

CITY GOVERNMENT

CHARTER (Revised 2003)

Support of the principles of the charter of the City of Palo Alto in effect July 1968, and the Council-Manager form of government as embodied therein, with specific endorsements and exceptions as outlined in the objectives of this position.

OBJECTIVES

Support of:

1. Retention of the charter as a general document with specific details of government in the administrative code. Obsolete material should be removed. The code should specify current practice in election procedures.
2. Amendment of the charter to require all meetings, except executive sessions of council, council committees, and council-appointed boards, commissions, and committees to be open to the public, and that the agendas and minutes of these meetings be public record
3. Inclusion in the charter of guarantee that "No citizen shall be denied the right to attend and speak" at any of the meetings listed above
4. Present charter requirement that the council appoint an auditor
5. Present at-large method of election of city council members
6. Present council size of nine (9) members
7. Selection of mayor from council by council
8. Strong city manager government structure with no change in basic relationship between mayor and manager
9. Continued efforts of the council, council-appointed boards, commissions, and committees to improve communications with the citizenry
 - a) These bodies should take great care to observe the rules of procedure which govern them, and all members should be sensitive to the abuse of procedural rules.
 - b) Every letter (communication) addressed to the council should be duplicated and sent to all council members and also included in the public packet.
 - c) To help the audience understand topics under discussion at meetings, wall maps, ordinances, and letters concerning business at hand should be posted on the wall of the council chamber or meeting room and projected on the screen when possible.
 - d) The council should continue to publish the agenda in advance in the newspaper and electronic media and keep agendas, schedules, and minutes of meetings available to the public.
 - e) In order to avoid possible confusion, the procedural code should include a statement that after a motion is debated there shall be a call to restate the motion before voting.

Opposition to:

1. Any change in the charter which would place council-appointed officers under contract
2. Any change in Palo Alto's election date to coincide with any partisan election

PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION (Revised 2002)

Support of an open and fair selection process for members of the Planning and Transportation Commission.

OBJECTIVES

Support of:

1. Selection of planning commissioners by the entire city council after interview of all applicants by the council. Provisions for their selection should be clearly stated either in the municipal code or city charter
2. Publicizing of vacancies on the Planning & Transportation Commission and encouragement of nominations and applications

3. Consideration of each appointment to the Planning & Transportation Commission in terms of the make-up of the existing commission to avoid an occupational or geographic imbalance
4. Selection as planning commissioners persons who have demonstrated interest in the total community and have time to carry out the job

ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD (1971, revised 1996)

Support of an architectural review board to provide effective city-wide architectural review.

OBJECTIVES

Support of:

1. Continuation of an architectural review board whose charge shall include design review of all buildings other than single family houses and duplexes
2. Including in the membership of the board an architect and a landscape architect as well as specially qualified lay people

CITY FINANCE (1988, modified 2017)

- I. Support of a financial structure for city government which recognizes public service as its prime objective; is equitable to those who pay; is prudently managed and reasonably flexible in application.**
- II. Support of maintenance of city services and programs at the highest level possible under budget constraints. Support of the concept of raising reliable revenues as efficiently as necessary to meet these needs.**

OBJECTIVES

Support of:

1. Evaluation by the city council of current programs to determine their conformance to the needs of a changing community
2. Evaluation of ALL programs and services as they interrelate before cutbacks are considered
3. A thorough examination of both current operation and capital expenditures prior to proposing either a substantial increase in revenues from current sources or the tapping of new sources of revenue to finance operating expenditures. The aim of such an examination should be to assure citizens that all possible economies are being affected without impairment of the desired level of service.
4. Raising of revenues, if necessary, by a variety of methods, including, but not limited to the redistribution of the state sales tax, the utility users tax with lifeline rates, and user fees with consideration for special circumstances such as age, residency, and income
5. User fees which are cost effective and economically feasible to collect
 - a) Non-resident fees should be higher than those for Palo Alto residents. Fees should not inflict a hardship on Palo Alto residents.
 - b) User fees should not necessarily be expected to cover the complete cost of a program (administration and/or capital costs).
 - c) There should be an annual review of user fees to determine if they are reasonable and/or counter-productive (e.g., high building permit fees, resulting in illegal building).
6. Raising utility rates as the cost to the city of utilities rises, but not to the point of surrounding private utility rates. As utility income transfer to the city diminishes, there could be cutbacks in programs, if necessary.
7. Adjusting utility rates to support infrastructure as conservation and alternative energy use increase. A life-line rate must be provided, however.

