

**CITY COUNCIL MEETING
MINUTES
March 24, 2026**

1. CALL TO ORDER & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE IN HONOR OF THE US MILITARY TROOPS

The City Council Meeting was held in a hybrid format (in-person and via Zoom videoconference and broadcast) from the Pinole Council Chambers, 2131 Pear Street, Pinole, California. Mayor Tave called the Special Meeting of the City Council to order at 6:00 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Before we begin, we would like to acknowledge the Ohlone people, who are the traditional custodians of this land. We pay our respects to the Ohlone elders, past, present and future, who call this place, Ohlone Land, the land that Pinole sits upon, their home. We are proud to continue their tradition of coming together and growing as a community. We thank the Ohlone community for their stewardship and support, and we look forward to strengthening our ties as we continue our relationship of mutual respect and understanding.

3. ROLL CALL, CITY CLERK'S REPORT & STATEMENT OF CONFLICT

An official who has a conflict must, prior to consideration of the decision; (1) publicly identify in detail the financial interest that causes the conflict; (2) recuse himself/herself from discussing and voting on the matter; and (3) leave the room until after the decision has been made, Cal. Gov. Code § 87105.

A. COUNCILMEMBERS PRESENT

Anthony Tave, Mayor
Devin Murphy, Mayor Pro Tem
Norma Martinez-Rubin, Council Member
Maureen Toms, Council Member
Cameron Sasai, Council Member*

*Arrived at 6:30 p.m.

B. STAFF PRESENT

Garrett Evans, Interim City Manager
Heather Bell-Spears, City Clerk
Eric Casher, City Attorney
Melissa Klawuhn, Police Chief
Markisha Guillory, Finance Director
Fiona Epps, Communications Director
Roxane Stone, Deputy City Clerk

City Clerk Heather Bell-Spears announced the agenda had been posted on March 23, 2026 at 12:00 p.m. with all legally required written notices.

City Clerk Bell-Spears also reported for Special Meetings, the noticing requirement was 24-hours in advance of the meeting time. She added that written comments had been received in advance of the meeting, distributed to the City Council and staff, posted to the City website and made available to the public to view in the Council Chambers.

Following an inquiry, the Council reported there were no conflicts with any items on the agenda.

4. CITIZENS TO BE HEARD (Public Comments)

Citizens may speak under any item not listed on the Agenda. The time limit is 3 minutes and is subject to modification by the Mayor. Individuals may not share or offer time to another speaker. Pursuant to provisions of the Brown Act, no action may be taken on a matter unless it is listed on the agenda, or unless certain emergency or special circumstances exist. The City Council may direct staff to investigate and/or schedule certain matters for consideration at a future Council meeting.

Jennifer Horn continued reading into the record written comments/emails received related to the topic of an Elected Mayor/Measure D, as follows:

Joan Goularte, The current city council gets paid, and the mayor for that year gets a stipend. That's enough! The city manager makes a good salary and that is who really runs the city. Use the \$25k and pave the sink hole at the park on PVR. Joan Goularte.

Roberta Bartlett, I am against this special election. The cost involved with this action could be better spent on a number of things this city needs: Road repair Additional police officers Traffic safety on San Pablo Avenue in front of the new senior housing. More street sweeping. Modernizing San Pablo Avenue Bring businesses to Appian 80 Shopping Center. A rotating mayor keeps ideas new and gives all council members equal time. I am against a permanent mayor position due to the cost of a maintaining salary plus benefits. Roberta Bartlett.

Susan Dunlap, I have lived in Pinole for 40 years since moving here as a teacher at Richmond High School. I have found the rotating position of mayor to work effectively for a city the size of Pinole. I urge you to vote no on this proposal to spend approximately \$25,000 on an election to see if citizens want to switch to a rotating position. I support the recent increased stipend for council members given your responsibilities but I have not seen any outreach to the citizens to explain the need for or benefit of this change. Given our current fiscal situation, I do not support spending our tax dollars on the election or if we changed to the directly-elected mayor position, the ongoing increased costs of that position. Please vote no on this proposal! Susan Dunlap.

Theresa Bailey, Please do not change the format for the mayor and expect taxpayers to pay \$25000. Please take the time to slowly drive thru the streets of Pinole to note the poor condition of our streets. The potholes are terrible. Before spending money, look at what the city needs for repairs. \$25,000 is not a lot of money for repairs but one pothole filled would help. Thank you Theresa Bailey.

Joe Sosensky, I have been reading about the Pinole City Council's proposal to put a question on the ballot to determine whether the city will have a full-time, fully paid mayor's position. Clearly, the city of Pinole has been struggling to fund our basic services already.

We have one of the higher sales tax rates in California and a new increase put into effect every few years. Our 10.25% rate is as much as three percent higher than that of other communities. The additional salary to be paid a full-time mayor- as well as likely additional compensation- could be better used to address current or future shortfalls in funding...

William Horton opposed Measure D which would drain \$55,000 from the City's budget to create a separately Elected Mayor, the current Mayoral rotation still worked well and four different Mayors in a four-year period provided a good variety of leadership. He quoted Theodore Roosevelt and pointed out all Council members were democratically elected by the voters and anytime a Council member became Mayor, they would have a couple of years working with citizens and the budget, which experience benefited everyone. Measure D would not guarantee new funds or ideas and he planned to vote no on Measure D.

Rafael Menis invited everyone to a protest on March 28, 2026 from 11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at the intersection of Tennent and San Pablo Avenues, registration required. Interested participants could also join an earlier rally at the Fernandez Park gazebo from 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. He noted due to the City's permit requirements, registration was limited and people were asked to register at mobilize.us. He was otherwise surprised to find when going through the registration process for the permit, to learn amplified sound was not permitted at the gazebo or in Fernandez Park, although in the past he had seen amplified sound allowed during numerous events at Fernandez Park.

Debbie Long commented that in the last week the ballot arguments in favor of or against Measure D, for an Elected Mayor were due. No arguments had been submitted in favor of an Elected Mayor or a rebuttal to the argument against Measure D to be placed on the November ballot. It looked like the Council majority in support of spending \$55,000 of taxpayer money to place this on the ballot could not defend their own position. This justified the position that the three Council members who voted to place the item on the ballot were fiscally irresponsible.

Ms. Long also commented that during the March 17, 2026 City Council meeting, she had asked where Council member Sasai and Mayor Pro Tem Murphy were, and while it was unclear, it appeared that Council member Sasai participated in the meeting via Zoom whereas Mayor Pro Tem Murphy was expected to join in. While asking a follow-up question, whether both Council members were out of state, she was informed yes but no other further explanation was given. In doing a follow-up, she found that both Council members were in Washington D.C. on the taxpayers' dime again. She asked why this was not listed on the meeting agenda since both Council members knew well ahead of time they would not be at the meeting, as well as it being a requirement of the Brown Act. This appeared to be a known requirement since on February 25, 2026, during the Community Services Commission meeting, that meeting agenda stated that Commissioner Avila was attending via Zoom and her location was specific with the name of the hotel and full address including the City where she was participating. She asked why this information had not been included for Council members who don't attend meetings in-person. She asked if they were trying to deliberately keep their travel a secret.

Ms. Long added if a City Council member in the State of California and pursuant to the Brown Act Zoomed in from a remote location that was not posted on the meeting agenda and did not meet specific legal exceptions, such as just cause or emergency circumstances, it generally negated their ability to participate in that meeting and prevented their votes from being counted.

Ms. Long requested that any votes taken by Council member Sasai be removed from the March 17, 2026 meeting. She could only deduce this lack of information was done to conceal that both Council members were in Washington D.C. at taxpayers' expense. She requested a response from the City Attorney either via email or at the next City Council meeting.

Peter Murray continued reading into the record written comments/emails received related to the topic of an Elected Mayor/Measure D, as follows:

Joe Sosensky, ...As cities go, Pinole is a relatively small one. I don't feel there is a need for a full-time mayor at additional expense. I believe our established structure of rotating mayors is functioning reasonably well. Now it's simply up to our elected officials to use our resources wisely and effectively spent. Thank you for your attention. Joe Sosensky Pinole resident.

Bill Miller, I think it's fine the way it is.

Diane Strong, I think it's fine the way it is!

Elena Lyman, Hello I am a Pinole resident and I support our City Council and Mayor-Pro-Tems. I do not support spending \$25,000 to put a question on the ballot. Please spend that money on our roads or our community events. Thank you very much, Elena Lyman.

Earl and Shirley Hogg, To the Pinole City Council, We oppose the paid position for the Mayor of Pinole. If our City Manager is unable to handle the finances of the City of Pinole, perhaps he needs to be replaced. Respectfully yours, Earl and Shirley Hogg.

Basem Khalil, Pinole is a small town, a municipality. Lately, the city council is engaging in non-essential issues such as parades, denying ICE from using city property

Mary Horton, former Mayor of the City of Pinole, spoke in favor of a rotational Mayor system and against Measure D, for a directly Elected Mayor. She commented that diversity, equity and inclusion was currently under fire and she found as a past Mayor who had rotated in the Mayor's chair four times, the best way to preserve diversity was through that methodology. There had been diversity on the City Council and through former Mayors, and through the rotational system that diversity was preserved and very important in Pinole. While a Council member suggested this was all about white men, she pointed out that had not been the case since 1990, when she had been a member of the City Council. She supported the rotational Mayor methodology and reiterated her opposition to Measure D.

