

Summary of the Santa Monica City Council Meeting of October 14, 2025

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<https://www.youtube.com/live/Js20NptTrPw?si=P91GX3hxTppwYsKR>

Core Points

1. City Council Meeting Proceedings and Protocols

- The Santa Monica City Council convened on October 14th with a quorum established after some initial delay.
- The meeting opened with traditional protocols including the Pledge of Allegiance and a land acknowledgment honoring the Gabrieleno Tongva people, the indigenous inhabitants of the area.
- No council members recused themselves from agenda items under the Lavine Act.
- An emergency closed session item was added regarding potential litigation exposure tied to supportive housing projects on Ocean Avenue, prompted by LA County's pause on these projects.

2. Community Concerns and Public Input

- Multiple speakers expressed frustration over lack of transparency and communication from city leadership about significant projects, especially related to housing for severely mentally ill individuals on Ocean Avenue.
- Safety concerns were raised about understaffing of police in public parks and the impact of homeless populations on community safety.
- Residents highlighted the importance of inclusiveness across all regions of Santa Monica and called for more equitable representation and attention to local voices.
- Business leaders urged the council to oppose mandatory labor peace agreements and right to recall ordinances on city-owned properties to encourage economic development and job growth.
- Street performers and local vendors requested increased enforcement on illegal activities at the Santa Monica Pier to improve safety and visitor experience.

- Several speakers supported maintaining and expanding open green spaces and parks, disputing claims that fields are underutilized.
- Ethical concerns about conflicts of interest were voiced, particularly regarding council members' relationships with developers and campaign contributions.

3. Proclamations and Recognitions

- The council proclaimed October 19-25 as United Against Hate Week, reaffirming Santa Monica's commitment to diversity, inclusion, and rejection of all forms of hate and discrimination.
- A youth poet recited a poem emphasizing resilience and standing against hatred, highlighting community engagement in anti-hate initiatives.
- October was declared Breast Cancer Awareness Month, with personal testimonies from the mayor and local health advocates underscoring the importance of early detection, community support, and fundraising efforts.
- Code Enforcement Officer Appreciation Week was recognized, celebrating the dedication of officers who enforce laws that protect health, safety, and property values in Santa Monica.

4. Signature Events and City Event Policies

- A new Santa Monica Signature Events category was established to designate recurring free community events, granting them automatic fee waivers and priority city support.
- This initiative aims to streamline the permitting process, reduce bureaucratic hurdles, and ensure predictable funding and support for cultural and community events, aiding economic recovery and placemaking.
- The city is developing a comprehensive events facilitation strategy, including infrastructure improvements, new event-ready spaces, and a new unified permitting software system to enhance coordination and transparency.
- Council discretionary funding policies were updated to move certain ongoing event supports from the discretionary fund into the city's base operating budget, while resetting a \$140,000 discretionary fund divided among council members for flexible allocation subject to council approval.

5. Santa Monica Civic Auditorium Redevelopment (RPG Project)

- The city has been negotiating an Exclusive Negotiation Agreement (ENA) with the Revitalization Partners Group (RPG) since late 2023 to restore and operate the Santa Monica Civic Auditorium as a world-class entertainment venue.
- RPG's vision includes restoring historic architectural features, adding a rooftop bar, retail and restaurant space, and converting adjacent parking lots into green spaces with possible outdoor concert stages. The venue would host immersive concerts, award shows, and other major events.
- Despite conceptual designs and community engagement, RPG has not provided detailed financial analyses, pro-forma budgets, or firm development plans after nearly two years of negotiation.
- Staff conducted a preliminary financial viability analysis using assumptions based on past data and verbal inputs from RPG, estimating a project cost around \$360 million and indicating challenging financial returns below typical investment thresholds without public subsidies.
- RPG requests a six-month ENA extension to finalize project scope, cost estimates, financing strategies, and continue community engagement.
- Council members expressed mixed views: some support additional time for RPG to present financial details and move forward; others advocate terminating the ENA and exploring competitive alternatives, including evaluating the site's highest and best use with and without current constraints (e.g., the soccer field and existing buildings).
- The council ultimately voted to decline extending the ENA but directed staff to explore alternative options for the civic site, allowing RPG to continue conversations non-exclusively.

6. Ocean Avenue Supportive Housing Projects Controversy

- The city received criticism for lack of transparency and community engagement regarding plans to house 49 severely mentally ill individuals in residential neighborhoods on Ocean Avenue, with concerns about safety, security, and neighborhood impact.

- LA County paused the projects, and the city council convened an emergency closed session to address potential litigation risks.
- Community members, including school representatives and residents, voiced fears over the “open door policy” allowing tenants to come and go freely without adequate supervision.
- The city and LA County are coordinating to improve communication and explore alternative housing options.

7. Zoning and Development on 2644 30th Street Parcel

- The council accepted a 10-year covenant restricting redevelopment, especially housing development, on a portion of the parcel at 2644 30th Street currently zoned Neighborhood Commercial (NC).
- The covenant also restricts redevelopment of the parking lot portion zoned R1 Residential, preserving current use for 10 years, with the possibility of revisiting these decisions during future General Plan updates.
- This move aimed to address community concerns about upzoning and development impacts in established neighborhoods.

8. Water Quality Report and Public Hearing

- The city’s 2025 Water Quality and Public Health Report was presented, confirming compliance with all federal and state drinking water regulations.
- The council approved the report and held a public hearing with no public comments.

