



City Council Town Hall and Joint Meeting with the North Ventura Coordinated Area Plan Working Group FINAL MINUTES

Special Meeting
March 11, 2019

The City Council of the City of Palo Alto met on this date at the Ventura Community Center, 3990 Ventura Ct., Palo Alto, CA at 6:10 P.M.

Present: Cormack; DuBois arrived at 6:54 P.M., Filseth, Fine, Kou, Tanaka

Absent: Kniss

Discussion

- A. Report From the City Manager on Issues of General Interest to the Ventura Neighborhood, Including: National Citizen Survey Results for Area 4 (Which Includes the Ventura Neighborhood), Traffic/Bicycle/Pedestrian Circulation, Parks, Parking Regulation, and Other Issues, and Introduction of Departments in Attendance.

Ed Shikada, City Manager, reported Area 4 of the National Citizen Survey was comprised of the Ventura, Charleston Meadows, Monroe Park, Palo Alto Orchards, Barron Park, Green Acres, Greater Miranda, Esther Clark Park, and Palo Alto Hills neighborhoods. Forty percent of Citywide respondents and 27 percent of Area 4 respondents rated Palo Alto as a place to retire as favorable, excellent, or good. Overall quality of life received excellent or good rankings from 84 percent of Citywide respondents and 73 percent of Area 4 respondents. Walking in Palo Alto received excellent or good ratings from 83 percent of Citywide respondents and 74 percent of Area 4 respondents. Availability of paths and walking trails received excellent or good ratings from 73 percent of Citywide respondents and 65 percent of Area 4 respondents. Quality of new development received excellent or good ratings from 48 percent of Citywide respondents and 38 percent of Area 4 respondents. Fifty-two percent of Citywide respondents and 42 percent of Area 4 respondents indicated they had used bus, rail, or other transportation at least once. Ninety percent of Citywide respondents and 86 percent of Area 4 respondents had talked to or visited immediate neighbors. Eighty-two percent of Citywide respondents and 75 percent of Area 4 respondents rated the City overall as excellent or good. Fifty-eight percent of Citywide respondents and 54 percent of Area 4 respondents ranked the

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value of services for taxes paid to Palo Alto as excellent or good. Overall, Area 4 ratings were slightly lower than Citywide ratings. A Historic Resources Report acknowledged that the history of the area dated back to the Mayfield annexation and referred to a 1904 quote from the Mayfield Board of Trustees regarding the differences between Mayfield and Palo Alto. The differences continued to be issues. The Council had directed Staff to scope and prioritize a traffic study for commuter cut-through traffic in the area. Residents in the area had expressed interest in parking enforcement. The Ventura Community Center was due for upgrades to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) along with mechanical and electrical upgrades. The City was pursuing the purchase of real property adjacent to Boulware Park.

Clare Elliott hoped the City would open up Matadero Creek and Barron Creek, plant more native trees in public areas, remove invasive species, develop more affordable housing, and relax restrictions on residents listing their homes on Airbnb.

Becky Sanders advised that the Ventura neighborhood would continue its support of housing for low-income people, teachers, service workers, and for neighborhood-serving retail.

Jonathan Brown inquired about the timeframe for upgrades to the Ventura Community Center, efforts to relocate vehicle dwellers to more humane living conditions, additional outreach to homeless people, the end of construction on Park Boulevard, removal of utility poles to comply with the ADA, enforcement of ground-floor neighborhood-serving retail, and increasing safety via the Safe Routes to School program.

Andrea Temkin expressed interest in increasing green space along the creek for people and animals, especially ducks, and supported a neighborhood of mixed races and mixed incomes.

Vice Mayor Fine remarked that some of the lower Area 4 ratings from the National Citizen Survey were in the areas of fitness, open space, and recreational activities and walkability. Those were areas the Council may want to support a bit more. Area 4 reported higher levels of engagement in clubs and religious activities. Area 4 residents' feeling of not being treated the same as other areas was reflected in the lower rating for treating all residents fairly.

Council Member Cormack noted the number of people who bike in the area. Perhaps the Council should consider improvements to Park Boulevard in

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parallel with development of the North Ventura Coordinated Area Plan (NVCAP).

Vice Mayor Fine requested the schedule for updating the Ventura Community Center.

