

Town of Los Altos Hills City Council Special Meeting Minutes

Tuesday February 28, 2023

Council Chambers, 26379 Fremont Road, Los Altos Hills, California

Present: Mayor Linda Swan, Vice Mayor Stanley Q. Mok, Councilmember Lisa Schmidt, Councilmember George Tyson, Councilmember Kavita Tankha

Absent:

Staff: City Manager Peter Pirnejad, City Attorney Steve Mattas, Administrative Services Director Sarina Revillar, Management Analyst II Cody Einfalt

CALL TO ORDER (6:00 P.M.)

- A. Roll Call
- B. Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor Swan called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

1. PRESENTATIONS FROM THE FLOOR

There were no presentations from the floor.

2. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Discussion and Potential City Council Action and Direction to Staff in Response to Residential Burglaries

Council Member Tankha explained that at the February 16, 2023, Regular City Council Meeting, an ad hoc subcommittee of the Council on town safety was formed. The subcommittee members are **Council Members Tankha** and **Tyson**. That subcommittee met yesterday, and in light of the fact that there have been four more residential burglaries since the February 16th City Council Meeting, decided to call a Special City Council Meeting for today.

At the last meeting, Council directed the Sheriff to add two deputies to the evening shift, 5:00 p.m. and 12:00 a.m., which is when most burglaries have taken place. The Sheriff's Office has not been able to fill these openings consistently. Deputies looking for additional hours may sign-up for these shifts, but it is not mandatory, so the Sheriff cannot guarantee that these two additional shifts will be filled each day.

The purpose of today's meeting is to explore options for keeping the town safer and reducing burglaries, and to receive direction for next steps.

Council Member Tyson suggested that the presentation by the City Manager and consultant be heard next.

City Manager Peter Pirnejad and **Consultant Bryan Uhler** shared a presentation entitled “*Burglaries: Preliminary Response Concepts/Options.*” **City Manager Pirnejad** gave an overview of **Mr. Uhler’s** experience and expertise and described the work and outreach that has been done since the subcommittee meeting.

Actions taken by the Town of Atherton which resulted in a reduction from 45 residential burglaries in one year to 16 in the next were reviewed. Short-, mid- and long-range options based on the Atherton Model were presented.

Council discussion ensued.

Public Comment

Helen Lin-Murphy, Los Altos Hills, asked if staff could look into improving response times and finding ways to influence the Sheriff’s priorities.

Dru Anderson, Los Altos Hills, suggested looking over various programs in town and using key pieces such as keeping properties clear 5 feet from the house like the Firewise guidelines to minimize hiding locations.

Courtenay C. Corrigan, Los Altos Hills, expressed that forming private neighborhood watch programs works if one has an organized neighborhood or the funds to hire private patrol. She was in favor of adding a detective due to the unique burglaries occurring.

Jim Waschura, Los Altos Hills, wanted to hear the Council’s opinion on the idea of a Public Safety Committee.

Homi Fatemi, Los Altos Hills, wants to look into State and Federal resources such as a detective to limit criminal activity.

Gary Patou, Los Altos Hills, said we need more law enforcement staff present and is in support of private patrol but believes it is the town’s responsibility.

Carol Gottlieb, Los Altos Hills, proposed that preventing parking on the pathways may reduce criminals’ ability to blend in.

Dorit Perry, Los Altos Hills, asked if burglaries occurred in vacant homes. She said that town should focus on response times. The Sheriff should focus on suspicious behavior and activities rather than traffic violations. She is in favor of hiring private security.

Shelley Osuch, Los Altos Hills, said that cameras in Carmel capture driver, car, and model and would like to see such advances in town. She was wondering if black out car tints were illegal and if the Sheriff could pull over cars with dark tints to deter criminal activity. Lastly, she mentioned notifying neighbors when burglaries occur is important to keep residents informed.

John M., Los Altos Hills, is in favor of a messaging system for residents. He believes the town needs about 6 deputies.

