



February 4, 2021

Mayor Kamei and Members of the City Council  
City of Mountain View  
500 Castro Street  
Mountain View, CA 94041

Re: Feb. 6<sup>th</sup> – Council Retreat, Agenda Item # 4.2 Strategic Planning

The LWV strongly encourages participation in governmental decision-making. A key component for the public to be able to contribute comments to the Mountain View Council, as well as other advisory bodies such as the Environmental Planning Commission, Rental Housing Committee, etc., is availability of staff reports with adequate notice.

We commend Mountain View's recent commitment to publish agendas and staff reports earlier than they have been published in the past, especially since we know the staff reports are often very extensive and staff are very busy. However, there has already been some slippage in meeting these deadlines, so we urge Council to make this a priority. We also hope that once the agendas and staff reports are published, emails will be sent rapidly thereafter to those who have asked to receive these on a regular basis.

We also understand that the City is committed to updating the Future Agenda Items more consistently than in past years. Knowing what items are to be discussed well in advance of the Council meetings is helpful for civic engagement. Perhaps these could also be shown for EPC and other advisory body agenda items. Another step in promoting community engagement would be to publish the actual agendas earlier, without the staff reports if they are not yet completed.

Many nearby cities including Palo Alto, Los Altos, and San Jose, publish their staff reports approximately a week before the scheduled meeting times. This larger window of time makes it easier for individuals, and especially organizations, to prepare questions of staff and to have dialog with Councilmembers and Commission members, rather than just providing comments. Some Councilmembers have stated that such conversations may be more helpful than letters expressing a point of view. The ability to ask clarifying questions of staff and/or Councilmembers before composing a letter with an opinion would lead to more informed public comments. We appreciate the pressures that staff is under to produce reports for council consideration and that last minute changes can result in their delay, making it harder for the public to provide informed comments. Assuming that the City meets the targeted deadlines recently adopted, we suggest that after six months, or some other reasonable timeframe, consideration be given to making reports available even a day earlier.

We believe that public participation is critical in a representative democracy and think that these changes will encourage better understanding and a more informed and engaged citizenry.

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Cc: Kimbra McCarthy