



# City of East Palo Alto MINUTES

## **SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL/WORK SESSION**

Saturday, February 4, 2006  
Time: 9:00AM – 1:30PM  
1960 Tate Street, East Palo Alto

9:00AM Special City Council Work Session

Call to Order And Roll Call

**PRESENT:**

Council/RDA:

Councilmembers Woods, Rutherford, Foster, Vice Mayor Evans, Mayor Abrica

City Staff:

City Manager James

City Attorney Lawson

Deputy City Clerk Warren

Facilitators: Peninsula Conflict Resolution Center

Shauna Wilson and Lori Heyman

1. Community Forum (*Please Limit Your Comments to Agenda Items Only*)
2. City Council/City Manager/City Attorney Relations
3. City Council Priorities/Objectives

Please refer to pages 2 through 7 for dialog/information from this special study session

**ADJOURNMENT 1:38PM**

East Palo Alto City Council Work Session  
Saturday, February 4, 2006  
1960 Tate in University Square  
9:00 AM – 1:30 PM

**Purpose of retreat: How the City Council and City staff can collaborate on serving the needs of everyone in East Palo Alto**

Present: Mayor Abrica, Vice Mayor: Evans, Council Members: Foster, Rutherford and Woods, City Manager James, City Attorney Lawson, Deputy City Clerk Warren,

Work Session facilitated by Shauna Wilson and Lori Heyman of PCRC

**Impressions of the previous year's accomplishments**

- New place to house the Community Services office
- Some issues with City Employees were resolved. Better relations
- Hired an Assistant City Manager, and good staff in Human Resources
- Hired a Police Chief with good professional skills
- New HR Assistant starting in mid- February to take on more HR duties
- Received City's first AA Bond rating in City's history
- Addressed every measure in the Joe Brann report recommendations
- Finance Director is doing a great job
- Met every audit standard on City funds
- All pending litigations have been resolved
- All City Managers are City employees not contractors

**City Council / City Staff Communications**

- Purpose: to clarify and define expectations and standards
- Outcome: Enhancing working relationships

**1.) What do City Council members want and need communicated from the City Manager and City Attorney?**

Council Member Foster: Council members did not get clear communication regarding the focus of this work session. Would have appreciated having a copy of the detailed agenda.

Vice Mayor Evans: Some Council members thought City Department heads would attend this work session. Staff should have been encouraged to attend the work session.

Vice Mayor Evans: Council members would like copies of the City contracts with the City Manager and City Attorney.

Council Member Rutherford: The City Attorney and City Manager should offer professional advice to council on actions requiring Council attention and appropriate recommendations for Council action.

Council Member Rutherford: consistent information from the City Attorney on legal procedures and provide a Roberts Rules of Order study session.

Council Member Foster: Any communications from the City Manager and/or City Attorney to one City Council member should be given to all City Council members.

Vice Mayor Evans: need to reinstate warrants on City Council agenda. Need to determine right level of information.

Mayor Abrica: communication about the warrants is good for the community.

Council Member Foster: need input on agenda changes for City Council meetings, more open process.

Vice Mayor Evans: City Manager should communicate to City Council what's not working, any hiring/staffing issues. The City Council could help.

Council Member Woods: Need clarification on adjustments made to staffing

Council Member Foster: would appreciate any Council assessments of City Manager and City Attorney that are negative be done in private.

Mayor Abrica: Need City plan for public safety, crime prevention, timeline, budget and specifics useful to communicate to residents.

Mayor Abrica: Want more detailed reports from City Attorney: i.e.: claims, lawsuits, etc.

Council Member Rutherford: Wants hard copy of Municipal Code, and more updates on specific laws that effect City Council members

Vice Mayor Evans: wants vision from City Manager.

Mayor Abrica and Council Member Foster: It is the City Councils job to give a consistent vision to the City Manager. It is the City Manager's job to implement the City Council's vision.

Mayor Abrica: Specific requests to City Manager and City Attorney should be done in writing.

