

CITY OF PASADENA
City Council Minutes
March 3, 2025 – 5:00 P.M.
City Hall Council Chamber

OPENING: Mayor Gordo called the regular meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. (Absent: Councilmembers Cole, Hampton, and Madison)

CLOSED SESSION On the order of the Mayor, the regular meeting recessed at 5:01 p.m. to discuss the following closed session item:

Councilmember Cole arrived at 5:11 p.m.

**CITY COUNCIL CONFERENCE WITH LEGAL COUNSEL
Regarding pending litigation pursuant to Government Code
Section 54956.9(d)(1)**

Councilmember Madison arrived at 5:18 p.m.

**Name of Case: Crutchfield et al v. City of Pasadena
Case No.: 24STCV12359**

Councilmember Hampton arrived at 5:25 p.m.

**CITY COUNCIL CONFERENCE WITH LEGAL COUNSEL
Regarding pending litigation pursuant to Government Code
Section 54956.9(d)(1)**

**Name of Case: Gordon v. City of Pasadena
Case No.: 24STCCV12359**

The above closed session items were discussed, with no reportable action at this time.

On the order of the Mayor, the regular meeting reconvened at 6:16 p.m. The pledge of allegiance was led by Councilmember Hampton.

ROLL CALL:
Councilmembers:

Mayor Victor M. Gordo
Councilmember Rick Cole
Councilmember Tyron Hampton
Councilmember Justin Jones
Councilmember Jason Lyon
Councilmember Steve Madison
Councilmember Gene Masuda
Vice Mayor Jessica Rivas

Staff:
City Manager Miguel Márquez
City Attorney/City Prosecutor Michele Beal Bagneris
City Clerk Mark Jomsky

CEREMONIAL MATTERS Mayor Gordo presented a certificate of recognition to the Rose City Crystals Synchronized Ice Skating Team and congratulated them for their tremendous achievements at the 2025 Pacific Coast Synchronized Skating Sectional. Team Manager Meipo Chan thanked the City Council for the recognition and accolades.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON MATTERS NOT ON THE AGENDA

Jeffrey Prang, LA County Tax Assessor’s Office, provided a brief update on the tax assessment standards for those rebuilding their homes after the wildfires, and noted that he would return to the City Council with a more complete presentation.

Olden Denham, Pasadena resident, expressed concerns regarding police officers abusing their authority, advocated for independent review, and requested the City Council agendize a discussion on AB392.

SPECIAL ITEM

PRESENTATION BY JULIE CLOWES, DIRECTOR OF SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION (SBA), LOS ANGELES OFFICE, REGARDING DISASTER LOAN AND ONE-ON-ONE BUSINESS SUPPORT

Julie Clowes, Director of Small Business Administration – Los Angeles, presented a brief PowerPoint presentation on the variety of disaster relief loans provided by the SBA that are available to those impacted by the recent wildfires, and responded to questions.

In response to Councilmember Jones’ inquiry regarding loan forgiveness, Director Clowes stated that the SBA would not be able to forgive loans without congressional authority.

Following brief discussion, on the order of the Mayor, and consensus of the City Council, the presentation was received and filed.

CONSENT CALENDAR

City Manager/ Executive Director

ADOPTION OF A RESOLUTION RATIFYING THE HEALTH OFFICER’S AMENDED DECLARATION OF LOCAL HEALTH EMERGENCY DUE TO IMPACTS OF CRITICAL FIRE EVENTS AND WINDSTORM CONDITIONS IN THE CITY OF PASADENA (Public Health Dept.)

Recommendation: It is recommended that the City Council:
(1) Find that the proposed action in the agenda report is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to state CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3) “Common Sense” exemption; and
(2) In accordance with Health and Safety Code section 101080, adopt a resolution ratifying the February 24, 2025, Health Officer amended declaration of a local health emergency due to impacts of critical fire events and windstorm conditions in the City of Pasadena. (Resolution No. 10122)

City Council

RESIGNATIONS, APPOINTMENTS, & REAPPOINTMENTS

APPOINTMENT OF GREG CUSTER TO THE ROSE BOWL OPERATING COMPANY BOARD (Tournament of Roses Nomination)

