

SJ Council Meeting, Fri 12/19/14, 1:30 PM
on appointment of temporary replacement for Kansen Chu's Council seat for D4
Informal notes by L.Ames

Agenda: <http://sanjoseca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/38623>

Video of the meeting: <http://www.sanjoseca.gov/index.aspx?nid=3398>

After various adds and drops, City Clerk reports that there are three candidates:

1. Bob Dhillon
2. Majorie McInnis Matthews
3. Robyn Shearin

They were interviewed in this sequence.

Only 6 councilmembers (CM) present at first (including Mayor Reed); later a 7th came. (Absent: Chu, Kalra, Rocha, Campos)

Initial discussion about amending the agenda to include discussion of replacement City Manager in closed session, but it would require unanimous vote and CM Pierluigi Oliverio (PLO) objects.

Council discussion about appropriateness of selecting D4 replacement on short notice. PLO objects; Majority rules to proceed.

Each candidate is interviewed in turn, with the others waiting in a remote location.

Candidate gives opening remarks, followed by questions.

PLO bombards first candidate with many questions. After nearly an hour, it looks as if he's going for a filibuster, so rest of Council votes to limit discussion to 5-minute turns, totaling no more than 1 hr each candidate.

PLO says that this is the only opportunity to find out if candidate is appropriate; they haven't even gone thru the standard vetting of any commission aspirant to check for conflict-of-interest.

While Mayor and various CMs do take turns asking questions, PLO asks the overwhelming majority, and most (all) are actually quite appropriate (see below).

Key question: do you plan to run for Council? A: Dhillon: yes; Matthews: no; Shearing: maybe, oh wait, "no".

After ~4 1/2 hours, public gets to talk. Mayor has D4 residents speak first, followed by rest. About a dozen speakers. Some speak on behalf of Matthews, others object to the process w/ varying degrees of frustration. (my are comments below). Speaker suggestions: Delay vote until new Council? Don't even fill the vacancy; have residents served by Staff.

Motion by Liccardo to appoint Matthews. Friendly Amendment to motion to not swear in the replacement until just before Jan 13th Council meeting, after Jan 9th filing deadline; won't be sworn in if files to run for office.

Discussion on how to phrase the question of the vote: PLO doesn't want to vote No on Matthews, but doesn't want to vote for the process. Finally motion is configured so that he could abstain. Pete Constant notes that the missing CMs were around to talk to the press before the Council session but were missing from the hearing and the vote.

Matthews is appointed to serve for D4, starting Jan 13th, by a vote of 6 yes, 1 (PLO) abstain, 4 absent.

[personal observation: Matthews seems like an excellent choice; only problem was w/ the process. Matthews served as CM for D4 (in the 1990's?), later went on to help lead Parks in LA, recently returned to SJ to retire. Volunteering, won't collect salary; has no further political ambitions. Not as up-to-date on current issues as the other candidates, but is ready to learn. All the CMs spoke positively of her before the vote, as did many of the public.]

Questions asked of the candidates. (These are the Qs that were asked of Shearin; the other 2 candidates were asked similar questions. Mayor asked the 1st, CM Constant asked some, Nguyen and Herrera asked a couple, vast majority by PLO)

- will you be a candidate for D4?
- what do you like and dislike about past CM's actions?
- have you attended nghbrhd mtgs?
- any interaction w/ local school boards?
- where should the dog park go in D4?
- should traffic impact fees be waived as an incentive?
- what's your work schedule: can Council fit in?
- what do you think of med. marijuana zoning regs? tax rates?
- opinion of traffic in D4
- mobile home parks: redevelop? Property rights vs affordable housing
- what are your top-3 priorities? How would you address them?
- budget priorities?
- what to do to reduce crime?
- opinion of Alviso and 237 developments?
- police: wear body cameras?
- park fees: waive as incentive?
- how to deal w/ homeless?
- should City and County Parks merge, so City can get Co. park funds for maintenance and operations?
- should volunteers help in the libraries?
- sell the Hayes Mansion to Sr. Assisted Living?
- buy/develop s/w so City Budget readily accessible online for public?
- rainy day fund: now 2-wks: should be more? less?
- traffic enforcement: get red-light cameras?

- baseball stadium?
- police drones?
- Union meetings in closed session: not even Council can attend. Thoughts?
- there are 158 massage parlors in SJ: should they be regulated?
- should SJ offer daycare?
- 2nd-unit in-law quarters?
- no smoking in units in apartment complexes?
- rezoning of industrial land for residential
- Santana Row: build more jobs there?
- subsidize downtown w/ more incentives?

My comments:

I thank all the candidates for volunteering and running the gauntlet

I agree w/ PLO (“that doesn’t always happen!”) and thanked him for excellent questions; agree that the selection of interim D4 CM should be done next year:

- not as last act by outgoing Council
- by new Council, after they’ve gotten settled
- after closing of filing period for the ballot
- after having been vetted for conflict of interest
- at an Evening Session so that more of the public can attend

Trade off: candidates would have to go thru this all again!

Q: do you even need appointee? Run day-to-day w/ staff, led by Chief of Staff

Also: I want to congratulate mayor-elect Liccardo,
say goodbye to Nguyen, Constant, and (not present) Campos,
bye to Mayor Reed
bye to Manager Shikada.

PLO asked me to recall the period after Yeager left for County and before PLO elected: D6 was run by staff, was that a problem? A: no.

A number of speakers (public and on Council) commented on how they rarely agree w/ PLO, but this was a good set of questions. PLO even got several rounds of applause from the audience.

After the vote, I introduced myself to Majorie Matthews as Chair of Nghbrhds Cmsn and also involved w/ Creeks/Parks/Trails, and offered to give a quick briefing. (She remembered me from her time on the Council.)

I also met Tam Nguyen (D7) and made similar introductions.

A very long afternoon session (session ran 1:30 PM - 6:30, plus follow-ons): it made me late for dinner!

~Larry, 12/20/14