the updated answers to
28 the responses. We might be lagging in the next Packet but at least then it's there.

29

30 Chair Hechtman: Alright Ms. Tanner, City official report.

31 **City Official Reports**

32 1. Directors Report, Meeting Schedule and Assignments

33 Ms. Rachael Tanner, Assistant Director: Alright, want to just do a few report-outs today. Thank
34 you, you all may have gotten on Monday an email. We're seeking a new member to our PTC,
35 ARB, HRB, and the Rec and Park Commission. So, a lot of recruitments going on. It's part of the
36 effort to consolidate the recruitments into a one-time a year for the Council. So, that there can
37 be just kind of some efficiency. It also means there's quite a bit of work in interviewing that the
38 Council Members will have to do. So, thank you if you forwarded those to your network and I
39 believe we did get enough applications, at least as a City, to... for each of the open positions.

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1 So, I think we... and we may have even exceeded that but I know we at least had enough for the
2 open positions. So, I know the City Clerk is working to schedule those interviews. And so, we'll
3 be looking forward to seeing how those interviews go and how the rest of the Commissions get
4 filled out. So, we will keep you posted as those are happening.

5
6 Last week at the Council... well, not last week, this week, a few days ago, at City Council
7 meeting we had a couple of items kind of in the planning and transportation world. In
8 particular, we had an item go... there was Objective Standards which came before the PTC. But
9 that was continued and so that will be heard on November 8th. The November 8th City Council
10 meeting is when we expect Objective Standards to be brought forward. And then we have also
11 the renter protection item which you all spent I think it was in the spring of this year, worked
12 on the renter protection item for a couple of meetings. That then went to the Human Relations
13 Commission and then it going to be going to City Council also on November 8th. So, I'm hoping
14 that it doesn't get bumped because, you know, the Objective Standards just got to be quite
15 late. It was almost 10 o'clock and so they weren't able to take up that item and to advance that
16 discussion. We did have a couple of pre-screenings for housing projects as well as not a
17 planning-related item, but we had the first-quarter report for 2022 for the City and so that we
18 certainly an interesting topic. We're really happy that our department was able to get another
19 Staff person to help us with our Development Center. Especially, as we look to opening up that
20 center for more in-person appointments as the pandemic continues to hopefully wane and
21 allow for more in-person services for those folks who want to have those in-person services.
22 We also have coming up on... this is... sorry, just need to find the date. On December 6, we will
23 have... or sorry, excuse me, I believe it's next week, November 1st, but I want to verify. The
24 Parking item that came to you and the agenda's changed a little bit. But that was the item that
25 Mr. Baird brought a few weeks ago regarding advancing parking. It will be on next week... on
26 November 1st the Consent Agenda for the City Council. City Council may pull that and decide to
27 hear that item. And I believe also coming up in November, but I think I will have to get the new
28 date because it may have shifted since Monday, is a discussion of grade separations. So, I know
29 Commissioner Templeton you spent a lot of time working on grade separations. So, it continues
30 to advance down the track if you will and we will again look forward to hearing that, and I will
31 send out these dates. Just want to confirm, some of them have shifted, so I want to make sure I
32 have those right dates. And we'll just have three meetings for City Council in November. The 1st,
33 the 15th... the 8th, and the 15th. They may add a fourth meeting after Thanksgiving but we will
34 see.

35
36 And then we are... sad here... sad but I guess proud to announce that Mr. Vinh Nguyen has
37 received a promotion to the City Clerk's Office and has accepted a job there. I believe Vinh, are
38 you going to be the Deputy City Clerk? Am I seeing, that right?

39
40 Mr. Vinh Nguyen, Admin Associate III: Yes, that's right.

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1
2 Ms. Tanner: Yes, so a very well-earned position for him. He’s absolutely fabulous. I cannot say
3 enough things about him and his efficiency. So, Lesley is great, who’s our new clerk. She’s
4 wonderful, so I knew Vinh had a bright career and his star was rising very quickly. And so, I’m
5 just glad that we got to be part of that rise and got to benefit from his services. So, thank you
6 Mr. Nguyen and we will certainly miss you here at the PTC. But he has trained up like I said he
7 has trained up two other Staff people along the way. So, he knew that he needed to make
8 himself indispensable but not irreplaceable. And so, we will be still having some technology
9 support for our virtual meetings; which will again continue through the end of this year and
10 we’ll perhaps be meeting in person or a hybrid in January. So, that is the end of my report and
11 I’m available for questions.

12
13 Chair Hechtman: Questions Commissioners? Vice-Chair Roohparvar.

14
15 Vice-Chair Roohparvar: I didn’t have a question but I did want to say thank you... you know
16 thank you for all your service Vinh. It’s been wonderful working with you, just here, and then
17 behind the scenes. We’ve seen I think, you know, Chair Hechtman, and I have defiantly seen
18 behind the scenes all that you do to make things happen. So, thank you again for all your hard
19 work.

20
21 Mr. Nguyen: Thank you.

22
23 Chair Hechtman: Commissioner Templeton.

24
25 Commissioner Templeton: I also want to congratulate you, Vinh. I am so happy to hear this
26 news. You made last year even possible for us, getting very flexible and creative. Taking
27 feedback and coming back with really innovative ideas. So, I’m so glad to hear this, that you’re
28 staying with the City, and that your career is progressing. I just couldn’t be happier for you.
29 Congratulations.

30
31 Mr. Nguyen: Thank you, I appreciate that.

32
33 Chair Hechtman: Alright, let’s move now to our action items, and tonight we have a study
34 session on our agenda.

35 **Study Session**

36 Public Comment is Permitted. Three (3) minutes per speaker. ^{1,3}

- 37 2. Study Session: Staff Recommends the Planning and Transportation Commission (PTC)
38 Conduct a Study Session Regarding Furthering the Electrification of Buildings in Palo
39 Alto by Amending the Municipal Code to Reduce Review by Planning Staff and
40 Thereby Streamlining Permitting Processes.

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1 Chair Hechtman: It's Agenda Item Number Two. Staff recommends the Planning and
2 Transportation Committee... Commission conduct a study session regarding furthering the
3 electrification of buildings in Palo Alto by amending the Municipal Code to reduce review by
4 planning Staff and thereby streamlining permitting processes. May we have a Staff report?
5

6 Ms. Rachael Tanner, Assistant Director: Certainly, and I want to just... I'll be giving the
7 presentation today but I'm joined by Jodie Gerhardt who's our manager of current planning,
8 and Sam Gutierrez, one of our Staff planners. They are the expert practitioners and so we'll
9 have a great discussion I think hopefully both the high-level policy. But also, how does that
10 translate when folks are trying to put solar panels on their rooves or really what happens when
11 folks are in that building process. I know sometimes that can be a little bit hidden from the
12 Commission's work. So, happy to dig into the nuts and bolts if you will as well as the high-level
13 discussion.
14

15 I'm going to share my screen and just go over a presentation that really just highlights some of
16 the aspects that we had in the Staff report. OK, so just a little background about kind of what is
17 bringing this to the forefront right now for the City of Palo Alto and Planning and Development
18 Services. You know, overall, our goal as a City has been for some time to reduce our GHG
19 emissions or greenhouse gas emissions. This is to help slow climate change and to make our
20 City and our world more sustainable. And specifically, the goal is to reduce greenhouse gas
21 emissions 80 percent below the 1990 levels by 2030. So, this is often short-handed as 80 by
22 2030. And so, you can see on the right-hand side of the screen what our 1990 emission levels
23 were and then 2019. And so, you can see that the levels have gone down and then you can also
24 see what is that... what does it look like in percent. So, again, the target reduction is 80 percent
25 below 1990 levels by 2030 and at the current pace, we've reached 38 percent below the 1990
26 levels in 2019. So, that's... at that time at least 11-years to go, now 9-years to go, or soon to be
27 8-years to go, in increasing that reduction even further. So, we've made progress, we've got a
28 bit of a ways to go. And one of the big areas where we can see more reduction in greenhouse
29 gases in the City and really typically, I mean this would go for almost any city in the United
30 States. Would be reducing emissions that are produced by buildings as well as emissions from
31 transportation. But today we're going to focus on the emissions from buildings reduction.
32

33 So, one of the chief ways that we can help to transition buildings to cleaner energy is through
34 some newer technologies, and some are older technologies, but by proliferating them more
35 and more throughout the City. So, electric vehicle supply equipment, EVSE. So, that's an electric
36 vehicle charger; solar photovoltaic panels, PV or often just called solar panels; energy storage
37 systems, ESS. They're also referred to a battery storage or batteries and electric heat pumps.
38 These are four technologies that can really make a big difference in helping a home or a
39 building, commercial building, not need fossil fuels any longer. And of course, we want to make

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1 sure that the energy that's being used is also clean electricity. Because electricity can obviously
2 not always be green, but certainly we want to move in that direction.

3
4 So, City Council right now is considering policy changes and other ideas to further the
5 proliferation of these technologies and other ways to help us reach the target of 80 by 2030.
6 That's through the S/CAP update and there is a Council Ad Hoc Committee as well as a City Staff
7 Internal Committee that is working on the update, and bringing that before the Ad Hoc and
8 ultimately before the City Council.

9
10 Earlier this year, we had a team of consultants, TRC is the name of the company, that looked at
11 our City's permitting process. Particularly, for solar, but also for the other energies...
12 technologies that we're talking about and identified areas where the City can improve it's
13 permitting to increase the adoption of these technologies. So, for the better part of this last
14 year, we've really been thinking about how can we as a City, Planning, and Development
15 Service in particular and our partner departments, advance these technologies through more
16 efficient permitting processes.

17
18 And one of the newer opportunities to further that is something called SolarAPP+. So,
19 SolarAPP+ is automated home solar permitting. It integrates with existing government software
20 and provides automated plan review, permit approval, and project tracking for solar permit...
21 solar installations on roof tops. It standardizes up to 90 percent of standard system plans and
22 provides an inspection checklist for verification by field inspectors for final sign-off after the
23 inspection. This system has some great capabilities. It can work on solar arrays that are up to
24 38-kilowatt hours maximum. It can only be on certain roof materials, so some rooves like metal
25 rooves for example. It cannot review plans for solar installations on metal rooves but for other
26 more traditional type of roofing it can. Electrical upgrades cannot necessarily be needed when...
27 for this project to go through SolarAPP+, but a lot of homes may not need that for their solar
28 installation, and right now, it's only serving mainly solar and... alone. Right now, we're seeing an
29 uptick in applicants who want to have solar panels, but also that ESS. That battery storage
30 system that can store the energy from the solar panels for use at a later time. Those being a
31 higher combination of applications. And SolarAPP+ is though working on their next iteration
32 where it could review the plans for both the solar and the battery storage system. So, that
33 would be definitely very, very beneficial. And so hopefully you can see how this could provide
34 some potential streamlining impacts for the City and for would-be permit holders. That they
35 can go online, a qualified contractor, put in the information about the solar installation that
36 they're going to do. It can check... if that plan that they have meets the criteria that's needed
37 and then they can have an automatic approval. They can go get their... have their Building
38 Permit, install the solar installation, and then have it verified by one of our building inspectors.
39 So, it has a lot of potential for efficiencies, especially for homeowners.