Mayor Pro Tem Murphy asked staff to look into the amplification issue at City parks and get back to the City Council.

5. OLD BUSINESS

- A. Commercial Cannabis Workshop. Action: Provide direction per Staff Recommendation (Eric Casher, Fiona Epps, Melissa Klawuhn, Markisha Guillory)**

Interim City Manager Garrett Evans introduced the Commercial Cannabis Workshop, with the City Attorney and other Department Heads to provide background information.

City Attorney Eric Casher provided a PowerPoint presentation and was joined by Police Chief Melissa Klawuhn, Finance Director Markisha Guillory and Communications Director Fiona Epps. An overview of Procedure and Implementation of a Commercial Cannabis Program was provided and included the background of cannabis consumption which was legal under state law and which allowed local governments to regulate or prohibit commercial cannabis businesses within their jurisdiction.

During the November 4, 2025 City Council meeting, staff was directed to prepare a presentation and report regarding the process and implementation of a Commercial Cannabis Program via ordinance. The types of cannabis businesses; regulations; economic contributions/fiscal impact; community and engagement plan and public safety impact were all highlighted.

Staff recommended the City Council provide direction regarding any or all or the following:

- Prepare a Request for Proposal (RFP) for a consultant to conduct an analysis of potential expenditures and revenues associated with establishing a cannabis program.
- Initiate the proposed outreach and communication strategy to engage the community in the preparation of a Commercial Cannabis Ordinance.
- Prepare a draft Commercial Cannabis Ordinance, including the types of allowed cannabis businesses, and the requirements to obtain a permit, to include in the ordinance.

Interim City Manager Evans reported he had reached out to a developer who had sited several cannabis dispensary/retail stores in Contra Costa County to solicit feedback about the City of Pinole, and who informed him a 5,000 square foot store generated between \$15 to \$20 million. Cities may have four to five percent gross receipts, with the cities of Berkeley, San Francisco and Richmond at about five percent and Contra Costa County about four percent. For Pinole, between \$600,000 to \$800,000 a year was anticipated from such a facility, if done well, and where public safety and all other concerns were taken into account. If directed by the City Council, a consultant would be able to double check everything.

Responding to questions from the City Council, Interim City Manager Evans, City Attorney Casher, Finance Director Guillory, Communications Director Epps, and Police Chief Klawuhn clarified the following:

- The estimated costs of attorney's fees and staff costs for drafting a Fiscal Impact Report could be provided to the City Council and indirect staff costs could be captured as well. (Toms)
- With respect to security, staff was in favor of having security on-site and noted some cities required security on-site after hours and some had moved to a camera system with a live feed directly to the Police Department, which would be beneficial to the Pinole Police Department (PPD). (Sasai)

- In terms of armed security, that could be discussed further given there would be some benefit but that should be analyzed and looked into further. (Sasai)
- Typically, the retailer would provide an operating agreement that would include a site plan and security plan and detail what was proposed by way of security. Some locations may require heightened security. The City could add as part of a City ordinance, either codified through the Pinole Municipal Code (PMC) or permitting process, minimum standards for security that would be consistent for any and all commercial retailers, and more information could be gathered with proposed recommendations for the City Council to consider. Also, the operating agreement could state at the discretion of the Police Chief, security could be increased or decreased giving the Police Chief flexibility. (Sasai)
- The City of Pittsburg, as an example, regulated cannabis business licenses by permitting one license per 25,000 in population, and the Pittsburg City Council worked to ensure there was no concentration of such businesses within one zone. (Sasai)
- The State requirements and buffer zones for cannabis dispensaries and cultivation sites would be taken into consideration with sites mapped where a potential facility could be located and staff would work with the City Council to determine acceptability. The buffer zones mandated by the State of California was 600-feet from a daycare and schools and such establishments but the City could have stricter standards. Most cities had stricter standards and data could be pulled for City Council review. (Sasai)
- The types of cannabis businesses were again clarified. There were many factors in the type of establishment permitted in a city. Oftentimes, it was due to revenue generation depending on the particular permitted use, with public safety a concern with all of the types of cannabis businesses. An economic analysis and consultant led-analysis would inform and provide data on that topic. It was noted that cultivation and processing of cannabis could have odors and some communities had not permitted those types of cannabis businesses as a result. (Sasai)
- Cultivation/distribution/delivery types of cannabis businesses would be a challenge for revenue versus retail stores, which was pretty regulated. Weedmaps, where one could learn, find and order weed, would show that deliveries were currently occurring throughout the community, and it was difficult to gauge those numbers but it was easier on the retail dispensary side. Whether this effort would allow the City to generate revenue from existing deliveries, as an example, was one of the conditions the consultant should be challenged with on how cities could best capture that revenue, a critical component that could be brought back to the City Council. (Sasai)
- Interim City Manager Evans reached out to a developer who sited several cannabis dispensary/retail stores in Contra Costa County and during those discussions, there was feedback provided whether there was interest in the Pinole area for such businesses. Input was provided that cannabis businesses liked retail areas and locations near the freeway, which increased the client base. (Martinez-Rubin)

- Acknowledged a request for the consultant to include in any analysis why commercial cannabis should be considered as a potential revenue source, relative to what would be generated and the start-up costs for a business that would offer one type of activity only, such as retail only; request to provide information on the potential revenue that could be generated from storefront activity relative to everything else that had to occur to have the product in the storefront; request for a business plan to be part of any agreement if it came to that; and consider the costs of legal fees for potentially drafting an ordinance and costs across City departments in the long-term. Given the unknowns, acknowledged concern with the costs for ongoing administration and enforcement. Also acknowledged a request for additional information on the type and size of business activity they were speaking of, the number of potential dispensaries that could be potentially located in Pinole, how many industrial areas Pinole had and how much accommodation there could be for the type of business that would meet the minimum State requirements for a buffer zone for such businesses, along with a possible increase of the buffer zone if the City were to impose stricter regulations. Acknowledged the emphasis that all of this information would help the City Council make an informed decision. (Martinez-Rubin)
- Also, acknowledged a request to initiate the proposed outreach and communication strategy to engage the community in the preparation of a Commercial Cannabis Ordinance prior to engaging a consultant, given that community engagement was essential to guide any policy the City Council may consider and since the staff report indicated it was a given the City Council would consider an ordinance, rather than an assessment of whether there was a need for a Commercial Cannabis Ordinance, with the only point of argument being to generate money. Acknowledged concerns with normalizing the use of a drug and the perception there would be no harm with its use. Acknowledged a request for staff to assess the societal impacts of having a retail cultivation that was just beyond dollars, and look at real case studies and cities, possibly two to three facilities in Contra Costa County, and share with the City Council whether there were any issues with loitering or traffic, as examples, and share that data point with the City Council. Whether that would be part of an analysis a consultant would do, it was suggested there could be an add-alternate to the RFP for specifics that could be added into the contract. (Martinez-Rubin)
- Acknowledged a request to review the commercial cannabis regulations and zoning restrictions for Solano, Napa and Marin Counties. (Mayor Pro Tem Murphy)
- A Commercial Cannabis Study would include some of the factors outlined in the PowerPoint presentation such as projected revenues and expenditures associated with establishing a Commercial Cannabis Program, licensing and application fees for the dispensaries, staffing needs, regulatory compliance costs and anticipated market activity. A more detailed analysis that included other factors could expand the scope of work. Staff confirmed the goal would be to have a licensing program for commercial cannabis that was cost recoverable. (Mayor Pro Tem Murphy)

- Whether there would be ongoing review periods or opportunities to revise the Commercial Cannabis Program after implementation, that could be done since the ordinance could always be amended through a first and second read as part of an ordinance amendment. (Mayor Pro Tem Murphy)
- Commercial cannabis licenses would be reviewed in the same way the City reviewed typical licensing through the Community Development Department and a business license application review would be included. Staff could confirm compliance with state licensing requirements as well. In terms of the potential revocation of a commercial cannabis license, the license would include requirements for compliance and there would be a renewal period and possibly periodic checks to ensure compliance. If the applicant failed to comply with any reporting requirements, that could be the basis for removal or rescission of a license and would be a policy decision and something where the City Council could provide direction. (Mayor Pro Tem Murphy)
- In terms of community engagement related to Proposition 64, the Control, Regulate, and Tax Adult Use of Marijuana Act, staff had not done much community engagement at this time, but that would change if the City Council were to consider leading any kind of public workshops. Information on Proposition 64 was available online. (Mayor Pro Tem Murphy)
- Whether staff was considering data from other cities, which had shown the impacts from cannabis businesses on crime rates, no specific data sets were available from the cities that had commercial cannabis businesses. That information was difficult to quantify. Speaking with Police Chiefs in cities with commercial cannabis businesses, they were unable to provide hard numbers but staff could push for more information. Staff emphasized the more proactive they were in the safety plan and working with the developers to ensure they had a solid security plan, both hard security and physical security of the location and practices, such as how businesses were securing cash and product after hours, would help deter crime. Acknowledged a request for more baseline data about how commercial cannabis businesses were impacting crime, when that crime was happening, in what businesses and what cities, which information would be helpful. (Mayor Pro Tem Murphy)
- In terms of specific locations where there was an increase in crime, that data was currently collected now whether a commercial business or residential and the Pinole Police Department (PPD) looked at Calls for Service (CFS) and worked with the resident or business to mitigate the volume of CFS as much as possible, which would carry over for this type of business as well. (Mayor Pro Tem Murphy)
- Staff recommended the City increase its camera system in the event commercial cannabis businesses were permitted. A live feed camera would come directly to the PPD and would assist in the response to a location, although there was no staff to monitor the cameras at all times. Most of the time camera systems were used after the fact to identify individuals who were responsible for a crime. (Mayor Pro Tem Murphy)

