



**Minutes**  
**Town of Atherton**  
**June 4, 2014**  
**4:00 P.M.**

**City Council Chambers**  
94 Ashfield Ave  
Atherton, California

**City Council Study Session**

**Mayor Wiest called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.**

**ROLL CALL**          Wiest, DeGolia, Lewis, Widmer

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

**STUDY SESSION**

**1.          5-YEAR CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM**

**Report:** City Manager George Rodericks

**Recommendation:** Review, discuss, and provide feedback regarding proposed projects, programs and funding for the 5-Year Capital Improvement Program

City Manager Rodericks presented the 5-Year CIP. The 5-Year CIP is a planning tool that identifies anticipated capital improvements and their funding sources over the next 5 years. The CIP does not appropriate funding; rather, it functions as a budgeting and planning tool. Funding is appropriated only for the current year as part of the annual budget adoption process.

The CIP is updated annually to reflect the latest community priorities, updated project cost estimates and available revenue sources. The CIP projects were selected on the following factors:

- Implementation of the Town's General Plan Guidelines;
- Council and Community Priorities;
- Implementation of accepted and approved Master Plans;
- Implementation of facilities planning and priorities;
- Ability to improve transportation deficiencies and congestion;
- Maintenance needs and safety of roadways;
- Drainage facilities enhancement needs; and
- Availability of funding

The 5-Year CIP identifies the highest priority capital needs that can be addressed within the available and forecasted revenue. Along with annual infrastructure improvement projects (street sealing, patching, traffic safety and other routine projects), the 5-Year CIP includes placeholder projects from the Drainage and Bike | Pedestrian Master Plans. It is anticipated that once the Plans are ultimately adopted there may well be some very significant projects on the horizon for the Council's policy and priority consideration (Tier II and Tier III projects). These projects will require significant financial commitments from the Town. It is anticipated that the Council will need to make policy and priority determinations and potentially solicit community input.

Staff selected a few of the projects to discuss during the Study Session. The Council was generally supportive of the 5-Year CIP recognizing that projects listed in future years were placeholders for the Master Plans. The Council suggested that the proposal for Gateway Signs along El Camino Real be eliminated and that funding for Park Improvement Projects be doubled. Further, the Council suggested that staff include funding in a future year to begin conversations around quad gates at the railway tracks on Watkins Avenue.

**2. UPDATE OF EL CAMINO REAL EFFORTS WITH CALTRANS**

**Report:** Community Services Director Mike Kashiwagi

**Recommendation:** Review and Discuss

Staff presented the report summarizing recent activities. Progress has been made and some of the improvements have already been implemented or are in the planning/design phase.

Enhanced crosswalk signing and striping improvements have been provided at the 5 marked crosswalk locations (Selby Lane, Stockbridge Avenue, Almendral Avenue, Isabella Avenue, Alejandra Avenue) and Caltrans will continue to refresh the signing and striping as needed.

The Town will continue to trim and remove vegetation within the landscape medians as needed. Caltrans has agreed to allow the use of Pedestrian Hybrid Beacons rather than the Rapid Flashing Beacon as originally proposed. Staff favors the Pedestrian Hybrid Beacon since it is designed to stop vehicles through a series of steady and flashing yellow and red lights. The hybrid beacon operates much like a traffic signal. Pedestrians activate the beacon when ready to cross, otherwise the beacon is dark and motorists proceed as usual. Staff has been successful getting two crosswalk locations included in a Caltrans Crosswalk Enhancement Project in San Mateo County. This project is currently in the environmental review stage and includes pedestrian hybrid beacons at Isabella Avenue and Alejandra Avenue.

This project is entirely State funded. Environmental review is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2015. Construction is scheduled to begin in late 2016. Therefore, it is anticipated that the pedestrian hybrid signals within Atherton will be under construction in 2017.