- III. Support of a budget formation process which promotes efficient staff operations, extensive legislative review, and citizen participation and involvement.**

OBJECTIVES

Support of:

1. An active role by the council early in the budgeting process, including meaningful budget guidelines
2. An active role by the City Auditor as the council's budget advisor during budget review proceeding.
3. An active role by the planning and transportation commission in the formulation of the capital improvement program
4. City actions to encourage citizen attendance and participation in budget and capital improvement program study and review sessions
5. Presentation of the budget and the annual financial report in a form which promotes council and citizen understanding and permits meaningful evaluation of them, including an annual financial report format which allows for direct comparison to the budget

PALO ALTO COMPREHENSIVE PLAN (1986, revised 1994)

Support of a process which keeps the Palo Alto Comprehensive Plan, including its Land use map up to date and reflective of the desires of the community.

OBJECTIVES

Support of:

1. Maximum opportunity for public input at all stages of the planning process (including, without limitation, neighborhood or town meetings with record of public input; workshops, public hearings; surveys on specific, well-defined issues)
2. Adequate publicity for all meetings
3. Availability to the public of staff reports and other appropriate documents with adequate lead time before meetings (at least 10 days to 2 weeks)
4. Use of citizen committees to address specific problems
 - a) Balanced representation of all interests (with non-resident property owners and workers included when appropriate, if clearly identified as such)
 - b) Selection of members by more than one individual (including, without limitation, one or two persons selected by each council member; representatives selected by appropriate groups such as neighborhood associations, business associations, civic groups, interested volunteers)
 - c) Definite, well-defined charge which is clearly understood by committee members and the public
 - d) Provision for feedback on reports and/or recommendations and follow-through with revisions as necessary
 - e) Provision for non-committee members to be permitted to speak at committee meetings
5. Use of special studies which focus on specific areas or issues when needs or problems are identified by the city council, the planning & transportation commission, city staff, or citizens

COOPERATIVE WORKING RELATIONSHIPS (1981, revised 1994)

I. Support of cooperation between the City of Palo Alto and other jurisdictions, agencies, and contractors to provide services and programs for the citizens of the area, when such cooperative arrangements meet one or more of certain specified criteria. Those criteria are:

1. Are cost effective, efficient, and/or reduce unnecessary duplication
2. Provide a solution to problems which go beyond local boundaries
3. Make better use of existing expertise, equipment, and/or facilities
4. Allow for adequate local control to insure strong community support
5. Promote increased communication and understanding among jurisdictions (elected officials, staff, citizens)
6. Encourage the use of volunteers

II. Support of the following as city policy: When a service is needed which the City of Palo Alto cannot provide by itself, the City's role is to see that the needs of its residents are met

by working in cooperation with other jurisdictions, agencies or contractors including non-profit groups or private individuals.

PALO ALTO EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PLAN (1998)

Support of the City of Palo Alto Emergency Management Plan for utilization in all disasters.

OBJECTIVES

Support of:

1. Early approval by the city council of the 1998 update of the Emergency Management Plan
2. Adequate funding in annual budgets
3. Early and continuous staff training
4. Ongoing citizen education and continuing citizen training as defined in the Emergency Management Plan update
5. Cooperation with other agencies, cities, region, and state
6. Effective communication systems with residents including:
 - a. a community early warning system
 - b. rapid dissemination of accurate instructions and information, and
 - c. timely access to emergency information