- It was the Police Chief's opinion that a commercial cannabis business be placed as far away from the freeway as possible, since if a crime occurred it allowed the PPD a better chance to apprehend suspects before reaching the freeway while recognizing from a business standpoint, it made sense for such a business to be closer to the freeway where people who may not be residents may stop in and make purchases. Staff reported the area of Fitzgerald Drive experienced a lot of shoplifting with most calls to the PPD from the businesses themselves. This had been a challenge since oftentimes those committing the crimes were not citizens of Pinole but people committing the crimes and leaving the City. Acknowledged a request that a follow-up presentation include data that proved the location of a commercial cannabis facility should not be near a freeway. Staff acknowledged not every type of commercial cannabis business, as outlined in the PowerPoint presentation, needed freeway visibility such as warehouse/distribution, which made sense to be located in a more industrial area. Staff could provide the best data possible, but there were lots of variables on this topic. (Mayor Pro Tem Murphy)
- The City received \$99,000 as part of a Cannabis Grant for this current fiscal year. Another application had been submitted in February 2026 for \$174,000 in funding. The funding the City had received allowed for the purchase of a traffic motorcycle, which would be on the street soon. Funds also provided training for PPD officers to recognize impaired drivers and outreach and education materials about driving under the influence of cannabis. Staff would follow-up on the status of funding for the grant application submitted in February 2026. (Mayor Pro Tem Murphy)
- The process for considering commercial cannabis licenses was yet to be determined. There could be an RFP process or a Request for Qualification (RFQ) for operators but again the process was yet to be determined with the City Council to weigh-in along with collaboration with the community. Clarified the operating agreements would come before the City Council for approval with the issuance of the license an administrative function. (Mayor Pro Tem Murphy)
- Confirmed much of the prior data on this topic, which had last been discussed in 2021, had to be updated. (Mayor Tave)
- If the City Council were to move forward to develop a Commercial Cannabis Ordinance, it would involve a first and second read, although staff was interested in hearing from the community and having more workshops and standalone discussions, which would take some time. If moving forward with a consultant that would also take some time resulting in a lengthy process. (Mayor Tave)
- A social equity program could be included in the RFP and could be considered and discussed. (Mayor Tave)
- If the City Council decided to move forward, a Commercial Cannabis Program could be set up. If as an example the City Council decided to issue two licenses, an RFP for operators to submit a proposal for those two licenses would be issued, to be evaluated and assessed with a recommendation brought forward to the City Council. (Mayor Pro Tem Murphy)

- An agreement would be approved by the City Council in an open meeting and weigh-in on the terms of the agreement, if needed. It would be a competitive procurement, since the City did not have anything in its current Procurement Policy for this type of procurement, but that process would be developed through this process and include identification of the standards to be set, qualifications, and then development of a procurement policy for those retailers through this exercise. (Mayor Pro Tem Murphy)

PUBLIC COMMENTS OPENED

Debbie Long stated she was not necessarily opposed to commercial cannabis but was opposed at this time. The City had too much on its plate and she commented on the time the City Council had taken to have the current discussion, staff time required to follow through and get all of this done, which cost money. The City was again coming to residents to consider several taxes and that money could be better spent towards potholes. She asked whether the grants discussed were specific to PPD needs or whether the funds could be used for consultants or cover any staff time. She suggested there were plenty of cannabis clubs to meet anyone's needs, with locations in El Sobrante and at Hilltop in Richmond. She knew people who used cannabis and was not judging anyone that did, but it was a matter of timing and now was not the time. She would also like to ensure there were enough tools included in a permit for commercial cannabis to ensure strict compliance.

As an example, Ms. Long stated it should not take three strikes you're out, but it would depend on the strike. She suggested any crime was too much crime. She also wanted more information on police calls to such facilities, such as what would the call entail, who was the victim and how was the victim affected. She reiterated one crime was too many, the timing was not right to pursue this topic but possibly next year. She emphasized the City needed to figure out what it was doing between the budget and taxes.

Cathy McFarland suggested the City Council was considering adding cannabis dispensaries to save the City from mismanagement and irresponsible spending of tax dollars. She commented a basic study for the project could cost between \$25,000 and \$50,000 or more. She asked the City Council to stop wasting money and create solutions to problems. Rather, she wanted to see the vacant lots, as identified in the City's asset list dated June 3, 2024, in which the City was paying taxes, insurance and maintenance, to be sold to gain revenue for the City.

Ms. McFarland stated she had shared in October or November 2025, a list of the top 20 dangerous cities in the state, two of which were located in Contra Costa County; the cities of Richmond and Antioch. She pointed out all 20 cities had cannabis sales. She suggested there was a correlation between drugs and crimes, and referenced two reports to support her comments, which information she had previously submitted for the record. She added the City had mentioned both of those cities in the PowerPoint presentation as examples for pushing cannabis dispensaries in Pinole in 2025.

Ms. McFarland also reported total cannabis sales for the State of California for 2024 was approximately \$4.6 billion, and in Contra Costa County \$107 million, with total alcohol sales in the State of California in 2024 at \$29.4 billion. She suggested the City wanted to encourage and profit off of those with addictions for money by allowing cannabis shops, but at the same time educate people about the use of cannabis. She found that to be an oxymoron.

Ms. McFarland suggested they were creating a problem and coming up with a solution that never fixed the problem but would be used as a revenue stream of income. She supported no cannabis dispensaries in Pinole.

Peter Murray commented this issue had been debated years ago. He questioned what happened to all of the documentation from prior discussions, expressing concern the City could spend upwards of \$60,000 for someone to tell them the same thing that was already somewhere in a drawer at City Hall. He understood the City Attorney was present for those presentations at that time and again questioned whether the City was going to rehash what had already been discussed or whether there were some new findings. He questioned whether the City may possibly permit two licenses for commercial cannabis businesses and suggested they were not needed in Pinole since there were plenty of dispensaries outside of Pinole. He also questioned whether or not serious numbers had been identified to address all of the issues that could be created if this was permitted and what would be done for those people who had problems with cannabis, or the fact it could lead to a deeper involvement in drugs. There were already issues in Oakland, San Francisco and Richmond, and those were not the communities he wanted to emulate. Pinole was a virtuous City, and should be desired as a family town not a high-end metropolitan city that accepted such issues. He suggested cannabis was not needed, it had been decided years ago it was not needed, and the City Council should learn from the people who preceded them.

Mary Horton urged the City Council to listen to the people. She was aware Council members have had conversations, supporters and special interests that had encouraged this dialogue, but she encouraged the City Council to keep the eye on the ball. She found this type of business was not needed and Pinole had a small police force. Pinole had problems in its small city with limited time and money to deal with them. Restaurants along San Pablo Avenue and more were suffering since COVID-19, and she wondered where the staff time, devotion, resources and money had gone to help struggling local restaurants/businesses. There had also been graffiti on a local building reading "fire the Mayor and fix the roads" with the response from the Mayor at that time they would "get those people who graffitied the building and hold them to account." The problems in the City were roads, ancillary crime, keeping the City safe and maintaining parks, which were the issues in front of the City Council. She suggested if going to the voters for support, there would likely be a solid and decisive no, and she begged the City Council to look at the issues in front of them and possibly table this topic for another time, again with other jurisdictions handling cannabis just fine. She urged the City Council to vote no.

Jesson de Leon stated he had called in after seeing the Special Meeting agenda item. Based on a fiscal perspective, the \$600,000 in projected revenue was generously on the high end considering the State of California and the Governor had reduced taxes for existing cannabis businesses because the cannabis industry was in decline. When considering fiscal responsibility, he urged the City Council to consider other avenues for revenue such as perhaps a gross receipts tax on existing businesses, which utilized the retailers currently in Pinole. As someone who moved to Pinole specifically for the family-oriented community, he would not want cannabis in the City, not because he wanted to deny access to those who needed it, but because there were so many other locations where cannabis could be accessed. Pinole did not have the infrastructure in place for the robust regulations that would be required to start a cannabis program.

PUBLIC COMMENTS CLOSED

Council member Toms commented there had been a proposal for an Economic Study and it was stated the item had not been budgeted. If the City Council were to modify the budget, she asked where the funds would come from, particularly since the budget was so tight.

Finance Director Guillory confirmed the budget was tight and would recommend the funds come from the Unassigned Fund Balance that could be used for one-time uses.