City Clerk/ Secretary

January 27, 2025

City Council

MINUTES APPROVED

January 27, 2025

Successor Agency to the Pasadena
Community Development Commission

**CLAIMS RECEIVED AND
FILED**

Claim No.	Claimant	Claim Amount
2025-0188	Taira Suzuki	\$ 8,374.53
2025-0189	Kevin Kim	20.00
2025-0190	Anne McCall Schell	3,851.63
2025-0191	Irene Lopez	138.34
2025-0192	Lisa Kurkdjian	35,000.00+
2025-0193	Luis Avalos-Ulloa	35,000.00+
2025-0194	Subro Claims, Inc. obo Geico Ins aso Derrick Lamar Scott	5,174.08
2025-0195	CSM OBO USAA ASO Vancura, James; Vancura, Jenae	5,720.27
2025-0196	Nikhil Honrao	606.79

MOTION:

It was moved by Councilmember Cole, seconded by Councilmember Lyon, to approve all items on the Consent Calendar. (Motion unanimously approved) (Absent: None)

**ORDINANCE – SECOND
READING**

Adopt “AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF PASADENA AMENDING AND ADDING VARIOUS SECTIONS TO TITLE 17, THE ZONING CODE, OF THE PASADENA MUNICIPAL CODE PERTAINING TO ADAPTIVE REUSE OF EXISTING NON-RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS, INCLUDING CHANGES RELATED TO PARKING AND VARIANCES FOR HISTORIC RESOURCES AND MINOR CLEANUPS” (Ordinance No. 7443)

The ordinance above was adopted by the following vote:

- AYES: Councilmembers Cole, Hampton, Jones, Masuda, Madison, Mayor Gordo
- NOES: Vice Mayor Rivas
- ABSENT: None
- ABSTAIN: Councilmember Lyon

PUBLIC HEARING

Councilmember Lyon reported a conflict of interest, disclosing that he previously worked as general counsel for the Western Justice Center, recused himself, and left the meeting at 7:03 p.m.

Councilmember Cole

QUASI-JUDICIAL ACTION: AN APPEAL OF THE BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS’ DECISION TO APPROVE CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT #7114 TO ESTABLISH A CLUBS, LODGES, PRIVATE MEETING HALL LAND USE WITHIN AN EXISTING BUILDING (MAXWELL HOUSE) AT 55 SOUTH GRAND AVENUE (Planning Dept.)

Recommendation: It is recommended that the City Council:
(1) Find that the action proposed in the agenda report is categorically exempt from environmental review pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15301 Class 1, Existing Facilities), and there are no features that distinguish the project from others in the

reported that he previously voted on this item as a former Planning Commissioner, recused himself, and left the meeting at 7:03 p.m.

exempt classes, and therefore, there are no unusual circumstances; and

(2) Adopt the findings in Attachment A (of the agenda report) to uphold the Board of Zoning Appeals' decision and approve Conditional Use Permit #7114, with the conditions in Attachment B of the agenda report.

City Clerk Jomsky reported that 140 postcards of the public hearing were mailed on February 20, 2025, and 20 copies of the public hearing notice were posted on February 21, 2025. He also reported that five new letters in support of the Western Justice Center's application for a conditional use permit and/or providing comments related to the matter, one letter providing information on the Maxwell House events, and one letter in opposition of Conditional Use Permit (CUP) #7114, were received by the City Clerk's office, distributed to the City Council, posted online, and made part of the public record for this item.

Jennifer Paige, Planning Director, reported that the applicant and the appellant did have a mediated discussion on Friday, February 28, 2025, but that no agreement between the two parties was reached.

In response to Councilmember Madison's inquiry regarding analogous situations where the City provides financial support for maintenance and upkeep of historic resources owned by the City as part of a lease arrangement, City Manager Márquez reported that the City has over 30 leases with various entities in the City, each one with different obligations, reflecting the period in time when negotiated, and subject to previous City Council priorities. Jeffrey Hernandez, Real Property Manager, noted that as part of the lease with the Norton Simon Museum, the City has a contractual financial obligation for upkeep and maintenance of landscaping and parking lots.

In response to Councilmember Madison's inquiry and concerns regarding the current lease agreement with Maxwell House and permitted activities, Dion O'Connell, Assistant City Attorney, reported that, in staff's opinion, a previous court order determines appropriate uses of the Maxwell House, allowing the Western Justice Center (WJC) to rent the premises to outside groups during non-business hours for community meetings and other lawful activity/businesses. City Attorney Bagneris added that if a lawful event obtains a proper permit, such as a wedding, then the event would be allowed.

Councilmember Madison emphasized the need to revisit and clarify the Maxwell House lease to prevent an excess of commercial events occurring during non-business hours.

