

**City of Cupertino  
City Council Workshop  
Held February 6, 2021**

**February 2021**

**Management  
Partners**





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## Workshop Report

The City of Cupertino held a City Council workshop on Saturday, February 6, 2021 from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. via Zoom. The workshop provided an opportunity for Council members and the City Manager to review governance structures and roles, discuss high performance governance and Council norms, strengthen Council-staff teamwork, and create a consensus about the City's work plan modifications for the coming two years. This report contains a summary of the results of the retreat.

Rod Gould, Senior Partner, and Christine Butterfield, Senior Manager with Management Partners facilitated the workshop.



### **Workshop Overview**

#### **Objectives**

- Strengthen trust and effectiveness of the City Council.
- Develop a Council agreement on norms for working together, with staff and the community.
- Clarify roles of the City of Cupertino governance structure.
- Update and agree upon the phasing of the City's work program due to the COVID-19 pandemic crisis.

#### **Agenda**

- Welcome and call to order by the Mayor.
- Public comments
- Comments from the City Manager

- Agenda review
- Ice breaker exercise
- Discuss Cupertino governance structure and roles
- Discuss high performance governance and Council norms
- Refine phasing of City work plan
- Review hanging issues and commitments
- Wrap up and next steps

### Participants

#### *City Council*

**Mayor  
Darcy Paul**



**Vice Mayor  
Liang Chao**



**Councilmember  
Kitty Moore**



**Councilmember  
Hung Wei**



**Councilmember  
Jon Willey**



#### *Executive Management Staff*

- City Manager Deb Feng

### **Workshop Preparation**

In preparation for the workshop, the facilitators met with the Assistant City Manager and City Manager to discuss the workshop objectives, facilitator's agenda and PowerPoint presentation.

### ***Welcome and Opening Comments***

Mayor Paul called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. and welcomed Councilmembers, the City Manager, and the public to the meeting. The Mayor invited public comments before opening the workshop. City Manager Deb Feng then offered some opening comments about the importance of the day's discussions.

Following the City Manager's comments, Rod Gould provided an overview of the day to help develop a shared understanding of the purpose and objectives of the workshop. He reviewed the ground rules, agenda, and the "bike rack." The bike rack would be used to record items raised during the workshop that would be addressed at another time.

Rod suggested several ground rules to help the group have a successful workshop.



- Keep video on
- Mute yourself when you are not speaking
- Assume good intent
- Be curious
- Seek consensus
- Stay focused (set aside electronic devices)

### ***Ice Breaker Exercise***

The facilitators led an ice breaker exercise to provide an opportunity for the Councilmembers and City Manager to learn more about each other. Each participant shared the following two things about themselves; a summary of what was shared is provided in Table 1 below.

1. Communication style
2. Decision making process

Table 1. *Communication and Decision-Making Styles*

Councilmember	Summary
<b>Mayor Paul</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Listens to understand</li><li>• Clarifies rationale and priorities</li><li>• Open to all parties' interests</li></ul>
<b>Vice Mayor</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Direct communicator and likes to delve into details</li><li>• Analyzes information</li><li>• Focus on what is best for residents</li></ul>
<b>Councilmember Willey</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Listens more</li><li>• Careful to send the right message</li><li>• Not quick to jump into the dialogue</li><li>• Represents the views of the community balance</li></ul>
<b>Councilmember Wei</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Favorite way to communicate is face to face</li><li>• Applies the law, a rational approach and compassion</li><li>• Stand by Council decisions (not just personal positions)</li></ul>
<b>Councilmember Moore</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Straight forward</li><li>• Defensible arguments</li><li>• She will bring up raise tough issues – “the elephant in the room”</li></ul>





## ***Governance Roles and Responsibilities***

To better understand the roles of the key players in local government, the group spent some time reviewing the roles and responsibilities of the Council, Mayor, city manager, commissions/committees, city attorney, and staff. The facilitators noted the importance of respecting others' roles, in order to be the most effective and productive City Council possible.



Rod explained the partnership between Council and staff; policy versus administrative domains; the role of commissions and committees, and the relationships between all major players within City government. The Councilmembers reviewed best practices for good and effective governance, and discussed civility, tone, and examined the distinction between policy versus administrative roles using the example for public expenditures and government contracting.