Council member Sasai asked about the sequencing of the action items that staff recommended the City Council provide direction. He found it made no sense to move forward with the items simultaneously since some of the data from the Commercial Cannabis Study would inform the questions asked about the information presented during the outreach to be conducted. Similarly, the feedback from residents during the outreach would determine what should be included in the ordinance to be drafted, such as the number of permits, buffer zones, impacts to public safety and the like, and which would inform next steps. He asked if the staff recommendation was to sequence the recommendations as outlined in the PowerPoint presentation.

City Attorney Casher deferred to others, but noted currently there was no recommendation for sequencing. Staff viewed the recommendations as next steps needed to move the item forward. Staff could receive direction and he acknowledged Council member Martinez-Rubin had recommended having Town Halls and webinars to help inform the consultant-driven process and noted this could be approached in a number of different ways. There was no recommendation on sequencing, but it was a recommendation to consider an RFP and the community engagement as next steps.

Council member Sasai found information from both steps could inform the process and he would wait for discussion from the rest of the City Council on sequencing. He asked about impaired driving statistics, and for cities and counties where there was a presence or concentration of cannabis dispensaries, whether an increase in impaired driving had occurred.

Police Chief Klawuhn did not have the data on what was specifically being asked but she could attempt to get that information.

Council member Sasai responded to public comment about cannabis being a gateway drug. He suggested any data or information would be helpful to understand whether that was true and whether cannabis was a gateway drug to prohibited substances. He asked whether staff had conducted any research.

City Attorney Casher suggested that would be part of a community engagement and education plan. It was important to level set and have those conversations with the community to ensure there was alignment with their understanding of the facts and available studies.

Council member Sasai looked forward to having those conversations with the community. He otherwise recommended moving forward with the first two staff recommendations, and when considering the cost of a cannabis program also consider the return in investment, which a Commercial Cannabis Study would show. While they may be over or under approximating the potential revenue, that study would be helpful. He was curious to see how other cities had put into place a Community Benefits Agreement and what it paid for.

If there were cannabis dispensaries in Pinole, Council member Sasai suggested the operators should pay for improvements in the City, such as revitalization, public art, things that could help with graffiti, Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) and how that could be funded, possible funding of micro grants for small businesses in Pinole to possibly rehabilitate properties, surveillance and anything that could enhance public safety for all businesses in Pinole.

Council member Sasai acknowledged the former Mayors in the Council Chambers and thanked them for their comments. He also looked forward to seeing the meeting minutes and discussion about cannabis that a former City Council had conducted in previous years, and would like to listen to the people, which was why the outreach and communication strategy was so important. He looked forward to feedback from the community on their appetite for cannabis dispensaries in Pinole and other types of businesses, and moving forward with that if that was something the community wanted to move forward with.

Mayor Pro Tem Murphy acknowledged the public comments on some of the issues and questioned the communication and engagement plan and did not envy staff on the work necessary to educate the public today about things that had been instilled wrongfully over the past few decades. He would like to see the City move forward with the Community Engagement Plan. He suggested there were stakeholders, partners and businesses who could help with that effort. He wanted to see staff reach out to Kaiser as an opportunity for that public education, since he assumed there were resources and data that explained cannabis as a medicine. He also asked staff to reach out to Stanford Botanicals Wellness LLC, a small business in Pinole centered on herbal medicine since 2020, and which had been a participant in many City events. And, also reach out to NORML, an organization that was fundamentally built around education and research on cannabis. He wanted residents to have the space to speak up and a space for residents to have a basis of facts and approach to education that was open and clear-eyed on what commercial cannabis meant for the City along with the health impacts of cannabis. He feared a lack of education of the public and ideally with the Communication and Engagement Plan he hoped to avoid misinformation. He trusted the Communications Director and her team would ensure that would not happen.

Mayor Pro Tem Murphy commented that Proposition 64 was great internally for staff to understand what that meant for the State and they now had to reiterate what that meant for the public. The organizations he mentioned could be helpful to develop some of the research and data. While commercial cannabis could be a revenue and cost recoverable opportunity, the value of the research and data could help this issue and future City Councils. He recognized there was some content around a previous City Council in 2020, and he would like to see that information.

Mayor Pro Tem Murphy also found the Economic Study would be valuable and he thanked the Finance Director for outlining the skeleton of what that would look like. He was excited to identify the types of cannabis businesses and not center only on storefront and distribution, and would be interested in how the RFQ or RFP process could ensure a scope to help understand the types of businesses they could have in Pinole and their economic impact. It was important to understand the health impacts and an economic analysis of each business, if possible, which he understood the Economic Study would include.

Finance Director Guillory suggested those topics would be covered under a basic study, which typically looked at the various types of activities.

Mayor Pro Tem Murphy further commented that the ordinance sounded like a good idea, necessary and 21st century government, and he supported that as well. He pointed out Pinole was behind other cities on this issue but the time they took to get here was important, and he valued those who made a decision early on to restrict commercial cannabis since they allowed themselves the possibility of looking at other cities and seeing what they had done. They now had more data that could come back and he thanked staff for the openness to bringing more data back to the City Council.

Council member Martinez-Rubin noted during the March 17, 2026 City Council meeting, HdL provided a presentation on revenue generation, specifically on tax revenue generation, and the report and information provided listed a number of potential types of businesses that could be of interest to consider. They had not talked much about viability but it was based on the market as currently known. She found it interesting that commercial cannabis was not on the list nor were retail dispensaries for products and what they saw were consumer goods and purchases for sale taxes that helped the City. She understood that HdL advised on cannabis regulations and should the City go that route, she would like HdL as a potential consultant to help mesh the data that was available on tax generation since they were part of the study a consultant would have. Also, HdL could provide information on the market size and demand in Pinole, and within a certain distance from Pinole, cannabis products from other nearby cities. She would be interested in having HdL also provide something that would inform what the competitive landscape was given there were existing dispensaries in nearby cities, and accessibility was not an issue. Medicinal cannabis products were also available as they were delivered into the City of Pinole, with accessibility not an issue. She asked whether the Economic Study would provide information on market size and demand and tax revenue projections.

Finance Director Guillory confirmed the study would provide market size and demand but she was unsure it would provide tax revenue projections but could inquire.

Council member Martinez-Rubin would also like to know that information in terms of how much was actually coming into a City. She asked the Interim City Manager if the amount quoted from a developer he had spoken with was specifically about taxes, since for every dollar of purchase the City would only get a certain percentage of that on any type of product sold. She would want information about what it would take in terms of gross receipts and type of activity in order to generate the kind of revenue via taxes that would support the costs associated with implementing a business program for commercial cannabis. She would also want to see an analysis of compliance fees and security requirements, as discussed as an issue, and the impacts of the tax restrictions on business viability as well as the administration process required to keep businesses of this type in Pinole, whatever type that might be as listed in the PowerPoint presentation.

Council member Martinez-Rubin noted HdL was acquainted with such businesses throughout the State and had spoken to the complexity of taxes involved, whether they were from direct purchases on-site as well as from deliveries given current tax law, and where taxes would actually go. She agreed a lot had to be clarified before even suggesting an ordinance, because data was needed in the context of what was known to be an issue. She was not expecting quantitative data on all of the questions asked and noted the City Council would have to get to a point to decide as best as possible based on what was presented and what the public sentiment was on the different issues.

Mayor Tave stated the HdL report that had been presented to the City Council on March 17, 2026, had about \$17 million worth of clothing that was purchased outside of Pinole. This discussion was about getting more information to communicate with the public. He also highlighted a number of milestones in the State of California related to cannabis, including: Proposition 19 in 1972, the nation's first ballot to legalize cannabis failed; in 1975, the state decriminalized the possession of cannabis up to one ounce; in 1996, the Compassionate Use Act, Proposition 215 allowed doctors to issue a medical license for someone to use cannabis for medical reasons; in 2003, Senate Bill (SB) 420 allowed medical patients to form cooperatives and collectives to collectively purchase cannabis without having to pay an enormous amount; in 2010, SB 1449 reduced possession of cannabis to less than an ounce to a criminal infraction; in 2014, Proposition 47 downgraded the possession of many controlled substances from felonies to misdemeanors; in 2015, the Medical Marijuana Regulation and Safety Act (MMRSA) was passed; in 2016, Proposition 64, Adult Use of Marijuana Act passed; in 2018, legal commercial recreational sales began; in 2019, SB 94 streamlined regulations by merging medical and recreational laws under the Medical and Adult Use Cannabis Regulation and Safety Act; in 2021, the Department of Cannabis Control was established; and in 2025, the Social Equity Program Extension was established. All of this information had shown this was not new, or something that was that complex, although HdL would be hard pressed to level out since the cannabis laws were different from city to city.

Mayor Tave found the City had taken a good approach by keeping general information in this discussion, but the City deserved a deep dive into this topic since people in Pinole used cannabis/marijuana for varying reasons, and the City needed to take a look and ensure doing a comprehensive report and bring it back to citizens for comment. He also recognized there were concerns in the community on the potential number of licenses, what a cannabis business would look like, the hours of operation and the like, which concerns were acknowledged but which he found to be over policing of cannabis in the past, and now people were starting to realize there was a different perspective. He was in favor of a more comprehensive report, but he asked to lean on some of the other city partners in the area who had tried and failed some tactics, or some of the different regulations they tried to put into place as a comparison, to allow a better conversation moving forward. He welcomed any motion to provide to staff.

