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A P P E A R A N C E S:

Los Gatos Planning Commissioners:	Kendra Burch, Chair Jeffrey Barnett, Vice Chair Susan Burnett Adam Mayer Joseph Sordi Rob Stump (via video)
Community Development Director:	Joel Paulson
Town Attorney:	Gabrielle Whelan
Transcribed by:	Vicki L. Blandin (619) 541-3405

1 CHAIR BURCH: Okay. Are there any disclosures?
2 All right. Ms. Shoopman, you'll be presenting the Staff
3 Report for us this evening?

4 JOCELYN SHOOPMAN: Thank you, and good evening.
5 Before you tonight is a request for a modification to an
6 existing Conditional Use Permit to allow for expanded hours
7 of operation in an institution for religious observance.

8 On January 10, 1990 the Planning Commission
9 approved a Conditional Use Permit to allow the improvement
10 and expansion of an existing institution for religious
11 observance. The property was occupied by the Jehovah's
12 Witnesses until 2019 when a Certificate of Use and
13 Occupancy was issued to the West Valley Muslim Association.

14 On March 11, 2020 the Planning Commission
15 approved a modification to the Conditional Use Permit to
16 allow for expanded hours of operation from 10:00pm to
17 11:00pm for 30 days annually during the month of Ramadan.

18 The Applicant is now requesting approval to
19 modify the hours of operation to state that the hours of
20 operation shall not begin prior to 1.5 hours before sunrise
21 or extend past 10:30pm, seven days a week, to accommodate
22 indoor morning and nighttime prayer services; as well as
23 during the 30-day month of Ramadan indoor nighttime prayer
24 services shall not extend past 11:30pm whenever sunset is
25

1 prior to 7:30pm or until midnight whenever sunset is after
2 7:30pm.

3 The Applicant's request is limited to the hours
4 of operation. No additional requested modifications to the
5 Conditional Use Permit or the existing structures are
6 proposed.

7 There were two Addendum reports provided with
8 additional public comments received after the distribution
9 of the Staff Report, as well as a Desk Item report that was
10 circulated this afternoon with supplemental information
11 from the Applicant, the Applicant's legal counsel, and
12 additional public comments.
13

14 In addition to Planning Staff, Staff from the
15 Parks and Public Works Department are also in attendance
16 this evening.

17 This concludes my presentation, and I will now
18 turn it over to the Town Attorney. Thank you.

19 ATTORNEY WHELAN: Thank you. I'm Gabrielle
20 Whelan, Town Attorney, and I have a brief PowerPoint
21 outlining the applicable laws to this application.

22 There are two laws to keep in mind. The first is
23 regarding the Town Code and Conditional Use Permits, and
24 the second is the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized
25 Persons Act, and that's commonly referred to as RLUIPA.

1 I'll start with Conditional Use Permits. They are
2 permits that allow uses that would not otherwise be
3 permitted by right in a particular zoning district, but
4 that could be made compatible if restrictions were imposed
5 on the use.

6 A Conditional Use Permit runs with the land, so
7 future buyers of a property get the benefit of the existing
8 Conditional Use Permit. The idea is that conditions are
9 imposed on issuance of the permit that are intended to
10 mitigate the impacts of the use on the surrounding area.

11 Per the Town Code, the Planning Commission needs
12 to make four findings in order to approve a Conditional Use
13 Permit. The first is that the proposed use is essential or
14 desirable to the public convenience or welfare. The second
15 is that the proposed use would not impair the integrity and
16 character of the zone. The third finding is that the
17 proposed use would not be detrimental to public health,
18 safety, or general welfare, and four, the proposed use of
19 the property is in harmony with the various elements or
20 objectives of the General Plan and the purposes of the Town
21 Code.

22 Applicants can seek modifications to approved
23 Conditional Use Permits, and a modification is required
24 whenever there has been an intensification of use,
25

1 commencement of new activities that could have a material
2 adverse impact on the surrounding area, or any change that
3 is a substantial departure from plans which were the basis
4 of the original Conditional Use Permit approval.

