



BURLINGAME CITY COUNCIL
Unapproved Minutes
City Council Study Session on July 6, 2026

1. CALL TO ORDER

A duly noticed meeting of the Burlingame City Council was held on the above date in person and via Zoom at 6:15 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

MEMBERS PRESENT: Brownrigg, Colson, Pappajohn, Stevenson*, Thayer

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

* Councilmember Stevenson appeared at the meeting remotely from Sunriver, Oregon, as noted on the agenda.

3. REPORT OF REMOTE PARTICIPATION

There were none.

4. PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

5. STUDY SESSION

a. STUDY SESSION ON REACH CODES FOR EXISTING BUILDINGS

Sustainability Program Manager Sigalle Michael stated that reach codes are local ordinances adopted by municipalities that exceed and enhance the State's building standards. She added that reach codes can apply to new construction, alterations, additions, and equipment replacement. She explained that this study session would not cover new construction.

Ms. Michael discussed AB 130, which prohibits new state and local building standards on residential buildings through 2031. She stated that AB 130 was partially adopted to facilitate rebuilding in the Los Angeles area after wildfires.

Ms. Michael stated that there are exceptions to AB 130 exist that allow certain local reach codes if they meet all of the following:

- The local code amendment is adopted to align with the City's General Plan (Burlingame's was adopted in 2019)
- The amendment permits mixed-fuel residential construction (does not ban gas outright)
- The measures are cost-effective, demonstrated by cost-effectiveness studies
- The General Plan and Climate Action Plan already include measures to reduce GHG emissions from buildings by replacing gas with electricity

Ms. Michael discussed the City's 2023 GHG emissions inventory, noting:

- 52% of emissions come from transportation
- The next largest sector is building energy

She noted that when building energy emissions were broken down, the two largest bars on the chart were from gas usage.

Ms. Michael discussed the rationale for targeting existing buildings:

- Renovations provide a low-cost opportunity to improve efficiency and reduce GHGs
- Reach codes support residents and property owners by encouraging more efficient, modern systems
- Reach codes will help align with upcoming Bay Area Air Quality Management District rules requiring zero-Nox gas appliances

Ms. Michael emphasized several points to avoid misconceptions:

- The proposed reach codes do not ban gas appliances
- They do not apply to every building or every permit
- They do not require electrical panel or service upgrades
- They do not require immediate replacement of existing equipment
- They are cost-effective, based on supporting studies
- They incentivize efficiency and cleaner appliances
- They allow exceptions for technical and financial hardships

Ms. Michael discussed three types of reach codes for the Council to consider:

1. Two-Way Air Conditioning
 - a. Residential

She explained that when adding a new air conditioning system where none existed before or when replacing an existing AC System, individuals would be incentivized or required to either install a heat pump or install a traditional AC unit but pair it with additional efficiency measures. She stated that a heat pump can replace both an AC and a gas furnace, providing a "two-for-one" opportunity for emissions reductions and operating efficiency. She added that over the lifetime of a heat pump, bill

savings are expected compared to maintaining a separate AC and gas furnace system. She noted that this measure prepares residents for upcoming Air District zero-NOx rules on gas heating equipment.

Ms. Michael stated that the challenge is that not all AC installations or replacements are done with permits, so some installations will not be captured. Additionally heat pumps are typically \$1,000 to \$3,000 more expensive upfront than a standard AC system alone. However, WestLight Energy (formerly PCE) is offering incentives and rebates that help narrow the cost gap.

b. Non-Residential

Ms. Michael stated that the non-residential reach code would apply a similar two-way AC/heat pump concept to non-residential buildings. She noted that this non-residential reach code is not constrained by AB 130.

2. Electric Readiness

Ms. Michael stated that electric readiness would apply when a homeowner undertakes an alteration or addition within three feet of an existing gas appliance. She explained that in this situation, the homeowner would be required to install “electric readiness” so that a future electric appliance could be installed in that location without major rework. She noted that electric readiness is a simple policy and already standard practice in new construction, so contractors are familiar with it. She added that installing electric readiness while walls are already open during a renovation is a much more cost-effective measure than retrofitting later.

3. FlexPath

Ms. Michael stated that this measure would apply to single-family homes, duplexes, and townhomes undergoing large renovations. Under this measure, when a project exceeds a specified valuation (or square footage) threshold, the property owner must select from a menu of energy efficiency options. Each option in the menu carries a point value based on modeled energy savings and cost-effectiveness.