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1 So, this next section I'm not going to go into detail, but this does redo the table in the Staff
2 report that kind of goes over what is the Planning Department's role when we are looking at
3 these types of energy installations. So, just at a high level, the bubble on the right shows when
4 we're talking about Building Permits. Typically, there's at least four departments who are
5 looking at the permits. There may be more involved and so this is just four of them. You have
6 Planning. We have our plan review Staff, so that's our engineering Staff who are looking at it
7 against the Building Code, and planning Staff are looking at it against our local Planning Codes.
8 We have our Utilities Department which you can imagine with energy is particularly important.
9 We may have our fire department looking at it depending on what the project is and we may
10 have Urban Forestry or Public Works if the project is in the public right-of-way, or if it's dealing
11 with protected trees. But that's on always the case for every energy storage system, but this
12 just gives a sense of what are some of the departments that are involved.

13
14 And right now, one of the things we've done in our department in our City is really prioritize the
15 clean energy technologies. They are prioritized in the review process. So, our goal is review all
16 of those permits in 14-days or less. Some of the permits have a 1-day or same-day turnaround
17 time. They may have a 3- to 5-day turnaround time and the maximum is 14-days. So, we really
18 are trying to make sure that when these come in the door. They are one of our top priorities to
19 make sure that we are reviewing these permits and at least getting comments back to the
20 applicant. We may not always be able to approve the permit on the first go around, but we
21 really are trying to make sure we're getting that feedback to them as soon as possible. So, that
22 they can make any corrections or updates that might be needed.

23
24 This is a little bit of a blurry slide, I do apologize. I tried to cut it out of a different document, but
25 we have seen improvements from these changes that we've made even just this year. So, you
26 can see on the left side in the white boxes are from 2020 and 2020 or May 2020 to August
27 2020. So, that would be the second box here. The number of records 83, the average days to
28 receive first-round comments was 19, and the average days from Building Permit submitted to
29 permit issued... so, Building Permit applications submitted to Building Permit issued was 83.
30 And already, we've seen one bigger increase which is likely due to the pandemic kind of
31 changing pace compared to 2020, 142 records. We've seen an average of 10-days to get in
32 those first-round comments and then 38-days from application to permit issuance. So, we've
33 made big strides in improvement and we want to continue to make even more strides and
34 improving the efficiency of this process.

35
36 As I said, I'm not going to go over each of these charts in detail but they are here in case we
37 want to refer to them as we're having our discussion. We have here where planning is involved
38 in the electric vehicle charging infrastructure and you can see on the left side single-family and
39 duplex. On the right commercial which includes multi-family residential if it's in more than a
40 duplex. For solar panels, which is very similar for homes or for commercial, and so you don't

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1 see a differentiation here for what we review for solar panels. Here are energy storage,
2 [unintelligible] those batteries and then again, the difference between the single-family and
3 duplex and the commercial size installations that we might look at, and lastly, electric heat
4 pumps. Again, showing what are we looking at, what might planning de looking at in those
5 plans.

6
7 So, one of the questions we want to talk about is how can we maybe streamline this further
8 than we already have in our process. So, two main paths that we are identifying which is are
9 there ways to reduce the time that it takes to perform a review. That might be improving the
10 communication materials for improved applications. So, that way when we get an application in
11 the door, it looks great. It has all the information that Staff needs. We don't need to have back
12 and forth with the applicant which takes more time for them to ultimately get their application
13 approved. We want to have clear checklists for applicants so that they know exactly what they
14 need. And Staff can see, you know, that they've checked the box and said yep, I have this and
15 here's the detail. It just makes it a lot easier to make sure we can see where things are. You can
16 manage with different companies, different businesses, they have different formats for certain
17 things, and having a standardized checklist that fits us. Just helps us to orient ourselves a little
18 bit quicker to those plans.

19
20 The second are to look at is are there policy changes and perhaps codes that we can eliminate
21 requirements or update requirements. So, that planning review is not needed which means
22 there's one less department in that review circle that needs to take a look at the plans. So, with
23 some the topics that we've talked about are can we come up with and identify a height of the
24 solar panels above the roof. So, that can be standardized and if you fall within that category,
25 then the Planning Department doesn't need to look at that review. And just for visual aid, this is
26 an image showing here's a solar panel tilted at an angle to maximize the impact and the rays
27 from the sun and so there's a height difference here. We want to make sure that if these are
28 proliferating across the City, that our daylight plan regulations don't inhibit the proliferation of
29 these panels that might intrude into that plan. And Ms. Gerhardt and Mr. Gutierrez can explain
30 more about that if the Commission is interested.

31
32 A second thing is allowing equipment and mechanical equipment in the setback. And I put noise
33 in parenthesis because a lot of the mechanical equipment is not allowed in the setback because
34 its noise producing. However, items that are identified as noise-producing equipment these
35 days may not make that much noise as they once did. And our code says that at the property
36 line, the noise can't be above 66 decibels and we have equipment that can be at 50, can be at
37 40. It can be at these lower decibel levels even closer, it may be at 3-feet, and so having it in a
38 setback doesn't really create that noise nuisance for neighbors. And so, can we change our
39 requirements so that the equipment can be located there and planning doesn't have to review

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1 that it's located there. There could be a cut sheet or other manufactory information to allow
2 that.

3
4 Items three and four may be a little more sensitive, thinking about tree canopy and tree
5 removal. Tree canopy would be more thinking about if folks need to trim trees, cut down limbs
6 in order to have their roof have better access to solar and to the sun so the solar panels are
7 more efficient. Canopy, you know, trimming can be not as sensitive maybe as removal but
8 certainly, can... you have to think about how many limbs are you cutting. Does it endanger the
9 tree? Can the tree be viable? It is really meeting our canopy coverage standards as well?
10 Especially when you get into commercial where we really want to have commercial... with trees
11 covering our parking lots for example. That could be great in terms of limiting solar heat island
12 effect or urban heat island and other things. But that means if you have let's say carpports in a
13 parking lot covering the parking lot but it's also covered with trees. There could be a conflict
14 there and how can we maybe minimize that conflict or make a trade-off there? With tree
15 removal, it's not so much for tree removal we might think how... why would you need to
16 remove a tree for some of these? Well, some could be for the solar. Maybe someone wants to
17 have a tree removed in order to have better direct sunlight from the sun onto their solar
18 panels. But when you start talking about batteries, you start talking about heat pumps, you
19 start talking about a combination of these systems at a house. You may... they may need
20 trenching for certain infrastructure connected to that equipment and that trenching could
21 impede into the Tree Protection Zone. It might disrupt the root system, it might have a conflict
22 with that tree, and sometimes in some properties, there may not be an alternate location that
23 allows both the tree to be unimpeded and for the technology to be installed. And so, thinking
24 about the rub there of how do we balance protecting our trees with also adding this
25 equipment. And also, that's something that the Planning Department does try to review for is
26 take a look at these plans, see where the trees are, double-check to make sure that these
27 equipment aren't going to be endangering the trees at all.

28
29 Number five, solar shingles and historic structures, this is kind of a smaller... maybe smaller
30 item in terms of it only effects historic structures which are not every structure in the City. Solar
31 shingles are kind of, you know, think about a shingle but it's a solar panel, and so we're seeing
32 that technology being used more and more. We think that it could be pretty compatible with
33 most historic buildings. Particularly, if they have kind of just typical roofing shingles there, but
34 some historic structures might have a terracotta roof. They might have a slate roof. They might
35 have an architectural feature that is really part of the roof material. And so how can... do we
36 want to look into allowing solar shingles there or maybe, in that case, we would just really want
37 to emphasize the solar panels versus the solar shingles.

38
39 And item six, I want to note was not in the Staff report but it is something that Staff have
40 thought about as we've been preparing for this presentation. One of the things that we may

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1 often get a question on when someone submits an application for an EV charger is you know,
2 our Staff may look at that and say hey, this is going into the garage. Is it going to prevent
3 someone from parking their car in the garage? And it could be for EV charger, but there may
4 also be other again clean energy technology that might be best suited to be placed in a garage.
5 And so, we could consider saying hey, if it's one of these technologies that's being put into a
6 garage. It's OK for that to encroach into the parking space and we don't need to review it.
7 Because again, the trade-off of saying yes, we want to get these technologies proliferated and
8 we want them to fit into people's homes. We want them to retrofit their homes and they've got
9 to put them in the places that they can that they have available. So, that's another option that
10 we could consider.

11
12 So, that concludes my presentation and really, it's a discussion tonight. We would love to hear
13 from PTC any input regarding pros and cons of those approaches or maybe on specific items
14 you think yeah, that one's OK. This is one uh, not as comfortable with, and we're also interested
15 if you have questions if you have other additional approaches, or thoughts about how we could
16 continue to streamline our review and proliferations of these technologies. And of course, this
17 an opportunity for further public comment regarding this topic and as you know, it's a very
18 popular topic amongst members of the public. So, this is our contact information, my and
19 Jodie's and Sam's as well and we are very happy to turn it back to the Commission.

20
21 Chair Hechtman: There we go. Thank you, Ms. Tanner, for the report. Commissioners, do you
22 have questions of Staff before we go to public comment? Alright, so we'll now open the floor
23 for... oh, sorry. Commissioner Lauing, there you go.

24
25 Commissioner Lauing: Thanks, just two quick ones. One is are in the first graph that you
26 showed, is that for all of the things in total that are being changed? That potentially could be
27 changed?

28
29 Ms. Tanner: I believe that it is all of the types. I would need to double-check that but that's
30 what I understand it's from.

31
32 Commissioner Lauing: Yeah, at some point it would be good to see the difference with EVs
33 versus solar panels and see how that ties up because some are probably going to take longer.

34
35 Ms. Tanner: Yeah.

36
37 Commissioner Lauing: And then second, are all these changes that would be made code
38 changes or some of them just policy changes or process changes?

39

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1 Ms. Tanner: That's a good question. It's a mix of both. I think on the reduced review kind of
2 end, where it might be better communications, checklists, etc. That would be more internal,
3 like can we improve our process, and how we're communicating with the applicants for
4 example. So, that they just have better applications and we have better internal review
5 processes. For the other items, like the one through six, those would be accompanied by code
6 changes. So, the height of the solar panels, allowing a certain height above the roof, the noise-
7 producing equipment in the setback, or certain mechanical equipment in the setback. The solar
8 shingles, it might be not so much a policy. It's just that for historic it tends to go property by
9 property and so maybe if we knew a general rule. Then it wouldn't have to be evaluated per
10 each property each time a historic property comes before us. So, it's a policy change in that
11 regard. Tree removal and tree canopy, you know I think there would be some adjustments that
12 could be made. I don't know Jodie if you or Sam want to speak to the tree removal or tree
13 trimming let's say kind of question. I don't want to say it depends but you know I think it's a
14 little bit more complicated when it comes to the tree item.