5 When approving a modification to a Conditional
6 Use Permit, the deciding body needs to make the same four
7 findings that I described previously.

8 Are there any questions on Conditional Use
9 Permits before I move into a description of RLUIPA? No.

10 RLUIPA is a federal law that was enacted in 2000.
11 It prohibits the government from imposing or implementing a
12 land use regulation in a manner that imposes a substantial
13 burden on religious exercise unless the government
14 demonstrates the imposition of the burden is in furtherance
15 of a compelling governmental interest and is the least
16 restrictive means of furthering that compelling
17 governmental interest.

18 Now, the statute does not define the term
19 "substantial burden," however, the 9th Circuit has defined a
20 substantial burden to mean one that imposes a significantly
21 great restriction or onus upon religious exercise.

22 When deciding whether or not a government has
23 imposed a substantial burden on a place of worship, a court
24 will consider the following factors: the court will
25

1 consider the size and resources of the burden party, the
2 actual religious needs of an individual or religious
3 congregation, the level of current or imminent space
4 constraints, whether alternative properties are reasonably
5 available, the history of a plaintiff's efforts to locate
6 within a community, and whether zoning authorities are
7 acting in good faith.

8 Once a plaintiff has established that there is a
9 substantial burden on religious exercise, the next question
10 will be whether or not there is a compelling governmental
11 interest at stake, and the cases describe a compelling
12 governmental interest as an interest of the highest order,
13 and examples that are given are public health or safety
14 concerns.

15 Once that decision has been made, then the court
16 will decide did the town or city's actions constitute the
17 least restrictive means to address that compelling
18 governmental interest? That means that the government needs
19 to prove that there is no alternative, less intrusive
20 regulation that would achieve the government's compelling
21 interest.

22 In addition to the substantial burden analysis,
23 RLUIPA has an equal terms requirement, and that means that
24 the government cannot impose or implement a land use
25

1 regulation such that a religious group is treated on less
2 than equal terms with a non-religious assembly or
3 institution.

4 In addition, RLUIPA contains a non-discrimination
5 requirement, and that means that the government cannot
6 impose a regulation that discriminates against any assembly
7 on the basis of the particular religion.

8 In addition, RLUIPA requires that a government
9 not impose or implement a land use regulation that would
10 totally exclude a particular religious assembly from the
11 jurisdiction or unreasonably limit that religious assembly
12 within the jurisdiction.

13 That concludes the information I wanted to share
14 regarding Conditional Use Permits and RLUIPA. Are there any
15 questions from the Commission at this point?

16 CHAIR BURCH: Doesn't look like it at this point.
17 Thank you, Ms. Whelan.

18 We will now open the public portion of the public
19 hearing on Item 2 and give the Applicant an opportunity to
20 address the Commission for up to five minutes. I have a
21 speaker card for Razi Mohiuddin.

22 RAZI MOHIUDDIN: Thank you. Can I have the slide
23 presentation? Thank you. My name is Razi Mohiuddin and I'm
24
25

1 the founder of the West Valley Muslim Association, the
2 WVMA, and the Applicant for the CUP today.

3 First of all, I want to thank the Planning
4 Commission. I served as a Planning Commissioner myself for
5 the City of Saratoga for eight years, just until about a
6 year ago, so I know what you have to deal with, especially
7 these days with the RHNA, with Builder's Remedy, with SB
8 330, with SB 4, and a whole bunch of other things that
9 require a lot of things to come to the Planning Commission,
10 and also additional things for the Staff as well, so thank
11 you for your service.
12

13 I also want to thank the Staff. We had to go
14 through about five rounds of discussions in order to
15 finalize the conditions (inaudible), so really appreciate
16 the Staff to work with us.

17 I also want to thank our neighbors as well. Our
18 neighbors have been really great in terms of providing
19 their feedback, and that has helped us fine tune what we do
20 overall.