Ms. Michael reviewed the FlexPath menu of measures:

- Induction cooktop – one point
- Heat pump clothes dryer – one point
- Water heating package – two points
- Air sealing – two points
- Duct sealing – three points
- R-49 attic insulation – four points
- Windows – four points
- R-15 wall insulation – five points
- New ducts and duct sealing – six points

- R-19 floor insulation – nine points
- R-30 floor insulation – ten points
- Heat pump water heater – twelve points
- Solar PV and electric readiness – thirteen points
- Heat pump space conditioner – eighteen points

Ms. Michael explained that the menu and point values were developed by a statewide reach code collaboration group, using cost-effectiveness studies. She reviewed an example where Burlingame has a valuation trigger of \$150,000 and a target score of 12:

- A homeowner doing a \$150,000 renovation could install a single heat pump water heater worth 12 points and thereby satisfy the requirement with one option
- Alternatively, the homeowner could choose several smaller measures – such as air sealing, added insulation, and new ductwork that together total 12 points, although that combination might cost more than installing a single heat pump.

She noted that the thresholds and target points are customizable at the City level, even though the menu content and point values are standardized statewide.

Ms. Michael stated that other jurisdictions have implemented the FlexPath menu including the City of San Mateo, East Palo Alto, and Palo Alto. She noted that these three cities utilize a square footage trigger. She noted that Menlo Park uses a valuation trigger. She explained that in Burlingame, the Building Division does not easily track project square footage in permit data, making a square-footage-based trigger operationally difficult. For this reason, staff's preferred option for Burlingame is a valuation-based trigger similar to Menlo Park.

Ms. Michael stated that TRC reviewed the City's permits against the above-listed reach code options and found the following:

- Assuming a trigger of \$100,000 and above, the FlexPath menu would apply to about 61 projects a year
- For two-way AC-single family residential – 23 projects per year, noting that some installations may not be permitted and therefore not captured
- For two-way AC – non-residential – approximately 14 projects per year
- For electric readiness - approximately 203 projects per year

Ms. Michael highlighted the City's current incentive structure. She noted that no permit fees are charged for heat pumps, main panel upgrades, and solar installations. She characterized this as unusual, stating that she was not aware of another city that simultaneously waives permit fees for all three of these types of projects. She noted that Burlingame also relies heavily on WestLight Energy for rebates that help close cost gaps for electrification retrofits.

Ms. Michael stated that she is seeking Council direction on whether to develop an ordinance to:

- Pursue two-way air conditioning for residential and/or non-residential

- Pursue electric readiness
- Consider implementing the FlexPath menu, and if so, at what valuation threshold and target score

She noted that, if no new residential reach code is adopted now, the next opportunity for significant state building code changes would not come until 2027.

Councilmember Colson asked whether under the windows option in the FlexPath menu, the requirement would apply only to windows in the new or remodeled area or to windows throughout the entire house.

Ms. Michael replied that the measure would apply to the whole house but noted that there is flexibility. For example, a \$100,000 project that consists solely of new roofing or new windows might be exempted, and Burlingame could decide how to exempt such projects in its implementation ordinance.

TRC Managing Research Consultant Taylor added that for the window measure, at least 50% of the windows in the building would need to be replaced to earn credit under the FlexPath menu.

Councilmember Colson asked whether there was any timeline limitation on retroactive credit under the FlexPath menu. She asked, for example, whether a homeowner who previously installed solar panels 20 years ago would receive credit. Ms. Taylor replied in the affirmative.

Councilmember Colson noted that the FlexPath menu didn't include battery backup systems and asked whether any other jurisdiction had added it as an option. Ms. Taylor replied in the negative. She explained that the menu is tied to formal cost-effectiveness studies, and battery backup had not been studied nor included in those analyses.

Councilmember Thayer asked for clarification on the tonnage range for the non-residential AC reach code. She referenced the City of San Mateo's approach, where the requirement applies between five and 20 tons, and asked whether Burlingame's proposal would be similar. Ms. Taylor replied in the affirmative. She explained that the State building code requires heat pumps up to five tons. The reach code would expand the requirement to systems between five and 20 tons.

Vice Mayor Pappajohn asked for a more detailed explanation of the cost-effectiveness studies and how these studies demonstrate that adoption "is not going to be a burden" on residents and commercial businesses. Ms. Taylor replied that one of the main legal requirements for adopting a reach code is demonstrating that the code is cost-effective, as reviewed by the California Energy Commission. After a city adopts reach codes, it submits the code to the CEC along with cost-effectiveness documentation. The CEC reviews and confirms that, over a 30-year period, the measure will save money. For each proposed measure, the analysis accounts for:

- Upfront equipment and installation costs
- Maintenance costs
- Utility bill impacts over time
- Other societal and individual factors

She emphasized that each of the reach code options presented to the City Council has an associated cost-effectiveness study showing net savings over the long term.

Vice Mayor Pappajohn asked how WestLight Energy's incentives and rebates factor into cost-effectiveness, given that the studies already show cost-effectiveness without incentives. Ms. Taylor replied that rebates are generally not included in cost-effectiveness studies; the studies must show cost-effectiveness without relying on rebates. She added that while measures may be cost-effective over time, some equipment can still involve higher upfront costs than alternatives. She stated that in that context, WestLight Energy's rebates are designed to reduce the upfront cost burden and make it easier for property owners.