15
16 Mr. Sam Gutierrez, Planner: I could add a little to that. So, in terms of trees, it's a number of
17 factors. So, you could have canopy trimming which can vary if the tree is located on the project
18 site, or if it's adjacent. So, we get into kind of state law and other things where you can trim a
19 tree, but it's limited to you can't kill or damage your neighbor's tree. Unless they say sure, pay
20 to remove it, I don't care, and then there's another layer to that. If we have a tree that's
21 protected by City Ordinance which it could be complicated further if it's on the neighbor's
22 property and they say, sure remove the oak. And then together in concert, they have to submit
23 an application to the City and go through the property processes there. But if it's only on the
24 subject property and not a protected tree, it's a little easier. They could trim it, they could cut it,
25 but if it is a protected tree then we need to consider the tree canopy still and then the root
26 zone because there might be trenching needed. So, that could get into the root zone and the
27 Tree Protection Zone and that's where arborist reports come in. So, there's definitely things
28 that we need our Public Works, Urban Forestry division to look at because they're the ones who
29 have that level of expertise. The planners have some high-level understanding because we do
30 review projects often with trees and we look at the reports. But we just don't have that
31 technical ability like our urban foresters do.

32
33 Ms. Tanner: And I think maybe to further try to elaborate that point, part of it is I think that
34 between planning and also Urban Forestry. When we get these applications taken in, there may
35 not be a tree shown on the plan, and sometimes our planners are using the tools we have,
36 including Google Maps. Looking at the property and saying well, there's a tree that I see that
37 seems pretty close to what is not shown here. And so that's kind of a check that's performed
38 that might trigger well it actually should go to Urban Forestry. It should go these other routes
39 and so I think it's an area... I think you heard one public comment in that was emailed in where
40 that person said the trade-off between trees and solar. I chose solar and I don't know how

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1 everyone feels about that. Everyone in the City may not have that same mind set and so if we
2 as planning and Urban Forestry are going to continue to be guardians of the trees. We just
3 might need to take in these applications and look at them and verify and it may not be
4 something that can just go without planning review. Sometimes that review is just a quick
5 review, right? It doesn't mean it needs to take days, but again, it's... it may not be able to be
6 eliminated in some cases if want to keep that type of let's say double-check on going.

7
8 Commissioner Lauing: OK, so just a quick follow-up to my second question based on what you
9 said. So, when this next comes back to PTC, it will include both the policy or procedural changes
10 that you make as well as potential ordinance changes, right? So, the public gets to weigh in on
11 all of it.

12
13 Ms. Tanner: Yeah.

14
15 Commissioner Lauing: OK, thank you.

16
17 Chair Hechtman: Commissioner Lauing, your microphone is a little funky tonight. I don't know if
18 it's something you can move, but you're a little bit warbly in your online voice and I know that
19 you're not warbly in your real voice. Commissioner Chang.

20
21 Commissioner Lauing: I had a paper here and some stuff. So, that's probably what was doing it.
22 Thanks for telling me.

23
24 Commissioner Chang: So, my first question was about the very first slide you showed where we
25 have this 80 percent by 2030 goal. Do we... does the City kind of behind the scenes have a
26 target amount of tons of carbon that it wants us to reduce through buildings? Is there a...
27 because you had mentioned that there are many different ways? And I didn't know if in getting
28 to our goal Is there a particular penciled-in kind of assignment that we've given to ourselves?

29
30 Ms. Tanner: A great question. I can look that up while we're on the line. I don't have... am I still
31 muted? No? OK. There was a little thing, you're muted. I'm like what's happening. So, I can try
32 to look that up. I do know just kind of off the top of my head that transportation emissions and
33 building emissions tend to be the second... the first and second most remaining sources of
34 emissions. But I would need to look what is the percentage that's attributed to buildings and
35 what's the reduction target. We probably have it. Jodie's helping me out here. Sending me it so
36 let me through it and see if I can get that to you maybe by the time we've finished public
37 comment.

38
39 Commissioner Chang: Thanks, and then I had another question about for the Solar App system
40 which seems like it would be fantastic. I think your presentation said that it could potentially

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1 reduce was it... it said something about 90 percent reduction and I wanted to understand more
2 about that. Whether that was 90 percent of the time or would be applicable to 90 percent of
3 the applications that we receive in the table that you showed of the 140 odd applications that
4 we've now received this year. So, how applicable is it to the applications that we receive?
5

6 Ms. Tanner: That's a great question. I will say that is from Solar App and Solar App is actually a
7 nationwide initiative that's supported by our Department of Energy. So, it really is trying to
8 work in each state to understand the Building Codes of that state and to make an application
9 that can work in that state. And so, what I think it's trying to represent is that at 90 percent of
10 solar installations for homes, and this is... it's primarily for homes. So, it's not for I have a big
11 commercial buildings. I'm this, that, the other. It's really focused on single-family homes or that
12 style of building and 90 percent of the time that an installation that a homeowner would do
13 could be approved through Solar App, or at least that's what they're asserting.
14

15 As far as our percentage, I think some of the things that we're working through internally are
16 very closely with our Utilities Department. Because one of the things that I think is just not that
17 common in California and in other parts of the country as well is the public utility. And so, for a
18 lot of the time what would happen is a homeowner goes to the Building Department, goes
19 through Solar App, gets their application, and then they work with the utility on the outside of
20 that system to get the utility's approval for what's needed. We in Palo Alto have a public utility
21 which means that it can seem like our process is longer but it's including that process with the
22 utility as well and so just working to make sure that we can have that work seamlessly. That's
23 more on the utility side but that would be where we would get the greatest gain I think is in
24 that scenario and then when they add battery storage to the application. That will also be a big
25 advancement. We are seeing a trend now where we're seeing solar in concert with batteries
26 and so that might further diminish that percentage right now until that part of the app is up and
27 running.
28

29 Commissioner Chang: So then about those 140 odd applications we're getting. Is the vast
30 majority of them solar or and just a tiny bit of them... so is the vast majority of them solar or
31 solar plus battery and then just a little bit of it is the heat pump water heater? Or what's the
32 distribution there? I mean I'm not asking for a number. I'm just trying to get a sense of
33 (interrupted)
34

35 Ms. Tanner: I do know that most of the solar applications that we're receiving do include
36 battery storage. That's just... it's a growing trend. I don't want to... I would hesitate to say what
37 percentage but there's definitely like that's where that industry and popularity seems to be
38 heading.
39

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1 Heat pumps, EV charges I think and heat pumps are becoming... they're all becoming much
2 more popular and so we have some numbers from... that are... we're looking at projecting
3 where are we now. I do have those numbers. Let me pull them up but you know, thinking about
4 orders of magnitude. For example, I know in one of the categories, I can't remember which one
5 now, I will get the table in front of me. But it's like maybe we have 100 applications this year
6 but if we're going to be on target for these goals. We need to be getting to like 500 applications
7 a year in the next few years. We need to massively increase the number of folks who are
8 adopting these technologies at their homes. So, let me look up that table as well while we're
9 talking.

10

11 Commissioner Chang: Yeah, well thanks for that context because that's kind of what I was
12 trying to understand. Like in terms of opining on what right path is to take, I wanted to
13 understand the magnitude of the issues that we're facing here.

14

15 And then one last question, for now, is about the Tree Ordinance. So, I know that there's a new
16 Tree Ordinance or the City's looking at updating the Tree Ordinance and it's slated to go back to
17 City Council again in April or by April I think. And so, was wondering if anybody here knows how
18 much of the update has taken into account the City's goals with respect to solar?

19

20 Ms. Tanner: I think that would certainly be something that we would want to work on over...
21 between now and April when it comes back. And I think one of the good things to know... so, I
22 would say, I don't... the history of that particular update is a couple... it comes from a couple of
23 years ago. So, it was an initiative that was started I want to say in 2018 or thereabouts, maybe
24 even 2017. It's kind of got paused for a bit and revived this year and so it's kind of being dusted
25 off and looked at again. And then I think in this context where we're moving much more
26 aggressively towards these green technologies. I think we want to make sure those live in
27 concert. I think one of the good advantages is that our Public Works Department is also leading
28 our S/CAP initiative and also houses Urban Forestry. So, they have that I think both parts of
29 that. You know, on one hand, they're trying to do this, on one hand... so I think they're really
30 well-posed along with planning and other partner agencies. Who really think about how to both
31 achieve both policy objectives of preservation of tree and also adoption of clean technology.
32 And so, this definitely needs to be folded into how do we strike that balance.

33

34 Commissioner Chang: OK, thank you.

35

36 Ms. Tanner: And I did get an answer, the table that I shared is all of the technologies. So, it's all
37 of those four technologies together.

38

39 Chair Hechtman: Other Commissioner questions before public comment? I'll ask a couple so
40 just to restate what I think you just said. The table we saw, that March to August of this year,

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1 142 applications came in. Those are all electrification project applications and one or more of
2 the electrification-type utility improvements that we're talking about tonight.

3
4 Ms. Tanner: Yes.

5
6 Chair Hechtman: And then the 38-days average to Building Permit, that was the time it took not
7 just for planning review but for every involved department, which will be different from
8 application to application, but it was all departments. Correct?

9
10 Ms. Tanner: All departments and including any let's say feedback, further information, revisions
11 from the applicant.

12
13 Chair Hechtman: Then in our task, tonight are we in a position to be recommending steps to
14 take to reduce that 38-day average overall; or are we only talking tonight about taking steps to
15 reduce the Planning Department's involvement as one of the possible four involved
16 departments that you showed on that wheel?

17
18 Ms. Tanner: I think it could be both. So, I think in regard to code changes, I think those would be
19 the code changes we'd bring back to this Commission. If there are other ideas though that
20 might branch into other areas. We'd certainly want to gather those and think about them
21 because we do work in concert with these departments and so. And especially through our PDS
22 Department where we have planning and development services together. We can suggest
23 changes as well and also work if it has to go through Public Works or a code in another... that's
24 in another purview of another department. We can certainly work with them on that change as
25 well. Our greatest control is over our planning and building part of it though.

26
27 Chair Hechtman: Right, right, so I'm... again, I'm trying to understand if we can, for example,
28 make the planning part of the process... Planning Department part of the process ministerial.
29 Are we only going to save 11 of the 38-days because the other 27-days are in some other
30 department that we're not going to be changing?

31
32 Ms. Tanner: So, part of the days will be reduced through Solar App and I would say... and maybe
33 this is where Jodie can help a little bit. When we're talking about these applications, typically
34 they are Building Permit applications. So, they're not discretionary planning applications like
35 you might have for a new multi-family building. So, we're already ministerial with these and so
36 there's not a procedural challenge to them being more quick. Other than if a code requirement
37 requires extra review, constantly tripping people up, things like that.

