

**From:** [Tom Haxton](#)  
**To:** [Council, City](#)  
**Subject:** Public comment on City Council agenda item AA1, the performance evaluation of the city manager  
**Date:** Monday, September 23, 2024 8:52:57 AM

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Dear Palo Alto City Council,

I am writing to comment on today's agenda item AA1, the performance evaluation of the city manager. I have feedback on the city manager's performance in responding to a request to improve the experience of middle school student athletes in Palo Alto.

### **Background**

The city has taken responsibility for PAUSD's middle school athletics program, and many have found their administration of the program to be inadequate. As the head cross country and track and field coach at JLS last year, I found that the city provided us inadequate support despite receiving over \$50,000 in revenue from our two teams last year alone. A large part of the problem is that the city chooses to allocate 65% of their middle school athletics budget on city staff who do not directly support the teams. Our teams had been entirely coached and operated by parent volunteer coaches since restarting from scratch in 2021. For our two teams, 95% of their revenue last year went to compensate city staff.

I addressed this issue by founding a [nonprofit organization](#) as an alternative to the city program, with the mission of spending registration fees more efficiently to support student athletes. I have been asking the city since June to consent to our teams participating in league competitions, but the city is blocking their participation.

Our nonprofit is currently supporting a thriving team of 62 JLS cross country runners, which is larger than last year's team, despite the downside of being blocked from league competitions. We are promoting access and equity by allowing all interested JLS students to participate and charging less than what the city charges (\$200 vs \$335, and waived for low-income families). We have demonstrated the value of investing registration fees back into our program, having hired non-parent coaches with expertise in our sport while providing parent coaches the support that I believe is important to retain them. I note that 9 or 10 of the 10 non-Palo Alto schools in our league have middle school athletics programs managed by nonprofits.

### **Feedback**

I am disappointed in the city manager's decision on this matter. I expect our city manager to act in the best interest of Palo Alto residents, especially our children. It is clear to me that allowing our team to participate in league competitions would benefit them, and I see no harm in doing so. The city has chosen to create their own competing team consisting of two students who want access to league competitions, two of their friends, and a few others. I expect that these students would join our team if we were allowed access to league competitions. If not, it would be easy for both teams to compete alongside each other, since cross country is a simple sport where the athletes simply line up and race.

I am also disappointed with how the city manager has chosen to discuss this issue with us. City staff initially declined to discuss my request. At a meeting on July 9th, city staff informed me of their plan of creating a competing team and told me that "you would be ruining our program by creating your own program." It became clear to me that we would need to wait until the teams were formed to continue the discussion. After the teams formed on August 24th, I asked city staff if they would "be open to discussing how we can best support our cross country runners," and they declined.

Later, on September 8th, one of you asked city staff what their objections were, and they did not reply. We spoke with the city manager and his staff on September 19th, and the city manager declined to share what harm he saw in granting our request.

The city manager's performance regarding our request is hurting Palo Alto children, and I ask that you consider my feedback during his performance evaluation.

Sincerely,  
Tom Haxton

**From:** [Min Zhou](#)  
**To:** [Council, City](#)  
**Subject:** Public comment on City Council agenda item AA1, the performance evaluation of the city manager  
**Date:** Sunday, September 22, 2024 11:41:37 PM

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Dear Palo Alto City Council,

I am writing to comment on today's agenda item AA1, the performance evaluation of the city manager. I have feedback on the city manager's performance in responding to a request to improve the experience of middle school student athletes in Palo Alto.

The city manager decided to block our cross country team's participation in league competitions and has declined to share his reason. He has refused to communicate with our coach and parents. He is not acting in the best interest of Palo Alto residents, especially our children.

As a parent, I am disappointed and ask that you consider my feedback during his performance evaluation.

Regards

Min Zhou

**From:** [Xiaodong Wang](#)  
**To:** [Council, City](#)  
**Subject:** Comment on City Council agenda item AA1, the performance evaluation of the city manager  
**Date:** Monday, September 23, 2024 12:01:25 AM

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Dear Palo Alto City Council,

I am writing to support Tom Haxton's public comment on City Council agenda item AA1, the performance evaluation of the city manager. As a Palo Alto parent whose daughter is enthusiastic about cross country, I am very disappointed by the city manager's decision to block the cross country team coached by Tom from participating in league competition. As a parent, I have witnessed the effectiveness of the [nonprofit organization](#). I would like to strongly urge the city manager to work with Tom Haxton to remove the block and provide necessary financial support to the nonprofit organization. I would advocate the City Council to evaluate the performance of the city manager, if this incollabration persists.

Best regards  
Xiaodong, a Palo Alto parent

**From:** [Eva Hu](#)  
**To:** [Council, City](#)  
**Subject:** Public comment on City Council agenda item AA1, the performance evaluation of the city manager  
**Date:** Monday, September 23, 2024 9:27:01 AM

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Dear Palo Alto City Council,

I am writing to comment on today's agenda item AA1, the performance evaluation of the city manager. I would like to provide feedback on the city manager's response to a request aimed at improving the experience of middle school student athletes in Palo Alto.

I am the parent of a PAMSACO cross country team member. Coach Haxton provides excellent training for JLS students. As residents of Palo Alto, our children have the right to participate in league competitions. Whether they form a team with other players from JLS or compete individually, we are willing to support it. I hope the city council will reconsider its decision to prohibit PAMSACO players from participating in the league and ensure fair treatment for every PAUSD student.

Sincerely,  
Eva Hu