Vice Mayor Pappajohn stated that she reviewed Menlo Park's ordinance, which uses a "two menu items" compliance option instead of a point target. She asked staff whether that might be simpler for staff and applicants. Ms. Taylor replied that under a "two menu item" system, applicants could choose any two options, including two of the lowest-impact, lowest-savings items. In contrast, a point-based system is calibrated to produce a more substantial level of energy savings.

Vice Mayor Pappajohn asked what feedback TRC heard from staff in other cities about the workload and complexity of implementing the FlexPath menu, especially the point calculations. Ms. Taylor replied that TRC developed implementation resources such as checklists that can be used both by the building departments and by applicants/contractors.

Councilmember Stevenson expressed strong support for addressing environmental issues and acknowledged the need to consider effective incentives and rebate programs to ensure adoption. He noted that approximately half of Burlingame's residents are renters and asked how AB 130 and the proposed reach codes affect landlords who own eight to 12 unit buildings. Ms. Taylor replied that three of the four reach codes being considered only apply to single-family buildings. The fourth applies to non-residential buildings. As a result, multi-unit apartment buildings would not be covered by these options.

Councilmember Stevenson asked how the \$100,000 valuation threshold used in some cities was determined and monitored, and how TRC assessed whether that amount represents an appropriate trigger. Ms. Taylor replied that TRC used Burlingame's permit data from the past five years to model multiple trigger options. The analysis sought to capture approximately 50 permits per year and ensure that the threshold aligned with "large" scopes of work that are compatible with the FlexPath menu options. TRC found that a \$100,000 valuation threshold captured the desired number of projects, and upon review of those project scopes, the amount appeared realistic with respect to requiring the menu options.

Mayor Brownrigg asked whether staff was recommending a specific set of measures beyond simply presenting regional examples. Ms. Michael replied that staff recommends adopting at least:

- The two-way AC measures (for residential and non-residential) and
- The electric readiness measure

Ms. Michael stated that regarding the FlexPath menu, staff is seeking Council direction.

Mayor Brownrigg opened the item up for public comment.

Former Mayor Nagel voiced support for adopting all of the proposed reach codes and advocated for stronger FlexPath requirements.

An individual asked the Council to enact the most aggressive reach codes possible.

Zach voiced support for strong electrification measures and more ambitious FlexPath thresholds.

Anthony voiced support for the proposed reach codes.

Bren from Menlo Spark encouraged the City to at least match, if not exceed, the FlexPaths adopted by the City of San Mateo and East Palo Alto.

Gerard Manning voiced strong support for the proposed reach codes.

Robert voiced support for aggressive reach codes and expanded permit fee waivers.

Dasha voiced support for all the reach code options.

Don encouraged adoption of all four measures and a strong FlexPath menu.

Bryce Nesbitt voiced support for strong reach codes.

Sven voiced support and discussed electrification and EV-readiness.

Mayor Brownrigg closed public comment.

Councilmember Colson stated that using a \$100,000 valuation trigger, and given an approximate \$500 per square foot construction cost in Burlingame, this threshold would correspond to about 200 square feet of work. She observed that this would capture smaller projects than the City of San Mateo's square footage trigger, meaning Burlingame's program would be more aggressive.

Vice Mayor Pappajohn asked whether her colleagues desired to go higher than 12 points on the FlexPath.

Councilmember Stevenson voiced support for using the \$100,000 valuation trigger and staff's recommended configuration as a starting point, provided the technical details worked for staff.

Councilmember Colson raised concern about the low point value assigned to induction cooktops in the FlexPath menu. She noted that induction cooktops are only assigned one point, despite substantial public testimony about the health impacts of gas stoves. She expressed a desire to raise the point value for

induction cooktops to three or five points. Ms. Taylor replied that the FlexPath menu and its point values cannot be altered by individual cities.

Vice Mayor Pappajohn asked if there were any other mechanisms to incentivize induction cooktops given that the menu points cannot be raised.

Ms. Michael replied that staff could undertake further public education, and there was potential for City-funded incentives.

Councilmember Thayer discussed public testimony urging the City to waive more permit fees for electrification, similar to Menlo Park.

Ms. Michael replied that Burlingame currently waives permit fees for heat pumps, main panel upgrades, and for solar when those projects are stand-alone.

Mayor Brownrigg asked that staff prepare a staff report summarizing the Council's direction on reach codes including:

- The set of measures to be pursued in a draft ordinance
- The FlexPath configuration
- Any requested incentive or education programs such as induction cooktop incentives

He asked that staff include analysis of alternative valuation thresholds and show how different thresholds would affect the number and type of projects captured.

6. ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Brownrigg adjourned the study session at 7:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Meaghan Hassel-Shearer
City Clerk