38
39 Ms. Jodie Gerhardt, Planning Manager: So, thank you, Rachael. I would agree that these are
40 ministerial Building Permits already. So, they are fairly streamlined in that way and all the

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1 different departments are reviewing them concurrently. And so, it's not, you know, if you take
2 away one department, it doesn't completely shrink down. It may lessen the time but not in the
3 way that you might be thinking initially.

4
5 Chair Hechtman: That's helpful, so that means if we can't make the recommendations that
6 really affects all the departments that are being involved, we're not going to be shortening the
7 ultimate time. We may be reducing who's involved in taking that time, but it's still going to take
8 the same amount of time.

9
10 Ms. Gerhardt: I mean the less departments you have, the less coordination there has to be. So,
11 there certainly is some savings in that.

12
13 Ms. Tanner: I think an example that I think is kind of interesting is, it might seem minute, but if
14 you multiple it's times 100. It becomes bigger, so with the EV chargers for example. Someone
15 wants to put an EV charger in their garage and our project coordinators who are our first point
16 of contact for folks who are doing these Building Permit applications may look at it and say.
17 Hey, they're putting something in their garage. They need to have enough space in their garage
18 to park a car because they're required to have covered parking. Hey Sam, can you go into the
19 system and look at this application. Sam goes in, looks at the application, has to maybe say the
20 same answer he said before but again that time of review. Taking a look, getting back, does it
21 need planning, does it not need planning? And so, in that case, is kind of why we said well
22 maybe if we just said for these technologies' encroachment into the parking space in the garage
23 is fine and our coordinators know that. They know I don't need to ask Sam anymore what to do.
24 It's a charger in a garage. It's fine and just go ahead and go with it. So, again it might seem
25 minute but over the scale that we're talking about can be a time saver for us.

26
27 Mr. Gutierrez: And I should add that PTC might recall that we did allow code changes for minor
28 encroachment for commercial properties for parking lots for these chargers. Approximately a
29 year ago now I think when we went to PTC with that. But the single-family home situation is a
30 little different with the requirement for a 10 by 20 covered parking spot with clearances, which
31 is different than the commercial parking garages. But we could perhaps, as Rachael suggested,
32 follow that train of thought and allow minor encroachments to solve the issue.

33
34 Chair Hechtman: Alright, one more question, one of the things we're going to talk about is
35 really the relationship between I think it's primarily solar panels but it could be other
36 electrification equipment and trees. And I'm interested to know if that discussion is primarily
37 theoretical or if it's really practical? And so, what I'm curious about is we've been permitting
38 solar panels for a while now. Have there been some instances where this conflict... potential
39 conflict came to the front where someone said I want solar, I want to remove these three
40 trees? And if so, tell me about... help us understand a little bit about that process and is that a

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1 6-months ordeal or? Anyway, but I'm looking for actual experiences that we've had to see if
2 that can illuminate our discussion.

3

4 Ms. Tanner: Great, thank you for the question. Ms. Gerhardt or Sam, did you want to answer
5 that? I (interrupted)

6

7 Ms. Gerhardt: So, if you wanted an example, I have a commercial example if that's relevant.

8

9 Ms. Tanner: Yeah, I think that would be great.

10

11 Ms. Gerhardt: Did I... I think I froze a little bit.

12

13 Ms. Tanner: I think you froze but we can hear you.

14

15 Ms. Gerhardt: OK, you can hear me. So, we do have at a downtown church they did want to put
16 in solar carports into their parking lot and that was along the perimeter of the property. There
17 happened to be several large trees along the perimeter of the property and so there was a lot
18 of discussions about could those trees be removed. Ultimately, we said no, they were nice
19 healthy trees. They also were part of the... all the parking lots have a shading requirement. That
20 you have to have 50 percent shading on your parking lot to reduce the heat island effect and
21 we only use trees to meet that standard. So, we needed to save the trees for that reason as
22 well and there was a lot of negotiations that had to happen to ultimately fit those car ports
23 onto the property.

24

25 Ms. Tanner: And I can think of another commercial property where I don't know actually what
26 ended up happening with the project because I think COVID slowed it down quite a bit. But
27 similarly, they wanted to do a lot of solar panels on their parking lot, which is a big parking lot,
28 and it was kind of like but how is that going to conflict with the trees? Or do you need to do it
29 everywhere and things like that. So, it may be, I should say more common, but the shading
30 requirement for the parking lots is applying to commercial and larger scope parking lots. So,
31 that's going to be relevant there, whereas the home I'm not sure if we have that conflict as
32 much but Urban Forestry would know probably better. And I'm sure they do get lots of requests
33 for people who want to remove trees for a variety of reasons and that's something that they
34 certainly are skilled at dealing with.

35

36 Mr. Gutierrez: And I could touch a little bit on the residential being a reviewer of projects like
37 this for what, 6-years now? So, I think as solar catches on more and as the Building Code
38 changes where it triggers more solar installed versus a plan to solar. We'll start to see maybe
39 more retrofitting and I believe that's where we'll notice more of these conflicts where when
40 you have a new house. That house and the site is more open to being planned because they're

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1 starting new. So, then the roofs and the angles of the roof and so forth are typically planned
2 with the solar. I rarely see a new house, for example, that has detached solar panels that aren't
3 on the roof somewhere. So, they kind of go hand in hand but the retrofitting, where you have
4 an existing house. That's where this might present some conflicts with trees because you have a
5 site that never had solar and you have had trees, protected or not, and then now you want to
6 put solar. But you've always had these large trees on your site and the tree removal would
7 remove canopy from the overall City's canopy. So, that... those would be instances but again,
8 that doesn't happen as much as the new homes which are a little more flexible in terms of
9 planning.

10
11 Chair Hechtman: Alright, thank you all of Staff. Helpful additional information. Alright, unless
12 there are any other questions of Staff, let's move on to public comment. Let's open the floor of
13 that. Please raise your hand if you wish to speak. On the Zoom App, there is a raise hand button
14 on the bottom of your screen. If you're dialing in from a phone, please press *9. Mr. Nguyen, is
15 our sole attendee tonight wishing to speak? Mr. Nguyen, you are muted. [note – video, and
16 audio cut out] muted.

17
18 Ms. Tanner: I think Zoom is giving him some trouble for his last meeting. Vinh, if you want, if
19 you can hear me if you want to promote me. I can... or if you can hear us, I think you could just
20 let Mr. Coale speak, and then we could... if we can hear him we could start the timer. Let's see.

21
22 Chair Hechtman: Well hold on, we are trying to get the technologies to work so that you can
23 speak.

24
25 Ms. Tanner: Vinh is sending me a message. His computer has frozen.

26
27 Chair Hechtman: So, on his way upstairs, Mr. Nguyen is showing us how important his role is in
28 these meetings.

29
30 Ms. Tanner: Exactly. Alright, I think what he's going to do, he's going to try to use his phone to
31 make me the... what am I saying, the host.

32
33 Chair Hechtman: And then you can maybe promote Mr. Coale to a panelist.

34
35 Ms. Tanner: Maybe he's back. Are you there Vinh?

36
37 Mr. Vinh Nguyen, Admin Associate III: Hello, I'm back. Sorry about that.

38
39 Ms. Tanner: OK, great. No worries.

40

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1 Mr. Nguyen: OK, Rachael you're the co-host.
2
3 Ms. Tanner: Oh ok, so can I (interrupted)
4
5 Mr. Nguyen: In the meantime, I'm going to restart my computer.
6
7 Ms. Tanner: OK, so I'm going to make a... get a timer really quickly Commissioners and then I
8 will unmute Mr. Coale and he will be able to speak. Interesting timer when you Google time.
9 OK, well, I got one now and (interrupted)
10
11 Chair Hechtman: Ms. Tanner, I'm not so concerned with the timer.
12
13 Ms. Tanner: OK.
14
15 Chair Hechtman: I can watch the clock. There's only one speaker and (interrupted)
16
17 Ms. Tanner: Alright.
18
19 Chair Hechtman: I mean we don't have anything else on our agenda tonight so.
20
21 Ms. Tanner: It's true, we don't.
22
23 Chair Hechtman: So, I'm just going to encourage Mr. Coale to keep his remarks to about 3-
24 minutes.
25
26 Ms. Tanner: Alright, I think... Mr. Coale, are you unmuted?
27
28 Mr. David Coale: Yes, I think I am. Can you hear me?
29
30 Ms. Tanner: Oh, yes, we can, great.
31
32 Mr. Coale: Yes, thank you very much for this opportunity to address the Commission. I've been
33 installing solar in Palo Alto for over 20-years now and have been trying to improve the process
34 of permitting in Palo Alto for most of that time as well. If you read my comments, I have a big
35 plug-in for SolarAPP+. This application, as you said developed by NREL, would eliminate plan
36 review entirely on the code side and it's free to jurisdictions. There's \$25 million in state
37 funding to help jurisdictions incorporate this. It will cover storage soon. It will also be covering
38 all aspects of electrification, so your heat pumps, water heaters, and heat pump furnaces and
39 those things will be covered. The main thing here is standardization and the reduction... and no

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1 plan review. By the time you go through Solar App, your plans are correct to NEC Code. So, it
2 eliminates the electrical code review. I think this would be great for Palo Alto.

3
4 The downfall here is that I think the Planning and Transportation... the Development Services is
5 trying to make sure that this app will include the Palo Alto only requirements. A lot of these
6 Palo Alto only requirements are what trips up most of the solar installers because everywhere
7 else the requirements are basically the same. Except Palo Alto where we have torque tests on
8 roof and solar panels and electrical panels and we have two ground rods required. The beauty
9 of Solar App is to just go standard. It will bring Palo Alto back in line with our neighbors and our
10 neighboring jurisdictions. And so far, on these extra Palo Alto only requirements, I have not
11 seen any information that's making our installation safer or faster or better. They're just extra
12 dotting the I and extra crossing the T for no real benefit. So, Solar App would be really good
13 thing.

14
15 In terms of the time listed in your tables, right now solar with storage is taking nearly 4-months.
16 So, you have to be careful when somebody hands you table with averages because an EV
17 Permit takes a couple of days and so that average is really a misnomer.

18
19 The other thing, when we looked to the future, it's going to be about 2,300 heat pump water
20 heater permits per year. So, we cannot afford to scrutinize every last one of these and in fact,
21 currently, 95 percent of all replacement water heaters are not permitted at all. So, we really
22 have to make some drastic changes if we're going to support the electrification that's required
23 to meet our 80 by 20 or 80 by 30 goal.

24
25 So, Solar App can do this. It will do electrification later on (interrupted)

26
27 Ms. Tanner: That's [unintelligible] 3-minutes.