21 We are requesting three things. I think the Staff
22 went through this already. The clock is not running. We are
23 requesting three things.

24 These are to offer congregational prayers at
25 their appointed times. A mosque cannot be a mosque if it

1 cannot offer congregational prayers. This is fundamental
2 and they have to be offered at the time. These times cannot
3 be changed by individuals or institutions.

4 These are a copy of plans that were part of the
5 due diligence materials that we received when we purchased
6 the facility in 2018. They clearly show that this facility
7 was approved in 1990, 36 years ago, to have three
8 auditoriums that can simultaneously hold about 700
9 attendees, and with about 200-plus vehicles driving down
10 Farley Road, on this street, in this neighborhood, and in
11 this R-1:8 zone. So, this was approved 36 years ago. This
12 was a material fact on which we based our decision to
13 acquire this facility for over \$11 million of our
14 community's funds. These plans are part of the Laserfiche
15 records of the Town and you can look them up here.

17 We have not added a single square footage to the
18 building. The only thing that has changed is the religion
19 here from Jehovah's Witness to the Muslim religion. And the
20 only question before you today is whether extending hours
21 creates new impacts.

22 When you separate out the hyperbole such as
23 stadium, scale, and other such terms that have been used,
24 there are three things that are possible impacts that I'd
25 like to focus on: noise, traffic, and safety.

1 One, noise. You have in front of you a
2 professional noise report that states that we are within
3 the Town's Noise Ordinance, and one of the Conditions of
4 Approval that is part and parcel of the CUP that the Town
5 has drafted is that we will continue to operate within
6 these ordinances at all times, including at night and
7 during the quiet hours period, so that is a Condition of
8 Approval that already is built into the conditions.

9
10 Second, traffic. Concentrated arrivals and
11 departures are inherent to a religious facility, and this
12 was decided 36 years ago, and with our traffic management
13 plan, we have streamlined this even more.

14 Third, safety. We have continuously reached out
15 to Fire and Police departments and asked them to monitor
16 our facility and our use. There have been zero concerns
17 highlighted to us, and there have been zero incidents due
18 to our services. There is also on your desk public records
19 from the police as well as fire that show that there have
20 been no reports of issues in Ramadan. And we have a two-
21 year track record of Ramadan services to prove that we can
22 operate safely and quietly.

23 Let's look at a statement from a neighbor here
24 that is in your packet on page 432. This was an unsolicited
25 comment that we received that is in your packet from Ms.

1 Rita Skubis, who lives three houses down from our exit
2 driveway on Farley Road. She says we have been respectful,
3 orderly, consistent with the zoning, and any impacts are
4 brief, predictable, and limited. These are unsolicited
5 comments, as I mentioned, from a close neighbor. There is
6 no better testimonial that what we can provide here.

7 We have done extensive outreach, reaching out to
8 60-plus neighbors, and we will continue to do so, and we
9 have listened to their feedback and taken 20-plus actions
10 to make it even better. We are open to even more actions as
11 long as they are reasonable and not cost prohibitive.

12 Finally, as I mentioned, we have gone through
13 five rounds of discussion with Staff to come up with 25
14 comprehensive Conditions of Approval. These are
15 comprehensive conditions, more than any other religious
16 institution in Los Gatos. They require us to operate within
17 Town ordinances for noise, parking, lighting, building
18 occupancy, and many others, and we have agreed to a
19 compliance review one year from now to assess any
20 additional impacts.

21 Staff recommends approval, and we respectfully
22 request yours. Thank you.

23 CHAIR BURCH: Thank you Do we have any questions
24 for the speaker? Vice Chair Barnett.

1 VICE CHAIR BARNETT: Thank you for your comments.
2 I think I read this in the packet, but is it accurate that
3 you wouldn't need the closing time until 12:00pm for the
4 next like ten years?