Rajiv Bhateja, Los Altos Hills, shared a presentation on ALPR. He is in favor of private patrol and having a private patrol car driving around town will be a deterrent. He proposed deploying decoy police cars that move from one place to another. He said that only 10 out of 51 burglaries in 2022 were investigated, which is less than 20%. He emphasized the need to find ways to better utilize ALPR system. He believes that we need a Public Safety Committee. He spoke to the CEO of Flock in hopes of scheduling training for deputies.

Kjell Karlsson, Los Altos Hills, said he is in favor of a Public Safety Committee. He recommended the town hire deputies based on three overtime hours rather than one full-time deputy so that their hours reflect the times we need them. Shifts of full-time deputy cannot be adjusted due to their union contract.

Jim Cruz, Los Altos Hills, is a victim of a burglary. He spoke regarding the Sheriff Department's handling of the burglary. He said that he remembered seeing motorcycle officers with rifles and believes that made a statement and were effective.

Captain Neil Valenzuela, Santa Clara County Sheriff Department, responded that the contracted response times are as follows: Priority one (ex: alarms) response time set for 9 minutes; Priority two (ex: identity theft, regular call for service) set for 14 minutes; and Priority three (ex: cold theft, parking complaint) set for 25 minutes.

City Manager Pirnejad explained where to find Sheriff reports in City Manager's Weekly report. The report includes every call made by the Sheriff deputies. He stated that the contract with the Sheriff Departments is on an hourly basis rather than shift basis. The Town of Los Altos Hills gets allocated a certain number of hours. Hours are assigned based on needs. Response times aren't measured from when the call is made. He recommended having the ALPR discussion at a future Council meeting.

MOTION MADE AND SECONDED: Vice Mayor **Mok** moved to have the Council appropriate \$150,000 from unrestricted reserves to the General Fund in order for the City Manager to elicit competitive bids and execute a contract not to exceed \$150,000 for private security. The motion was seconded by Councilmember **Tankha**.

MOTION PASSED 3-2:

AYES: Swan, Mok, Tankha
NOES: Schmidt, Tyson

ABSTAIN: None
RECUSE: None
ABSENT: None

MOTION MADE AND SECONDED: Councilmember **Tankha** moved to approve the City Manager to authorize to provide for and arrange for an additional 40 hours a week of detective time under the existing contract with an understanding that would be an overspend that would be paid to the Sheriff’s office on their normal payment schedule. The Sheriff’s office will periodically share reports on their findings. The motion was seconded by Vice Mayor **Mok**.

MOTION PASSED 5-0:

AYES: Swan, Mok, Schmidt, Tankha, Tyson
NOES: None
ABSTAIN: None
RECUSE: None
ABSENT: None

MOTION MADE AND SECONDED: Councilmember **Tankha** moved to authorize the subcommittee to work with staff and our consultant to send out postcards educating our residents about what they can do to secure their homes in the short term and to undertake the Community Outreach/Education Campaign (“Atherton Model”) described in the presentation. The City Manager will return to Council with any contracts associated with this that are beyond his signing authority. The motion was seconded by Vice Mayor **Mok**.

MOTION PASSED 5-0:

AYES: Swan, Mok, Schmidt, Tankha, Tyson
NOES: None
ABSTAIN: None
RECUSE: None
ABSENT: None

MOTION MADE AND SECONDED: Councilmember **Schmidt** moved that the Council add an additional Sheriff’s deputy when the contract with the Santa Clara County Sheriff Department is renegotiated. The motion was seconded by Councilmember **Tyson**.

MOTION PASSED 5-0:

AYES: Swan, Mok, Schmidt, Tankha, Tyson
NOES: None
ABSTAIN: None
RECUSE: None
ABSENT: None

3. **ADJOURN**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Deborah L. Padovan

Deborah Padovan
City Clerk

The minutes of the February 28, 2023, special City Council meeting were approved as presented at the March 16, 2023, regular City Council meeting.