28
29 Mr. Coale: OK, the real thing is to make sure to go standard with it and not change it around.
30 Reduce any requirements that Palo Alto might have that are extra and go with the standard.
31 That's where you're going to realize a lot of your savings. Not just current things but as we go
32 forward with electrification. Thank you so much for the extra time.

33
34 Chair Hechtman: Thank you. Mr. Nguyen, it doesn't look like we have any other public speakers
35 since we don't have any other public attendees. So, I am going to conclude the public comment
36 portion and bring it back to the Commission for discussion. This is a study session so we're not
37 required to conclude with any sort of motion. But rather I think Staff is looking for direction
38 more generally from a consensus of the Commission. So, what I'd like to do is give everyone an
39 opportunity to start to share their thoughts. I would suggest that each Commissioner take up to
40 5-minutes and recognize that if you can't get it all out in the first 5-minutes, you'll have an

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1 opportunity to say more after we've been once through the Commission. So, who would like to
2 lead off? Thank you, Vice-Chair Roohparvar. You're muted.

3
4 Vice-Chair Roohparvar: Sorry, I actually had a follow-up question. Have... has City Staff heard of
5 Aurora being used for solar and I was just wondering if you're aware of that? Because that's
6 another technology that I've heard is really prevalent in the solar space and that is used I think
7 to determine the degree of shading over a property. So, you can tell very quickly whether it
8 makes sense or not to put solar panels on because you wouldn't want to put solar panels in if
9 there's shade and you're not getting any sun. So, I was just curious if you guys had thoughts on
10 that.

11
12 Ms. Tanner: I had not heard of that. I don't know if Ms. Gerhardt or Mr. Gutierrez have heard of
13 that. It might be something that our Utilities Department might be familiar with. I know we do
14 help folks to assess their properties for different types of energy, but I'm not sure if that's the...
15 is it a company or like an application or is it?

16
17 Vice-Chair Roohparvar: It's a company and they have an app and I heard about it from... I was at
18 this conference with a bunch of solar experts and they were raving about it. And I've looked at
19 it too as well like on the side. I think it's very easy to use. Maybe it will be something that we
20 can put a link to on our website or I don't know what, that can make it easy for constituents to
21 figure out if solar makes sense for them or not.

22
23 Ms. Tanner: Yeah, it seems like an easy way... maybe not easy but a way maybe if people are
24 thinking about it right? They want to do it but like a first step of oh yeah, it would make sense
25 at my home to pursue this.

26
27 Vice-Chair Roohparvar: Yeah, I heard it's easy to use too. So, I just wanted to flag it as
28 something, you know, maybe if Staff wants to look into further.

29
30 Mr. Gutierrez: The Aurora App analyzing your roof using Google Maps aerial photos and then it
31 could help determine based on I think longitude and latitude the position of the roof forms
32 relative to the sun. And then it's kind of tells you where you would best-put panels. I'm sure it
33 has some margin of error obviously but it's better than maybe you and a notebook piece of
34 paper trying to figure it out on your own because where do you start. But it's a software to
35 assist in designing the system for solar gain is my understanding.

36
37 Vice-Chair Roohparvar: Is it free? Is that something that's free that we can just [unintelligible]
38 (interrupted)

39
40 Mr. Gutierrez: I don't know about that. We could look into it.

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1
2 Vice-Chair Roohparvar: It would be cool if it was something free that we could offer. So, people
3 don't have to necessarily hire somebody to come out and pay for them to tell them whether
4 solar makes sense or not.

5
6 Ms. Tanner: Yeah, for sure.

7
8 Ms. Gerhardt: So, it would be good if we had this extra tool but I think also too, in talking with
9 solar companies. I've got solar on my house. The companies themselves will do this kind of
10 analysis and help homeowners understand what fits or not, but this would be good for the do-
11 it-yourself kind of person.

12
13 Chair Hechtman: Ms. Tanner, to help us focus our discussion, can you pull up what I think is the
14 last slide that had a... identified the review issues and the five or six policy changes. Great.

15
16 Alright, and while I'm waiting for Commissioners to step up and start the dialog, let me ask
17 another question. We heard from our public speaker about other jurisdictions that have
18 adopted this SolarAPP+ and I'm curious whether Staff has been able to investigate any of those
19 other jurisdictions? Are they neighboring jurisdictions and how, if at all, did they contend with
20 the kinds of issues that we are going to talk about tonight, where maybe the installation of solar
21 might conflict with their Tree Ordinance?

22
23 Ms. Tanner: Certainly. I think for SolarApp+, we have talked with some other California
24 jurisdictions that have adopted it. It's still I think... I think there are quite a few cities in Arizona.
25 I don't know if that's where it launched first or what but there's quite a lot of adoption in
26 Arizona. Some in California, we have spoken with them, and so pretty good reviews I would say
27 generally across the board. And sometimes we can be skeptical when folks are promising it's
28 going to do this or that and you kind of say OK, is it really going to, but so far very positive
29 reviews. I think with the tree issue it's not so much an issue I think when it comes to the app in
30 that it's an installer could certainly go and say hey, here's the kind of... here's the solar system
31 that I'm putting on this roof. Here are the metrics and the different parameters of it and it can
32 go onto SolarApp and be fine. Because rarely does a rooftop solar need trenching or anything
33 that would actually endanger a tree. It'd be more than the homeowner might say well, in order
34 to maximize my solar array. I need to apply for a Tree Removal Permit and go through that
35 process. And so, it's not that it would be the same permit necessarily but it could be an
36 outcome or even [unintelligible] if they do it before of that solar installation. Hopefully, that
37 makes some sense there.

38
39 Chair Hechtman: If I'm understanding that correctly then we don't... we wouldn't need to try to
40 fold into the SolarApp application our tree issues. It's just a separate process that the applicant

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1 has to know based on our instructions maybe that if you're not touching a tree, here's your app
2 and process to get a permit. But if you are touching a tree, then in addition to doing that you
3 have to do this. Is that (interrupted)

4
5 Ms. Tanner: Right, even right now today without the application, when there's not trenching or
6 thing. When it's just roof tops solar purely, I think we're fine. Maybe, Ms. Gerhardt, she's going
7 to say something but I think it's more kind of thinking globally about the role of trees and solar
8 and the interconnection. Not necessarily that there's a specific conflict in the solar itself. The
9 application if that makes sense. So, Jodie, did you want to speak to that?

10
11 Ms. Gerhardt: I just wanted to explain that the single-family process and the multi-family
12 commercial process would be very different. For a single-family house, the tree removal is not
13 associated with a new house or things like that. Tree removal would go directly through our
14 Urban Forestry team and the solar may be processed by building fairly quickly. So, those would
15 be two separate processes. For multi-family, it would be more of a coordinated process through
16 a planning application.

17
18 Chair Hechtman: Thank you.

19
20 Ms. Tanner: And just to complicate things further, I think where the conflict can be... so there's
21 the conflict of... potential conflict of my solar panel may be enhanced if I trim or remove this
22 tree but when there's the other technologies that may require trenching. That's where we
23 might need to look at is this infringing on the Tree Protection Zone. Is there an impact to the
24 tree from the trenching that's related with the other technologies primarily? Not so much the
25 solar panels themselves.

26
27 Chair Hechtman: Thank you for that. Commissioner Chang followed by Commissioner
28 Templeton.

29
30 Commissioner Chang: So, I had a follow on question. I guess I'm finding it hard to opine on what
31 the best thing is to do or because I would say look into all of them or whichever ones affect the
32 most applications or chew up the most of your time right now. But one question I have to
33 follow on with what Commissioner Hechtman [note – Chair Hechtman] was asking and also as a
34 result of the public comment that... the public commenter who just spoke. Do you have... are
35 you able to offer more information about the Palo Alto only requirements that he eluded to
36 and whether any of these proposed streamline or any of the streamlining proposals would help
37 with any of those so-called Palo Alto only requirements?

38
39 Ms. Tanner: Yeah, that's a great question. The specific requirements that Mr. Coale mentioned
40 are not Palo Alto only requirements. They are in the California Building Code and so there's not

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1 really a change that we could make as a municipality to the California Building Code. What we
2 do find is that we, in Palo Alto, do tend to perform perhaps more rigorous inspections of solar
3 installations than other cities. And so, we've been improving our inspection process to really
4 just do a few... test a few things at each solar installation. But anecdotally, we have heard about
5 just other cities kind of drive-by and just kind of sign off on the inspection. And we do get up on
6 the roof and actually take a look at the installation. So, that can seem a little bit different than
7 others but those specific requirements are not Palo Alto only. They may be more rigorously
8 inspected or just routinely inspected at all here in Palo Alto. Some of the ones that we have
9 been working through a little bit more tightly are things that are our Utilities Department does
10 require. In particular, and I'm going to not be able to answer very many questions and this is
11 definitely not my area of expertise, but there are some... I can't even think of the word of what
12 it is. But basically, there are some safety measures that our Utility Department requires when
13 installing solar that are a little bit more than what PG&E requires and PG&E provides a service
14 for pretty much everywhere around us. And so, there are some different requirements there
15 and we've been working to see other alternatives that can provide workforce safety but may be
16 not as challenging for the contractors.

17

18 Commissioner Chang: OK, thank you.

19

20 Chair Hechtman: Commissioner Templeton.

21

22 Commissioner Templeton: Thank you. First of all, thank you so much for putting this together,
23 this study session, and it's incredibly important that we work together as a City to reduce our
24 impact on the environment. And this is a great way to do it so thank you for bringing this
25 forward.

26

27 For point number one, any reason not to do this? This one looks like a slam dunk.

28

29 Ms. Tanner: I don't think so and we were talking, Ms. Gerhardt and I, and kind of is this really a
30 problem we're seeing? And we said it's not really a problem right now but it could be with the
31 proliferation of solar. If more and more people see it, some people don't think it looks
32 attractive, and so if we could just set some parameters. And also, that way people... we have all
33 sets of folks who've proposed some pretty interesting installations as well that would probably
34 be beyond the extents of what we would want to see. And so, I think this could give some good
35 boundaries that folks know what to expect. Oh, the neighbors putting up solar, it might have a
36 tilt or an angle that's a little bit different than the slope of their roof and it's something that we
37 need to get ready for.

38

39 Commissioner Templeton: I'm sorry, I meant the reduced review part.

40

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1 Ms. Tanner: Oh, sorry, number one.

2

3 Commissioner Templeton: Yeah.

4

5 Ms. Tanner: Yeah, number one and two, yeah, no reason to not do that.

6

7 Commissioner Templeton: Ok, so let's just (interrupted)

8

9 Ms. Tanner: Sorry.

10

11 Commissioner Templeton: No problem, you got into it. You're ahead of me. So, for the second
12 large bullet point there, policy changes and eliminated code requirements, it's good that we did
13 a study session. I would love to have heard from a few more people that live in Palo Alto. Some
14 of these things are very near and dear to folks' hearts around here and our tree canopy is
15 incredibly important. The trade-offs as you described are a personal preference and it's going to
16 be important for us to gauge that before we change the rules there.