Brad Eggleston, Public Works Director, indicated roofs had been replaced in the last year. Upcoming improvements included air conditioning for the community center and administration building, new electrical panels and transformers, and ADA modifications. Because bids received for the work in 2018 were higher than expected, additional funding was under consideration for the Fiscal Year 2020 Budget.

Action

1. Update on the Ventura Coordinated Area Plan (NVCAP) Planning Process, Review of Next Steps, and Possible Council Direction to Staff on Next Steps.

Jonathan Lait, Planning and Community Environment Director, advised that the at-places memorandum contained information about the historic significance of the Fry's Electronics (Fry's) site. The Historic Resources Report would be released at a later time, but the findings should remain consistent between the current time and release of the report.

Elena Lee, Senior Planner, reported the North Ventura Coordinated Area Plan (NVCAP) was a 60-acre site bounded by Page Mill Road, the Caltrain tracks, Lambert Avenue, and El Camino Real. The Comprehensive Plan identified a coordinated area plan as a tool to guide development where significant change was foreseeable. The Council characterized the NVCAP as a walkable mixed-use area with multifamily housing, ground-floor retail, creek improvements, and an interconnected street grid. The NVCAP project launched in November 2017. On March 5, 2018, the Council adopted preliminary goals, objectives, a schedule, and plan boundaries and authorized the formation of a Working Group, which was appointed April 30, 2018. The first Working Group meeting was held in October 2018 with two subsequent meetings. A community workshop to introduce the Project and to receive feedback was held February 5, 2019. The NVCAP should provide policies, development regulations, and design guidelines consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. A draft NVCAP would be presented to the Planning and Transportation Commission (PTC) for review and to the City Council for final action. Components of the NVCAP were distribution of land uses, distribution of public infrastructure to support land uses, a

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program of implementation measures, design and development standards, a determination of economic and fiscal feasibility, and an environmental review. The City's lead consultant for the project was Perkins+Will with ARUP, Strategic Economics, Plan to Place, BKF Engineers, and David Powers working as subconsultants.

Geeti Silwal, Perkins+Will, related that existing conditions had been identified and plans for the site were evolving. The consultants were constantly working with the Working Group to obtain input. The area contained a good mix of residential units, but the majority of the site was comprised of office, service, and retail uses. Approximately one third of the site was comprised of surface parking. During morning peak hours, 41 percent of off-street parking and 63 percent of on-street parking was utilized. The community had reported the area was underserved for open space. The area was to be studied for an urban canopy target area. The site was attractive for technology companies, but the site did not have good connectivity. For walkability, north-south connectivity was good, but east-west connectivity was poor because of the lack of crosswalks at Page Mill Road. Park Boulevard with bicycle infrastructure lent itself to higher bike volume. Improving bicycle infrastructure on El Camino Real and Page Mill Road would improve connectivity. Transit services were good on El Camino Real and California Avenue, but last-mile/first-mile options were needed. Traffic volumes on El Camino Real and Page Mill Road were high and cut-through traffic to Oregon Expressway occurred within the site. Some large parcels within the site were owned by single entities. The City's Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) would be important in planning for the site. The current RM-30 (Multifamily Residential) zoning for the Fry's site restricted housing to 30 units per acre with a building height limit of 35 feet. Because of its proximity to transit, the density and height of buildings on the Fry's site could be increased. Affordable housing was not feasible with the current zoning on the Fry's site. The economic consultants had indicated a minimum density of 120 units per acre would make affordable housing feasible. The NVCAP area was occupied by mostly small to medium businesses. Rents within the NVCAP area averaged \$8-\$9 per square foot for office, \$5-\$7 per square foot for research and development (R&D), and \$5 per square foot for housing. The Fry's lease would expire in 2019. For retail to be viable within the NVCAP area, people would need to live and work in or near the area. Matadero Creek could provide an identity for the area, and the community was interested in leveraging Matadero Creek as an asset for development. The community felt the arts were an opportunity for the area. Working Group members walked the NVCAP site and shared their findings at the November 15, 2018 Working Group meeting. The January 16, 2019 Working Group meeting functioned as a visioning session. During the community workshop, the consultants presented findings from their work

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and the Working Group. Community workshop participants agreed with the City's goal for the NVCAP area; preferred a good mix of housing; agreed with increasing the building height limit with the caveat that buildings should not create a "canyon" feeling for pedestrians; supported improving Matadero Creek and bike facilities; wanted neighborhood-serving retail uses and space for artists and craftsmen; and prioritized connectivity for pedestrians and bicyclists over vehicles. Future Working Group meetings and community workshops would develop options for the site.