Council member Sasai commented that eight years ago, Measure R was on the ballot for a countywide measure to legalize cannabis dispensaries, cultivation and allow revenue from businesses, which measure passed by 71.44 percent. He asked the City Clerk if there was any way to place a quick call to the County Clerk Recorder to see if the aggregated data could be provided on how Pinole residents voted on the measure, and City Clerk Bell-Spears confirmed that could be done.

Council member Sasai added that AB 1775, passed a year or two ago, allowed for on-site consumption and sale of food and beverages at dispensaries. He asked for that to be included in the commercial cannabis analysis in the RFP as well as part of the discussion during the community outreach.

Mayor Tave commented this issue had been around for a long time, and there could be families that had been impacted by laws that were unjust before, which was why they had to find a way to weave some restorative justice into this topic so that revenue from such businesses that was going to the City somehow weaved its way back into the community.

There had also been impacts to law enforcement as well, and the Mayor would like to see how other communities had seen that revenue stream go back to their police and fire departments.

Council member Martinez-Rubin offered a motion, seconded by Council member Toms, to direct staff to design and implement a series of workshops to inform and assess the need for a Cannabis Program in the City of Pinole.

Council member Sasai asked if the motion was different from the outreach strategy staff had outlined in the staff report.

On the motion, Council member Martinez-Rubin commented that her motion and the staff recommendation probably overlapped, but the way she read what was presented as part of the staff report was that it would be prior to an ordinance. In her mind, it was an assumption an ordinance would occur. Her motion was to have a series of workshops to inform everyone and the public, to discuss even further some of the items they had discussed during this workshop. The series of workshops could have themes along the lines of the categories of the types of questions that had been raised. She found the two processes would overlap but her motion was intended to inform future direction.

Council member Sasai agreed there was not enough information to just draft an ordinance at this time. He suggested the analysis provided by a consultant could provide information given to residents who engaged in the outreach plan as well as answer any questions anyone may have. He clarified the motion, as stated, was not in total alignment with the outreach and communication strategy staff had prepared.

Council member Martinez-Rubin reiterated her intent for the motion, as stated. While her motion was a different purpose from the staff recommendation for the outreach and communication strategy, she was attempting to ask for an assessment to identify the need for an ordinance. The City Council had discussions to bring them to this point and the City Council itself, among them had generated a number of questions given the unknowns. She wanted to combine the City Council's perspectives with questions in their minds, along with whatever may be generated from the public, and they could meet at some point or not, but it was another way to obtain data that would inform the direction to take. The motion would not negate the need for a study by a consultant, specifically around the numbers piece, and whatever quantitative data there could be could complement both, which would be informative.

Mayor Tave commented he would prefer adding an addendum to the RFP and to have that outreach component, since presently there was not enough data and answers to questions that had been raised, which was the purpose of the workshop. He wondered if the consultant could do that work, which may make more sense, and where they would have more content to have a discussion. He sought an opportunity for the consultant to put facts in front of them to allow for a deeper conversation and asked if that might offer a better route.

Council member Martinez-Rubin noted that Mayor Pro Tem Murphy had brought up a need for a lesson in history and or the process of the different legal statutes that had occurred. The very act of having opportunities to have discussions and raise questions was educational in and of itself.

Council member Martinez-Rubin stated her motion was very general and staff could design a series of workshops based on what they had heard at this time and what had been discovered in the process of developing an RFP, and learning from the prospective consultants what they could offer. Offering an opportunity for people to have more inquiries and questions would be informative. She referenced the process the City Council had taken when updating the City seal and how they had used existing venues and opportunities or events the City already had, which were not workshops, but were periods of time spent with members of the public where information was provided, and that along with a survey which asked for input and which allowed the opportunity to raise questions or just broadly open up the question, whether there was a need for a cannabis program in Pinole and what was envisioned, would open up the opportunity for people to comment.

Council member Sasai suggested the City seal process had been beautifully done, and provided a lot of feedback from the community and as a result the City ended up with a great product, but he found that a discussion about commercial cannabis would be more complex given the impacts and the number of factors the community should consider before providing true feedback after all of the data had been presented. The analyses would provide the community with that necessary data to then make a determination whether there was an appetite for commercial cannabis.

Mayor Tave commented the City seal process had been done masterfully. He applauded the work done with the help of a consultant who had guided the conversations. Presently, they were discussing getting that consultant on-board to help with that and he agreed with the comments this was not an easy topic. He suggested having a professional working with the team to come up with a process was essential and for the City Council to try to bombard staff with questions as they had during this discussion, and looking for answers was a good thing because they were asking the questions. This was a workshop to start the discussion, get feedback and bring it together with a consultant. He understood the intent of the motion but found the language staff had included for an outreach program was sufficient.

Mayor Tave suggested possibly an Ad Hoc Committee could be considered which had worked for the City seal process.

Council member Toms suggested that could be part one since there had not been surveys or a lot of public outreach other than having this topic on two agendas. She agreed the City did not know the public's appetite for this topic before spending the money for a Fiscal Impact Study or having staff time expended to draft an ordinance, since the City had not heard from the public. Also, this topic was not on the City Council priority list.

Mayor Tave suggested the City had been discussing this topic for some time. Based on his discussions with community members, people used cannabis for medical reasons, cannabis for recreational reasons and went to dispensaries outside Pinole. He recognized the comments but emphasized the need to have answers to many questions prior to the City Council moving forward with an ordinance. The community needed answers given there was some bias, and misinformation on both sides of the dais that needed to be addressed with facts. He again heard the comments provided by Council member Martinez-Rubin, and for him those comments had been well received, but he suggested there should be that guiding hand of a consultant to have this conversation in depth to allow for real and meaningful communication with the general public as a whole.

Council member Martinez-Rubin explained they were not necessarily asking for answers from the public, but offering an opportunity to ask questions and she suggested one in a series of workshops could provide that opportunity for inquiry by the public.

Mayor Tave suggested the current workshop had provided the well-received content Commissioner Martinez-Rubin was asking for, and he question what else was needed.

Council member Martinez-Rubin suggested the use of the Senior Center and another venue that was not in a formal setting would allow the opportunity for back-and-forth discussions and open inquiries so that the City Council and staff could get some sense of the kinds of things that were questions and allowed the public to provide feedback. She again wanted to see a venue where people could come together knowing that there was a theme to the workshop that could be any one of the areas where there was a set of questions that were discussed at this workshop, and then open it up to public inquiries.

Mayor Tave stated to facilitate that conversation was why he suggested an Ad Hoc Committee.

Mayor Pro Tem Murphy asked for the motion to be restated.

City Clerk Bell-Spears advised the original motion was to direct staff to design and implement a series of workshops to inform and assess the need for a Cannabis Program in the City of Pinole.

In response to the Mayor Pro Tem, Council member Martinez-Rubin clarified her motion, as re-read into the record, was not intended to exclude consideration of an ordinance, she was just reiterating the motion, which she again read into the record as follows: *to direct staff to design and implement a series of workshops to inform and assess the need for a Cannabis Program in the City of Pinole.* She affirmed that the workshops would include the possibility of an ordinance, which was the reason for the questions.

On the motion, Council member Sasai asked about the number of workshops, venues, timeline and the like. He also asked that the staff costs and staff hours be approximated.

Council member Martinez-Rubin suggested that would be determined based on staff's availability and what staff considered feasible given other priority items that the City Council had established.

Council member Sasai asked staff to respond since staff put in the work to draft the outreach and communication strategy. The motion as stated was a different approach and would be in addition to the staff recommendation. He asked staff how they saw the timeline duration, staff costs and staff time and when that data would be brought back to the City Council for another round of consideration.

Interim City Manager Evans suggested an Ad Hoc Committee would be a wonderful way to pull the information together and bounce ideas off the members on what was enough time. He suggested there would be a handful of hours to pull all of this together into a legible format, and the pre-data gathering that had come up needed to be done. A workshop at the Senior Center or other venues could be done and staff could lead the discussion, with the public to provide input that would also include discussion of a possible ordinance.

The Interim City Manager added that he could provide a more concrete number working with staff on the costs involved, but that could also be something that could be discussed with an Ad Hoc Committee. He commented that if staff returned at the April 7, 2026 City Council meeting with the creation of an Ad Hoc Committee, they could then bounce ideas off in a Zoom team meeting quickly and ensure they were going down the right path, and provide feedback from the Ad Hoc Committee to the full City Council thereafter.

Council member Sasai suggested that was a great suggestion. He supported an Ad Hoc Committee given the engagement needed with the public, stakeholders, including industry and labor. He recommended moving forward with an Ad Hoc Committee that was a good first step as opposed to a series of workshops given there were many things to iron out first.

ACTION: Motion by Council members Martinez-Rubin/Toms to direct staff to design and implement a series of workshops to inform and assess the need for a Cannabis Program in the City of Pinole.