17

18 I will say regarding the noise equipment setback. We investigated... at my home we
19 investigated getting a heat pump and were a couple of inches shy of being able to do that so we
20 didn't pursue that. So, I think your instinct here is that if we had a little bit more flexibility that
21 we would see some of these improvements implemented. So, that's an anecdote but just to let
22 you know, I have a feeling that we're not the only ones that have hit that obstacle, and from
23 our conversations with the contractor that is the case. Palo Alto does have some well-known
24 obstacles towards implementing some of these energy efficiency measures. So, it's really good
25 that we're talking about changing that and I think that one, in particular, is something we need
26 to look very seriously at.

27

28 The height of the solar panels, I'm concerned about that one because it does get into the
29 daylight plan a little. So, we would have to really study what those changes would be if we did
30 go that direction. Do you know... you mentioned a few minutes ago but I was stuck on point
31 number one and I'm not sure if you addressed this. Do we think this is a primary obstacle or a
32 secondary obstacle towards implementing solar panels [unintelligible] the height?

33

34 Ms. Tanner: Ms. Gerhardt, do you want to speak to the height of the solar panels, kind of the
35 slope and I'll maybe advance this picture just to... if it helps at all?

36

37 Ms. Gerhardt: Yeah, I think the picture is very helpful but Sam might have some more relevant
38 information about what's happening lately. I think most of the time though; solar panels are
39 proposed fairly close to the roof. Now what the definition of close is, I think we could talk that

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1 through some more, and I think even with the SolarApp. I think they were saying 10-inches,
2 correct Rachael?
3
4 Ms. Tanner: Yeah.
5
6 Ms. Gerhardt: So, maybe that becomes our definition of what close to the roof means. And
7 (interrupted)
8
9 Commissioner Templeton: That makes sense. Go ahead.
10
11 Ms. Gerhardt: But maybe we want to allow more than that too if we want to encourage even
12 further. So, that would be the discussion we would appreciate hearing.
13
14 Commissioner Templeton: Well again (interrupted)
15
16 Mr. Gutierrez: Yeah.
17
18 Commissioner Templeton: With an anecdote... oh, go ahead Mr. Gutierrez.
19
20 Mr. Gutierrez: Oh sure, sure. I was going to add that for example in this particular case, my
21 understanding with solar, again dealing with it for several years and just reviewing these
22 applications. It depends on the system that you're going for and the efficiency. If you want to
23 run 100 percent whatever the calculated energy that you'd consume. Let's say your AC unit is
24 on high and all of your... your electric oven is running and everything. You just go I want to put a
25 system that fully covers me and then some. Or I want to generate revenue from my solar
26 system, whatever it may be, you have different kilowatt systems and then that means larger
27 panels or more. and then that needs to be put on the roof, that's the primary location, in a
28 particular manner to capture the sun. So, this house in this example it's angled where the sun is
29 passing by its kind of in a perpendicular way. So, in order for those panels, where they placed
30 them, to gain that efficiency. They need to tilt it up so it wouldn't be tilted away from the sun as
31 much. It would still get exposure but it would reduce the efficiency pretty significantly. You
32 know, just using my hand, the solar panel would be like this, the sun is here. It's still going to
33 get light but not as much. So, they do this, now you get the direct light. So, it really depends on
34 the system that they're placing on the house. I mean this example here is an Eichler and they're
35 not the most efficient houses in terms of energy. So, it is a counterbalance there. If we limit the
36 tilt, then they're going to limit the system, and then that might go against our GHG goals
37 ultimately as well. So, we have to understand holistically what's going on. This is a single pane
38 glasshouse and probably has the large, nice open back as some of these Eichler-style houses do.
39 But they do result in poor energy numbers, so there's a balancing act here that we could
40 consider.

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Commissioner Templeton: Definitely.

Ms. Tanner: I would say, I don't know that we get a lot of complaints about solar panels. But we just (interrupted)

Mr. Gutierrez: We don't.

Ms. Tanner: We kind of prepare for the future I think.

Commissioner Templeton: Yeah, I would say as far as the other energy efficiency issues that we may have with our structures. That's a whole other discussion and maybe we can find ways to incentives those; or encourage those kinds of changes to for example the window efficiencies and things like that. But just sticking to this discussion, for now, another anecdote I would share from our neighborhood is that we've got a lot of avid gardeners. And that daylight plan is really important to them in making sure that the sun is going where it should and so I think that's part of the daylight plan discussion. It doesn't look like in this example the daylight plan is messed with too much but it would be interesting to understand what is that margin gain by allowing you to go further, closer to the edge of the property with those elevated panels. So, I think it warrants further study I guess is what I'm trying to get at. Is it's a really intriguing idea and I think it would allow people to have more efficient installations. We just want to make sure that we understand the downstream implications to adjacent properties as well before going forward with the change. But it's very promising because, like you said, it is more efficient.

OK, so can we go back to the slide with the bullets? The... I think that the solar shingles situation is changing rapidly and this might not be much of an issue. We do need to prepare for it but I think I would like to find a way to understand how we can make it work because I think we're going to see a lot of people who like this. I just... I really do, especially with the example that you gave of what some of the other solar installations look like. I think people are going to be very excited to embrace the shingles and especially for the historic structures. So, I think it's good that we're talking about that as well.

The interior garage space, I... that's... I mean that's a whole can of worms. There's a lot of folks in our community that use the garage for storage for things other than vehicles. So, it makes sense that we would be more permissive with the installation of charging. But then we kind of sort of have to redefine what a garage is and that's complicated. So, I guess... is there any reason not to do that? Like 2.6 here?

Ms. Tanner: I don't think that there's a reason to not pursue that. I mean I think in particular with the EVSC, it makes sense. I mean if somebody is installing a car charger, I think they also

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1 want to make sure their car can fit into a garage to get to the charger. So, I think that there's a
2 self-interest in making sure there's enough space to accommodate their vehicle. Hopefully,
3 their contractor is checking on that if we're not going to check on that anymore because we
4 have rough dimensions that you need to maintain and their car could be smaller than that. So, I
5 don't know if we need to be the check on that. Maybe it would be interesting to know from the
6 Commission if you're interest in like yes, EVSC chargers Ok to encroach into garage space but
7 what about other things? If a heat pump was in there if a battery were in there, would that be
8 OK, or do we really just want to focus on a vehicle charging equipment? Sure, makes sense to
9 have it encroach because you got to have it where your vehicle is parked. And in that case, that
10 family may not be having storage in the garage because they're going to charge a vehicle in it.

11
12 Commissioner Templeton: Yeah, I mean we have an electric vehicle and our car does not live in
13 our garage and we make it work but your point is valid. There's a lot of things that are utilities
14 that we want to do and sometimes those... like in our home, personal properties and
15 sometimes those things live in the garage. Our water heater's back there and our car charger
16 and all those things so it's possible. But it would be nice to have this organized and maybe
17 that's something that's going to happen with the industry and not necessarily through the City.
18 Right, like how are people going to start organizing their home utility system? But in the past,
19 most of that has been guided by the City rules. Where's your circuit breaker and what kinds of
20 things can be under the roof versus outside of the structure, those kinds of things so. In other
21 words, I guess what I'm saying is we may be a little early in the game for some of this, right?
22 We're going to make some changes, we're going to try things, but we may have to iterate on
23 this as the industry grows. And I know I've gone over my 5-minutes so I'll stop there. Thank you.

24
25 Chair Hechtman: Commissioner... excuse me... Commissioner Lauing followed by Commissioner
26 Chang.

27
28 Commissioner Lauing: Thanks. I think the overall... I mean the reason there are inspections is
29 because there are safety issues that have to protect the neighborhoods; electricity, fire, and all
30 that. And there are building requirements like... to protect the neighbors like [unintelligible] and
31 there's also collateral damage that can happen if we don't have inspections like tree damage
32 and tree canopy.

33
34 In general, which is how I'm talking right now, I think that what you need to do on all of these
35 issues relative to Page... Packet Page... Table One, Packet Page 9 and 10. Is kind of start with the
36 things that maybe are less technical and less problematic on all those categories that I
37 mentioned. For example, solar charging stations and say yes, we should be able to do that
38 pretty fast and I'm just throwing this out on the table. Maybe if 240 is already there, it doesn't
39 need any Building Permit or any inspection. It just needs... you have to sign that it was put in by

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1 a licensed electrician. So, we should get those kinds of things as simple as we can and as fast as
2 we can.

3
4 Some of these other things since we've already brought up tonight, tree canopy and tree
5 removal. I mean that's very intricately involved not only in the roots. I use the pun in the roots
6 of our City but with the other legislation that will be correcting and improving that Tree
7 Ordinance. So, by definition, that all has to be integrated. I don't think it's going to be one way
8 or the other. I think there's five different basically kinds of trees from specimen... heritage trees
9 to very, very large trees to California trees to crappy trees that shouldn't be here. So, that will
10 all be categorized and there'll be some adjustments that are going to have to be made on
11 trade-offs between canopy on a house that needs solar and not.

12
13 But to me, I feel like maybe that's as far we can go tonight, and as Commissioner Templeton
14 was saying that we need some iterations on this. If we were really going to sit down tonight and
15 look at it deeply. We would need to go through that table, like you guys have done before as
16 Staff, and give us a nice 30-page document analyzing each one of those bullet points and saying
17 this is... like the discussion that we just had. I would rather had spent 30-minutes on that with a
18 lot more science and measurements and what is happening and how it impacts with the
19 daylight so we can make some judgments.

20
21 Now I would basically say in conclusion and going back to general. I think that stuff that you can
22 find to do right away. Certainly, those two items on reduced review, improve communication,
23 and so on. You don't need to come to us for that. You'll figure that out and just do a great job of
24 it. But the thing that you can make quicker changes on, even bring in piece mill and say let's just
25 look at these chargers now. What can we do to really get that part going? Let's not hold this
26 whole thing until we have all of the things that are on there and then bring us more data about
27 that in a public hearing. So, that the public can hear and then as you look at maybe removing
28 some of these things, which is going to make a number of citizens correctly concerned. I think
29 you also need to be able to do audits, even if there's less restrictions after it's done. The City
30 gets to come back and say OK, you know how it's supposed to go in. Now we're going to go and
31 check and yes, that's a cost, but it's also a safety net that we have to have on projects. The IRS
32 does this so the City can do it. So, stop there, thank you.

33
34 Chair Hechtman: Thank you, Commissioner Lauing. Commissioner Chang.

35
36 Commissioner Chang: Thank you. So, I want to reiterate also what everybody has said so far
37 where this is just really important for us to do and anecdotally from personal experience. I'm a
38 big environmentalist person and I'm really into... really support solar and really support trees
39 and we have an electric car. And I'm actually looking at my second in solar installation right now

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1 and these things are barriers. And so, if we really need people to adopt, we really need to make
2 it as easy as possible.