Don Barr related that the Mayview Community Health Center needed a new facility containing 25,000 square feet and located near El Camino Real. Palo Alto Housing had suggested building affordable housing above the clinic. He encouraged the Council to prioritize a community health clinic within the NVCAP area.

Ken Joye suggested the Staff Report misrepresented some information and the consultant's methodology raised questions of transparency. The potential to rezone single-family residences on Pepper Avenue and Olive Avenue should be addressed explicitly. The community workshop did not ask questions about office space in the NVCAP area, particularly the Fry's site. He expressed concern about the reference to existing, legal conforming office uses.

Bob Moss remarked that the intersection of Page Mill Road and El Camino Real was the most congested in the City, and any use located at the intersection would increase congestion. Perhaps Stanford University would agree to expanding Margarite Shuttle service through the NVCAP area. The Fry's building had historic importance as the first manufacturing building in Palo Alto.

Becky Sanders concurred with Mr. Moss' comments regarding the history of the Fry's site and Mr. Barr's comments for a medical clinic with housing. She supported pedestrian and bicycle connectivity from the NVCAP area into South Ventura. Vehicles should be kept to the periphery of the site. The Fry's site should provide family-oriented activities.

Cedric de la Beaujardiere shared his vision for Matadero Creek, rooftop gardens, green stormwater infrastructure, green buildings, a car-free core, a public square, a community center, mixed-use developments and housing, and community ownership of businesses and services.

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Kelsey Banes hoped the City would prioritize humans over cars and maximize open space. She emphasized the need for affordable housing and housing for young families.

Pat Burt noted the Council could modify the purview of the Working Group so that it could draft the NVCAP, as the South of Forest Area (SOFA) Working Group did.

Linnea Wickstrom hoped the NVCAP would include housing for extremely-low-income people with some preference for people with developmental disabilities.

Karen Holman remarked that the Working Group did not receive all the information that the SOFA working group received, and that information would be extremely helpful. The existing conditions could be enhanced to build a sense of community, just as the SOFA process did.

Todd Collins commented that the community was grossly underserved with amenities, and the ideas presented by the consultant were insufficient. One of the most important community amenities was a school.

David Adams believed the analysis and data was incomplete and should include estimates and scenarios for underutilized or new uses. Perhaps the consultant could survey people living in transit-oriented housing to determine their transit use. He opposed any additional office uses.

Waldek Kaczmarek felt the North Ventura Area was being used to resolve issues created in other areas of the City. The community would probably support the NVCAP project more if efforts to achieve targets were spread throughout the City.

Winter Dellenbach concurred with comments regarding the medical clinic. Development and redevelopment of the NVCAP area should be compatible with the Ventura neighborhood. Mitigation of stormwater runoff should be a fundamental part of the NVCAP area. The area needed a modern meeting space that could host all kinds of activities.

L. David Baron commented that the Zoning Code did not allow buildings shown in the Staff Report to be constructed in the City. Building height and density were not the only factors that determined the number of housing units built in a development.

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Samuel Jackson suggested the Council consider increasing building density and increasing efforts to shift residents' modes of transportation. If more people did not depend on cars, parking areas could be used for parks, schools, and hospitals.

Nikki Narang hoped the NVCAP would limit cut-through traffic.

Elaine Johnson recommended the NVCAP address realistic parking needs and inquired about the toxic plume in the area.

Ms. Lee reported consultants were studying the toxic plume and mitigations.

Angela Dellaporta, NVCAP Working Group Member, advised that responses to a neighborhood survey reflected the comments made by the consultant and public speakers. Most respondents supported housing for middle-income and low-income people, a reduction in car traffic, green space, naturalization of the creek, ample parking, implementation of green building standards, no new office uses, and not forcing neighbors to move.

Council Member DuBois inquired about the number of employees per square foot in new office buildings, particularly those located on Park Boulevard.

Mr. Lait responded that Staff did not have employment data for those offices.