5 RAZI MOHIUDDIN: That is correct. Ramadan goes in
6 a cycle that rotates about once every 33 years, so right
7 now, because we are in daylight regular time, the sunset is
8 before 7:30pm. The next time the sunset goes past 7:30pm
9 will be in the year 2041, so that will be almost 14-15
10 years from today. Until then, we would need it until
11 11:30pm. After that, for the next 14-15 years it will be
12 until midnight, and then it will go back to the same cycle
13 again.
14

15 VICE CHAIR BARNETT: Thank you. Understood. Would
16 you, as the Applicant, agree to a condition that would
17 require at least quarterly newsletters to the neighbors
18 concerning events and hours? I understand you already have
19 that on your website, but some people may not have access
20 to that.
21

22 RAZI MOHIUDDIN: We absolutely will, but keep in
23 mind that many of our activities may not be scheduled a
24 quarter in advance, as an example, but we can certainly
25 agree to a quarterly newsletter to our neighbors.

1 VICE CHAIR BARNETT: Okay, thank you for that. My
2 last question is with respect to shuttle service, and I
3 carefully read your comments about why that is something
4 the mosque does not want to proceed with, but one of the
5 concerns was a place for gathering for embarking and
6 disembarking. I guess my question is if the Town itself
7 could provide that space, would some reasonable shuttle
8 service be acceptable?

9 RAZI MOHIUDDIN: Let me answer that question.
10 Thank you for bringing it up, I think, because it's a very
11 important part of the discussion over here. Generally, what
12 happens, the answer is no, we would not consider a shuttle
13 service, and I'll tell you why.

14 What happens is the way Ramadan works is you
15 typically break your fast at sunset, and about an hour-and-
16 a-half later you start the nightly prayers, so we have
17 about an hour-and-a-half in order to do the following
18 things: we have to break our fast; we have to pray the
19 sunset prayer; we have to eat dinner; we have to prepare
20 our families, and especially if we have young children and
21 others, to get ready; and then we have to drive over to the
22 facility in order to do that, all in a matter of one-and-a-
23 half hours. That is very, very difficult to do, even today,
24 within that period of time.
25

1 When you add a shuttle service, then that adds at
2 least a minimum of half an hour, if not more, because you
3 go to another location, park there, get in the vehicle,
4 come over, wait for the shuttle, and then repeat that
5 process.

6 Imagine, for example, this meeting is starting at
7 7:00pm every evening. Imagine 30 days of these meetings and
8 you are working, as an example, and you have one-and-a-half
9 hours at 5:30 when you leave your work, and you have to do
10 all of the five things that I mentioned, and then come over
11 here using a shuttle. That would be a substantial burden on
12 our community and it would not work for us.

13
14 VICE CHAIR BARNETT: I understand, and thank you
15 for your comments in general. Thank you.

16 DIRECTOR PAULSON: Chair, Commissioner Stump has
17 his hand raised.

18 CHAIR BURCH: Commissioner Stump.

19 COMMISSIONER STUMP: Thank you. By the way,
20 Chair, I've got my video turned off in case I have issues
21 with bandwidth.

22 Thank you very much for speaking with us this
23 evening. I've got some questions about use and occupancy.
24 Obviously, back in 2020—and you've explained this in your
25 Desk Item today—you anticipated 10-25 members using the

1 facility until 11:00pm during Ramadan. I also note from
2 your Desk Item that it seems like your high attendance for
3 this Ramadan period was 850. What growth in attendance have
4 you experienced, and what growth do you think you will
5 continue to experience as it relates to your mosque?

6 RAZI MOHIUDDIN: Commissioner Stump, thank you so
7 much for that question, and I think it's an important
8 question over here.

9
10 Our community has definitely grown since 2020
11 when this was actually proposed at this point in time. The
12 facility always has had a 682-seat capacity over here. When
13 we talk about the 850, we exceeded that only on two nights
14 this Ramadan, only on the 25th and the 27th night of Ramadan,
15 which I don't remember the exact March dates on that one,
16 but for the remainder portion of Ramadan we did not exceed
17 that capacity of the seats that exist over there.

