



**Additional Documents List**  
**Special City Council Meeting**  
**September 13, 2020**  
(Updated 9/14/2020 at 2:30 p.m.)

Item No.	Agenda Item Description	Distributor	Document
PC	Public Comment submitted for: <b>Special Open Session – Item No. 1</b>	City Clerk’s Division	Public Comment E-mails

**E-mail Public Comment 9/13/2020 SPECIAL City  
Council Meeting**

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 1  
PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT**

1. Chris Bray

**From:** [Chris Bray](#)  
**To:** [City Council Public Comment](#)  
**Cc:** [CCO](#)  
**Subject:** Comment for Sept. 13 Special Closed Session  
**Date:** Saturday, September 12, 2020 5:18:01 PM

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Councilmembers,

In the mid-1990s, the Pasadena Firefighters Association took a "no confidence" vote in their fire chief. He was forced to retire a few months later, but the battle between the union and the chief was incredibly damaging to the fire department. The chief was brittle, condescending, disconnected, and enraged by criticism of any kind, and he had a tendency to hermetically seal himself inside his office. He didn't like to go to fire stations or talk to firefighters, he communicated with subordinates strictly through the chain of command, and he wouldn't wear the uniform. (He insisted on wearing a suit, because he liked to say, "I'm not some *firefighter* - - I'm a public sector *executive*.) He was very fond of explaining how sophisticated he was, and giving speeches about the complex task of bringing the knuckle-dragging fire service into the twenty-first century with *modern* policy. Firefighters loathed him.

When he was finally driven out of the job, the department was left with a wounded culture, factionalized and angry. The terrible fire chief, who couldn't talk to the people he led and inspire their confidence, was gone, but the harm his tenure had caused still lingered.

The city manager at the time, Phil Hawkey, hired an interim fire chief, Pete Pederson, who had retired as the chief of the Salt Lake City Fire Department. In his first week on the job, Interim Chief Pederson bought twenty-four one pound bags of coffee -- for three shifts in eight stations. He put on the fire department uniform, went by himself to every station on every shift, gave each shift a bag of coffee, sat down around the kitchen table with them, and slung some bullshit for half an hour. "Hi, I'm Pete. I'm gonna be running the department for a while." He showed pictures of his grandchildren, talked about his retirement travel, asked about their children, and drank coffee. That's all.

The next week, with a department that trusted him, respected him, and understood that he was one of them and on their side, he began to make serious policy interventions and repair the operational harm that had been done to the department by a smug and incompetent autocrat. But the first thing he did was *talk to people*, and show that he could. His first -- absolutely brilliant and instinctive -- move as a leader was to sit down face-to-face and have ordinary conversation with people who were angry, suspicious, and isolated from their leaders. "Hi, I'm Pete."

You desperately need a Pete Pederson. You need an interim city manager who is calm, experienced, open, and full of decency and respect for the people he or she will lead for a while. Your task is to find a leader who can transition from a period of anger, isolation, and suspicion by *just talking to people*. Another imperious, isolated autocrat will sink us.

Chris Bray  