Rod asked the City Manager what she needs from Council, in order to be successful. Ms. Feng shared that in terms of communications, she needs the following:

- To *hear* more about:
  - Emerging issues, and
  - Gather the questions and comments that Councilmembers collect from the community.
- *Since November 2019* when the last Council workshop was held, the City Manager has observed improvements in the relationships across the City's governance roles.
- *Changes triggered by the pandemic include:*
  - Decrease in interpersonal interfaces with the public and Council,

- Relationship building is more difficult, and
- Increased focus on operations by the Council, with too much focus on administration which is the responsibility of the City Manager.

Rod then asked Council about what their reactions to the City Manager's comments. Council offered the following feedback:

- Things are going well, and it is much better than under the previous City Manager. More work is needed to ensure that staff understands they are here to serve the residents and "we need to be sure decisions are made in collaboration with residents."
- Treat the City Manager as a mentor.
- Happy with Deb's candor.
- Continue to develop trust between Council and staff and explore how we build communication and bridge relations with staff.
- Would like to receive updates about what is not working well.
- Communicate more information to Council.
- Council communication must go through the City Manager and interested in the view of Council from staff's perspective.
- City Council/staff partnership missing.
- Deb inherited an organization characterized as a "train wreck."
- Ramifications of lawsuit persist. Previous City Manager left the state, two assistant city managers departed and planning, and parks and recreation staff also left. Staff was abused by a project manager and developer. There are still lingering trust issues.
- Deb is doing beautifully.
- Interested in heightening efficiency.
- It's not about efficiency; it's really about serving people well; it's a push-pull between those two principles.
- Interested in greater accountability.
- City staff need to understand basic legal regulations in the City.
- Ensure that when new codes are considered by Council that the versions and changes are well documented through various readings.

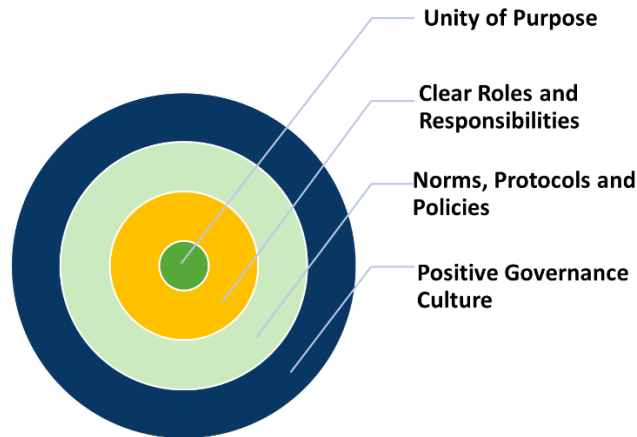
At the close of the conversation, Deb reminded the Council that staff has developed a work plan dashboard to improve project status information.

## **High Performance Governance and Council Norms**

Rod led the group in developing a shared understanding of high-performance governance and Council norms. The Council and City Manager reviewed two articles from the *Institute for Local Government* (ILG) and discussed examples of Council norms and another regarding Council goal setting authored by Rod Gould.

Rod explained that how the Council works together as a body and plays a critical role in the effectiveness of the City's strategic direction, staff performance and motivation, and regional influence. In addition, the group reviewed the four essential elements for effective Councils, as shown in Figure 1 below.



*Figure 1. Elements of Effective Councils*



After reviewing communication tips, ways to disagree with a colleague, and how best to build professional relationships, Council reviewed the self-assessment survey results. A summary of the survey is presented on the slide below.

## Council Self-Assessment Summary

- **We do our best work as a Council when we...**
  - Are provided background information and given time to ask questions
  - Have simple tasks
  - Listen to different perspectives with an open mind
  - Have a clear goal
  - Stand by collective decisions made by the Council
- **We could improve as a Council in the following area...**
  - Building consensus
  - Running effective and efficient meetings
  - Presuming good intentions
  - Building relationships with staff to enhance trust
  - If the City Manager placed more importance on the requests of the members of the Council

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Rod posed the following three questions to the group.

- What was surprising?
- What do we do well?
- What do we need to work on?

A summary of the discussion among Councilmembers is provided below.

Councilmembers offered that the Mayor runs a great meeting and that the results of the assessment appear consistent with their experience so far. In addition, the group discussed the idea of building flexibility into the meeting agendas including conducting meetings in neighborhoods and being thoughtful about the room layout when planning for meetings as well as creating opportunities for the Council to reflect on their performance following decisions.

### **Council Norms**

Following the discussion about high-performance governance, the facilitators reviewed examples of typical Council norms. The group talked about which ones make sense for Cupertino, and how the norms should be operationalized. Rod explained that the next steps for the norms are to formally adopt them by resolution, then review and confirm or modify the norms on a regular basis.

