Mayor calls for rubber-bullet ban

San Jose Police Department releases May footage, reviews fastest-compiled after-action report

By Laura Fields
STAFF WRITER

San Jose City Council reviewed several public safety items during Tuesday’s Zoom meeting including San Jose Police Department’s overall conduct, changes to the police duty manual and the department’s report to debrief officers after protests and riots that happened over the summer.

In a Sept. 11 news release, SJPD released police body camera footage to provide context for those events that were captured in videos taken by the public.

The events occurred between May 29-31 during the first weekend of protests in Downtown San Jose after George Floyd’s death on May 25.

“No question, people will look at the same scene and come up with a different conclusion.” San Jose Mayor Sam Liccardo said in regard to the videos during the meeting.

Liccardo compared the foam and rubber bullets used by SJPD during the protests to ones used by Israeli special forces in Gaza, an area that saw unrest for several years, to argue that projectiles afflict innocent bystanders.

“This is not an apples-to-apples comparison,” SJPD Capt. Jason Dwyer said in response to Liccardo. “This is not Gaza or the West Bank.”

Dwyer elaborated that the bullets used in Gaza can be fired at a higher velocity than the ones used by SJPD.

But Liccardo pushed back and called for a ban on firing foam and rubber bullets in a crowd.

“I know of five people hit on [May 29] alone,” he said.

Dave Knopf, SJPD assistant chief, said he stands by his officers’ actions during riots because he’s “not going to commit officers to make the line and not defend themselves.”

One of the events discussed in SJPD’s news release was the collision of a police officer on a motorcycle and a pedestrian in Downtown San Jose on May 31. At approximately 9:30 p.m. when officers responded to a possible looting at the Bank of America at the corner of South Fourth and San Fernando streets. According to the news release, officers detained multiple suspects at the scene while one suspect who ran northbound on Fourth Street was shot by SJPD with foam bullets and turned into the street, running directly into the path of the motor officer.

San Jose resident Scott Largent said in public comments that he was at the scene of the incident during the May 31 protest and described SJPD’s incident report as, “horrible.”

He said he recorded video of San Jose state student officers running from the incident as police followed them.

“A couple were pushed to the ground, others were shot with ‘bullets’” Largent said. “It was just wild cause it was just a small amount of kids trying to make their way back to the other side of campus basically.”

Joshua Umar-Erinnin, director of compassion and justice ministries at River Church Community, said the projectiles used during the riots caused “life-changing harm” to people and should be banned.

Dwyer said alternatives to projectiles are limited because tasers and tear gas are considered intermediate forces and are inaccurate in a crowd. He added that protesters can also grab batons and use them to attack officers.

Dwyer also said he’s concerned that the result of the 2020 presidential election could lead to riots similar to those that broke out in 2016 after President Donald Trump was elected.

Protest curfews in question

Councilmember Maya Esparza questioned City Manager Dave Sykes and City Attorney Nora Firmann about the trends of curfews in place by San Jose Mayor Liccardo after the May protests.

“I grew up here and I’ve never had a curfew before,” Esparza said. “It was quite an experience to have something like that in San Jose.”

Firmann said out of 79 total curfew violation citations, 60 were standalone incidents and therefore would not be prosecuted.

Incident report expedited

SJPD’s after-action report (AAR), a document that summarizes key information in discussions and operations, was created to meet the needs of debriefing officers after the protests.

The report is used to determine operational challenges and areas of improvement for officers, according to a presentation by SJPD during the council meeting Tuesday.

“Tactics are evolving,” Firmann said. “We’re trying to adapt to the landscape.”

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“How do we do that right?” said Mayor Liccardo, who requested an expedited report due to the increasing number of curfews.

The citywide curfew occurred from May 31 to June 6 and was in place between 8:30 p.m. to 5 a.m., according to a June 1 campuswide email from SJPD President Mary Papazian.

“I should grow up here and I’ve never had a curfew before,” Esparza said. “It was quite an experience to have something like that in San Jose.”

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San Jose cultural art at stake

By Isalia Gallo

San Jose Arts Advocates, an organization dedicated to supporting cultural art, organized a city council candidate forum that focused on increasing funding for the arts and developing a more culturally diverse community.

District 6

On Sept. 10, the first debate with San Jose City Council District 6 candidates occurred with Dev Davis, who is running for reelection, and now candidate Jake Torild.

The debate was moderated by San Jose Executive Director Brendan Rawson and Sangam Arts founder Zara Rawson.

San Jose is a nonprofit organization that celebrates the community, while Sangam provides a platform for a female-led, woman-owned arts company.

Torild, a biomedical engineer and community activist, said he would advocate for more art galleries and mural spaces in the city because they lack cultural diversity.