9. Council Procedures and Agenda Management

- Several procedural clarifications and motions were made regarding public comment time limits, agenda item order, and motion handling.
- The council emphasized the need for clearer communication about public speaking rules and streamlined meeting management to accommodate community participation efficiently.

Key Conclusions

1. Urgency for Transparency and Community Engagement

The meeting underscored widespread community dissatisfaction with perceived lack of

transparency, inclusiveness, and communication from city officials on critical projects, especially supportive housing and civic redevelopment. This calls for improved outreach, clearer information sharing, and meaningful public involvement in decision-making.

2. Complexity and Financial Challenges of Civic Auditorium Project

Despite an appealing vision for revitalizing the Civic, the lack of concrete financial data and viable financing plans hampers progress. The city's preliminary analysis indicates the project faces significant financial hurdles and requires substantial investment or subsidies for feasibility. The council's decision to not extend exclusivity and explore broader options reflects prudent fiscal stewardship balanced with community aspirations.

3. Balancing Economic Vitality and Community Values in Event Policies

The new signature events category and revamped discretionary funding policy aim to support economic recovery and cultural vibrancy while providing transparency, cost control, and equitable access for community event organizers. These efforts align with Santa Monica's goals to attract visitors, support local businesses, and enhance quality of life.

4. Need for Holistic Planning on Key City Sites

The approach to the civic site and the 2644 30th Street parcel reveals a strategic intent to evaluate highest and best uses considering current constraints and future opportunities, including potential redevelopment and preservation. This approach enables the city to adapt to changing needs while respecting community concerns and historic preservation.

5. Safety and Housing Policy Challenges Remain Pressing

The Ocean Avenue housing project controversy highlights the delicate balance between addressing homelessness and mental health crises and preserving neighborhood safety and property values. The city and county must collaborate to find solutions that address urgent social needs without compromising community well-being.

6. Commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Health

Proclamations and recognitions reflect Santa Monica's ongoing dedication to fighting hate, promoting inclusion, supporting health initiatives like breast cancer awareness, and valuing essential city workers such as code enforcement officers, reinforcing community cohesion and resilience.

Important Details

1. Council Composition and Attendance

- Council Member Zwick was absent; others participated either remotely or in person.
- The mayor and several members took active roles in proceedings and motions.

2. Emergency Litigation Item

- The emergency closed session item regarding Ocean Avenue housing was added by two-thirds council vote due to new information post-agenda posting.
- Public comment on this item was allowed under a specific agenda item to maintain transparency.

3. Public Comment Rules and Adjustments

- Typically, speakers get four minutes during general input but this can be reduced to one minute if over 25 speakers register.
- For this meeting, a motion to allow two minutes per speaker failed, so the one-minute rule remained.
- Clarifications were made to better communicate these rules in future meetings.

4. United Against Hate Week Details

- The week runs October 19-25, featuring training, performances, and community events.
- Partner organizations include local schools, PTAs, teachers' associations, and various city departments.

5. Breast Cancer Awareness Month Specifics

- Approximately 316,950 women and 2,800 men expected to be diagnosed in 2025 nationally.
- Margie Peterson Breast Center at Providence St. John's Health Center is a recognized leader in breast cancer care.
- Local walk event "Making Strides of Santa Monica" scheduled for October 25th at the pier.

6. Signature Events Criteria and List

- Events must be free, nonprofit-organized, city-site based, and held at least three times (not necessarily consecutively).
- Initial list includes 14 recurring events such as Montana Avenue Art Walk, festivals, and cultural celebrations.
- Events not qualifying as signature events still have access to city support and discretionary funding.

7. Financial Details on Discretionary Fund

- Current base discretionary fund is about \$137,000 annually with \$100,000 routinely committed.
- Proposal moves \$83,000 in ongoing commitments into base operating budget, leaving \$140,000 truly discretionary.
- Each of the seven council members would have a \$20,000 allocation but expenditures require full council approval.

8. Santa Monica Civic Redevelopment Financial Estimates

- Estimated total project cost: approximately \$360 million.
- Projected venue capacity: 2,800 to 3,300 seats.
- Average ticket price assumed: \$125; ancillary spending estimated at \$75 per ticket.
- Internal rate of return under optimistic assumptions around 7%, below typical investment thresholds (8-12%).
- RPG requests six-month extension to provide detailed financials and plans; council decides not to extend exclusivity.

9. Ocean Avenue Housing Controversy Specifics

- Proposal for 49 supportive housing units for severely mentally ill individuals.
- Concerns about security, open access, and neighborhood impact.
- LA County paused the project; state funding extension sought.
- Public and political figures express need for better community engagement and safety assurances.

10. Zoning and Covenant at 2644 30th Street

- Covenant prohibits redevelopment of parking lot and rezoned portion for housing for 10 years.
- After 10 years, the city may revisit zoning and land use as part of General Plan updates.
- Covenant aims to address neighborhood concerns over potential upzoning and increased density.

11. Water Quality Report Compliance

- City's Drinking Water meets all federal and state standards.
- Public hearing held with no comments; report adopted unanimously.

12. Next Meeting and Closing Remarks

- Next regular council meeting scheduled for October 28th at 5:30 p.m.
- Meeting adjourned with community encouragement and acknowledgment of ongoing civic challenges.

This summary reflects a comprehensive extraction of the core issues, council decisions, community concerns, and procedural developments from the October 14th Santa Monica City Council meeting transcript, capturing the multifaceted nature of local governance, community engagement, and urban planning challenges.

Please be aware this transcript/summary was generated by an AI and may contain errors or omissions. For complete and accurate information, please consult the original audio or video recording of the meeting.