3
4 So, I agree with what Commissioner Lauing, Commissioner Templeton said where I think
5 number one is a no-brainer and City Staff is going to do a great job with that. With respect to
6 the policy changes, again I do think we need more information and a better look at all of the
7 items. Thinking about the setback, the number two, that one also seems possible. I mean
8 there's issues that I'm not aware of but that one might be a bit of a no-brainer because I think
9 that those rules about allowing equipment in the setback were established at a time where the
10 equipment was much lower.

11
12 And then looking at number six, the garage spaces for encroachment, I think that may also be
13 an opportunity where there's some really low hanging fruit, and maybe we do want to be less
14 of... police that a little bit less. For chargers in particular because that occupies a much smaller
15 amount of space than say batteries. So, I think we would need to look into it a little bit more for
16 what are the dimension in the batteries right now and these things are going to get... be getting
17 smaller and smaller and better and better over time.

18
19 I think the heat pump water heater, that one, which we also have, is a bigger issue, and putting
20 that into a garage is not necessarily an exception that you want to make because there are real
21 safety considerations there. And they also occupy a lot of space and it's not something that's so
22 easy for a person to change once it's in there. So, that would be my two cents on a couple of
23 the items at least.

24
25 With respect to the tree canopy versus solar, that's a tradeoff that I myself have faced. I was
26 doing a little bit of Googling about that and I think maybe if significant changes are going to be
27 made, and this is really more for not planning since this is not where the ordinance sits. There's
28 been a lot of... there's a lot of debate out there about whether the tree is more important
29 versus the savings in carbon emissions from installing solar. And there are some data that I've
30 looked at that says that a small system can be the equivalent of 40 trees in terms of the amount
31 of carbon savings. That said, trees offer a lot more so I think there is a... an it is something that
32 so many people are passionate about but it's something that we should look at. Especially given
33 the coming update to the ordinance. Thanks.

34
35 Chair Hechtman: Commissioner Alcheck, preliminary round of comments.

36
37 Commissioner Alcheck: I think... oh, let me put my video on, sorry. I think... I don't know that I'll
38 need to go a second round. I'm just going to use the few minutes to share thoughts. I think the
39 writings on the wall. We need to develop our code to encourage electrification every way we
40 can. I think that we should... I think this process... if I was in charge of this process it would

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1 begin like this. I would instruct my Staff to find the electrification rules for every City in the Bay
2 Area. And then I would say hey guys, highlight all the things that are different between our
3 electrification rules and the... what are other cities doing that is different than us? And then
4 we'd have this big binder that showed what everyone else is doing. And then I would say which
5 cities are leaders in this process? And then after that, I would say let's reach out to local
6 providers and find out whether they work in the cities that we've described as leaders and ask
7 them what they don't like about those City's programs.

8
9 And then the last thing I would say would be I think that it would... one of the ironies of this
10 discussion because it references our tree canopy, is that the Council reviewed the tree canopy
11 rules earlier this week I think and consider making the rules a lot stricter a la Los Altos. Los Altos
12 would not be a City that I would look to as an example of anything coming close to progressive
13 changes. So, for example, I think in Los Altos their rules about tree removal are far more
14 restrictive than ours. And I think that it's interesting that we're talking about how we would
15 interact with tree canopies in relation to some environmental goals and reason I'm saying irony
16 is because the City Council probably had this discussion earlier this week. And I wonder because
17 I didn't actually watch it, whether the discussion included the concept of removal for the
18 purposes of solar installations; or whether it was a discussion about how to preserve trees in
19 the absence of other goals like solar installations. So, that's the... to me there's a little irony
20 there.

21
22 I would suggest that the picture we saw of that solar panel on top of that Eichler looks like an
23 old installation. It's a... but I think it would interesting to... one of the things in the Packet said
24 that installations that were a few inches weren't subject to the same review. My first thought
25 when I read that sentence was how many inches? What is the exact inches because obviously,
26 the picture that you used in your Packet is so... I mean that's not inches. Those are feet. So, I
27 think that if I was interested in furthering electrification then I would be... it would be really
28 liberal with the rules like as long as it's within the daylight plan. We're not going to spend a lot
29 of time worrying about how it diverges from the angle from the roof, whether it's inches or feet
30 if you're within the daylight plan. That to me would seem like a policy that highly encourages
31 electrification over aesthetics. Those are obviously decisions that have to be made. We have to
32 balance those things and I think it's really hard to have that discussion in the absence of
33 comparing where we are relative to the rest of what we see as our peers or what we see as
34 leaders in this area. So, I think it's really premature to say well what's the height of a solar panel
35 should be or even the alternative which is what I suggested like well any height is OK as long as
36 it's within the daylight plan. Those discussions are premature because if we... I think it's easier
37 for the City Council to decide where it wants to sit when it knows what cities that it considers
38 either leaders or peers are doing. I think that... so that's why I sort of suggested those steps in
39 the beginning on how to set this up. How to set this discussion up when it comes back.

40

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1 I would... I think there should... there's probably some writing, like an academic writing, on the
2 topic of what does it mean for a homeowner who can't access solar energy because of a
3 neighboring tree? I bet there's some academic writing on this topic. I think that would be
4 interesting to understand like how do... do we want every Palo Altan to have a right to solar
5 access and if that's the case. How does that [note – video and audio cut out]
6

7 Chair Hechtman: Commissioner Alcheck?

8
9 Commissioner Alcheck: I don't know [unintelligible]... sorry I don't know what just happened. I
10 think we have to ask that question sort of globally and it would be interesting to know if there's
11 some thoughts on that, that are... that we don't have to come up with ourselves.
12

13 And then I would suggest... there was a comment in the paper and the way I read it was sort of
14 asking. You said that planning does not review the installation of EVSC in these properties
15 referring to single-family and duplex. It's kind of seemed like you had highlighted that to say
16 should we and my understanding is that right now when you do new development. You do have
17 to equip a garage for example with the 50 amp circuit that an EVSC would plug into. So, when
18 you order the thing from Tesla, it's a far easier connection on the wall in your garage because
19 you've got a 50 amp... you know the equivalent of... my understanding of the current code is
20 that you have to put that... a dryer plug on the wall of your garage. Which is essentially bringing
21 your garage right up to the spot where all someone has to do is buy the right plug. And so, I
22 think if the statement on that Packet Page 9, planning does not review the installation of EVSC
23 in these properties, I just think that that's not really... I don't think we have to go there. That
24 makes it sound like we're not really pushing it and I think we are. I think we're saying you've got
25 to have this infrastructure in this new garage or new whatever you're building and why would
26 someone need an electric vehicle charger until they bought an electric vehicle. So, I don't think
27 we need to go farther there and review the installation of actual charging stations for let's say a
28 property that's going to be sold to maybe somebody who doesn't have an electric vehicle. So,
29 it's like a stretch.
30

31 Chair Hechtman: Commissioner Alcheck, do you want to maybe hold... if you have much more,
32 hold your additional comments for another round?
33

34 Commissioner Alcheck: Yeah, I mean I was going say one more comment which has to do with
35 the lot coverage or the setback issue. And I would just say that again, I think this is an area
36 where we could use a better understanding of what other jurisdictions are doing. I think that's
37 one of the things we learned in the ADU discussion is that new equipment doesn't produce as
38 much sound. And so, there's maybe less... and there may be less... and more energy-efficient
39 equipment produces less sound and so... and maybe we're getting ahead of ourselves. Maybe
40 batteries are installed predominantly undercover because being exposed to raw elements are...

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1 so I just think it would be interesting to get a little bit more information about that before we
2 jump down the road and go oh well I don't know what a hazardous battery close to a fence, etc.

3
4 So, in general, I'd love to have this discussion in an environment where you buried us in
5 relevant information from local jurisdictions and also discussions about solar energy access
6 rights. And then finally, what the perception was among the City Council? Is our... was... is the
7 direction to be a leader in this space and to encourage... unapologetically encourage solar or is
8 it to bring us in par with our neighbors? And I think once you have those three pieces then this
9 study session could have... then the next step would be to have a really in-depth conversation.
10 Thank you.

11
12 Chair Hechtman: Thank you. Commissioner Chang, your hand is still up. Is that a ghost hand or
13 do you have more? OK, Vice-Chair Roohparvar.

14
15 Vice-Chair Roohparvar: I just had a few minor comments. I agree with everything everyone's
16 said. You know, number one I would say is pretty straight forward and I do think that we need
17 additional information. I think the tree issues are going to be... I'd like to better understand the
18 trade-offs there.

19
20 And then I did want to flag one issue with number 2.2, align equipment in the setback, with
21 respect to noise. I don't know if this is going to be an issue but I would also take a look at
22 whether we want to think about size as well. Like how big the equipment is in order to make
23 sure that whatever's being put in the setback doesn't impair fire access or something like that.
24 Where people can't get proper access for example in the case of a fire or an emergency and
25 that's it. I'll keep my comments brief, thank you.

26
27 Chair Hechtman: Thank you. So, first of all, I want to recognize that tonight we're really having a
28 discussion from 30,000-feet as a launch point for Staff to pursue these ideas. And so, to the
29 extent, I've heard other Commissioners talk about how it would be nice to see the meat that's
30 on these bones. I agree with that but I think this is premature because I think the amount of
31 information at 30,000-square foot level is basically everything you can see for 30,000-feet and
32 that's too much to take in and it's too much for Staff to process. I think the step after this after
33 we give them direction, is they go away and they start to look at the information. And they start
34 to synthesize and come back with a set of recommendations and language for policy changes
35 and the information that informs those suggestions. And that's where I think it will be our
36 opportunity to wrestle with the details but for now, I think it would overly complicate our task.

