

**DATE:** 4/22/2025

**TO:** COUNCILMEMBERS

**FROM:** CITY MANAGER'S OFFICE

**SUBJECT:** COUNCIL Q&A FOR APRIL 22, 2025 CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING

**Study Session**

- Please respond to the concerns raised by Jim Wing in his email to the Council.

**Answer: The concerns can be divided into four different sections.**

**First, Mr. Wing raises concerns regarding overhead electric and communications lines that will need to be placed underground. These are items that were presented in April of last year when this was presented to City Council. City staff has earmarked Rule 20A funds that can be allocated for undergrounding of overhead utility poles as part of major projects. These lines can be placed underground as is done in various projects throughout the City. It would be of a large benefit to the City if more overhead lines were placed underground as part of this project and beyond.**

**Second, Mr. Wing raises concerns regarding underground sewer, gas, and water utility lines. They are correct that they may need relocation as part of this project, but we do not know yet because the site analysis and design have not yet been completed. The relocation of water utility lines to bring them closer to businesses is currently being done in other parts of downtown as part of a different infrastructure upgrade from Cal Water.**

**Third, Mr. Wing raises concerns regarding the slope of the parking plazas. City staff has retained the services of a firm that specializes in parking design that will be able to create underground parking meeting the community need for the space.**

**Finally, Mr. Wing raises concerns regarding alleyways and emergency accessible routes. It is City staff's full intention to ensure that we work closely with County Fire to ensure that all required emergency access routes are retained on the site.**

**Agenda Item 1 (Minutes):**

- The first speaker in Public Comments on Items not on the Agenda was Walter Eng.  
**Answer: The minutes reflect the name of speakers as they wrote them on the speaker cards. The card provided during the last meeting had "Walter" listed on the name field.**

**Agenda Item 2 (Treasurer's Report):**

- Please explain the following remittances to USBANK:
  - o \$1,320.00 on Jan. 9, 2025: **Custodial and transaction fees for trust account for November 2024.**

- o \$60,383.77 on Jan. 9, 2025: **CalCard Payment for 11/25/2024 - 12/24/2024.**
- o \$1,304.00 on Jan. 30, 2025: **Custodial and transaction fees for trust account for December 2024.**
- o \$34,803.72 on Jan. 30, 2025: **CalCard Payment for 12/25/2024 - 1/24/2025.**
- o \$60,173 on Feb. 27, 2025: **CalCard Payment for 1/25/2025 - 2/24/2025.**
- o \$1,347 on March 6, 2025: **Custodial and transaction fees for trust account for January 2025.**
- o \$1,890 on March 27, 2025: **Administration fee for Trust account.**

- Why does the check register for January include cents in the itemized check register but the registers for February and March do not?

**Answer: The difference is the result of a formatting inconsistency when exporting the reports from the City's financial system. The January check register was generated using the default format that includes cents. In February and March, the reports were exported with a rounding setting enabled. This has since been corrected to ensure consistent formatting across all months.**

- Account 2. Typo: Gency should be Agency

**Answer: Thank you. It has been noted and corrected for future reports.**

- Account 2 and 3. LAIF and CAMP: Aside from the different management, what are the distinctions between these funds? Why was LAIF selected as the account to receive the \$16M excess cash from checking?

**Answer: The City transitioned from CAMP to PTA (Public Trust Advisors) in 2024. PTA now actively manages the City's long-term investment portfolio. Although the City no longer uses CAMP for new investments, the remaining funds in that account are still pooled, fully liquid, and continue to earn interest.**

**The \$16 million was transferred to LAIF (Local Agency Investment Fund) as a short-term holding strategy while the City evaluates long-term investment options with PTA. LAIF, managed by the State Treasurer's Office, is the largest investment pool for local governments in California. It provides daily liquidity, charges no fees, and follows a conservative investment approach, making it a widely trusted place to hold public funds.**

**Staff is also reviewing the balance in CAMP to determine the best way to align those funds with the City's current investment strategy.**

