



**City of Santa Rosa  
City Council Priority Setting Workshop  
Held August 3 and 4, 2020**

**August 2020**



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## Workshop Report

The City of Santa Rosa held a City Council and executive team special meeting on Monday, August 3 and Tuesday, August 4, 2020. The Monday meeting was held from 4:00 to 9:30 p.m. and was focused on hearing from the public. The Tuesday meeting was a Council priority setting session, and was held from 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

The August 4 session provided an opportunity for the Council and executive staff to reflect on major items and projects to focus on in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting economic recession, determine how best to support residents through the recession, and identify top priorities in addition to crisis response priorities. This report contains a summary of the results of the priority setting session.

Greg Larson, Partner at Management Partners, facilitated the workshop. Sam Lieberman, Principal Management Analyst at Management Partners, assisted on the workshop as well.

### ***Workshop Overview***

#### **Objectives**

- Obtain public input on issues facing the City of Santa Rosa
- Review prior adopted Council priorities
- Select a limited number of priorities to guide the City's work
- Strengthen teamwork of the City Council and staff

#### **Participants**

##### ***City Council***

- Mayor Tom Schwedhelm
- Vice Mayor Victoria Fleming
- Councilmember Chris Rogers
- Councilmember Richard Dowd
- Councilmember Ernesto Olivares
- Councilmember John Sawyer
- Councilmember Jack Tibbetts

**Staff**

- City Manager, Sean McGlynn
- City Attorney, Sue Gallagher
- Assistant City Manager/Operations and Transportation, Jason Nutt
- Assistant City Manager/Community Development and Engagement, David Guhin
- City Clerk, Stephanie Williams
- Fire Chief, Tony Gossner
- Interim Chief Financial Officer, Alan Alton

**Agenda**

<p><b>Agenda: Day 1</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Welcome from the Mayor</li><li>• Comments from the City Manager</li><li>• Public comments</li><li>• Wrap up</li></ul>	<p><b>Agenda: Day 2</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Welcome from the Mayor and City Manager</li><li>• Review objectives and agenda for the day</li><li>• Updates on previously adopted Council priorities</li><li>• Presentation on organizational constraints</li><li>• Council review, discussion, and direction on priorities</li><li>• Follow-up on other 2019 workshop direction</li><li>• Wrap up and next steps</li></ul>
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**Workshop Ground Rules**

At the start of the workshop, the facilitator suggested several ground rules to help the group have a successful workshop.



- Listen to understand
- Assume good intent
- Executive team to share views
- Speak up if we need course correction

**Bike Rack.** The facilitator explained that items that were brought up but could not receive immediate attention would be added to a “bike rack.” However, no items were added to the bike rack during this session.

## ***Day 1 Session***

### **Opening Comments**

#### ***Mayor Schwedhelm***

Mayor Schwedhelm convened the City Council meeting and asked for the roll call, with all Councilmembers present except for Council member Sawyer who had an unavoidable conflict. The Mayor also asked the City Clerk to present the process for gathering public comments this evening.

The Mayor's opening remarks focused on the importance of hearing from the public this evening to inform the City Council's deliberations the next day.

#### ***City Manager Sean McGlynn***

City Manager McGlynn discussed the Council's past practice of setting clear priorities to guide staff's work and how these challenging times make that work all the more important.

In addition, the City Manager highlighted two issues for Council's attention based on direction over the past several months:

- 1) An organization-wide focus on diversity, inclusion and equity to reflect both national and local recent conversations; and
- 2) Ensuring the fiscal health of the City given the revenue reductions resulting from the pandemic.

### **Public Comment Summary**

Over 100 public comments were received through live dial-in testimony, played audio messages, and read emails and letters. Most all were directly focused on the Council's priority setting discussions the next day.

Approximately three-quarters included statements in support of making deployment of a municipal fiber-to-the-curb utility as a preferred network alternative to privately installed 5-G aerial antennas, as well as updating the City's telecommunications policies.

The remaining speakers focused on a wide array of topics including neighborhood improvements remaining from the Tubbs wildfire, economic development, homelessness, affordable housing, Black Lives Matter and police reform.

Approximately 20 speakers on many different topics highlighted potential use of the PG&E wildfire settlement funds as resources to apply towards the issues they were speaking about.

## ***Day 2 Session***

### **Opening Comments**

#### ***Mayor Schwedhelm***

The workshop began with a roll call and welcome from Mayor Schwedhelm, who thanked the public for their thoughtful comments on the previous day and thanked staff for attending. He stated the importance of having priorities and being focused due to the pandemic and economic unknowns.

#### ***City Manager Sean McGlynn***

The City Manager thanked his colleagues and encouraged Councilmembers to identify priorities that are focused and carefully considered.

He also encouraged Council to add fiscal sustainability and organization diversity, equity and inclusion as tier one priorities. He also informed Council that staff is looking for direction on how to obtain public input on the use of the PG&E settlement funds.