Per Caltrans, the intersection of Selby Lane and El Camino Real meets criteria for the installation of a traffic signal. Caltrans will only contribute 50% of the cost for a traffic signal since two legs of this intersection are outside of their jurisdictional control. One leg is within the Town of Atherton and the other leg lies within San Mateo County. The need and support for a traffic signal at Selby was discussed by City Council at the December 18, 2013 meeting. At that time, the City Council did not support construction of a traffic signal due to concerns of increased traffic on Selby resulting from a new traffic signal as well as the required contribution towards construction. At the February 5, 2014 Study Session, the City Council discussed potential traffic calming measures but chose to not move forward with a study due to staff assessment that there were limited options available to effectively reduce vehicle volumes and speeds and that the better ultimate solution was the narrowing of lanes on El Camino Real or restrictions to left turn movements. Staff was directed to investigate these options further and report back to the Council.

Staff believes the primary factor contributing to accidents is poor visibility due to heavy vegetation in the median and the opposing left turn lanes on El Camino Real. Staff recently met with Caltrans to discuss potential solutions to improve visibility and operations at this

intersection. Staff and Caltrans believe the visibility and operations of this intersection would be improved by eliminating one of the left turn movements. However, doing so would impact access into an existing residential area. Caltrans would also need to perform an operational analysis of the existing traffic signal at 5th Avenue and El Camino Real to determine the feasibility of this option.

Caltrans and the Town agree that developing a plan for the entire 1.6 mile segment of El Camino Real would be the most effective and comprehensive approach to improving pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular safety. The reduction of travel lanes from six lanes to four lanes would improve pedestrian safety by decreasing crossing distance and would also reduce vehicular speeds. The lane reduction would also provide additional space within the right of way to install pedestrian portals within the existing medians as well as Class I bicycle/pedestrian facilities. It is also acknowledged that these types of changes would be very costly to study and construct and would require the participation and agreement of a number of stakeholders including adjacent jurisdictions who may be impacted by the reduction in travel lanes – it was noted by the Council that the Town needs to begin conversations with these stakeholder jurisdictions soon in the process. These stakeholder jurisdictions include Menlo Park Fire District, Redwood City, the County of San Mateo, and Menlo Park.

Staff met with Caltrans to outline a process for moving forward. Caltrans indicated that a necessary next step is to perform an operational analysis to determine impacts of the travel lane reduction. It is anticipated that the consultant and staff cost to perform this work would be in the range of \$80K - \$120K. The funding was included in the Town's 5-Year CIP. The Council expressed support for moving forward with the caveat that we include stakeholder jurisdictions in the discussion early on in the process.

**3. PARCEL TAX DISCUSSION**  
**Report:** City Manager George Rodericks  
**Recommendation:** Review and Discuss

Staff provided the Council with a summary of some of the major items in the 5-Year CIP funded by the Town's Parcel Tax. Staff presented the Council with two scenarios for setting the FY 2014/15 parcel tax rate. Both scenarios included identical capital improvements; however, one of the scenarios provided for a 25% reduction in the parcel tax rate for FY 2014/15 with the rate returning to normal in the remaining years.

The final decision on the rate to be imposed for the Parcel Tax will be made at the June 18 City Council meeting. The discussion revolved around the following options:

- 1) Impose the Parcel Tax at its full rate for FY 2014/15
  - a. Determine that there are priority projects on the horizon with costs that will exceed available revenues and that given the Town's known funding resources, the Parcel Tax will need to be used to fund these projects.
  - b. "Bank" the Parcel Tax funds moving forward to "save – then spend" the funds on priority qualifying projects.

- 2) Impose the Parcel Tax at a lesser rate for FY 2014/15.
  - a. Determine that in FY 2014/15, the identified capital project need has a revenue requirement that most closely mirrors a 25% reduction in the parcel tax.
  - b. Determine that while there are priority projects on the horizon, the exact projects and costs have not yet been determined.
  - c. Determine that while that Town takes the time to identify and prioritize these future capital projects, the rate for FY 2014/15 can be reduced by up to 25% without impact to the capital project needs for that fiscal year.

The Council discussed the merits of reducing the tax rate versus keeping the tax rate constant in order to plan and save for future capital projects in the areas of drainage and streets/roads. The consensus of the Council was to leave the tax rate constant with the understanding that every year the Council must go through the same analysis of revenues against needed expenditures. The final decision on the rate to be imposed for the Parcel Tax will be made at the June 18 City Council meeting.

**ADJOURN**

Mayor Wiest adjourned the meeting at 5:55 p.m.

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Theresa DellaSanta  
City Clerk**