“There are areas that are traditionally left behind, and I would really love to see art start to expand into neighborhoods that don’t necessarily have that kind of access or the same level of voice within the city,” he said.

Davis, the District 6 incumbent, said the city is doing more to highlight groups of diverse artists and is focused on improving theater and the visual arts.

She said she has to see more access to music programs for students whose schools have limited funding.

Candidates were asked how they would cultivate San Jose’s diversity to build a stronger cultural community.

Most of the 50% of residents speak a language other than English. Torild said that, in order to preserve non-English-speaking cultures, the city needs to invest in new kinds of art that promote engagement and local perspectives.

“The biggest impact of the arts is being through interactions at council meetings,” Davis said. “It’s a way to bring diversity in so that the entire city can experience it.”

Rawson asked the candidates if they would support the proposed “private patron for public policy” initiative which would require building developers to pay 1% for public art.

“I do want to see what we say and what can come through,” Davis said. “But at the same time we have to maintain that balance of being able to make sure that developers still want to bring more housing, more housing for San Jose.”

Torild also said he would support the policy because increased funding could bring artists and residents in the city.

Candidates also addressed the bond tax known as the “Jurisdictional Occupancy Tax (TOT), which is crucial for San Jose’s art funding and has decreased by more than 50 million during the pandemic.

“This year, because of the pandemic, the TOT tax has been diminished, resulting in a reduction of 70% or 85 million, reduction in cultural grants programs,” Rawson said.

Sangam asked candidate if they would support an increase in the portion of the TOT that is allocated to cultural programs and meeting the Office of Cultural Affairs administration costs to the general fund, allowing more of the TOT dollars to be invested in local arts.

Davis said an increase in the TOT from the current 60% is too much.

“The inequality in wages could be voided for art investments,” Torild said. “We have families struggling to survive and skipping meals for their kids. This doesn’t look well for getting people out of their homes and engaging in the art and culture of the city.”

Accountant Susan Matthew, who did not provide a last name, mentioned the single biggest challenge she faces as a female-artist is renting for her housing and makes space.

“I like to hear about perspectives, how this specifically affects the arts and how [you would] address [this issue of affordable housing for artists],” he asked.

Torild said San Jose’s challenge is providing affordable housing options for artists who might be living difficulty.

“We’ve built a lot of luxury development over the last couple of years and we’ve really been able to leave out spaces that are affordable,” he said. “It’s a very first step you need to take is making sure we’re getting on-site affordable housing in our development.”

Davis also addressed the city’s downtown occupancy tax for arts organizations, stating the council members should explore the issue further.

San Jose Arts Advocates hosted the District 4 debate on Monday with candidates David Cohen and Lan Diep.

This debate was led by San Jose city council candidate Ryan McGee and Amanda Rawson, the project manager for Arts Build Community.

Arts Build Community is a woman-led art planning firm that brings artists to show how creative works within the design of city infrastructure.

District 4 incumbent Diep said art has a cohesive nature and could build for cultural communities.

He mentioned the city is discussing a potential relocation for the San Jose Flea Market, but he wanted to acknowledge the importance of its current Berryessa location.

“There is a lot of moms to use art to preserve the history and significance of the flea market as a future place in San Jose,” Diep said.

Cohen, a high-tech engineer, said he feels like north San Jose has been developing without a “sense of place,” but has a lot of potential to foster an art culture. He mentioned it’s important to create gathering spots in San Jose neighborhoods and create art on existing infrastructure.

McGee asked the candidates about the 1% for requiring building developers to pay for public art.

Cohen said he agreed with the idea because artistically-apposing developments can make more affordable housing.

Diep said he supports the idea, saying it’s important to promote what about it would happen and how it would affect building developers.

Rawson mentioned around 55 million decrease in funding for cultural grant programs and asked candidates if they would support a 10% increase in hotel tax for the Cultural Arts program.

Cohen said the city should make art a priority, regardless of where funding comes from.

“When you get into difficult times, you’re going to have to make those decisions about what gets preserved and what gets saved,” Cohen said. “You’re going to need those artists when you need to keep people occupied and employed.”

Diep also supported finding new revenue sources to find art is but is reluctant to act on the general fund and to make any commitments.

He said San Jose should be able enough to make it possible in the future.

Candidates were asked if they would work to secure the plan to update Cultural Connections, a city initiative created in 2011 to prioritize art and culture.

“I think everyone appreciates music and theater and all the ways art can create a sense of place in our community,” Diep said. “We have a plan and will roll it out and I’m certain that we will look at it with new eyes and try to update to 2020 standards.”

Cohen agreed that it’s important to preserve the plan.

McGee asked candidates for ideas that would enhance artwork in their district and support artists during times of self-isolation.

