



Town of Atherton City Council Workshop Held April 20, 2023

May 2023

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Workshop Report

The Town of Atherton's City Council held a workshop from 8:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. on Thursday, April 20, 2023 in the Council Chambers. The workshop provided an opportunity for Councilmembers to learn more about each other, identify priorities for the coming fiscal year, reflect on effective governance practices, and strengthen teamwork. This report contains a summary of the results of the workshop.

Nancy Hetrick with Baker Tilly facilitated the workshop.



Workshop Overview

Objectives

- Strengthen a sense of teamwork and governance
- Get consensus on priorities for the coming year.

Agenda

- Welcome and Agenda Review
- Warm-up Activity
- Review Effective Practices and Roles for Elected Officials
- Hear Organizational Updates
- Identify FY 2023-24 Council Priorities

Participants

Council



Executive Staff

- City Manager George Rodericks
- City Attorney Mona Ebrahimi

Workshop Preparation

In preparation for the workshop, the facilitator conducted individual interviews with Councilmembers, prepared an agenda and other materials, and reviewed the workshop plan with the City Manager.

Opening Comments

The workshop began with the call to order by Mayor Bill Widmer. Nancy reviewed the workshop agenda, objectives, suggested ground rules, and explained the “bike rack” time management tool. No items were added to the bike rack during the workshop.

Warm Up Activity

The workshop began with an engaging discussion about the motivations that prompted Council members to run for office and the legacy they hope to leave. This discussion provided an opportunity to learn more about each other.

The following themes emerged from the discussion on motivation to run for Council:

- Making a difference
- Improving representation in government
- Addressing environmental concerns
- Navigating a polarized political landscape
- Effecting change

The following themes were mentioned when discussing legacy:

- Building trust in local government
- Ensuring high quality of life in Atherton
- Having a positive impact on the environment
- Creating a sense of community



Good Governance and Effective Practices and Roles

Next, the group discussed good governance, roles, and responsibilities. The team reflected on what contributes to effectively governing together. It served as a short refresh on roles, responsibilities, and good governance practices.

Nancy then led a discussion intended help the City Manager and Council members better understand the unique communication preferences of others. A summary of the takeaways is listed below:

- Aim to have all facts and information available at once (big picture).
- Some Councilmembers prefer visual depictions of the information being presented (i.e., use of maps and charts).
- Individual meetings with the City Manager are valued but should be better tailored to the unique needs of each council member.
- Data and visuals are helpful for discussion.
- Using a variety of methods is helpful to understanding issues/items; including via text, email, or in person conversation depending on the topic.

Council reviewed the norms set in 2022 and agreed there was no need to revise or update them. The Council norms are listed below:

- Assume good intent
- Show mutual respect

- Be trustworthy
- Listen with intention; strive to make others feel heard
- Seek clarification with both staff and colleagues
- Focus on the issue, not the person
- Disagree agreeably and maintain decorum at the dais
- When debate is over and vote is taken, we move on
- Envision the future and make progress on long-term goals
- Inspire public confidence in our city government
- Be succinct; no need to restate the same reason for a vote that has already been stated

Organizational Updates

The City Manager provided an update to share progress on some key initiatives. This update is summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Town Update

Town Action Item	Status/Progress
Climate Action Plan	Work is progressing and the Annual Report to the Council will come in the next few months.
Alameda de las Pulgas Grant Project	A project manager has been selected with the project to be completed in the FY 2023/24 budget year.
Alameda de las Pulgas Culvert Grant Project	Congresswoman Eshoo recommending the approval of the Town Grant Request.
Stockbridge Pedestrian Beacon	This will be incorporated into the FY 2023/24 budget year.
Earth Day	Events are taking place Saturday, April 22 at Menlo Atherton High School. We are expecting large crowd. It is being jointly funded and organized.
ADAPT	Continuing to work on leadership and next steps to expand programs and opportunities
Housing Element	We recently received feedback from the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) and the item will be on Council agenda for May 17
Finances	Our 5-Year Fiscal Outlook is positive and the spreadsheet will be discussed by Council as part of the budget process
Summer Concerts and Events	Returning in 2023 at Town Center. We will evaluate if the use of the Park for some events is an issue considering timing with the Circulation Project
Circulation Project	Project is to start after award in summer 2023
Certificates of Participation (COP)	We are at the half-way mark (5-years) in 2024

Priorities Discussion

Council reviewed the Citywide strategic goals in detail and made some adjustments based on progress.

The revised goals are presented below. Changes are noted in red font. The strategic goal to *Maximize Use of Town Center/Library* was identified as an ongoing activity and has been removed from the list.

- **Goal A: Maintain Fiscal Responsibility.** Maintain a balanced budget with adequate reserves; responsibly manage long term liability; and increase and maintain transparency.
- **Goal B: Preserve Small Town Character and Quality of Life.** Maintain focus to identify initiatives to mitigate impacts of regional and state impacts.
- **Goal C: Manage Circulation and Improve Safety *through Investments in Infrastructure*.** Provide stewardship and leadership to maintain mobility and improve accessibility and safety for bicycles and pedestrians.
- **Goal D: Strengthen Community Engagement and Transparency.** Pursue opportunities for increased engagement, public outreach *and education*.
- **Goal E: Be a Forward-Thinking, Well-Managed, Well-Planned City.** Be proactive and anticipate future needs.
- **Goal F: Emergency Preparedness – Be Prepared.** Partner with key stakeholders and empower residents to prepare for emergencies.

Housing (specifically, the Town's Housing Element), infrastructure projects (specifically drainage and life/safety improvements), and public education on topics like emergency preparedness and environmental programs were discussed as key priorities for the next year. Additional areas that were noted include: the Town's 100th birthday celebration and continued financial stewardship.

Wrap-up and Next Steps

To wrap up, Nancy summarized key agreements from the day. She explained that Baker Tilly would prepare this summary report and invited closing comments from the group. The City Manager will work with his staff to incorporate updates to the priorities that were discussed.