Some of the Councilmembers like the flexibility of not having formally adopted norms and found the sample norms too restrictive. The Council decided to table the discussion and decision about Council norms for Cupertino for a future time.

## ***City Work Plan***

After a brief stretch break, the group reconvened to review and discuss the City's work plan.

Ms. Feng provided an overview of the work plan, discussed the COVID-19 crisis, and proposed to adjust the work plan time horizon from one year to two years to ensure the COVID-19 pandemic continues to receive the City's primary focus and attention.

The City Manager presented the FY 2019-20 projects that were delayed due to COVID-19. Following this presentation, she reviewed the FY 2020-21 work program and discussed which items were completed, and which were in-progress. These slides can be found in Attachment A.

The City Manager noted that the pandemic triggered unanticipated work and has impacted the City's work program. The Council discussed what must be done in the coming fiscal year, and what could be deferred to FY 2022-23 and/or FY 2023-24. The Council asked to review the work plan again at a future meeting to ensure that the public can participate and engage as the workshop agenda did not specifically list the work plan item.

## ***Wrap Up and Next Steps***

The City Manager committed to updating and distributing the City work program as well as follow up on the bike rack items identified by Council in the workshop to be addressed at another meeting. The topics are listed below.

### **Bike Rack**

The following items were added to the bike rack.

1. How and when is the right time for Council to dive into details of a policy, issue, questions, and explore options? Consider holding more study sessions and ensure that staff outlines the policy development and decision-making process in more detail.
2. Discuss changing staff reports to include an array of options for Council to consider as well as staff providing a specific recommendation.
3. How do other cities conduct Council policy analysis/review?
4. Cupertino should "raise the bar" by involving the community more in the review of policy issues.

To conclude the workshop, each Councilmember and the City Manager offered a closing comment or key takeaway from the day's discussions.

Rod indicated that Management Partners would prepare and submit this report. A summary of the closing comments that were offered is below.

- Need for involving more volunteers and connecting them to opportunities
- Council is aligned and so are staff
- Glad the prioritization process worked out
- Lots of listening
- Another half day workshop would be helpful

## Attachment A: City Work Program

### Review and Refine the City's Work Program

#### FY 2020-21 City Work Program

- **Completed**
  - Commissioner Handbook Update
  - Policies on Nonprofit Support
  - Public Infrastructure Financing Strategy
  - Review the City's Housing and Human Services Grant Funds
  - Study session on...ordinance...on banning gas-powered leaf blowers
  - Transportation to-from Service Providers
- **In Progress**
  - Affordable Housing Strategies
  - Blackberry Farm Golf Course Needs Assessment
  - Bollinger Road Safety Study
  - Climate Action Plan
  - Policies...to Regulate Mobile Service Vendors
  - Development Accountability
  - Dogs Off Leash Area (DOLA)
  - Emergency Services Continuity of Operations Plan
  - Engage Philanthropic Organizations...to build moderate-income and ELI housing units for Developmentally Disabled...



### Review and Refine the City's Work Program

#### FY 2020-21 City Work Program

- **In Progress (Continued)**
  - Established Preapproved ADU Plans
  - General Plan Authorization Process
  - Homeless Services and Facilities
  - Housing Program for De Anza College Students
  - Housing Survey
  - Investigate Alternatives to City Hall
  - Leadership Program
  - Municipal Water System
  - Parks & Recreation Strategic Plan
  - Pilot – Adaptive Traffic Signaling
  - Pilot – Multimodal Traffic Count
  - Pilot – Noise Measurement
  - Pilot – Online Store for City-Branded Items
  - Pilot – Pollution Monitoring
  - Pilot – Water Scheduling Based Moisture Content
  - Rancho Rinconada
  - Reducing Secondhand Smoke Exposure
  - Regional Transformative Transit Projects Initiative
  - Research Governor's pledge towards homelessness...
  - Residential and Mixed-Use Residential Design Standards
  - Review and Update General Plan



## Review and Refine the City's Work Program

### FY 2020-21 City Work Program

- **In Progress (Continued)**
  - Review Environmental Review Committee
  - Review Property Tax Share
  - Roadmap Project
  - Shuttle Bus Pilot Program Implementation
  - Sign Ordinance Update
  - Single-Use Plastics Ordinance
  - Small Business Development Center
  - Study Session for...RHNA
  - Study Session on Regulating Diversified Retail Use
  - Targeted Marketing Programs to Assist Small Businesses
  - Traffic Congestion Map and Identify Solutions
  - Two-Way Communication