- Check registers. What's the purpose of the payments to:
  - o Amazon Capital Services? **It is primarily used by the IT, Maintenance, and Recreation departments for equipment, supplies, rentals, accessories, and materials.**
  - o City of Palo Alto (Rev Collections)? **Total paid: \$890,906.20 – Includes \$889,632.76 for 3rd Quarter FY2024/25 Operations and Maintenance (O&M) of the Regional Water Quality Control Plant (RWQCP), and \$1,273.44 for address update and mapping for November, December, and January.**

- o County of Santa Clara Office of the Sheriff? **Total paid: \$13,727.46 – Includes \$11,141.46 for Statewide Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (SLETS) database access setup and PIN charges, \$2,500 for range use, and \$86 for Live Scan.**

**Agenda Item 3 (Project Completion):**

- If the City confirmed all the outstanding debt was retired by 2020, why did over 4 years elapse before bringing forward this resolution?  
**Answer: Due to the Finance Department turnover and information not being passed on to their successors, there was an oversight of the completion of this item. NBS notified the current Finance Department about the completion of debt payment for this assessment district.**
- How many other Assessment Districts are currently active?  
**Answer: The Blue Oak Sewer Assessment District is currently active and the debt payment for this project will end in 2039.**

**Agenda Item 4 (Zone Text Amendment for Lighting Performance Standards):**

- Resolution: Title to Section 1 should be “ADDITION” instead of “AMENDMENT.”  
**Answer: Note. This will be updated in the final document for signatures.**
- Resolution: The three pages after the resolution refer to chapters 14.90, 14.02, and 14.81. They should be replaced with one cover page for 14.91.  
**Answer: Note. This will be updated in the final document for signatures.**

**Agenda Item 5 (Allocation for Fundraising):**

- As of now, the resolution identifies LAMVCF as receiving the \$300,000 and setting up the Capital Campaign Cabinet “that will oversee the capital campaign firm or individual’s work.” Does that mean the Foundation will select and hire the campaign firm or individual?  
**Answer: The Foundation will be the entity that employs the firm or individual, but the Steering Committee will select the firm or individual.**
- During the last Council meeting, there was discussion of a Steering Committee consisting of 1 person from City staff, 1 person from LASC and 1 person from LAMVCF. That Steering Committee is not contemplated in the resolution. How will the Steering Committee be selected, when will it be selected, and how will it interact with the fundraiser, the Capital Campaign Committee and the foundation?  
**Answer: The Steering Committee has been incorporated into the resolution as an additional requirement with one individual from each organization, which has been done in the updated resolution. The individual Steering Committee members will be selected by each of the organizations. It was mentioned during discussion at the last meeting that it would be a City staff member as the representative. The Steering Committee will get regular reports back from the capital campaign firm or individual and Capital Campaign Committee on their progress, but will not be actively involved in fundraising.**

- If there is to be both a Steering Committee and a Capital Campaign Cabinet, who reports to whom?
- **Answer: The person or firm hired will report to the Capital Campaign Cabinet. The Steering Committee will oversee the hiring process, but will cease to have a formal role after the Campaign Cabinet is established. It is expected the Steering Committee will receive updates from the Campaign Cabinet and share them with each respective organization.**
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- Does the language of the resolution make clear that if no capital campaign consultant is hired, the funding (less expenses) will be returned to the City?  
**Answer: This is standard practice for the Community Foundation, but this language has been added in the resolution to make explicitly clear. Additionally, the City will not send funds to the Community Foundation until a person or firm has been selected.**
- In the resolution, one of the three requirements is, *"Must provide an analysis to the City of how a City contribution towards the project, requested \$5 million, would be best received in this process"* but this requirement seems to assume that the city will give \$5M despite that that number comes from a study that we don't have a lot of confidence in. Isn't it a better way to phrase this to allow for consideration that the city doesn't have to donate these funds (as would be consistent with the original proposition from the Stage Company) and to say, *"Must provide an analysis to the City of whether any City contribution towards the project up to the requested \$5 million, is needed for this process"*.  
**Answer: This language can be added in the resolution if City Council would like to not specify a dollar amount. This was not included in the discussion at the last Council meeting.**

