



POLICY AND SERVICES COMMITTEE SUMMARY MINUTES

Regular Meeting
April 12, 2022

The Policy and Services Committee of the City of Palo Alto met on this date in virtual teleconference at 7:00 P.M.

Present In-Person: Cormack

Present Virtually: Stone (Chair), Tanaka

Absent:

Oral Communications

None

Agenda Items

1. Receive Update on National Community Survey and Potential Feedback on Survey Questions

Chantal Cotton Gaines, Deputy City Manager advised that the Policy and Services Committee (Committee) is coordinating with Polco to begin the survey process for Fiscal Year (FY) 2022. Survey questions for FY 2020 were reviewed by the previous Committee in August of that year. Several historical comparisons are included in the report for reference and context of changes over time.

Council Member Cormack considered the survey too lengthy and redundant. She inquired about the cost of conducting the survey with custom questions.

Ms. Gaines noted that reopening the contract to switch the survey cadence costs approximately \$34,000 each time.

Council Member Cormack asked how long it takes for respondents to complete the survey.

Ms. Gaines disclosed that she did not remember.

Council Member Cormack did not understand why the question was included regarding the recommendation of Palo Alto libraries to friends. Insight into the

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level of welcome that visitors experience would be beneficial. Perhaps the last two items in Question 8 could be combined. She suggested including visitors to questions where residents are mentioned. Question 10 is too lengthy. All utility items should be placed under Question 11. It may be more appropriate to use the information in the development of the budget.

Council Member Stone agreed with Council Member Cormack about some questions being duplicative. Insight into the City's benchmark is valuable, and the data is useful. He appreciated questions consistent with other communities so that comparisons can be made. Including the recommendation of visiting Downtown Palo Alto and California Avenue to section 3 seems worthwhile. Art programs and theater in section 10 should be separate items. He asked for clarification regarding the cost of reopening the survey and if the process is underway.

Ms. Gaines clarified that the total amount of custom questions that Palo Alto has is part of how the fee is assessed. Polco interprets a contract amendment in light of a change in the City's cadence. The cost prior to the amendment was slightly below \$30,000.

Council Member Stone believed the data would be valuable unless there would be a substantial cost to implement the changes.

Ms. Gaines noted that the data from the survey is used in the budget process for performance measures in some cases.

Council Member Tanaka agreed with remarks about the survey being too lengthy and questioned accuracy resulting from survey fatigue. He believed that surveying immediately after services rendered would provide more useful feedback. The City should consider shorter and more timely surveys. He suggested that the budget instead be used for a net promoter survey.

Council Member Cormack asked if making budget decisions was permissible for the current meeting.

Molly Stump, City Attorney clarified that a budget decision could be pursued. She recommended proposing a change to the survey rather than a budget matter because the manager cannot expend budgeted funds.

Council Member Tanaka expressed opposition to the motion and asked about what changes could be made to move forward.

Ms. Stump suggested a proposal not to pursue the survey for FY 2022 and explore alternative feedback mechanisms to secure input on City services.

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Council Member Cormack asked about the utility to Staff of some of the questions.

Ms. Gaines advised that feedback from the survey for performance metric purposes has typically been used.

Council Member Cormack asked for clarification regarding the previous survey being transitioned to both paper and online, which reduced costs.

Ms. Gaines confirmed that was correct.

Council Member Cormack was not prepared to second the item and suggested more discussion.

Council Member Stone did not support rejecting the survey. He suggested exploring other options while continuing with the presented survey.

Ms. Gaines announced that she will be working with Polco to ensure an understanding Palo Alto's placement in the queue for the survey, and changes to the survey is factored into the timeline.

MOTION: Council Member Cormack moved, seconded by Council Member Stone to recommend the City Council:

- I. Direct staff to reduce the length of the survey and work with the Chair of the Policy & Services Committee as an ad hoc.

MOTION PASSED: 2-1, Tanaka no

2. Discussion of City Council Referral Related to Strategic Priorities and Values

Chantal Cotton Gaines, Deputy City Manager provided brief overview of the City Council referral related to strategic priorities and a set of values of the City and the Community. Topics to consider include Fiscal Sustainability, Social Justice, Healthy City Healthy Community, and Environmental Sustainability. Staff explored existing City values and broadly defining the term of values. Existing values printed each year in the City's budget include quality, courtesy, efficiency, integrity, and innovation.

Council Member Cormack suggested creating a paragraph-long statement describing the City's values to fill the referral. Designating a Council Member to partner with Ms. Gaines to devise a list to include may be useful.

Council Member Stone asked for clarification about the values being current Palo Alto values.

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Ms. Gaines answered yes. The values are printed each year in the budget, but she was unsure when they were adopted.

Council Member Stone believed some additional components need to be included. He inquired regarding how meaningful it would be to recraft values.

Ed Shikada, City Manager noted that involving a Staff input process could be a timely effort and would likely be a substantial undertaking. He suggested preparing a statement initially and proceed with a review of City values as a subsequent step.

Council Member Stone asked Mr. Shikada if he believed the paragraph form would be beneficial for a values statement.

Mr. Shikada stated that a bottom-up approach is a different endeavor than the visionary statement that would be reflected from the leadership of the institution. He asked Council Member Cormack for clarification about her comment on whether the paragraph would replace the budget statements or potentially compliment them.

Council Member Cormack stated that she believed staff was being asked to identify a set of enduring values that the community believes will be used when making decisions. The goal is to make the priority setting easier. She believed what the Committee is doing and how the Staff completes work are two separate tasks.

Council Member Stone expressed a preference for both parts of the organization collaborating to seek common values.

Mr. Shikada stated that if the Council leads by taking the next step to guide how decisions are made, staff could follow up as a following step in the effort described.

Council Member Stone suggested including both diversity and equity, and government accountability and transparency values.

Council Member Tanaka inquired about whether some components should be more fundamental.

Mr. Shikada asked for clarification that the intent is to create an ad hoc to develop a draft and return to the Committee before presenting to the full Council.

Council Member Cormack answered yes. She asked if bringing the item to Council is required or whether the Committee can complete the work.

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Molly Stump, City Attorney clarified that the Committee can ask that the item return for Committee organization before presenting to the Council.

Council Member Tanaka suggested including good customer service.

Council Member Cormack asked for clarification about how that would help Council make better policy decisions.

Council Member Tanaka remarked that he thought the item was for staff to remember.

Council Member Cormack explained that it relates to how the organization completes the work and not the guided values.

Council Member Stone agreed that customer service is important. He asked if Mr. Shikada concurred with Council Member Cormack's view of the statement being intended for how Council works or for the entire organization.

Mr. Shikada believed that the intent was for the statement to focus on Council decision-making, and a subsequent step for staff to work on a follow-up that reflects how the organization completes its work.

Council Member Tanaka suggested including public safety.

Council Member Stone supported adding public safety as a value.

Council Member Cormack stated that providing public safety is a service and not a value of the City.

MOTION: Council Member Stone moved, seconded by Council Member Cormack to:

- I. Direct staff to work with Council Member Cormack as an ad hoc to draft a set of values for the City to include Fiscal Sustainability, Environmental Sustainability, Social Justice, Healthy City Healthy Community, Innovation, Accountability/Transparency, Diversity and Equity, and consider describing City services such as Public Safety.

MOTION PASSED: 2-1, Tanaka no

Future Meetings and Agendas

Chantal Cotton Gaines, Deputy City Manager announced that efforts are underway to present agenda items before the June 2022 break regarding Renter Protection. The Policy and Services Committee will proceed with the list of Work Plan items, in addition to the new referrals.

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Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 P.M.