Vote:	Failed	2-3
	Ayes:	Martinez-Rubin, Toms
	Noes:	Tave, Murphy, Sasai
	Abstain:	None
	Absent:	None

Council member Sasai offered a motion, seconded by Mayor Tave to establish an Ad Hoc Committee to discuss the topic of Commercial Cannabis Programs.

On the motion, Mayor Pro Tem Murphy asked the Finance Director whether legalized cannabis was considered a consumer good, to which Finance Director Guillory advised she was not aware of that and would have to do some research.

Interim City Manager Evans commented it was an excise tax more than what would be seen on a Bradley Burns.

Mayor Pro Tem Murphy commented it had been referenced during the meeting that HdL provided a presentation at the March 17, 2026 City Council meeting about consumer goods. He hypothesized that commercial cannabis or any cannabis legalized would be considered a consumer good, since it was taxable and legal. He asked for clarification. He also asked if HdL was paid to provide the report or whether the report was provided for free.

Finance Director Guillory confirmed HdL had been paid for the report provided to the City Council and which was an update to a report prepared in 2019 as part of the Market Analytics Report. She added there was a separate arm of HdL that conducted studies on cannabis, and that would not have been automatically included in the report presented. She further clarified the report had been geared to the City of Pinole specifically and what the City had now in terms of its tax base, and where some of the gaps were. Since the City of Pinole did not currently have commercial cannabis businesses, it had not been included in the report.

Mayor Pro Tem Murphy wanted to ensure that while commercial cannabis was not currently in Pinole, it was considered a consumer good in the State of California, pursuant to Proposition 64.

Mayor Pro Tem Murphy emphasized the importance of that information being provided given the amount of misinformation in the Council Chambers. He would like to see the Ad Hoc Committee discuss the consumer good idea.

Council member Sasai could include that in the motion and could also further amend his motion that the Ad Hoc Committee discuss the advancement of a possible Commercial Cannabis Program and ordinance to include everything discussed at this meeting, the outreach and communication strategy and a targeted outreach to stakeholders.

Mayor Pro Tem Murphy further commented he would not support an Ad Hoc Committee for this item. He suggested the City Council should follow the staff recommendations to prepare an RFP for a consultant to conduct an analysis of potential expenditures and revenues associated with establishing a cannabis program and initiate the proposed outreach and communication strategy to engage the community in the preparation of a commercial cannabis ordinance. As to the staff recommendation to prepare a draft Commercial Cannabis Ordinance, including the types of allowed cannabis businesses and the requirements to obtain a permit to include in the ordinance, he would like to see staff provide examples from some of the cities referenced or the expanded list of cities and counties he had requested from Solano, Napa and Marin Counties. While okay with an Ad Hoc Committee, it would deter from the actual work that needed to be done, and move those items forward, as staff had recommended, and subject to the feedback provided by the City Council. He also saw the value of having a consultant move the conversations forward in a structured way beyond what they had today.

Council member Martinez-Rubin asked whether the Ad Hoc Committee would also consider the need to assess whether a Cannabis Program was needed in Pinole.

Council member Sasai suggested the Ad Hoc Committee should discuss the outreach process to determine whether or not the people of Pinole had an appetite for this type of program and it was not the Ad Hoc Committee making the decision. He reiterated the outreach and communication strategy included in the staff report was work already done and he saw no other amendments were needed.

Council member Martinez-Rubin clarified it would be the purpose of the outreach and education, and she suggested there be an element of assessment to determine the need for a Cannabis Program, which was not foreign to the discussion but a necessity to include input. If the Ad Hoc Committee recommended there be opportunities for public input on the need for a Cannabis Program that would complement much of what was being discussed.

Council member Sasai found this discussion to be circular in nature. He suggested the City just needed to hear from the people of Pinole, whether or not they wanted to move forward with commercial cannabis and noted in his interactions with residents he found support.

Mayor Tave suggested the Ad Hoc Committee was well defined and there was enough information to vote on the motion. He suggested if a Council member had concern, that member should work with the Interim City Manager to have more input with the Ad Hoc Committee, without violating the Brown Act, which would be a good platform to get more information vetted out. He hoped the Ad Hoc Committee would return with recommendations moving forward.

Council member Sasai suggested what Council member Martinez-Rubin was asking would prolong the process that had already been laid out by staff. If appointed to the Ad Hoc Committee, he would advocate that the life of the Ad Hoc Committee not be an extended one to two-year process but allow a couple of workshops to get people on board.

Mayor Tave understood if the motion passed an Ad Hoc Committee could be formed at the next City Council meeting, which was when they could well define the outcomes from the Ad Hoc Committee. He suggested an Ad Hoc Committee would help digest the information and come back with recommendations to the City Council, which was the best process to allow a decision to be reached.

City Clerk Bell-Spears clarified the motion with Council member Sasai, to establish an Ad Hoc Committee of the City Council to discuss issues related to Commercial Cannabis Programs and discuss the consumer goods question as well as discuss advancement of a possible Commercial Cannabis Program and ordinance to include everything discussed at this meeting, the outreach and communication strategy and a targeted outreach to stakeholders.

Council member Sasai wanted it clear in the motion that the primary reason for the Ad Hoc Committee was to move forward with an initial outreach plan for informal workshops, and that information be taken back to the City Council at the end of the duration of the Ad Hoc Committee.

In response to the Mayor, City Clerk Bell-Spears advised the creation of an Ad Hoc Committee would be agendized under Council Appointments.

City Attorney Casher responded to Mayor Tave's question as to how much time would be involved to draft an ordinance if the results were overwhelming in favor of an ordinance that he would look at other agencies in the area to find another city that had a comparable program that Pinole was trying to establish. He noted there were a lot of examples out there.

Mayor Pro Tem Murphy asked that the motion be amended and that the Ad Hoc Committee have a closure within 60-days.

Council member Sasai accepted the recommendation for a closure of 60-days for the Ad Hoc Committee.

Council member Martinez-Rubin expressed concern with that limited amount of time given they were in the budget period where staff would be occupied with that process and it could be a burden to staff.

Interim City Manager Evans acknowledged staff would be busy with the budget but could work with the Ad Hoc Committee and try to hit the deliverables as much as possible. Should staff reach a point where additional time was needed, they could come back to the full City Council with an interim report of the progress to date and request additional time, if needed.

ACTION: Motion by Council members Sasai/Mayor Tave to establish an Ad Hoc Committee to: discuss the topic of Commercial Cannabis Programs; discuss the advancement of a possible Commercial Cannabis Program and ordinance to include everything discussed at this meeting, the outreach and communication strategy and a targeted outreach to

stakeholders; with the primary reason for the Ad Hoc Committee to move forward with an initial outreach plan for informal workshops and that information be taken back to the City Council at the end of the duration of the Ad Hoc Committee, and with the Ad Hoc Committee to have a closure of 60-days, which could be extended, if needed, to be discussed by the City Council.

Vote: **Passed** **5-0**
 Ayes: **Tave, Murphy, Martinez-Rubin, Sasai, Toms**
 Noes: **None**
 Abstain: **None**
 Absent: **None**

Mayor Pro Tem Murphy offered a motion, seconded by Council member Sasai to direct staff to prepare a Request for Proposal (RFP) for a consultant to conduct an analysis of potential expenditures and revenues associated with the establishment of a Cannabis Program.

On the motion, Council member Sasai asked that the timeline for the RFP be brought back to the City Council.

Interim City Manager Evans explained it would take 30-days to write the RFP, possibly 45-days for responses, another 30- to 45-days to review responses and prepare an item for the City Council, which could be another 30-days. He added, when asked, that the Ad Hoc Committee would run regardless of the process decided.

Council member Martinez-Rubin asked whether it was understood that a number of the questions that were asked about what would be included in data/information to be received from the consultant would be included in the RFP.

Interim City Manager Evans stated that would be the intent over the next 30-days.

ACTION: Motion by Mayor Pro Tem Murphy/Council member Sasai to direct staff to prepare a Request for Proposal (RFP) for a consultant to conduct an analysis of potential expenditures and revenues associated with the establishment of a Cannabis Program.

Vote: **Passed** **4-1**
 Ayes: **Tave, Murphy, Martinez-Rubin, Sasai**
 Noes: **Toms**
 Abstain: **None**
 Absent: **None**

6. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Voter Survey Results. **Action: Receive a Report and Provide Direction (Markisha Guillory)**

Finance Director Guillory introduced Joshua Emeneger, Principal Researcher, Probolsky Research, who provided an extensive PowerPoint presentation on the City of Pinole, Voter Survey Executive Results Presentation, dated March 2026.

The presentation provided the voter survey results for various tax measures and highlighted the survey methodology. Based on the responses to questions in the survey, the following conclusions were identified:

- Facebook was determined to be the top social app and website used regularly by voters.
- 99 percent rate of respondents found the quality of life in Pinole as good or fair.
- 71 percent of respondents were satisfied with the job the City was doing in providing services to residents.
- 79 percent of the respondents were satisfied with fire and paramedic emergency response service and response times.
- 78 percent of respondents were satisfied with police services.
- 57 percent of respondents were unsatisfied with the Public Works.
- 44 percent of respondents agreed that the City managed taxpayer money responsibly.
- 49 percent of respondents agreed that the City operated transparently.
- 94 percent of respondents agreed that it's smarter to invest in needed infrastructure improvements now rather than paying high repair costs later.
- 77 percent of respondents thought there was a need for additional funds to maintain the level of City services and facilities.