#### **Agenda Item 6 (Subdivision Map):**

- Why does the map list Jon Maginot as the City Clerk instead of Melissa Thurman?  
**Answer: The Map was completed by a Civil Engineer and Land Surveyor that has previously done work in the City of Los Altos. Unfortunately, in their Final Mylars they used old staff title/names. These are administratively allowed to be written in when the Final Map is signed; this is a common circumstance that happens around the state. To reject the Final Map Mylars can be a significant delay which is why names and titles are allowed to be written pursuant to the Subdivision Map Act. The Civil Engineer and Land Surveyor has been informed of the accurate information for future projects within the city.**

#### **Agenda Item 7 (Special Events as Government Speech):**

- Thank you for recognizing the egg-hunting speed of Los Altos children.  
**Answer: You're welcome.**
- The staff report in discussion/analysis says, "... the City Council should not authorize certain special events unless the Council is prepared to adopt the event's message as government speech (City speech)." Is "authorize" used synonymously with "sponsor" in this sentence?  
**Answer: Yes. Apologies for the confusion.**

- Can we authorize/allow an event that is wholly paid for by an organization and if the City is not financially supporting it whether in-kind or otherwise, does that then mean we are not adopting it as government speech?

**Answer: Yes. City staff would permit a special event where the organizer pays the application fee and their cost for City services. It would not need to be government speech as they would pay for their special event.**

- Does sponsoring one Art Fair mean that we need to sponsor all art fairs that apply?

**Answer: No. Sponsorship would only apply to the specific event adopted as government speech.**

- Please attach LAMC chapter 9.25.

**Answer: Attached.**

- Please explain the difference between sponsorship of special events and fee waivers of City space for events, i.e. why are fee waivers not government speech?

**Answer: Sponsorship of special events are for the City to sponsor a special event that qualifies under LAMC 9.25. These would need to be adopted as government speech to receive sponsorship from the City.**

**Fee waivers is a separate process that pertains to the waiving of fees for facility rentals if the applicant meets the outlined criteria within that policy. They are not required to be adopted as government speech.**

#### **Agenda Item 8 (Special Event Sponsorship):**

- Why are the following events not included on the list:
  - Lunar New Year celebration
  - Community Iftar
  - Diwali celebration
  - Family Fun Days
  - Halloween Movie Night
  - Summer Concert Series

**Answer: These events are divided into two distinct categories.**

**Lunar New Year, Iftar, and Diwali are not special events because they are programs hosted within the Community Center and are facility rentals to outside organizations. Facility rentals hosted within the Community Center typically do not fall under the special events category.**

**The other events, Family Fun Days, Halloween Movie Night, and Summer Concert Series are events organized and coordinated by the City directly so they do not need to be City-sponsored as they are inherently City events.**

- Are there sponsors who want to bring back the Fall Festival and/or Movie Nights?

**Answer: City staff has not heard of any potential event organizers who would like to bring back the Fall Festival and/or Movie Nights. These can be left in the resolution for potential future events or the new event organizers can apply under the new policy when planning their event.**

- Does this proposed policy in any way interfere with a private person's ability to rent city facilities to be used for a purpose that the City would be prohibited from sponsoring?

**Answer: Any individual or organization is able to rent City facilities so long as they meet all the requirements outlined in the rental policy.**

- How do the dollar signs map to actual dollars? Don't need exact amounts, just an order of magnitude to better understand the scale. The Art & Wine Festival will probably receive extra attention, so please be prepared to share as much detail as possible should questions arise.

