



Memorandum

TO: CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Mayor Sam Liccardo

SUBJECT: CITY ROADMAP FROM
COVID TO RECOVERY

DATE: February 25, 2021

APPROVED:

DATE: 2-24-2021

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Modify the City Roadmap and Priority Setting exercise to enable Council to vote up-or down on a full adoption of the City Roadmap Initiatives in the FY 2020-2021 City Roadmap (Appendix B, Table 1), after allowing individual Councilmembers to make motions to remove any items through a standard motion-making process.
2. Direct the City Manager to adjust the number of points allocated to each Councilmember to enable us to proceed with the prioritization exercise solely as to the backlogged, referred, and new discretionary policy items. (Appendices C, D, E, and F, Tables 2-5).
3. Direct the City Manager to indicate whether any of the discretionary policy items in Tables 2-5 can be combined based on similarities.

DISCUSSION

Our City's priorities have shifted dramatically over the past year in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent emergencies – wildfires, flood warnings, civil unrest, historic heat waves, power outages, and economic turmoil. Through every emergency 2020 threw at us, City staff rapidly adapted to meet urgent community needs. We thank them for their long nights and weekends, and for their unwavering dedication to public service.

The FY 20-21 City Roadmap represents 28 initiatives that are vital to our community through the remainder of the pandemic and high-priority projects that will be crucial in our recovery. As proposed, the road mapping exercise tasks the Council with picking and choosing between these 28 core initiatives and the additional 47 discretionary policy items that are backlogged, referred through Rules, or completely new. City Staff has done an admirable job in identifying the critical work that we need to accomplish in the year head, as reflected in Appendix B. For that reason, we advocate simply approving the list, and focusing the Council's attention on

prioritizing the more discretionary, policy-related items. If colleagues feel differently, this process could allow them to make motions to supplant (but not merely add without subtracting) individual items to the list.

We make this recommendation for other reasons as well. Most of the initiatives listed in the FY 20-21 City Roadmap (Appendix B) are all well under way; stopping these to start others will undermine the reasonable expectations of the community and many partners. Many are tied to dedicated or specially assigned sources of funding—such as sewer fees, Measure E affordable housing funding, or philanthropic grants—that can not simply be “swapped out” for projects not aligned with the funding source. For example, we already have Airport staff fully dedicating to boosting air service and recruiting airlines; if Council chooses to not to prioritize CR13 (“Increase Airport Passenger Levels”), we can’t simply re-assign that staff to food distribution, because federal law won’t allow us to shift airport revenues for that purpose. Moreover, several initiatives require staff with specific expertise, and we can’t reasonably expect the team leading our learning pods work to take on the efforts led by the San Jose Clean Energy team, and vice-versa. We have experts with specialized knowledge leading these efforts for a reason.

Equally important, a mere listing of initiatives, without more, does not provide Council with the information it needs to make meaningful trade-offs. In other words, the consequences of not prioritizing Appendix B initiatives are not clear. For example, if we don’t prioritize CR2, relating to BART support work, do we walk away from the \$ 7 billion project altogether? Do we simply allow the engineers and contractors to do whatever they deem fit in our City? If we don’t prioritize BeautifySJ work, does that mean we halt everything, reduce funding, or merely continue at existing levels of funding for cleanups and blight reduction?

More troubling, the contemplated approach creates perverse incentives to prioritize the discretionary over the essential. Since nobody reasonably expects us to halt essential work such as rental assistance (CR22) or food distribution (CR11), pitting these kinds of services against discretionary items on the other lists ultimately encourages prioritization points on pet projects, to the detriment of essential City services. A rational strategic assumption from any participant will be that “others will invest in those essential services, and we won’t *really* stop doing that, so I’ll focus on the projects that I prefer, and that are less likely to get broad support from my colleagues.” Avoiding this “Prisoner’s Dilemma” requires prioritization among like initiatives, to enable truly apples-to-apples comparisons.

The City Manager concluded that staff has the capacity to continue to provide the services outlined in the FY 20-21 City Roadmap, but very limited bandwidth to take on new policy items. We should confirm that the initiatives listed in the City Roadmap are essential, so that we can focus our discussion on the Council’s discretionary policy proposals. The 31 points originally allotted to each Councilmember should be adjusted accordingly to reflect this change.