

October 18, 2022

RE: Meeting Agenda Item 7G

Honorable Mayor and Councilmembers,

As you are all aware, the Council adopted an emergency ordinance in March 2020 to permit the city government to take certain actions which wouldn't require the normal oversight and permission of the residents of our city. This suspension of the normal restraints on our Council and Staff may have seemed reasonable at the time though in hindsight, some of the decisions now appear to have been ill-advised and possibly entirely inappropriate.

The Staff Report on this issue, Item 7G, addresses the fact that the character of the pandemic has changed and, therefore, it appears that it is no longer necessary or appropriate to allow the Council and Staff to continue to enforce several of the resolutions, rules, regulations, and ordinances that were adopted at a time when the whole world, including local government leaders, were operating in a state of panic and appear to have been ignoring some of the potentially negative and harmful long-term consequences of their precipitously adopted resolutions.

The Staff Report attempts to clarify our current predicament related to these persisting under-the-radar actions taken by the Council. Unfortunately, the report is written in such legalistic language that it really isn't all that helpful when it comes to clarifying the issue for the average resident of Alameda.

The report suggests that there would be no cost to the City if many of these resolutions, etc. were allowed to remain in effect. I disagree with this assessment.

It appears that for the most part, the report is addressing cost to the City's treasury and is ignoring the ongoing costs to the residents. Mom and pop landlords continue to be impacted. Some small business owners continue to be impacted. And drivers, including first responders, who would use Park Street, Webster Street, and the several ill-conceived "quiet streets" continue to be significantly impacted. Consider also that the cost of placing permanent barriers along the narrowed commercial streets will cost a hundred thousand dollars, or more. This project will also potentially have a disastrous outcome should emergency evacuation ever become necessary. This will become even more significant if self-interested pressure groups succeed in their quest to distort Grand Street so that it will no longer be able to serve as a route for emergency evacuation.

So, in the case of the "Commercial Streets" project the Council should be advised to reverse their previous ill-advised decisions to 1) permanently narrow Park and Webster Streets, and 2) to extend the life of the "quiet streets" project for two more years. I understand that a few people may have made arguments for these projects at the height of the pandemic, however, at this point, I don't believe that there can be any logical, let alone, constructive justification for allowing them to continue to exert their harmful effects on the residents of Alameda.

In my opinion, other than allowing for the continued use of virtual meetings, hopefully as an element of a hybrid format allowing in person participation, I don't see any reason for allowing the emergently

adopted resolutions, regulations, and ordinances to remain in effect. And there is absolutely no justification for allowing the Mayor, the Council, or any member of the City Staff, including the City Manager, to take unrestricted action based on the no longer existing state of emergency that lead to initially granting the Staff/Manager et al virtually complete freedom of action in 2020.

Jay Garfinkle