### **Current Department Priorities and Issues**

The city manager, assistant city managers, interim chief financial officer, and fire chief each gave updates on previously adopted council priorities to inform Council on their progress.

Highlights of their comments follow.



#### **Fire Chief Tony Gossner**

- Station 5: Actively purchasing property to move this station; working with various organizations is a slow but meaningful process to obtain a permanent station
- NOAA Radios: Received a \$350,000 FEMA grant to purchase these radios which can be activated at the city's request for severe weather incidents; will hand out radios to residents in various impacted areas; creating a request for proposals to purchase radios with the hope of delivering them by the end of 2020.
- Evacuation Planning:
  - Many departments are coordinating on a "Know Your Way Out" campaign which ties into the "Know Your Alerts" campaign.
  - The county received a two-year \$90,000 grant for "Zone Haven" which is an evacuation planning tool. The City is working with the county to get the city mapped into the tool.

- A monthly alert warning committee with county officials continues to meet and an after-action committee has been developed to review alerts sent and to continually improve the process.
- Vegetation Management: The City currently does not have a vegetation management plan. Vegetation management would keep grasses mowed, trees trimmed and keep vegetation away from houses. The fire prevention division will draft a vegetation management plan.

**Alan Alton, Interim Chief Financial Officer**

- Ongoing structural deficit: Hired a consultant to assist with reviewing and revising the long-range financial forecast to ensure assumptions moving forward are accurate and will be revising the forecast to update for recession impacts.
- Rebuilding reserves: The fire incident in 2017 drew down reserves significantly. The 2018 sales tax that passed helped rebuild the reserves, however the pandemic induced recession has once again depleted reserves.

**Jason Nutt, Assistant City Manager/Operations and Transportation**

- Finalized Tubbs fire recovery negotiations with FEMA
- New parks development almost complete and ready to open
- Working on some appeals regarding damaged pavement due to debris removal
- Attempting to find additional funding for fire station 5
- Deferred maintenance plan
  - About \$60M annual shortfall to keep facilities in “good” condition.
  - About \$6-\$7M annual shortfall in pavement condition index deferred maintenance
  - Five-year capital improvement plan is under development
  - Accessibility transportation plan needs updating
- Roseland library operations and funding: Working with the library district to develop a solutions-based deliverable; evaluating sites in the southwest for a new library facility; new structure could cost \$22M; updating the current facility will cost around \$10M; leasing another building is around \$300,000 annually

**David Guhin, Assistant City Manager/Community Development and Engagement**

- Fire rebuild: 83% of homes in process of being rebuilt; 47% completed
- Comprehensive Housing Strategy: Downtown specific plan on its way to Council for approval; rental assistant program is looking for funding sources; working with the state on housing allocation funding; working on updating neighborhood revitalization program
- Two-tiered work plan to address homelessness sustaining programs, partnerships
- Climate Action Plan: Have moved to 100% renewable; electric busses getting purchased
- Minimum wage ordinance passed and went into effect July 1. Working on CPI increase
- Mobile Home Rent Increase Ordinance: Released RFP but did not get proposals; this effort has been paused for now but will be revisited
- Affordable Childcare: Creating a pilot program with partners to identify funding for grants for home-based sitters, additional training for certifications, and finding new locations for sitters
- Cannabis: Facilities continue to open up; 41 places open with 18 under review; have seen a \$100,000 sales tax increase over the prior year

**Sean McGlynn, City Manager**

- No progress to report on City Charter review
- Tier 3 progress as outlined in Council packet
- Public safety subcommittee has held one meeting and another is scheduled
- Community Engagement and Outreach – what does council want included? Especially in terms of PG&E settlement dollars
- Organizational Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion will be a significant lift; hoping to have a commitment from council on prioritizing this

## ***Discussion of Organizational Constraints***

Facilitator Greg Larson led a discussion about the organizational constraints facing any jurisdiction. He noted that 85% of most cities' time and resources are spent on ongoing responsibilities, leaving only 15% for new initiatives or projects.

Consequently, the Council's highest priorities should be clearly specified so that they can be achieved during the timeframe established by the Council.



Greg also introduced the five elements of organizational capacity:

- Staff Capacity – The amount of time staff and supervisors spend on day-to-day services and how much time is left over for high priority projects.
- Financial Capacity – The amount of money devoted to day-to-day services and is available for special projects.
- Council Capacity and Clarity – The amount of time Council spends on ongoing policy setting, financial review, constituent matters, and land use items with the remainder available for new and high priority initiatives.
- Community Capacity – The level of community engagement, community divisiveness and complexity of community issues.
- External Dynamics – State mandates, regional competition, state legislation, economic challenges and other forces beyond the City's control.

Members of the Council mentioned it was helpful to understand the organization's capacity to undertake new initiatives and priorities.