Elissa Barrett (Executive Director of WJC), applicant, provided background information on the historical maintenance and revitalization of the Maxwell House, and advocated for their request for a CUP to continue operations.

Richard McDonald, representing the appellant, provided rebuttal comments noting the WJC's different criteria for nonprofit events, commercializing issues, and having preferred vendors.

Mike Davis, appellant, stated concerns regarding the number of weddings held at the Maxwell House, the noise disturbances impacting adjacent residents, and requested that the City Council deny the WJC's request for a CUP.

The following individuals spoke in support of granting the Western Justice Center the CUP permit and/or provided other related comments:

Nathaniel Osollo, Western Justice Center
Colin Dueweke, Western Justice Center
Gordy Goldsmith, Western Justice Center
Sandy Greenstein, Pasadena resident
Eva Barrientos, Western Justice Center
Janie Heinrich, Mobility Dog

Carl West, Pasadena resident, expressed concerns related to potential consequences and impacts for the surrounding neighbors if the CUP is approved to include for-profit activities.

Councilmember Madison discussed his interpretation of the court order pertaining to the allowed uses of the Maxwell House, and highlighted concerns regarding for-profit commercial uses of the property by the WJC. He acknowledged the need for the WJC to obtain/identify funds for maintenance, and advocated for the City to consider if it is possible to step in and provide funds for the upkeep of the property.

Discussion ensued regarding maintenance funding, potential for granting the WJC an additional temporary use permit (TUP) during mediation, complaints received by the City pertaining to the weddings at the property, conditions of TUPs that might be applied to this situation, and the need for the City Council to review the lease agreement separately from the CUP quasi-judicial hearing.

In response to Councilmember Hampton's inquiry regarding a sliding scale for the number of events permitted, Planning Director Paige reported that the City Council could allow a lesser number of events as part of the WJC's CUP and then reevaluate such a decision at a later date. She also added that the City reserves the right to reassess the permit if compliance issues occur. Councilmember Hampton

expressed support for reducing the number of events and implementing a sliding scale with a lower number of events.

In response to Councilmember Madison's concerns regarding the WJC's list of preferred vendors and the prohibitions of for-profit activities, Executive Director Barrett clarified that WJC does not promote other businesses, but has a preferred list of vendors due to the conditions of the TUP. Councilmember Madison reiterated concerns that the permitted use for the venue does not allow WJC to host weddings for revenue purposes as such events are not considered non-profit law related functions indicated in the lease.

Mayor Gordo stated that if the City were to contribute money towards the upkeep on the Maxwell House, a state actor issue could arise and possibly create other issues, such as limiting who is allowed to lease the space.

Following discussion, Justin Mahramas, representing the applicant, stated that the WJC would be amenable to applying for a new TUP while a 30-day continuance occurred to determine if other resolutions are available, and to also allow the City Council to separately discuss the lease agreement.

Richard McDonald, on behalf of the appellant, agreed to the 30-day continuance, however, he expressed concerns for a new TUP for one year period, noting that one of the conditions of the last TUP was that the applicant would apply for CUP.

Discussion further ensued regarding the issuance of a TUP for one year given that it would not be feasible for the WJC to schedule events within the next 30 days, and the appropriate number of events, with the conditions of the TUP to be determined by the Planning Director.

Following discussion, it was moved by Councilmember Hampton, seconded by Councilmember Madison, to continue the public hearing to April 7, 2025, at 6:00 p.m. (Motion unanimously approved) (Absent: Councilmembers Cole and Lyon)

**RECOMMENDATIONS
FROM OFFICERS AND
DEPARTMENTS**

City Manager

Councilmembers Cole and Lyon returned to the meeting at 9:27 p.m.

APPROVAL OF A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING WITH THE COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES FOR ADMINISTRATION OF THE RIGHT OF ENTRY (ROE) PROGRAM REQUIRED FOR THE PHASE 2 PRIVATE PROPERTY DEBRIS REMOVAL PROGRAM (Planning Dept.)

Recommendation: It is recommended that the City Council:

(1) Find that the action proposed in the agenda report is not a project and otherwise exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA") pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Sections 15378(b)(5), 15269(c), and 15061(b)(3);

Councilmember Jones stated a potential conflict of interest related to his employer, recused himself from the item, and left the meeting at 9:27 p.m.

- (2) Authorize the City Manager to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding, with the County of Los Angeles for administration of the Right of Entry (ROE) Program required for the Phase 2 Private Property Debris Removal Program (Contract No. 24,210); and
- (3) The proposed memorandum of understanding is exempt from competitive bidding, pursuant to City Charter, Section 1002 (H), and Pasadena Municipal Code, Section 4.08.049 (A)(3), contracts with other government entities.

