Summary of the Santa Monica City Council Meeting of January 13, 2026

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Core Points

- Santa Monica City Council Meeting Procedures and Protocols
    - The meeting opened with traditional formalities including the Pledge of Allegiance and a land acknowledgement honoring the Gabrieleno Tongva people, the original inhabitants of Santa Monica.
    - Roll call was conducted, quorum was established, and agenda management motions were made to efficiently address key housing and financial items early in the meeting. Remote attendance and recusal protocols were acknowledged in light of conflicts of interest and legal guidance.
- Public Input and Community Concerns
    - A significant portion of the meeting was dedicated to public comment, with over 40 speakers addressing matters primarily related to housing policies, worker protections, ethical governance, and community safety.
    - Key public concerns included the sudden closure of Rusty's workers' jobs without right of return, demands for worker retention protections, ethical questions regarding council members' conflicts of interest, and opposition to rapid zoning changes perceived to threaten neighborhood character.
    - Many speakers urged the council to reconsider votes tainted by conflicts of interest, particularly involving Council Member Jesse

Zwick and Mayor Caroline Terrosa, calling for transparency, accountability, and revotes on housing production-related items.

- Housing Production-Related Items and Conflict of Interest Review
    - The City Attorney and staff presented a detailed overview of the circumstances prompting reconsideration of certain housing production-related votes due to Mayor Pro Tem Promzwick's employment with Housing Action Coalition (HAC) and associated Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC) guidance.
    - Five key housing policy items from August to September 2025 were identified for revote or ratification, based on their timing within the conflict period and Mayor Pro Tem's participation.
    - The council was asked to ratify the building code adoption to avoid permitting disruptions and to reconsider four other housing-related items, including the Resolution of Intent (ROI) for SB9, SB450, and SB1123, high-rise definitions, single stair provisions, and the Affordable Housing Pilot Program (AHPP).
- Affordable Housing Pilot Program (AHPP) and Expansion
    - The council reviewed the AHPP pilot program, originally enacted as an emergency ordinance to facilitate affordable housing production with options for off-site units, rehabilitation, or fee payments, and gap financing increased to $160,000 per unit.
    - The program was expanded to include purchase of at-risk covenants, enforceable milestones for off-site development, and community benefit payments tied to reduced taxes or measure GS impacts.

        - The council considered codifying the pilot and expanding it to additional eligible projects, with long-term affordability protections and clear conditions to ensure viability and accountability.
- Boards and Commissions Review and Recommendations
    - A comprehensive staff report reviewed the city's 26 boards and commissions with proposals to consolidate some, reduce membership sizes, modify residency requirements, and eliminate the council liaison role to prevent undue influence.
    - Key recommendations included consolidating the Disabilities, Housing, and Human Services commissions into a single Housing and Human Services Commission, converting the Urban Forest Task Force into a commission, and reducing the Arts and Public Safety Reform Oversight commissions to seven members.
    - The council debated the importance of maintaining the Disabilities Commission as standalone due to its advocacy role and the risk of marginalization if combined. Concerns were also raised about expertise and representation on technical commissions like the Airport Commission.
    - The council took direction on attendance policies, annual reports, and the removal of the annual boards and commissions dinner as a cost-saving measure.
- Ethics, Transparency, and Conflict of Interest Issues
    - Multiple public speakers and council members addressed allegations of conflicts of interest related to Council Member Zwick, Mayor Terrosa, and Mayor Pro Tem Promzwick, emphasizing

the erosion of public trust and the need for transparent governance.