**Answer: The best way to explain the order of magnitude is below:**

**\$ - the application fee which covers the cost of processing an application and a pre-event meeting with the organizer to review the application. Typically \$150 for a non-profit applying for a special event.**

**\$\$ - typically a brief or controlled street closure area which requires City staff to shut down a street, but not manage the closure for a long period of time.**

**The exact dollar amount would depend on the size, day, and time of closure. For example, a street closure on a Sunday at 10 am would be significantly easier to coordinate than a street closure on Friday at 6 pm because the Police team could close the streets before cars arrive on Sunday morning compared to trying to close the streets during the evening weekend dinner rush.**

**\$\$\$ - a recurring street closure that happens once a month for multiple months in a row that would fall into the \$\$ category if it was an individual event. For 2024, the Headwest Market cost on average \$1,471.40 per occurrence so it would total \$11,771.20 for all eight months.**

**\$\$\$\$ - a recurring street closure that happens once a week for five months that would fall into the \$\$ category if it was an individual event.**

**\$\$\$\$\$ - a full closure of the entire downtown that requires the coordination of MSC and Police Department. Both events require the full services of our MSC and Police Department to prepare the street closure and maintain the safety of the event because there are many moving parts for both events. For 2024, the Art & Wine Festival, which cost \$41,638.05 in total last year, had a half-sponsorship so the City sponsorship covered \$20,819.03.**

- Will we need to adopt through resolution our sponsored events every year?

**Answer: No. This resolution will be in effect indefinitely.**

- For events that don't require street closures and we are not sponsoring them (e.g. First Fridays), what is the main factor driving costs to the City?

**Answer: Most special events that do not require street closures would only incur the application fee, which is articulated by a single dollar sign in the scale provided to Council.**

- Why do we sponsor a Corvette Spectacular and which organization runs this?

**Answer: City staff cannot articulate why a previous City Council identified this event as a benefit to the Los Altos community, but this was done by resolution making it a sponsored event. This event is coordinated by LAVA.**

- Looking at the information in the report and the presentation, it looks like the largest total costs to the city are from all the various LAVA events, sponsored and non-sponsored, because of the large number of them, is it true that LAVA is the costliest for the city to sponsor overall?

**Answer: LAVA does host the majority of the events that occur downtown. There are a few large events they organize, such as the Art & Wine Festival, Farmers Market, Headwest Market, that are costly to operate due to magnitude or frequency. Many of their other events do not cost the City anything to sponsor, such as the Spring Egg Hunt or any of the various Strolls.**

- The First Friday events happen monthly, is this also a large expense for the city and if so roughly how much annually?

**Answer: This event does not cause an expense for the City because, although it is a recurring monthly event, there is no street closure involved.**

- How much do we as a city pay annually to support all these events combined?

**Answer: The City has not historically tracked the total dollars spent for full City-sponsored events because they did not require cost estimates and costs for services. City staff plans to track this moving forward.**

- Have we measured the value and attractiveness of the non-legacy events for the community overall and whether they are supported by retail, restaurants, and residents alike?

**Answer: The City has not conducted any assessments for these events.**

#### **Agenda Item 9 (Process for the Formation of Stormwater Assessment Districts):**

- Are there communities that have expressed interest in forming a district?

**Answer: In 2003, the Raymundo Assessment District was established after twenty-eight property owners were interested and followed the process to form an assessment district to improve the infrastructure on their street by installing curbs, gutters, and storm drains along Raymundo Avenue, between Springer Road and Mountain View Avenue.**

**In 2007 Blue Oak Assessment District was formed when twenty property owners with septic tanks at Blue Oak Lane needed to connect to the City's sewer collection system.**

**Currently, the city has not received formal requests from other communities/neighborhoods expressing interest in forming an assessment district with the intent to make infrastructure improvements. However, there have been informal conversations with property owners around storm water district formation.**

- Does the City intend to proactively engage communities to suggest forming a district?  
**Answer: City staff will include an item regarding assessment district formation in the City Weekly Update that goes to the residents and will publish the information on the City's website. As questions and complaints arise from the residents, staff will recommend the formation of an assessment district.**
- Are any relevant proposals for stormwater district projects known to be developing?  
**Answer: There are no current proposals for stormwater district projects known to be developing. If the property owners in a specific area in the city are interested in forming an assessment district, they need to follow the process outlined in the staff report and attachments.**