A breakdown of the percentages of respondents' responses to a number of questions on the survey related to providing effective public safety and maintaining streets and sidewalks as the most important services, and providing effective public safety as the service with the highest satisfaction was identified, with the largest gap between the importance and satisfaction maintaining streets and sidewalks at 48 percent.

A breakdown was also provided on responses to questions about the various tax measures (with each question followed by a series of follow-up questions and message effectiveness, which were also highlighted and outlined in the PowerPoint presentation), as follows:

Question: To repair and improve Pinole's aging streets and roads; fix potholes; repair, construct, and improve sidewalks and pedestrian safety improvements; upgrade storm drains to reduce flooding; and complete other essential infrastructure improvements; shall the City of Pinole issue bonds in an amount not to exceed twenty million dollars with bonds repaid from property taxes levied at legal rates, requiring independent citizen oversight, annual audits, and all funds spent locally and not for salaries or pensions; until ended by voters, requiring two-thirds approval?

The measure had majority support.

Question: *To repair and improve Pinole's aging streets and roads; fix potholes; repair, construct, and improve sidewalks and pedestrian safety improvements; upgrade storm drains to reduce flooding; and complete other essential infrastructure improvements; shall the City of Pinole issue bonds in an amount not to exceed twenty million dollars, with bonds repaid from property taxes levied at legal rates, requiring independent citizen oversight, annual audits, and all funds spent locally and not for salaries or pensions; until ended by voters, requiring two-thirds approval?*

The measure retained majority support.

Question: *Shall City of Pinole establish a transactions and use (sales) tax by 0.25% to fund Pinole Police Department services such as patrol response, training, equipment, and dispatch, with all revenue kept local, independent citizens' oversight and annual audits, generating approximately one million three hundred thousand dollars per year, until ended by voters, requiring two-thirds approval?*

The measure had plurality opposition by a small margin.

Question: *Shall City of Pinole establish a \$250 per-parcel annual special tax, to fund Pinole Police Department services such as patrol/response, training, equipment, dispatch, with all revenue kept local, independent citizens' oversight and annual audits, generating approximately one million five hundred thousand dollars per year, until ended by voters, requiring two-thirds approval?*

The measure had majority opposition.

Question: *Shall City of Pinole establish a transactions and use (sales) tax by 0.25% to fund Pinole Police Department services such as patrol response, training, equipment, and dispatch, with all revenue kept local, independent citizens' oversight and annual audits, generating approximately one million three hundred thousand dollars per year, until ended by voters, requiring two-thirds approval?*

The measure gained plurality support by a small margin.

Question: *Shall City of Pinole establish a \$250 per-parcel annual special tax, to fund Pinole Police Department services such as patrol/response, training, equipment, dispatch, with all revenue kept local, independent citizens' oversight and annual audits, generating approximately one million five hundred thousand dollars per year, until ended by voters, requiring two-thirds approval?*

The measure retained majority opposition.

It was also highlighted that 53 percent of respondents would for sure vote for a Pinole Infrastructure Bond Tax Measure, in response to the Question: *There may be an additional tax measure placed on the November ballot by Contra Costa County. If approved by voters, the additional 0.625% Transactions and Use (sales) Tax would generate approximately \$150 million to support general operations of the County for a period of five years. Out of the following potential tax measures on the November ballot, which would you for sure vote for? Select all that apply.*

Mr. Emeneger concluded the public safety tax measure was a no-go; it did not start or end up with majority support as the infrastructure tax measure, which was a challenge, particularly since a two-thirds vote would be required; the infrastructure tax measure had the highest gap between important and satisfaction and had shown that if they were to choose a tax measure, the infrastructure tax measure was the way to go.

If the City Council were to consider the route of the two-thirds dedicated special tax, it was possible but it would take quite a bit of investment in outreach. It was also possible to consider a General Tax, and at the same time have an advisory vote which would require 50+1, and have an advisory vote letting voters know this was for infrastructure, streets, repair of potholes, and fixing sidewalks. If both passed, voters could be informed it was more obtainable with the 50+1, and the advisory vote letting them reassure voters this was where the funds would go, even though it would go to the General Fund, and was the most likely pathway for success if they wanted to pass one of the measures.

Mr. Emeneger also highlighted the likely voter demographics, respondent demographics by gender, age group, ethnicity, education, household income and home type; demographics by party preference, vote propensity, survey mode, and survey language. He reiterated based on the polling results, there was a somewhat clear resolution that of the three potential tax measures, both the public safety measures whether a sales tax or a bond or a parcel tax, would have trouble passing and would not likely get the two-thirds vote required. The infrastructure tax measure may reach a two-thirds vote, but the most likely obtainable method would be to consider a General Sales Tax Measure with an advisory vote, to reassure voters that was where the money would go.

Responding to questions from the City Council, Mr. Emeneger clarified the following:

- While a two-thirds vote for an infrastructure bond was doable it would require a lot of outreach and education. Again, recommended consideration of a General Sales Tax Measure with an advisory vote. (Martinez-Rubin)
- Clarified Slide 2 of the PowerPoint presentation that had shown what websites were regularly used by voters and which was based on the responses from the respondents, with Facebook.com and You Tube the top two websites used regularly. The data was based on a question in the poll and not based on data from an outside source. (Mayor Pro Tem Murphy)
- Clarified again the outcomes to questions about the various tax measures, as shown in the PowerPoint presentation, and clarified the introduction used to the messaging when asking the questions about the various tax measures. (Mayor Pro Tem Murphy)
- Clarified the Question: *Shall City of Pinole establish a \$250 per-parcel annual special tax, to fund Pinole Police Department services such as patrol/response, training, equipment, dispatch, with all revenue kept local, independent citizens' oversight and annual audits, generating approximately one million five hundred thousand dollars per year, until ended by voters, requiring two-thirds approval?*, with the consultant having worked with City staff to figure out what type of amounts could be used to test as part of the question. (Mayor Pro Tem Murphy)

- The \$250 dollar amount, had been run by City staff and the City Attorney for all ballot language. It was also clarified that while some of the numbers had been numeric and some written out in the questions about each tax measure, that had not been intentional but when speaking of total amounts, it was commonplace to write the figure out, which was why the consultant followed legal advice to do that. When considering an amount per parcel, it was common to show the amount in a numerical form. The consultant had followed Best Practices when it came to recreating the ballot languages. (Mayor Pro Tem Murphy)
- Reiterated there would be more support for a General Tax but which had not been tested and they had focused on the infrastructure tax measure, and for that measure the consultant was of the opinion with 50 +1 that had a very good chance of passing. (Toms)
- As to whether a taxable bond could be considered a General Tax, the consultant would have to return with clarification but anything that would go into the General Fund would be just the 50+1, and when speaking of that, any type of tax measure that could just get to that 50+1 and out of the special election, out of the dedicated funding and out of the two-thirds requirement would make it more electorally attainable. (Toms)
- Reiterated 44 percent of respondents agreed the City managed taxpayer money responsibly and 38 percent disagreed, with 18.5 percent unsure. Of those surveyed, a percentage were unsure, particularly as they asked normative questions such as whether money was being spent responsibly and where they tended to see more unsure responses. It was also observed that when it came to questions about managing taxpayer money responsibly and transparent questions, over time the unsure category rose. Over the past couple of years, the disagree category had also risen and this was a national phenomenon seen everywhere given the national narrative affecting local politics. Given what was happening at the national level, responses to such questions had been more negative. What was seen was also in line with other communities in the state, but again the national narrative had affected perceptions at the local level. (Mayor Tave)

PUBLIC COMMENTS OPENED

Rafael Menis reported he found online information about a case before the Supreme Court of the State of California, City of San Jose v. the Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association, which had been decided on December 18, 2025. That case stated cities could incur pension bond debt without a two-thirds vote to pay for already incurred obligations, such as unfunded pension liabilities, even though it would ordinarily trigger the two-thirds majority vote requirement for debt in excess of the City's revenue in a given year, as shown in the California Constitution Article 16, subsection 18, subdivision a. The Supreme Court said for their holding that there was an obligation to address retirement plans and it was legal for cities to do that without a two-thirds vote, but he was unsure whether that would necessarily apply to road infrastructure since it was a fact specific to pensions and unfunded liabilities around pensions where there was already a legal debt obligation around that, but he wanted to bring it to the City Attorney and staff's attention.

Mr. Menis added he had provided written comments about the financial path the City was on. He commented that in 2024, the City had four financial scenarios to consider: some revenue measures, some revenue measures and some cuts, a bunch of cuts, or one revenue measure, a sales tax and some significant cuts starting in 2030. Pursuant to Page 15 of 230 of the agenda packet, the City was on the path for Budget Scenario 4, which meant if the City did not do additional tax measures like those they were discussing whether bonds, additional sales taxes or other measures, the City would be facing \$10 million a year and increasing cuts starting in 2030 and moving on from there, and people needed to be aware of that.