    - The City Attorney clarified legal obligations regarding disclosure and recusal, noting the difference between financial conflicts and other types of conflicts, and that the FPPC did not find past actions invalid but recommended prospective recusals.
    - The council committed to following legal advice, conducting thorough reviews, and revoting on relevant items to ensure lawful and ethical decision-making.
- Community Safety and Social Issues
    - Public comments highlighted concerns over homelessness, public safety, and the city's response to encampments and drug use, particularly referencing recent fires linked to unsupervised individuals in public spaces.
    - The council issued proclamations recognizing Human Trafficking Prevention Month, with representatives from local anti-trafficking organizations emphasizing the ongoing challenges and the need for community awareness and support services.
    - Tragic incidents involving use of force by federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers were memorialized with calls for accountability and systemic reforms.
- City Financial Matters and Redevelopment Bond Refunding
    - The council approved a resolution authorizing the issuance of 2026 tax allocation refunding bonds to refinance outstanding

redevelopment agency debt from 2006 and 2011 bonds, projected to save approximately $12.2 million in debt service over time.

- Refinancing at lower interest rates (approximately 3.6% vs. prior 4.5%-5.9%) would increase residual property tax revenues for the city and other local taxing agencies, aligning with the city's realignment plan to improve fiscal health.

- Other City Updates and Announcements
    - The City Manager introduced Ailen Reynolds as the new Director of Housing and Human Services, highlighting her extensive experience.
    - Capital improvement projects were underway including landscaping and sidewalk repairs, with an emphasis on improving city gateways and cleanliness along freeway corridors.
    - Police Chief Derek Jacobs was to be officially sworn in, with noted improvements in department activity and community engagement.
    - The reopening of Fairview and Ocean Park branch libraries was announced with upcoming celebratory events.
    - The Mayor alerted the community about a federal threat to key anti-poverty funding programs (TANIF, Child Care Development Fund, Social Services Block Grant) with ongoing monitoring and contingency planning.

Key Conclusions

- Reconsideration and Revote of Housing Policies is Essential

  The council's voluntary and proactive decision to reconsider housing production-related votes affected by conflict of interest guidance reflects a

commitment to transparency, legality, and public trust, despite no findings of past wrongdoing. This process aims to reaffirm or revise prior policy to ensure clear, lawful governance.

- Aligning Local Ordinances with State Law while Exploring Housing Affordability Options

  The council agreed to proceed with the ratification of the building code and repeal of an emergency interim zoning ordinance that exceeded state law, while directing the planning commission to explore options within state law that could enhance family-sized housing, affordability, and equitable home ownership, including potential contributions to the city's affordable housing fund.
- Affordable Housing Pilot Program Expansion Provides a Critical Tool

  Codifying and expanding the AHPP pilot program with updated financing, enforceable milestones, and protections for off-site affordable housing represent a significant step toward accelerating affordable housing production and stabilizing existing deed-restricted units, helping to address the city's housing crisis.
- Boards and Commissions Realignment Balances Efficiency and Representation

  The recommended consolidation and restructuring of select boards and commissions aim to streamline governance and reduce administrative burden while balancing concerns about representation and advocacy, especially for vulnerable populations such as individuals with disabilities.
- Community Voice and Ethical Governance Must Guide Decisions

  The intensity of public input, especially regarding conflicts of interest,

housing development impacts, and worker protections, underscores the need for the council to maintain ethical standards, actively engage with residents, and ensure that development policies reflect community values and priorities.

- Fiscal Responsibility and Debt Refinancing Supports City Stability
  The refunding of redevelopment bonds at lower interest rates will save the city millions in debt service, contributing to improved fiscal stability and enabling reinvestment in local services and infrastructure.
- Ongoing Social Challenges Require City Vigilance and Compassion
  Issues of homelessness, public safety, and human trafficking remain critical concerns. The council's recognition of these issues and commitment to prevention, support services, and community healing are integral to addressing social equity and public well-being.