“He said that the real change that people in the community can see and look at on their own time and space is a helpful,” Cohen said.

Diep said therein a misconception that being American is more important than who you are or someone’s culture.

He said people should appreciate what they have and develop their cultures, but said displaying diversity can bring the city and community health benefits through art programs that can increase music therapy and social distancing.

Davis said she supports that and said while people are sheltering in place, arts can naturally build a stronger community.

“The social glue that does this,” he said. “Cohen finished the debate by saying it’s important to promote community art participation and cultivate more venues for live performances once people are no longer required to maintain social distance.

The promotion of community art participation and cultivate more venues for live performances after current social distancing.

Follow Isalia on Instagram @Isalia
Earth is doomed by ignorance

Samantha Herrera
STAFF WRITER

Humanity is at a crucial junction where we can help to reverse our impact on climate change, but unfortunately we will most likely fail to meet that necessity. According to an April 4, 2017 article by Columbia University, climate changes naturally occur because of alterations in the Earth’s energy balance, which describe how much energy from the sun is used and returned back to space. Earth’s climate has changed numerous times over the past 650,000 years, moving in and out of ice ages and warm periods. However, because of human activity such as deforestation, fossil fuels and overpopulation, which are all in the interest of big corporations, we have changed the natural process of climate change, leading to extreme weather events.

In 1972, the first United Nations Conference on the Human Environment was held in Stockholm, Sweden. During that conference, the Helsinki Declaration was established to coordinate the UN’s environmental activities and assist developing countries in implementing environmentally sound policies and practices, according to a Sept. 20, 2013 BBC News article. That conference was 48 years ago. In recent years, some countries have tried to come together and combat climate change, but this hasn’t worked out because some leaders care more about their economies than the environment.

According to a Dec. 12, 2015 article by the National Resources Defense Council, a non-profit international environmental advocacy group, 195 countries came together to fight climate change and its impacts. This was known as the Paris Climate Agreement. Its aim is to limit global temperature rise by reducing greenhouse gas emissions, provide a framework for transparent accountability and the achievement of more ambitious goals. Countries that sign the agreement agree to try to keep global temperature below two degrees Celsius this century, mobilize support for climate change mitigation and adaptation in developing nations.

This was a promising start to see some positive change in using the environment. However, not all countries wanted to participate in the Paris Climate Agreement. Since Iraq and Libya have all opted out of signing the Paris Climate Agreement because oil has been an important factor in their economic security. All these countries make money off their oil reserves. Turkey, Ethiopia, South Sudan and Yemen have also opted out of the agreement, according to Climate Home News.

With little big countries rolling out of the world’s climate agreement, it’s safe to say they don’t care about the environment as much as they care about the income the oil is giving them. It’s hard to hope that humans will come together in 2018, President Donald Trump said he deemed climate change played a role in the California wildfires, according to a Nov. 20, 2018 BBC News article, President Trump said to a reporter when asked about climate change, “I don’t believe it.” He went on to say that, “Right now we’re at the cleanest we’ve ever been, and that’s very important to me!” However, the Trump administration has made deep cuts to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), which was established in 1970 to maintain and enforce environmental laws.

According to a Feb. 10 article from The Hill, the Trump administration cut the EPA’s budget by 23%, then by 31% in 2019 and in 2020 he cut the budget by 26%, according to a Feb. 10 article from The Hill. With those budgets cut, the EPA said it expect seeing more lead, toxic chemicals and contaminated water affecting American lives. This will result in more asthma attacks, more toxic pollutants in our communities and jeopardize the health and safety of Americans, according to the Environmental Defense Fund website.

Also, fires have been burning across California, Oregon and Washington. Bigger and more frequent hurricanes have been hitting the east, such as the Category 4 Hurricane Laura in 2020 whichLouisiana in late August. Record-breaking temperatures occurred around the US, such as California. Death Valley reaching a scorching 130 degrees Fahrenheit! But the president still doesn’t think that climate change is a contributing factor.

Constance Rampini, an environmental studies professor at SJSU, and that when the world is at its breaking point, humans will come together and find a solution to help. “The earth’s temperature will continue to warm if we don’t do anything!” Rampini said.

This may be true, but if we continue to ignore science and not work together to battle climate change, then climate change is just going to keep getting worse until it can’t be fixed.

Follow Sam on Twitter @sammiherreraa.
Student-athletes discuss injustices
SJSU Black players unite during weekly Zoom meetings

By Ruth Noreen Aguilar
SPORTS

Season delay leads to draft panic

By Olivia Gerber
SPORTS

The biggest thing is getting a good year of film and winning as many games as possible to get recognized. That may happen in the spring or it may happen a year from now.

