



Memorandum

TO: RULES AND OPEN
GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE

FROM: Mayor Matt Mahan

SUBJECT: SEE BELOW

DATE: January 13, 2023

APPROVED

Date: 01/13/2023

SUBJECT: 2023 CITY COUNCIL PRIORITY-SETTING SESSIONS

RECOMMENDATION

1. Direct the City Manager to:
 - a. Schedule and/or agendize two separate City Council priority setting sessions in mid- to late February 2023 by way of either regularly scheduled Council meetings or special meetings.
 - b. In the first session, agendize a joint readout on the most immediate set of preferred outcomes, performance metrics, recommendations and other feedback from each of the five transition committees on: 1) Homelessness, 2) Community Safety, 3) Clean Neighborhoods, 4) Planning and Permitting, and 5) Downtown Vibrancy.
 - c. In the second session, incorporate discussions from the first session into an immediate set of Administration recommendations for Council consideration regarding fewer areas of focus, preferred outcomes, specific programs, and initiatives to bring about those outcomes and performance metrics.
2. Direct the City Manager to develop a framework, program dashboard, and progress reporting cadence that allows the Administration and Council to focus Council deliberation and City resources on prioritizing progress towards these most important goals as part of the Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Budget Process.
3. Given that Recommendations 1 and 2 should result in an increased emphasis on mutually-agreed pressing priorities, avoid duplicative work by directing the City Manager to suspend reporting to Council on the remaining current Fiscal Year 2022-2023 City Initiatives Roadmap, while allowing the appropriate Council committees to incorporate current Fiscal Year 2022-2023 City Initiatives Roadmap updates and feedback as appropriate.

BACKGROUND

The COVID-19 pandemic posed an unprecedented challenge to our City, requiring nearly 900 employees to staff the Emergency Operation Center. As we developed and scaled new services including food distribution, isolation and quarantine, childcare, and vaccinations in record time, we also continued delivering core services through a Continuity of Operations Plan. Now our City is in recovery and it is time for the Council and Administration to refocus on the key challenges and opportunities our City faces.

In the most recent City Services Annual Report, our residents clearly communicated their priorities for city improvement (Table 1). I have tasked five transition committees– on Homelessness, Community Safety, Clean Neighborhoods, Planning and Permitting, and Downtown Vibrancy– to generate a focused list of actionable and measurable recommendations that will immediately address these priorities.

Table 1 – Resident Priorities for City Improvements

1.	Address homelessness issues
2.	Improve public safety, reduce crime
3.	Provide more affordable housing
4.	Beautify city, landscaping
5.	Improve police response, presence

Source: City of San José Annual Report on City Services 2021-2022

Each transition committee is chaired by one or two Councilmembers and one community member. Each committee is also joined by a City staff lead who brings collaboration, creativity, and expertise. The committees are composed of community members from diverse backgrounds and representatives from key institutions, such as San Jose State University and the District Attorney’s Office, who bring unique insights and resources to bear on a given issue area. The transition committees will each meet three times between now and mid-February; they are tasked with providing a focused list of actionable and measurable recommendations to immediately address their respective challenges.

I believe the community input generated from the transition committee process will be most valuable if it directly informs our budget process in combination with further public discussion, Council deliberation, and guidance from City Staff. Indeed, we seek to further the “One Team” values formulated and demonstrated by our City Manager and her Administration. As such, I have recommended our City Manager schedule two priority setting sessions for the Council.

The first session will include a joint read-out by transition committee Councilmember Chairs and City staff leads. The read-out will cover transition committee deliberations and

recommendations. I look forward to the full Council discussion and public feedback on these recommendations.

In the second session, the Administration will present a concise set of recommended priority focus areas and outcomes-based goals based on prior discussions for Council consideration and feedback.

These two priority setting sessions will inform my March Budget Message and the Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Budget Process. I hope and believe the direct community engagement generated through the transition committees will result in a more focused and better-informed priority setting and budget formulation process.

This memo and the transition committee approach are the fruit of numerous meetings stretching back to November with City Manager Jennifer Maguire and Assistant City Manager Lee Wilcox. Their perspective, suggestions, and insights have been invaluable in the development of this approach and I am extremely grateful for their collaborative spirit and participation in generating these recommendations. I am very encouraged by the alignment of the Administration, Council, and community behind the need for our scarce City resources to increasingly emphasize customer service; focus on core priorities; and measure and track our progress.

We often rely on past plans or blueprints, but the severity of the issues we face today puts us in uncharted territory. We must collectively become comfortable with experimentation, data-driven testing, execution-as-learning, and pivoting when something does not work. As part of this learning, it is appropriate to have the Administration suspend the significant effort required to provide regular updates to Council on the planned and actual objectives and key results for each of the eight enterprise priorities in the Fiscal Year 2022-2023 City Initiatives Roadmap. Instead, the appropriate Council Standing Committees should be allowed to incorporate updates and feedback as appropriate. This will free up staff time to focus on transition committees, priority setting, and the budget process for the coming fiscal year.

All large cities face the issues of homelessness, blight, crime, and insufficient housing stock; each involve a complex ecosystem of policymaking and operations, and none are easily solved. By focusing more deliberately on these key issues and engaging a broad coalition of stakeholders, we can facilitate deeper conversations, greater learning, and stronger collaboration among the Council and with the Administration, and deliver meaningful results for our residents.