37
38 So, turning to the substance, I will say that generally, I like the idea of a City being able to issue
39 as many over-the-counter same-day permits as they can. The fewer things that need
40 processing, the better the customer experience, and obviously the easier for Staff to focus on

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1 the things that need processing. So, but you can't... in the topic that we're talking about here,
2 there is... you can't have a one size fits all. But you can have a dual process and I think this is
3 really one of the things I got out of the Staff report, one of the things that they're asking us to
4 think about. I can envision a fork in the road situation where you can choose a path where
5 there are Objective Standards and fit into basically an envelop or a box. And you can choose
6 that for your solar panel if you want to fit into these dimensions and if so, you can get your
7 permit over the counter. And if you can't or don't want to fit into that box, then you go in a
8 longer review period that maybe is something akin to what we are doing now. Increased for
9 efficiency as much as we can make it. So, to accomplish that I think you need Staff effort
10 upfront to not only come up with Objective Standards that are as broad as we can make them
11 without going too far. And I think that's really where the excitement of that developing that
12 kind of legislation is. Is where are the boundaries? For example, is one of those Objective
13 Standards to get your over-the-counter solar permit that you're not touching canopy, or is
14 there something a little bit farther than? Is there some little bit of touching of the canopy that
15 still will fit into that box? Same with excavation, does the box have to only work for no
16 excavation or is there some amount of excavation that can fit in the box, and does it matter
17 what kind of tree is in the vicinity of where you're going to excavate?
18

19 So, but to me, I think if we can come up with those objective standards to create the box and
20 come up with item 1.2 here. A clear checklist for applicants so that they know exactly if they
21 want to fit into the box what has to come in. Then I think the 500 hour... the 50 hours that Staff
22 spends putting that together saves 500 hours of Staff time because we can do all of those
23 permits in a day. And some... I'm hoping a large number of applicants will say this is just too
24 easy to pass it up. For the 4 percent aesthetic benefit that I would perceive in taking this longer
25 route, I don't... it's not worth it. So, I view those... the people that would fit in the boxes as the
26 low hanging fruit and so I think we should speed up our overall process by speeding those
27 people through.
28

29 And I think that kind of approach can work for the height of solar panels, for the equipment in
30 the setback and I think they're one of the keys... is one of the things to be in that box is your
31 equipment has to be able to demonstrate through its specifications that it doesn't exceed the
32 decibel limit. Because that's the issue with that equipment in the setback is we're trying to keep
33 the noise from crossing the property line at an unacceptably high volume.
34

35 Tree canopy and tree removal, I just I think this is a really fascinating issue because we're...
36 these are [unintelligible] and solar energy storage. They're rowing in the same direction, but
37 running into each other potentially, and so I think as go forward if we're looking at Objective
38 Standards. Again, it may be that these... where these issues arise, you just can fit into the box
39 and so you're going to have to go with the other longer review period.
40

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1 Solar shingles and historic structures, I guess... I have to admit I've never seen solar shingles but
2 when I think about historic structures there's something called facadism which is sometimes a
3 derogatory term. But in its kinder version what it means is that the part of the historic building
4 that the people can see as they drive by on the public thoroughfare, that is particularly
5 important. That face should look the same and you shouldn't be allowed to alter that. And so,
6 when I think about solar and historic structures, I'm wondering if again part of the box for the
7 streamlined review is it's on the part of the roof that is not visible on the face of the building
8 from the street. Now that of course won't work for some historic buildings but it will work for
9 some and if we can move those through. We don't have that issue then it doesn't have to be
10 solar shingles necessarily as long as it's on the backside. And I just don't know enough about
11 solar shingles to know if putting those on the front part of a building would actually change the
12 look such that somebody just passing by that house would say oh look at that old house. That's
13 a new roof, that's a modern roof and it affects the aesthetic. I just don't know.

14
15 I don't have a strong opinion on the last item. I agree, I think Commissioner Templeton said
16 many people in Palo Alto don't use their garages exclusively to park their cars. I'm... that's true
17 at my house and so I think if we're improving our energy efficiency as one of the things that
18 gets stored in that garage is the charging unit, I think that's worth pursuing. Why wouldn't we
19 look at that as a possibility?

20
21 So, those are my comments. Commissioner Alcheck, I see your hand. Is that a new hand? OK.
22 Second round of comments from any of you Commissioners? OK, I'm not seeing any hands so
23 then let me turn to Staff and ask them if they have direction from us that's satisfactory to help
24 you move forward. Or are there a couple of important items we missed you'd like us to talk
25 about and provide you direction on?

26
27 Ms. Tanner: Great. I'll speak and then I'll just invite Jodie and Sam if you have any other
28 questions or comments that you want to make to also make them. I think this have been
29 extremely helpful. I think as you all noted it is kind of the 30,000-foot view and then we would
30 expect probably for each of these items we would bring them back individually and zoom in
31 closer. And so, daylight plan discussion for example would be more robust and then we
32 wouldn't have that the same night as we have the discussion about the garages. And so, we
33 want to be able to take these one at a time.

34
35 I think Commissioner Templeton, to your point about can there be groups people who may be
36 interested in these at different levels. Especially when you start actually talking about
37 ordinance changes and things like that. We may see more than one attendee for example as we
38 start talking about some of these issues.

39

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1 I think I would summarize the comments on the tree canopy given the emergence of the
2 directive from the Council to look closer at our Tree Ordinance that maybe we would fold that
3 work project into that. And that way it can really be holistic and not be something that's apart
4 from those larger efforts to care for trees. Again, and I think our Public Works Department is
5 well suited to help have that discussion, but certainly, I think it's enough for us to know that
6 there's interest. And I think the wisdom of saying let's look at kind of what we can do maybe
7 more... where can we be nimble about this and get those changes because even though it's like
8 every permit that we're helping to be a little bit faster. Helps all permits be faster because then
9 it's removing that workload and then we have more time to give to the permits that do need
10 maybe a more robust review. So, even though it might be a small change if it's across a number
11 of permits it really can help our system improve and increase.

12
13 So, I feel like we got a lot of great insight from you all and I... hopefully you got an introductory
14 kind of to the topic area that our City is pursuing. Jodie, Sam, anything you would want to add
15 or any questions that you might have for the Commissioners? OK, not seeing anything. I want to
16 thank you both for your time here and also for all the work that you do working very, very hard
17 on our permit review process.

18
19 Chair Hechtman: Yeah, thank you very much for the great discussion Staff and Commissioners.
20 Let's move on from the study session item and also wanted to thank our one public speaker for
21 participating both in our written comments in advance and taking the time to be here and
22 speak with us tonight. I'm going to move us now into Committee items.

23 **Committee Items**

24 Chair Hechtman: Do we have items that any Commissioner wants to bring up? Very well then,
25 we will move to Commissioner questions, comments, announcements or future agenda items.

26 **Commissioner Questions, Comments or Announcements**

27 Chair Hechtman: Commissioners? Alright, I have one for a brief discussion. So, last week I
28 attended a meeting... virtual meeting with the Mayor, Vice Mayor, and the Chairs of other Palo
29 Alto Boards and Commissions. And toward the end of that meeting, Vice Mayor Burt brought
30 up the topic of a re-envisioning of California Avenue. I know we're all aware of, actually what
31 started before the pandemic, the efforts to make it more walkable. The wider sidewalks and
32 then of course with the effects of the pandemic and taking over the street. In any event, Vice
33 Mayor Burt is interested in moving forward with that concept to look at re-envisioning and
34 bringing a more vibrant art and music scene there. And he brought this up to the assembled
35 Chairs to ask the question do you think that your entity would want to have a seat at the table
36 for that discussion? And so, I'm bringing back to you my fellow Commissioners to see what you
37 think about that so that I can respond to the question from the Vice Mayor. Commissioner
38 Templeton.

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1
2 Commissioner Templeton: Absolutely, I think we would have a lot to contribute to that
3 discussion. Thank you for bringing it up.

4
5 Chair Hechtman: Commissioners, anybody feel differently? OK.

6
7 Commissioner Alcheck: I'm just curious what... how does... they... was there kind of idea of how
8 that... is the suggestion that there would be a cross Commission Committee created that
9 would... be represented presumably by parks and arts and human? I mean what... I'm trying to
10 understand how that would work.

11
12 Chair Hechtman: I don't think he described that level of detail but certainly what he was talking
13 about gave me a sense of kind of a stakeholders group that could include representatives from
14 the Boards and Commissions that wanted a seat at that table as well as other individuals who
15 aren't on a Board or Commission.

16
17 Commissioner Alcheck: And would the... is... in your mind does that sound like the goal would
18 be like sort of a specific plan kind of concept? Like it would or is... would the idea... is the idea
19 about planning concepts or?

20
21 Chair Hechtman: To my ear, it sounded a lot like planning so and so I was thinking yeah of
22 course we need to be involved in that.

23
24 Commissioner Alcheck: Yeah, I guess my first thought when you said it was like yeah there's
25 seven people that probably could host a great discussion with the community on that topic.
26 And I could name names but yeah, it strikes me as sort of an odd idea to invite maybe other the
27 ARB I guess who could... would have probably a valuable. It just seems kind of odd to
28 incorporate all the different Boards and Commissions into a discussion like that unless you are
29 specifically interested in those individuals. Because at the end of the day, I feel like our role isn't
30 to give our own personal thoughts on what California Avenue would be. If that conversation
31 happened it would be to host a discussion and then try to share perspectives on what we've
32 learned so interesting idea. Obviously, I think if there was some assemble... avengers assembled
33 group then I would hope that one of you could be a part of that and sit on that group and
34 participate.

35
36 Chair Hechtman: Commissioner Templeton. You're muted.

37
38 Commissioner Templeton: Thank you. Just to respond, I mean if you imagine what one could do
39 if they completely re-envisioned California Avenue. It could be more than just buildings, right?
40 It could be a place that became a de facto park or maybe we would change it to a park. It could

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1 be a place that would have arts. It would... we would have to have discussions about
2 architecture and making sure that the sidewalks and streets were safe. You know there's... in
3 other words there's a need for us to collaborate and re-envision that. So, it makes sense to me
4 that if he were addressing a group of representatives from each Commission to get their input. I
5 think it could make sense. Thanks.

6
7 Chair Hechtman: Alright, any other Commissioner questions, comments, announcements,
8 future agenda items? Well then before... oh, Ms. Tanner?

9
10 Ms. Tanner: I just noted I forgot in my opening, November 15th, joint study session; PTC, ARB,
11 City Council. It will be via Zoom for us so that will be a lot of people in one room and a lot of
12 Commissioners. So, if you can participate, that would be great and it will be a study session and
13 it will be remote for all of us but the Council Members will be in the Chamber.

14
15 Chair Hechtman: Thank you. Alright, before I adjourn us I think I do want to just say and I think
16 I've hid it well tonight but I think I'm pretty disappointed that Mr. Nguyen is moving to a
17 different job. That's entirely selfish of course because he has been instrumental for running our
18 smooth meetings since well March of last year, March of 2020, and really has been a pleasure
19 to work with. So, I'm... it seems like a good idea for him to do that and of course I wish him well
20 but we will miss you here at the PTC. And we are looking forward to working with the people
21 that you have trained because I know that the same effort you have brought to all the things
22 that you've done with us, you probably... I'm sure you've brought to that training. So we'll look
23 forward to seeing you at the Council level at the City Clerk's Office and I see Commissioner
24 Lauing's hand.

25
26 Commissioner Lauing: Yeah, I was going to suggest with a lot of thanks and respect that we
27 adjourn the meeting in honor of Mr. Nguyen. I think he's done a fantastic job with us. He's
28 taken on a very big job and I have got zero questions about the fact that he's going to excel in
29 that. And as we thank you as a thank you gift, we're going to pick a very long meeting next year
30 and invite you back and make sure it lasts till at least midnight. So, thanks for your service and I
31 would recommend that we adjourn in his honor.

32
33 Chair Hechtman: Alright, I think that's a terrific idea and I'm seeing nods and applause from all
34 my fellow Commissioners. So, this meeting is adjourned in honor of Vinh Nguyen. Thank you.

35 **Adjournment**

36 8:15 pm

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