



DATE: February 9, 2021

CATEGORY: New Business

DEPT.: City Manager's Office

TITLE: **Legislative Program Priorities for 2021**

RECOMMENDATION

Approve recommendations for the proposed legislative program priorities to guide the City's regional, State, and Federal legislative advocacy during the 2021 legislative session, as outlined in this Council report.

BACKGROUND

The City Council has an annual practice of establishing legislative priorities that provide guidance for the City's advocacy efforts related to regional, State, and Federal actions that may have an impact on the City and the City's local control to address community and operational needs. In prior years, priorities have focused on Federal issues and have been developed in preparation for the Council's annual Washington D.C. trip to the National League of Cities (NLC) Congressional Cities Conference. In the past, this has involved scheduling meetings with the City's Congressional representatives and relevant Federal agencies and preparing position papers. In 2019, Council expressed their interest in shifting the focus of advocacy efforts to regional and State legislative priorities for 2020.

As part of the Fiscal Year 2019-20 and Fiscal Year 2020-21 Major Goals Work Plan, Council directed staff to expand the City's existing legislative advocacy program. Council discussed the parameters for an enhanced legislative program during a Study Session on October 29, 2019 (Attachment 1) and provided further direction on February 4, 2020 as part of the Council's midyear review of the Major Goals Work Plan (Attachment 2). The parameters include the following:

- Focus on regional and State legislative issues.
- Identify key legislative issues and bills and set priorities to focus the City's legislative efforts.

- Analyze and track priority bills/legislation and proactively advocate for the City's interests.
- Provide Council with talking points and regular written legislative updates.
- Maintain regular contact and coordinate Council and staff meetings with legislative representatives.

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 significantly impacted the implementation of the expanded legislative program. The City's legislative priority shifted to identifying and advocating for regional, State, and Federal pandemic recovery resources and fostering intergovernmental relations to address the needs of the Mountain View community. Over the past year, the City has demonstrated leadership and established effective regional partnerships to bring financial assistance, relief services, and COVID-19 testing and vaccinations to Mountain View. The City also created a Resiliency Roundtable to coordinate recovery efforts amongst local agencies and community groups.

The dedication of staff resources to these and other COVID-19-related priorities has resulted in a delay to the full implementation of an enhanced City legislative program focused on a broader range of priority issue areas. While staff has continued to actively track legislation, conduct bill analysis, prepare advocacy letters, and provide updates to Council, the request for regular talking points and legislative updates to the City Council and meetings with legislative representatives has not yet met the frequency of the program outcomes as initially proposed.

ANALYSIS

The purpose of this report is to seek Council approval of the City's 2021 legislative priorities, as outlined below. In addition, in light of the events over the past year, staff is raising two items for Council's consideration related to the parameters of, and resources for, the City's legislative program.

First, with the change in the Federal administration and the importance of Federal funding and legislation to support COVID-19 recovery in Mountain View, staff believes it would be timely to broaden the City's legislative efforts to once again include advocacy at the Federal level. Council can affirm that direction with adoption of the proposed legislative priorities, which include Federal matters. In addition, staff welcomes Council comments about staff support that may be useful related to Councilmember participation in this year's NLC Congressional City Conference from March 7 to March 10, 2021, with the understanding that the Conference has changed to a virtual format.

Second, to maximize the City's access to information and opportunities to advocate for legislative outcomes, staff sees value in retaining the services of a legislative advocacy firm. Even though some staff capacity within the City Manager's Office was freed up with communications and outreach functions being consolidated under the new Chief Communications Officer, effective legislative tracking, analysis, and action require the involvement of staff from across the organization, and such staff time is limited due to work on other priorities. An advocacy firm would augment staff capacity, provide expertise, and increase the City's presence during the State legislative process. Staff plans to include in the Fiscal Year 2021-22 Budget a proposal for limited-period funding for legislative advocacy consultant services to provide Council and staff with greater opportunities to engage with regional, State, and Federal leaders to influence legislative outcomes in a more meaningful way.