Nick Starkel
Graduate quarterback

With fall sports postponed because of the coronavirus pandemic, SJSU men's football players looking to get drafted by an NFL team face a lot of uncertainty.

SJSU Athletics released a statement on Aug. 10 announcing that the Mountain West Conference is indefinitely postponing all scheduled fall sports contests and its championship events.

This postponement of the season poses issues for senior football players with dreams of playing in the NFL.

"I really had a lot of questions myself and I don't have the answers to what's going to happen in the spring," graduate student and offensive tackle Jack Snyder said over the phone.

One of the things that Snyder said they are facing is not having highlight reels from their senior season for scouts to evaluate.

"Most guys need to play their senior year so that they can put themselves in a position to get drafted because it's so hard to get drafted," said SJSU football head coach Brent Brennan over the phone. Players who don't have highlight reels from their senior season in college football will be affected the most by not playing their senior season from the University of Arkansas, he said, wanting to play another college football season, whether it's this semester or next.

"I'm going to play whenever they tell us we can play," Starkel said. "The biggest thing is getting a year of good film and winning as many games as possible to get recognized. That may happen in the spring or it may happen a year from now."

Actualizing the NFL's 2020 season also caused scheduling conflicts for the spring collegiate football season and the NFL draft.

"The NFL Combine, a week-long tournament for college athletes to display their athleticism before the draft in April, is crucial for players to make an impression on team scouts. "The combine is essentially like a huge interview and when April 29, 2021, it may have to be rescheduled to accommodate the spring 2021 college football season."

The Mountain West Conference announced that it will release more information on Mountain West sports today.

Follow Olivia on Twitter
@LivGerber

STAFF WRITER

By Ruth Noremi Aguilar
SPORTS

Over the summer, the San Jose State student-athletes decided to form a group and organize Zoom meetings where Black SJSU athletes could voice their concerns about racial injustices occurring on and off-campus.

Jordan Cobb, a biology sophomore from the SJSU softball, SJSU football and men's basketball team, said they wanted to bring Black athletes from San Jose State together because of the national attention to the Black Lives Matter movement.

Following Zoom meetings hosted by some Black SJSU coaches and faculty members over the summer, Cobb and Simmons wanted to recreate the same sense of community to meetings with other Black student-athletes.

"I feel like I understand a lot of people in the group a lot better and they have definitely gotten to know me a bit better," said SJSU football graduate student and line backer said over the phone.

"Yeah, it's pretty neat having a community where I can learn stuff like that," Cobb said over the phone. "Back, it's pretty neat having I feel like I understand a lot of people a community inside of a community."

"It brings us closer to a lot of new people and new faces, new names that I learn and stuff like that," Cobb said over the phone. "I feel like I understand a lot of people, new faces, new names that I understand a lot of people in the group a lot better and they have definitely gotten to know me a bit better, " Christian Webb, a graduate student and linebacker, said over the phone.

"I feel like I understand a lot of people in the group a lot better and they have definitely gotten to know me a bit better." "I feel like I understand a lot of people in the group a lot better and they have definitely gotten to know me a bit better," Christian Webb, a graduate student and linebacker, said over the phone.

"I feel like I understand a lot of people in the group a lot better and they have definitely gotten to know me a bit better." "I feel like I understand a lot of people in the group a lot better and they have definitely gotten to know me a bit better," Christian Webb, a graduate student and linebacker, said over the phone.

"I feel like I understand a lot of people in the group a lot better and they have definitely gotten to know me a bit better."

Topics change depending on who is expected to attend the meetings. Racial bias is frequently discussed and committee members can share their experiences.

"Athletes from the football, men's basketball, cheer and some student-teams have attended these meetings. The group has seen its members grow from two to more than 10 Black student-athletes in total. Cobb and Simmons said they hope every Black student-athlete on campus will attend the conference calls.

"You can't necessarily expect a whole crowd to come when something barely starts, so we've been taking our baby steps," Simmons said over the phone. "But you know, we're growing."

However, Simmons said the committee wants to do more than talk. They also plan on organizing events to bring attention to some of the systemic problems they have experienced as Black people and Black student-athletes.

Cobb and Simmons said they want to keep the relationships they've made with fellow committee members after their college athletic careers are over.

"The goals are . . . long-lasting relationships," Simmons said. "Because some people are in different stages in their careers, and they'll still have a community to come back to and sort. Hey, the people I want to connect with are still going to be good with this day."

Follow Ruth on Twitter
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PHOTO COURTESY OF ERNIE GONZALEZ

ILLUSTRATION BY NICK YBARRA

Caleb Simmons, SJSU men's basketball guard, speaks to a crowd during the Black Lives Matter march led by the football team on Sept. 1.