Council Member DuBois asked about the interaction between new State laws and a coordinated area plan.

Mr. Lait related that planning for the North Ventura area would consider the possibilities if laws such as Senate Bill (SB) 50 were enacted. The North Ventura area would probably not be excluded from State law simply because the City implemented a coordinated area plan for the area.

Council Member DuBois inquired whether Staff and the Working Group was reviewing what was allowed under existing zoning and whether that would be the baseline for the Environmental Impact Report (EIR).

Mr. Lait indicated the baseline for the EIR would be the existing conditions; therefore, the size and intensity of land uses, circulation patterns, parking, and traffic would be embedded as the baseline for any analysis under the different scenarios.

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Council Member DuBois suggested a useful scenario would be retaining the existing zoning.

Mr. Lait explained that a no-project alternative could capture some of the same information.

Council Member DuBois inquired whether stakeholder meetings were public meetings.

Mr. Lait reported Staff invited specific groups of people to stakeholder meetings, but the meetings were not open to the public or subject to the Brown Act. Many people were more willing to speak candidly in a meeting with Staff or the consultants only. Notes from stakeholder meetings were included in the packet.

Council Member DuBois asked if an underpass at Page Mill Road and Ash Street and a connection between Ash Street and Portage Avenue had been discussed.

Mr. Lait reported the process had not reached that level of design analysis yet.

Council Member DuBois suggested bike access to Midtown and an underpass of the rail tracks would be useful. He hoped the standards for schools would be used for housing with respect to the toxic plume; the area would be an underground district for utilities; and recycled water would be considered in the area. He wanted the Council to consider a higher inclusionary percentage of affordable housing for the area. He wanted to see creative ideas about targeted housing and about protections against displacement. The Council may want to consider a policy to support local restaurants rather than private dining rooms and cafeterias. Small office space continued to be a need. The Stanford University playing fields should not be considered park space. The economic analysis needed to compare the current zoning to proposed changes and updated objectives.

Molly Stump, City Attorney, advised that Staff was seeking overall direction regarding the NVCAP project. Major modifications to the NVCAP process could be introduced, but they should be discussed in a future meeting.

Council Member Cormack inquired regarding the percentage of the NVCAP area that was covered by surface parking lots.

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Ms. Silwal replied 20-plus acres or approximately one third of the area.

Council Member Cormack remarked that understanding property ownership and uses at a more granular level would be helpful. She wanted Staff to provide the Council with a range of options for things such as housing types and sizes and the creek. Environmental concerns and constraints were meaningful. Vehicle dwellers had to be included in the plan.

Council Member Kou inquired whether information gathered during meetings with Palo Alto Unified School District (PAUSD) personnel would be shared with the PAUSD Board of Education.

Mr. Lait explained that Staff could share information during meetings of the City/School Liaison Committee.

Council Member Kou requested Staff's definition of neighborhood fabric.

Mr. Lait defined neighborhood fabric as a recognition of and appreciation for the history and culture of the area. The neighborhood fabric of the North Ventura area would evolve through the planning process.

Council Member Kou asked if the NVCAP Goals had been prioritized.

Mr. Lait replied no.

Council Member Kou felt the prevention of gentrification should be prioritized higher in the list of goals. She inquired whether the railroad on 3001 El Camino Real had any significant value.

Mr. Lait indicated the historic analysis was not complete.

Council Member Kou asked if the historic analysis could extend beyond the Fry's site.

Mr. Lait responded yes. The historic analysis would be based on the study area.

Council Member Kou inquired regarding the process for placing the Fry's site on the California Register of Historical Resources.

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Mr. Lait explained that the City had not made a formal determination as to the historic significance of the property. The determination would be part of the Council's review of the NVCAP and the associated environmental document. He asked if Council Member Kou was concerned that something would occur on the property before the NVCAP was complete.

Council Member Kou answered no. She asked if inspections for hazardous materials would continue into the future.

Mr. Lait indicated that was unknown at the current time.

Mr. Moss reported the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Regional Water Quality Control Board gave the Barron Park Association Foundation the right to oversee the toxic plume in the City. The plume in the Stanford Research Park had been cleaned up, but the NVCAP area had been contaminated by water flow from the Stanford Research Park. Any development in the area was required to have at a minimum a vapor barrier to prevent toxic materials from entering structures. The interior of structures should be inspected annually.