Important Details

- Conflict of Interest Timeline and FPPC Guidance
  - Mayor Pro Tem Promzwick applied for and accepted employment with Housing Action Coalition between June and September 2025.
  - FPPC advised prospective recusal from housing production matters starting August 15, 2025, with no findings of past violations.
  - Council reviewed all votes by Mayor Pro Tem within August 12 to October 28, 2025, identifying five housing production-related items for reconsideration.
- Specific Housing Policy Items Identified for Revote or Ratification

        - August 12, 2025: Resolution of Intent for SB9, SB450, SB1123 and emergency Affordable Housing Pilot Program ordinance.
        - September 9, 2025: Definition of high-rise and single stair provisions.
        - September 30, 2025: Annual building code adoption and extension of AHPP program.
- Affordable Housing Pilot Program Details
    - Gap financing increased to $160,000 per unit, adjusted annually by ENR index.
    - New option to purchase and extend covenants on at-risk affordable units for 75 years, contingent on structural soundness.
    - Community benefit payment of 5% of first transfer value if Measure GS is reduced or eliminated.
    - Enforceable milestones for off-site affordable housing development linked to market-rate project permitting and construction timelines.
    - Right of first refusal held by the city on off-site affordable properties.
- Public Comments Reflect Diverse Perspectives
    - Workers and advocates called for strong worker retention laws following Rusty's closure.
    - Some residents expressed opposition to overdevelopment, loss of neighborhood character, and lack of genuine community input.

        - Others advocated for increased housing supply, including affordable family housing and gentle densification consistent with state law.
        - Ethical concerns were raised regarding undisclosed conflicts of interest and the influence of developers on council decisions.
- Boards and Commissions Restructuring Specifics
        - Proposed consolidation of Disabilities, Housing, and Human Services commissions into a seven-member Housing and Human Services Commission, with encouragement for existing members to reapply.
        - Urban Forest Task Force proposed to become a commission with reduced membership and removal of strict ISA certification requirements.
        - Arts Commission and Public Safety Reform Oversight Commission membership to be reduced to seven, with youth seat age increased to 25 and expanded eligibility.
        - Removal of council liaison roles from boards to avoid undue influence.
        - Revised attendance policies to limit unexcused absences to two per fiscal year with automatic vacancy.
        - Elimination of annual boards and commissions dinner in favor of receiving reports as information items at council meetings.
- Ethics and Governance Actions

        - City Attorney confirmed no obligation to disclose ex parte communications in non-judicial proceedings but affirmed commitment to transparency.
        - Council member Snell and Zwick recused themselves from certain agenda items due to conflicts related to employment and financial interests.
        - City Attorney and staff committed to ongoing review and briefing on other potentially conflicted matters, including Hollywood Community Housing DDA.
- Human Trafficking Awareness and Social Justice Proclamations
    - January proclaimed Human Trafficking Prevention Month with participation from CAST and Sunnitha Anti-Trafficking Initiative.
    - Emphasis on survivor-centered, trauma-informed approaches and the need for community education and policy reform.
- Financial and Operational Updates
    - Capital improvements include landscaping along freeway corridors and extensive sidewalk repairs downtown.
    - Police Chief Derek Jacobs' swearing-in scheduled with noted departmental improvements.
    - Library branches reopening with community celebrations.
    - Monitoring of federal legal challenges to key anti-poverty funding programs with contingency planning.
- Meeting Adjournments in Memory of Community Members

        - The meeting was adjourned in remembrance of Keith Porter Jr. and Renee Nicole Good, victims of fatal incidents involving ICE officers, with calls for accountability and systemic reform.
- Voting Outcomes on Key Items
    - Tax allocation refunding bonds authorized unanimously.
    - Boards and commissions restructuring approved with exceptions to maintain a standalone Disabilities Commission and remove nepotism prohibitions.
    - Affordable Housing Pilot Program codification and expansion adopted.
    - Housing production-related items mostly ratified with direction to align with state law and explore family housing and affordability options via planning commission review.

This comprehensive summary captures the detailed discussions, decisions, and community inputs from the Santa Monica City Council meeting transcript, emphasizing the complexity and sensitivity of housing policy governance, community engagement, ethical oversight, and social equity challenges faced by the city.

Please note that 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.