Mary Horton noted the public was not to have any drinks in the Council Chambers, and given some Council members had drinks/water at the dais, that restriction should be equalized and possibly updated. She commented she heard constant comments about the City's infrastructure, roads, potholes, lighting along Pinole Valley Road which was unsafe and liability for the City which needed to be considered. Also, salaries, pensions, increased salaries, and travel expenses, were all factored into when people were asked if they would consider more taxes. Perception was reality, people wanted to know how trips to Washington D.C. helped Pinole, its infrastructure and the PPD, and she asked that the City Council keep that in mind when considering this issue.

Debbie Long was unsure how to address all of the information which was a lot to take in in one evening. She would never support another General Sales Tax Measure from anyone in the City, since it had never been used for what it had been promised. The PPD was told that Measure I would help the PPD and they were still looking at a contract since the City could not satisfy the needs of the PPD, even with Measure I. If considering another shell game and trying to get another General Bond passed, she would not support that either. If considering a specific bond, that would be valid since it could only be used for the purpose for which it was specified. If the City Council were to consider any tax bond, it needed to specify whether it would include an annual increase, which was happening with a lot of the tax revenues that had a five percent or Cost-of-Living (COLA) increase added every year. She understood the City of El Cerrito had one and by the time it was over people would pay a couple thousand a year. If the City Council were to consider a specific bond, it needed to be specific within how it would be read. She did not believe in the past the City Council had proven there was any dedicated funding when there was a General Sales Tax measure, since it was dumped into the General Reserves and would be used for travel expenses, or for what had been paid out to Council members. And, when discussing the need to inform people, she found that no one participating in the survey had been informed about the mismanagement of money and the City Council just passed another one tonight, mismanaging a marijuana bill when there were so many other things for staff to work on. She stated there was talk about hard money but never talk about the cost to staff and therein lay the problem, the City Council was not listening to the people.

Cathy McFarland commented the survey for the three potential ballot measures included the main concerns residents had as a top priority for years, although the City used those items to get added funds and never really delivered. The current population of Pinole was approximately 18,000 persons with 12,000 voters per the City Clerk, and 400 people were randomly polled. Given that, 96.65 percent of the voting residents were not represented and the survey only represented 3.35 percent of the voters in Pinole. In reality, the sample-sized survey as well as prior and upcoming surveys were a waste of time and taxpayers' money. She questioned the request to consider a \$20 million bond given how the City Council had managed prior monies with infrastructure.

Ms. McFarland stated the original road maintenance budget for 2024/25 through the many different funds was \$11.7 million but only \$1.6 million was actually spent. The budget for 2025/26 was \$8.3 million and at six months the total actually spent was \$1.1 million and at a recent meeting with the Directors of Finance and Public Works, no one had answered questions as to where the slated money for roads had gone. Pinole voters voted for an increase in sales taxes in 2024, which passed, and the PPD and emergency response teams had been without a contract for almost a year, yet the City had a revenue income coming in from 2024/25 totaling \$612,000 and for 2025/26 for the first six months was \$982,000. Now, there was a desire for another increase and she highlighted all of the impacts to residents from the increases in sales taxes and property taxes. She commented the City received an eight percent increase up to 40 percent for the five years. She suggested the City had overtaxed fatigued residents.

Jennifer Horn found the poll had shown that residents were pretty happy with a good quality of life, satisfied with the job the City was doing providing services, the PPD, fire and paramedics but no one mentioned the need to change the City's governing structure, which three members of the City Council voted for at a cost to taxpayers of \$57,000. There was no question on the poll for that or a box to check, but an Other category where that concern could have been expressed. Only 4.8 percent had checked that box as compared to public safety, which respondents at 68 percent noted compared to the streets that were mentioned by 65 percent of respondents, parks mentioned by 48 percent of respondents, and managing City finances rated 38 percent or fifth among all issues that voters were concerned about. This concern was elsewhere in the poll, with a majority of respondents having agreed with a hypothetical person who suggested the City should figure out how to balance the budget without new taxes, and a majority also stated they would vote no on a sales tax measure if they knew the City received other funds from other sources.

In addition, Ms. Horn stated the gap between the importance and satisfaction on this issue of managing finances underscored the concern with how the City managed its finances. She found the poll had shown that the citizens of Pinole wanted this City Council to manage taxpayer money responsibly and in a manner consistent with the real concerns that the people had, police, fire, parks, streets and the like, and perhaps those who voted to spend \$57,000 to put Measure D on the ballot, a measure citizens were not clamoring for and a measure even its proponents now would not support in writing, would remember those concerns in the future.

William Horton commented on the trouble he sensed on the November ballot. He commented a \$250 parcel tax as shown on Pages 27 and 42 of the PowerPoint presentation, was far below a two-thirds vote, and the City Council would be well advised to see that citizens did not want a parcel tax. A sales tax of a quarter percent as shown on Pages 26 and 41 of the PowerPoint presentation were below the two-thirds approval needed and would be an uphill battle. A \$20 million bond issue per Pages 15 and 24 of the PowerPoint presentation, spoke to the story of this complicated document, and again it was below the two-thirds approval needed and they may get it or not, which was a gamble with all of the other taxes on the November ballot. He added an advisory measure may pass, but a tax measure on the same ballot may fail, which had happened around 30 years ago when citizens passed an advisory measure but did not pass the tax to pay for it. He urged caution on what the City sought and stated it may get some surprises with the votes.

PUBLIC COMMENTS CLOSED

Mayor Tave asked what would happen if the electorate passed an advisory measure but not the funding.

City Attorney Casher commented he would have to look into that and had not considered that scenario.

Mayor Pro Tem Murphy commented when he worked on ballot measures in the past with that scenario, the City could be set to work on an issue but people may not want to invest, although the data spoke to clear support for repairing roads which everyone was aligned with. He asked whether the 400 respondents represented a statistically significant sample size.

Mr. Emeneger explained that was standard and he offered a comparison and noted for other cities with larger votes, they would survey 300 people, which was perfectly acceptable for polling. The fact they polled 400 people for a city the size of Pinole was very, very thorough and statistically significant.

Mayor Pro Tem Murphy referenced the question asked about the infrastructure bond, and asked about the timeline if that were to pass.

Mr. Emeneger explained they had added the language *until ended by voters* to the second to last clause in the question, which read: *To repair and improve Pinole's aging streets and roads; fix potholes; repair, construct, and improve sidewalks and pedestrian safety improvements; upgrade storm drains to reduce flooding; and complete other essential infrastructure improvements; shall the City of Pinole issue bonds in an amount not to exceed twenty million dollars with bonds repaid from property taxes levied at legal rates, requiring independent citizen oversight, annual audits, and all funds spent locally and not for salaries or pensions; until ended by voters, requiring two-thirds approval?* In the past, they may have an A and B test, where there was a sunset clause, and one that says until ended by voters to see if there was any difference. In this case, they added the language *until ended by voters*, which explained the timeline for the measure.

Mayor Pro Tem Murphy asked what direction was being asked of the City Council for this item.

Interim City Manager Evans would like the City Council to accept the report and staff would return with other types of activities, as previously mentioned. This was a component from the April 2024 Strategic Planning Financial Report, in particular, Scenario 1, which looked at strong revenue strategies; a parcel tax was Strategy 3, a Sales and Use Tax, which was approved by the Community was Strategy 2.

Mayor Pro Tem Murphy understood the City Council would file and receive the report. He commented the City Council adopted the Long-Term Financial Plan (LTFP) in 2022. It included the idea of a cannabis tax measure, and he asked about the next steps once this report was filed.

Interim City Manager Evans explained that action would tie into the Special Meeting scheduled for March 31, 2026 when the City Council would receive a budget update, and allow a better understanding of the projections over the next five to ten years similar to what had been included in the report from April 2024. The challenge was that certain expenditures were outpacing revenues and the City needed to come up with strategies to address that.

Mayor Tave commented on the idea to issue a bond to help with pension obligations and asked if that was something that could be done.

Finance Director Guillory clarified the City had the 2006 Pension Obligation Bonds through 2036.

In response to Mayor Tave as to whether or not there could be two bonds, Interim City Manager Evans suggested speaking to a financial advisor, and he referred to NHA to lay out the pros and cons of layering two bonds at once and the capacity within the General Fund.

Mayor Pro Tem Murphy understood the City had until August to place a ballot measure on the ballot, was informed by City Clerk Bell-Spears it was typically the first week of August and staff would count back from there in terms of bringing it to the City Council.

ACTION: Motion by Council members Sasai/Toms to Receive the Report on the Voter Survey Results.

Vote:	Passed	5-0
	Ayes:	Tave, Murphy, Martinez-Rubin, Sasai, Toms
	Noes:	None
	Abstain:	None
	Absent:	None

7. ADJOURNMENT to the Special City Council Meeting of March 31, 2026 in Remembrance of Amber Swartz.

At 9:48 p.m., Mayor Tave adjourned to a Special City Council Meeting on March 31, 2026 in Remembrance of Amber Swartz.

Submitted by:



Roxane Stone, CMC
Deputy City Clerk

Approved by City Council: April 7, 2026