Council Member Kou hoped the NVCAP would include a monitoring plan for toxic materials.

Mr. Lait advised that the EIR would include mitigation measures specific to the toxic plume.

Council Member Kou noted the Staff Report did not mention any attempt to establish a baseline for employee parking needs. No evidence demonstrated that people were relying less on cars. She hoped the NVCAP considered parking carefully so that it would not impact neighborhoods. The minimum number of affordable units in developments should be 20 percent. She suggested two members of the former SOFA Working Group be added to the NVCAP Working Group as a member and an alternate.

Vice Mayor Fine inquired regarding the mix of retail businesses and square footage of each type in the area.

Mr. Lait indicated specific standards applied to the Fry's site. The Municipal Code allowed the continuation of existing uses and stipulated a minimum amount of retail to be retained. Staff was reviewing City and County of Santa Clara (County) records to determine the square footage of different uses in the NVCAP area.

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Vice Mayor Fine requested the same information for office uses. Property owners could provide information regarding the feasibility of no additional office uses and the cost to remove or maintain office uses. Property owners may not be willing to redevelop their properties if they could not retain office uses. The ideas for retail uses and amenities in the NVCAP area could be more creative, but a market study of the feasibility of uses would be helpful. He inquired about commercial projects that would open soon.

Mr. Lait indicated Staff tracked commercial space.

Vice Mayor Fine concurred with Council Member Cormack's suggestion for an option to include naturalization of the creek. The Council may want an estimated timeline for implementation of the NVCAP and a discussion of prioritizing the implementation of certain aspects of the NVCAP. He expressed interest in a program for vehicle dwellers, construction impacts, cut-through traffic, and bicycle connections. Park Boulevard needed additional amenities to facilitate the connection to California Avenue. Perhaps creative amenities could promote sustainability and a healthy ecosystem.

Council Member Tanaka believed the NVCAP area should be a vibrant, walkable and bikeable neighborhood. He supported small office spaces, co-living spaces, enhancing Park Boulevard to the California Avenue station for pedestrians, better bicycle connectivity, and more retail uses along El Camino Real and Page Mill Road/Oregon Expressway. He discouraged the Working Group from locating housing adjacent to train tracks. An economic feasibility study would be important for funding improvements in the NVCAP area.

Mayor Filseth encouraged the Working Group to consider a school. With respect to parking, efficient circulation was not the top priority in residential neighborhoods.

MOTION: Council Member DuBois moved, seconded by Vice Mayor Fine to Update project direction to include:

- A. Removal of the Stanford playing fields from the park space counted for Ventura use;
- B. Evaluate and propose policies around:
 - 1. Higher required inclusionary housing;

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2. Workforce housing;
 3. Preventing displacement of existing residents;
- C. Evaluate and propose office size limits to encourage small office uses; and
- D. Evaluate and propose an objective accounting for economic value provided to property owners as part of the specific plan versus current zoning, and the value of any community amenities.

Council Member DuBois explained that the Motion directed Staff to evaluate specific issues. Whether or not new State laws affected the value provided to property owners, the Council and the community needed to understand the value.

Vice Mayor Fine felt the points in Part B of the Motion were reasonable. The issue would be tradeoffs for each of the points, and a feasibility study could help everyone understand the tradeoffs. He did not know the impacts of a policy that encouraged small office spaces. Restricting small offices to healthcare offices could garner support. The Council needed to understand whether implementing zoning changes would result in the desired development.

Mayor Filseth indicated the Motion was reasonably broad and assumed the intent was to protect community-serving services rather than global-serving businesses.

Council Member DuBois stated the issue was limiting office size so that a building comprised of small offices could not be converted to a building comprised of one large office.

Council Member Cormack could support the Motion even though she may not understand the intent or the range of limits on office size. She requested clarification of Part D.

Council Member DuBois advised that Staff would determine the value under existing zoning regulations.

Council Member Cormack seemed to recall that the demand for small office spaces had declined. She proposed the Council review the three scenarios just after the Working Group reviewed them. In the current timeline, Staff

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would present three scenarios to the Working Group, who would recommend one to the Council.