Proposed Legislative Priorities for 2021

The recommended priorities for 2021 follow the guiding principles outlined in City Council Policy A-16, Positions on Ballot Measures and Legislative Advocacy, as summarized below (Attachment 3):

- Protects or increases local control or revenue;
- Protects or increases funding or otherwise benefits specific programs or services utilized in Mountain View;
- Opposes an unfunded mandate; and
- Is consistent with existing City policy, a past action, or current City Council major goals.

The recommended priorities include regional, State, and Federal issue areas as well as specific bills that have been introduced in the 2020-21 legislative session. The issue areas focus on COVID-19 recovery, race, equity, and inclusion, housing, sustainability, and airplane noise. More detail on these issues is summarized below and in Attachment 4.

COVID-19 Recovery and Relief

Staff will identify and advocate for regional, State, and Federal legislation that provides pandemic relief funding and other resources for Mountain View, possibly including, but not necessarily limited to, direct stimulus payments for local governments; rent relief and eviction protections for residents; emergency housing and assistance for unstably housed

and homeless residents (also covered in the housing issue area below); assistance for small businesses; testing, vaccines, and other public health resources; and supports for regulatory relief that enables remote, alternative delivery of City services.

Race, Equity, and Inclusion

Staff will identify and advocate for regional, State, and Federal legislation and initiatives that advance the objectives of racial equity, inclusion, and justice, possibly including, but not limited to, equitable access to public health and other pandemic relief resources (also supported within the COVID-19 issue area above); efforts to close the digital divide; support for community-police relations, accountability, and public trust; protecting the rights of immigrants and other vulnerable populations; and supporting Federal Fair Housing laws (as noted below).

Housing

Housing staff has identified five major issue areas that they intend to follow during this legislative cycle, many of which overlap with the priority issue areas above related to COVID-19 relief and equity: (1) affordable housing funding; (2) COVID-19 impacts; (3) tenant/landlord matters; (4) homelessness response; and (5) land use bills that impact housing-related policy. Federal legislative issues that will be tracked and acted on include maintaining or increasing funding levels for Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and HOME grants and supporting Federal Fair Housing laws. These priority areas are based on staff's awareness of key current housing issues, Council Major Goals, and goals identified in the City's 2020-25 Consolidated Plan.

Staff has identified several current bills within these issue areas (listed in Attachment 4) and will proactively monitor them. Depending on further analysis and legislative amendments, not all of these bills will necessarily become priorities for the City. Additionally, other bills may emerge within the five issue areas. Staff will track and prioritize legislative bill additions as necessary.

Sustainability

Staff will identify and advocate for regional, State, and Federal legislation, policies, and programs that reduce carbon emissions and other environmental impacts.

Other

Staff will engage with the Santa Clara/Santa Cruz Counties Airport/Community Roundtable, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), and Congressional representatives to mitigate the effects of airplane noise on Mountain View residents.

NEXT STEPS

Upon the City Council's approval of the proposed legislative program priorities for 2021, staff will provide updates on a regular basis (at least bimonthly) in the weekly Council Connection on the legislative bills, issues, and priorities that are being tracked. Staff will also engage with the City's State and Federal elected representatives to identify opportunities for the Council to connect with legislators and coordinate those meetings.

Staff will begin work on developing a Request for Proposals (RFP) for legislative advocacy consultant services so the City can be in a position to move forward in the event funding is included in the Fiscal Year 2021-22 Budget.

On an ongoing basis, staff will continue to proactively identify, track, and monitor key bills and initiatives consistent with the approved legislative priorities and advocate for the City's interests.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact associated with the adoption of the proposed legislative program priorities for 2021.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Do not approve the Legislative Program Priorities for 2021.
2. Modify the Legislative Program Priorities for 2021.
3. Provide other direction.

PUBLIC NOTICING

Agenda posting with copies to State Senator Josh D. Becker (District 13), State Assembly member Marc Berman (District 24), and Congresswoman Anna Eshoo (District 18).

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- Attachments:
1. October 29, 2019 Study Session Memo
 2. February 4, 2020 Council Report
 3. Positions on Ballot Measures and Legislative Advocacy – Council Policy A-16
 4. Summary of Legislative Bills and Priorities for 2021
 5. [League of California Cities \(LCC\) 2021 Strategic Advocacy Priorities](#)