UPDATE – DEBRIS REMOVAL AND RECOVERY FOR EATON FIRE AND WINDSTORM

Recommendation: It is recommended that the City Council:

- (1) Consider updates from City staff and provide direction if desired by the City Council; and
- (2) Find that, if direction is given to staff, it would not be a “project” subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to California Public Resources Code Section 21065 and within the meaning of CEQA Guidelines Section 15378(b).

City Clerk Jomsky reported that the Items 6 and 7 will be discussed concurrently.

Planning Director Paige provided introductory comments and Israel Del Toro, Deputy Planning Director, presented a PowerPoint presentation on the wildfire debris removal update, the local opt-out program, the proposed memorandum of understanding (MOU) with LA County, and both responded to questions.

In response to Councilmember Madison’s inquiry regarding the City incurring LA County’s costs for the debris removal program and the costs of the Tetra Tech contract, Chris Sheppard, from LA County Public Works, reported that the proposed \$10 million Tetra Tech contract establishes a not-to-exceed amount to cover the opt-in debris removal program for areas affected by the recent Palisades Fire and Eaton Fire in LA County, and that the City’s costs would be determined by the proportional assignment of jurisdictions. Caroline Monroy, Deputy City Attorney, added that the MOUs with the County negotiated by other cities involved are all substantially the same. Matt Hawkesworth, Finance Director, added that the cities individually pay an apportionment because each city submits their own claims for FEMA reimbursement.

In response to Councilmember Hampton’s inquiry regarding a dashboard, Deputy Planning Director Del Toro stated that as part of the MOU, the City will be gaining access to a dashboard with additional information to better help residents.

Councilmember Hampton suggested putting a lien on opt-out properties impacted by the Eaton Fire that do not comply with debris removal in a timely manner to prevent prolonging toxicity and to

protect neighboring residents. City Manager Márquez stated that City staff will define a timeline for ensure opt-out properties are cleared on the same timeline as opt-in properties.

MOTION:

Following discussion, it was moved by Councilmember Cole, seconded by Councilmember Lyon, to approve the staff recommendation for APPROVAL OF A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING WITH THE COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES FOR ADMINISTRATION OF THE RIGHT OF ENTRY (ROE) PROGRAM. (Motion unanimously approved) (Absent: Councilmember Jones)

Following discussion, on the order of the Mayor, and consensus of the City Council, the information was received and filed UPDATE – DEBRIS REMOVAL AND RECOVERY FOR EATON FIRE AND WINDSTORM.

INFORMATION ITEM

Councilmember Jones returned to the meeting at 10:27 p.m.

INFORMATIONAL ITEM BY CITY ATTORNEY/CITY PROSECUTOR'S DEPARTMENT ON PASADENA PRICE GOUGING COMPLAINTS

Tim Wellman, Chief Assistant City Prosecutor, presented a brief PowerPoint presentation on the item, and responded to questions.

In response to Councilmember Hampton's inquiry regarding publishing a list of businesses that City brings action against for price gouging, City Attorney Bagneris reported that if a business or individual is convicted of price gouging, their name would be made public and they would have a criminal record.

Following brief discussion, on the order of the Mayor, and consensus of the City Council, the information was received and filed.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OFFICERS AND DEPARTMENTS

Advisory Bodies

Mayor Gordo stated a conflict of interest, recused himself from the item, and left the meeting at 10:42 p.m.

RECOMMENDATION AND REQUEST BY THE PASADENA RENTAL HOUSING BOARD TO ADOPT A TEMPORARY, EMERGENCY ORDINANCE FOR EMERGENCY EVICTION DEFENSE FOR TENANTS IMPACTED BY THE EATON FIRE

Ryan Bell, Chair of Pasadena Rental Housing Board (PRHB), provided background on the Board's discussion and action regarding the numerous possible policy interventions to address impacts of the Eaton Fire pertaining to tenants, and responded to questions.

In response to Vice Mayor Rivas' inquiry regarding the City's position on the County's tenant moratorium, City Attorney Bagneris reported that the County's moratorium would not apply since Pasadena is a Charter City with authority over properties in the City.