Also requested Municipal Code some time back. Requests from City Manager to City Council should be in writing. This would help with follow-up

Mayor Abrica: wants specific implementation plan from City Departments and Managers

Vice Mayor Evans: Monthly written reports from City Staff and Departments

## **2.) What do the City Manager and the City Attorney need or want from the City Council members regarding communications?**

City Manager James: City Council to understand context. City Manager was required to implement the Grand Jury recommendations from the Joe Brann report

City Manager James: Council needs to understand the time and steps necessary to implement Council directives. City Manager is required to implement directives from previous City Councils.

City Attorney Lawson: Wants public discourse at a higher level between Council and City staff. Respect for professional positions

City Attorney Lawson: understanding from City Council that his reports may be technical, and though he understands political ramifications, the City Attorney's job is to represent the best interest of the City.

City Attorney Lawson: needs more regular evaluations and benefits standards that are public.

City Attorney James: If Council has questions, to please call the City Manager directly.

## **3.) Anything else that might enhance City Staff/City Council relations**

Mayor Abirca: Council should set up process for determining how to fulfill contract obligations with the City Manager and City Attorney, and how to meet goals.

Council Member Foster: City Council members should do their homework before the meetings. Should Ask questions of staff ahead of time.

Vice Mayor Evans: we need an outside expert to do evaluation of City Manager and City Attorney

Vice Mayor Evans: the contract worker situation has still not been addressed

Council Member Foster: The plan from 2003 has expired. We need a new 4 year plan

Council Member Foster: Need an organizational audit of all City Departments. Would like an outside person to help determine why the Planning Department is not working.

Council Member Rutherford: need people in key positions for Planning Department to work. The Planning Department is not adequately staffed.

Vice Mayor Evans: Planning Department needs better desk hours

Mayor Abrica: streamline the planning and building process. It needs to be more customer-friendly. Need to improve community relations. There are too many misunderstandings.

Vice Mayor Evans: city departments are understaffed.

Vice Mayor Evans: City Manager's office is deficient in information and staff needs a new structure. There should be outside input and an audit.

Vice Mayor Evans: The Human Resources manager should not be the Assistant City Manager

Vice Mayor Evans: Clear communication from the City to residents. Signage at the Corp Yard indicated the recycling program was closed.

Mayor Abrica: The City should continue the recycling program.

Vice Mayor Evans: Voiced the need to reassess the storm drain issue. Focus Areas for the City in 2006

**Infrastructure:**

- Maintenance and improvements
- Sidewalks and roads
- Parks
- Storm drains
- Plan for Bay Road refurbishment

**Public Safety:**

- Code enforcement
- Staffing
- Moving Police Dept. and upgrading Police Department and vehicles
- Disaster and emergency preparedness/ long term and short term

**Businesses:**

- Detailed plan for small businesses
- Guidelines for service agencies receiving City funds and monitoring of agencies receiving City funds
- Supermarket in EPA

**Human Services:**

- Youth activities/after school, summer, and funding for more slots
- Senior Center/senior services
- Human needs assessment

**City Organization:**

- Communications between City and Community
- Organizational audits
- Fix Planning Dept./ staffing and hours
- Establish Public Works Division
- Staffing Public works
- Implementation plan for all City Depts.
- Management for Community development
- Capital improvements and redevelopment
- Budget deficit
- Collaborate with school district on use of equipment

### **Next Steps/Action Items**

- City Manager will get input and suggestions from City Departments on what is needed to address these issues and concerns at the next department meeting, February 8. He will ask City Departments to determine which departments would handle each task. He will provide a brief summary of how to meet the priorities and what trade offs would be necessary if any. City Manager will look into hiring a consultant to drive the process.
  
- Department Heads and City Manager will report to the City Council at a special meeting Tuesday, March 14 from 6:00 – 9:00 PM with a response to these priorities.

Evaluation of process: Plus: Good location/good site. Appreciated that facilitator helped Council to stay on task. Felt the discussion was honest and everyone got down to business. Each person got an opportunity to express concerns and issues. Appreciated the civility of the discourse.

There was stated confusion on who should attend the work session and not seeing the detailed agenda earlier. City Manager and City Attorney's evaluation still needs to be addressed. More on the food selection and more INPUT in general.