It was also noted for Council's information that some efforts require substantial staff focus and attention in the beginning until they are engrained into the organization's normal operations. Examples include recovering from an economic collapse such as the Great Recession or the COVID-19 pandemic, refocusing the organization on diversity and equity, or reforming police priorities and human services funding and response.

## ***Discussion of Priorities***

The first part of the discussion included a recap of interviews with Council that were conducted in March 2020 for the priority setting workshop and follow-up interviews conducted in July for the COVID financial planning project. The Council was also presented with the results of their virtual dot-voting over the prior week to frame the initial discussion of potential Tier 1 and Tier 2 priorities, as defined in prior years.



- **Tier 1:** Council's top priorities; will receive primary attention
- **Tier 2:** Projects that will receive attention as resources permit

### **Agreed Upon City Council Priorities for FY 2020-21**

The Mayor then asked each Council member, in turn, to respond to the possible Council priorities and their relative placement on the priority tiers. This discussion identified a general reluctance among Councilmembers to reduce the ranking of previously adopted priorities while at the same time recognizing new and emerging issues that had to be addressed as well.

Consequently, the facilitator proposed establishing a new category of short-term priorities in response to three simultaneous current crises: public health due to COVID-19, economic fallout from the pandemic, and calls for police service prioritization and reform. This led to a new tier system and the following priorities for the next six to eight months.

- ***Crises Response Priorities***
  - Economic Resiliency, including Childcare
  - Homelessness
  - Public Safety Priorities and Reform
  - Organizational Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
  - Fiscal Stability, Funding and Services
- ***Tier 1 – Continuing Priorities***
  - Climate Change
  - Housing and Affordable Housing
  - Government and Council Reform
- ***Possible Future Priorities***

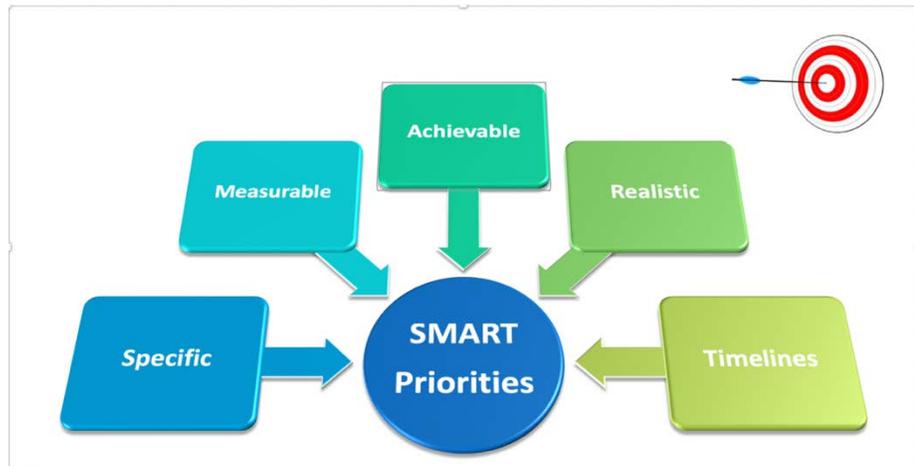
These were not established as part of the Council's Tier 1 priorities but were noted as important for future discussions.

- 2017 Recovery and Resilience
- Family Friendly City
- Community Engagement and Outreach
- Utilities Infrastructure and Rates Planning
- Focus on Deferred Maintenance

### Follow Up Steps for Council Priorities

A City Council ad hoc committee will work with the City Manager and staff to define specifics and success metrics for the Crisis Response and Tier 1 priorities and return to the Council for review and discussion.

The purpose of this follow-up work is to ensure that there are clear expectations for all parties about what specifically will move forward and be accomplished within each of the priorities given limited time, resources and staff capacity, as discussed previously.



### PG&E Settlement Funds

A discussion ensued on how best to engage the public and determine the uses of the PG&E settlement funds. The Mayor suggested that the Long-Range Financial Planning Committee develop recommendations and present those to Council for discussion and direction.

Councilmember Tibbetts reminded Council that they need to focus on realistic construction and operating costs, as well as the need of neighborhoods specifically impacted by the fire emergency.

There was Council consensus to have the Long-Range Financial Planning Committee develop recommendations for Council consideration regarding the process and use of PG&E settlement funds.

## ***Closing Comments for Day 2***

The Mayor and City Councilmembers offered an array of closing comments, including:

- Appreciation for the process, collaboration, and facilitation
- Satisfaction with the end result and prioritization
- Session went as well as possible given constraints of Zoom
- Desire to return to face-to-face workshops in the future with more staff engagement
- Public feedback the night before was helpful
- Given Council districting, funding and/or staffing will be needed to respond to constituent concerns
- Looking forward to future discussion about the use of the PG&E settlement funds
- Need to set realistic timetables for each priority

## ***Next Steps***

The follow up to the workshop will be:

- This workshop report prepared
- Ad-hoc committee to work with staff on timelines and metrics for each priority
- Long-Range Financial Planning Committee to propose PG&E settlement funds process