Mr. Lait reported the Working Group would refine three scenarios, the community would provide input regarding a preferred option, and the Working Group would consider community feedback and recommend a preferred scenario to the Council. The Staff Report would include the three scenarios and the Working Group's preferred scenario. The Council could combine components of the three scenarios into its preferred scenario.

Council Member Cormack expressed concern that the preferred scenario would be appropriate but not creative.

Ed Shikada, City Manager, remarked that the issues raised by the Council could require analysis by the Planning Department and the City Attorney's Office. Staff could evaluate the work, funding, and time needed to respond to the Council's direction and return to the Council.

Ms. Stump understood the City Manager was proposing another step in the process for Staff to hold a scoping conversation with the Council prior to developing a series of policy proposals. The direction was fairly complex and ambitious.

Mr. Lait corrected his previous comments in that the Working Group would develop two scenarios to present to the community. The Working Group would utilize public input to refine the two scenarios into a single preferred scenario. The Staff Report for the preferred scenario would include the two alternatives and community input. He hoped the Council would allow Staff to continue with the current process while Staff quickly prepared a response to the Motion.

Mayor Filseth asked if Staff could continue the process under the Motion.

Mr. Lait suggested the current process could proceed, but future Council direction for additional analysis could impose timing and funding constraints on the process.

AMENDMENT: Council Member Cormack moved, seconded by Council Member XX to direct Staff to return to Council with 3 scenarios.

AMENDMENT WITHDRAWN BY THE MAKER

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Council Member Kou proposed adding a member with experience of the SOFA planning process to the NVCAP Working Group.

Mr. Lait reported the Municipal Code limited the number of members to 14. The Council would have to amend the Municipal Code to increase the number of members.

Council Member Kou inquired whether a member providing guidance would be a voting member of the Working Group.

Mr. Lait explained that the Working Group did not vote on issues. Community members were encouraged to attend and participate in Working Group meetings.

Kirsten Flynn, NVCAP Member expressed concern that Council Member Kou felt the Working Group needed assistance when members had spent many hours studying and researching information and had a core knowledge of their neighborhood.

Council Member Kou clarified that someone with experience of the SOFA process could provide guidance to the Working Group.

Terry Holzemer, NVCAP Member, felt the Working Group should consider the critical historical information in preparing a plan for the entire site. A subcommittee of the Working Group should review historical information for the Fry's site and for the entire area.

Council Member DuBois asked if public comments during Working Group meetings were limited.

Mr. Lait indicated public comment was received at the end of Working Group meetings, and time limits were imposed on public speakers.

AMENDMENT: Council Member Kou moved, seconded by Council Member XX to add to the Motion, "add a member to the NVCAP Working Group who participated in the South of Forest Area (SOFA) Plan."

AMENDMENT WITHDRAWN BY THE MAKER

Council Member Kou requested public comment be allowed at the beginning and end of Working Group meetings.

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Council Member DuBois asked if Staff could accommodate the request.

Mr. Lait advised that he would attempt to enhance public participation in meetings. Staff had recently increased the length of Working Group meetings to three hours so that the Working Group could complete its process.

Parker Mankey, NVCAP Member, requested the public write all their comments in emails to the NVCAP Working Group so that the public would not have to condense their comments into two minutes. Members did read their emails.

AMENDMENT: Council Member Kou moved, seconded by Council Member XX to enhance oral communications at the NVCAP meetings.

AMENDMENT FAILED DUE TO THE LACK OF A SECOND

Mr. Holzemer believed the Working Group should follow the SOFA process to ensure community involvement in the process. A PAUSD representative could be an advisory member to the Working Group.

Mayor Filseth asked Staff to include a PAUSD representative in the process.

Mr. Lait reiterated that PAUSD could be involved through the City/School Liaison Committee meetings.

Mayor Filseth suggested Staff involve a PAUSD representative more closely than one meeting per month.

Doria Summa, NVCAP Member and Planning and Transportation Commissioner, proposed the Working Group hold more meetings, specifically a meeting for residents familiar with the SOFA process to share their experiences. The Working Group could be doing more.

Council Member Tanaka wanted to see a bold scenario for the NVCAP area. He requested the consequences of removing the playing fields from open space.

Mr. Lait replied none.

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Council Member Tanaka agreed with encouraging the development of small offices, but not necessarily medical offices.

MOTION PASSED: 6-0 Kniss absent

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 9:31 P.M.