Councilmember Lyon expressed support for the PRHB's recommendation, while noting the need for a formal staff report identifying means of implementing the recommendation. In response

to Councilmember Lyon's inquiry regarding possible means of implementation, City Attorney Bagneris reported that the City Council could adopt an uncodified ordinance referencing the eviction moratorium recently adopted by the LA County Board of Supervisors in response to the January wildfires.

In response to Councilmember Cole's inquiry regarding economic impact measures that PRHB has adopted, Chair Bell stated that the Board has passed a resolution allowing landlords to voluntarily lower their rent (without affecting their base rent and their permitted rent increase), temporarily housing unauthorized occupants and pets that are fire victims, temporarily allowing tenants to stay in short-term rentals (i.e. hotels, Airbnb) beyond the regular 29 days without establishing tenancy, and passing a resolution to allow City staff to issue prorated refunds of rental housing fees to landlords whose units were burned down in the Eaton Fire. Chair Bell also stated that LA County has set up a relief fund as a means of eviction defense. Helen Morales, Rent Stabilization Department Director, also reported that the City has contracted with Loyola Center for conflict resolution to assist tenants and landlords to resolve conflicts related to tenancy agreements.

Councilmember Hampton requested City staff to check if the City's Housing Department has funds for rental assistance or identify other funding sources that would ensure that tenants receive the support they need, while landlords are not made to solely bear the burden of the assistance. He expressed concerns that housing providers and tenants may both face larger debts when the moratorium ends, especially if they are unable to obtain relief funds from the County.

City Clerk Jomsky reported that eight letters expressing concerns with the City adopting an ordinance related to emergency eviction defense for tenants impacted by the Eaton Fire and/or advocating for the City Council to include safeguards to protect property owners should an ordinance be approved and providing other comments, six letters in opposition to the PRHB's recommendation to the City Council to adopt an ordinance, three letters advocating for the City Council to align with LA County's emergency tenant protections, and two letters in support of the PRHB's recommendation for the City Council to adopt an ordinance, were received by the City Clerk's Office, distributed to the City Council, posted online, and made part of the public record for this item.

The following individuals expressed support for the Pasadena Rental Housing Board's recommendations for tenant protections and/or provided other related comments:

Angela Strong, Pasadena resident
Bert Newton, Making Housing and Community Happen
Marley, Pasadena resident

Patrick Briggs, Pasadena resident
Christine Rodriguez, Pasadena resident
Rian Barrett, Pasadena Foothills Association of Realtors
Lisa Thorton, Pasadena Mennonite Church
Una Lee Jost, Pasadena resident

The following individuals advocated for the City to explore ways to financially support tenants and landlords and/or other provided other related comments:

Jesus Rojas, representing Apartment Association of Greater Los Angeles
Deborah Lutz, Pasadena resident

Adam Bray Ali, Pasadena resident, expressed opposition to the PRHB's recommendations.

Councilmember Cole suggested that the City Council defer to Los Angeles County's protections or pass an ordinance that explicitly incorporates the protections adopted by the County. He also suggested that the City explore ways to provide funds to residents impacted by the Eaton Fire, whether privately raised or from public funds. Councilmember Hampton supported this approach, advocated for tenant and landlords to work together on rental repayments and to utilize mediation for disputes that may arise, and requested that City staff return within 30 days with options to provide rental assistance. Councilmember Cole emphasized the importance of the City's protections to align with the County's protections for clarity and consistency purposes for Pasadena residents.

Councilmember Lyon requested that the City Attorney's Office include information on any variations the City's ordinance would have from the County's adopted protections when the item returns to the City Council for consideration.

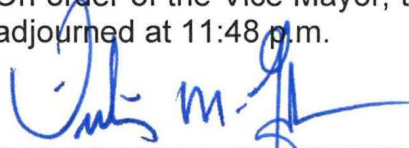
MOTION:

Following discussion, it was moved by Councilmember Cole, seconded by Councilmember Hampton, to direct City staff to return with a mechanism to most effectively and expeditiously align with the Los Angeles County's adopted protections for those impacted by the recent wildfires and modify as appropriate for Pasadena, encourage tenant-landlord mediation and potential repayment of some portion of rent through mediated terms, and report back within 30 days on potential funding sources for rental assistance. (Motion unanimously approved) (Absent: Mayor Gordo)

ADJOURNMENT

City Clerk Jomsky reported that the City Council Meeting originally scheduled for March 10, 2025 will be cancelled.

On order of the Vice Mayor, the regular meeting of the City Council adjourned at 11:48 p.m.



Victor M. Gordo, Mayor
City of Pasadena

ATTEST:



City Clerk