18 Now, what happens typically in a Ramadan service
19 is that keep in mind—and I'll have one of our resident
20 callers explain this in a little bit more detail about what
21 happens on Ramadan time later—but typically what happens is
22 our Ramadan service, you have to imagine the following:
23 people are standing for 2.5 hours straight in order to
24 listen to a Quran recitation, and people get tired and they
25 leave over a period of time, because they have to go to

1 work, they have to go to school, they have to do a variety
2 of different things, so there is natural attrition or a
3 decrease in the number of people that attend a Ramadan
4 prayer. As it starts, let's say, at 8:00pm, by the time it
5 goes to about 9:00pm you will see about 60-70% of the
6 people drop off, and then by the time you get to about the
7 last quarter, you have about 90% of the people depart and
8 only about 10% approximately remain there.

9
10 If you read the text of the 2020 application, it
11 describes attendees who would remain for the remainder of
12 the Ramadan nightly prayers during extended hours, and the
13 number that was referred to was 10-25, so that was the drop
14 off. Of course, we could have said it much better in terms
15 of explaining it, but that's what we meant when we said
16 that at the end of the services you would have fewer people
17 there.

18 Now, obviously with an increase in our overall
19 capacity, there will be an increase from that 10-25 number,
20 but nevertheless, it will be smaller than what people start
21 off with.

22 COMMISSIONER STUMP: Chair, if I might continue?

23 CHAIR BURCH: Yes.

24 COMMISSIONER STUMP: I wanted to ask you, when
25 you take a look at 850 attendees on that high night, do you

1 have any estimate as to how many cars would have been
2 driven to your mosque, or around your mosque, to support
3 those 850 people?

4 RAZI MOHIUDDIN: Yes, we did in fact. I
5 personally, myself, counted the number of cars that were
6 there on that evening. There were approximately 280 cars
7 that were there at the beginning of that. We accommodated
8 closed to 200 of them in our parking lot, and we
9 accommodated about another 35 vehicles at Affordable
10 Treasures at the corner of Los Gatos Boulevard and Farley
11 Road, by special permission with Affordable Treasures. The
12 rest of them were parked on the street.

14 COMMISSIONER STUMP: I understand one of your
15 challenges has been for people to park in your lot, and I
16 know you're going to be doing some parking lot work. Maybe
17 there are some configuration challenges, etc., but how full
18 is your parking lot on those nights, understanding that you
19 can park up to 180 cars currently without reconfiguration?
20 How full is your onsite parking lot on any given night?

21 RAZI MOHIUDDIN: We first want to fill up the
22 parking lot as much as possible before any kind of offsite
23 parking, to utilize that. We actually use, fill in about
24 200 cars in the parking lot on busy nights by essentially
25

1 taking advantage of without actually having any kind of
2 fire access blockage over there.

3 We did submit a parking lot reconfiguration for
4 207 vehicles. That is part of our original submission over
5 there, and sometime in the future we plan to actually
6 implement that.

7 COMMISSIONER STUMP: Chair, because I am remote,
8 I really have a number of questions, but I don't want to
9 keep droning on. If there are other Commissioners that have
10 questions, you certainly could come back to me.

11 CHAIR BURCH: All right. There are, and then I
12 will probably ask my fellow commissioners if we want to
13 hold the balance of our questions until the end to allow
14 for public testimony.

15 COMMISSIONER STUMP: Okay, thank you.

16 CHAIR BURCH: But first, Commissioner Burnett.

17 COMMISSIONER BURNETT: Thank you, Chair, and
18 thank you for coming, and thank you for all the attendance.
19 It's very interesting learning about your religion, and I
20 am grateful to understand it more, so thank you for that.

21 My question to you is of the eight total mosques
22 in the area, all of which, except the Los Gatos mosque, are
23 on an arterial thoroughfare, are any of them in a
24 residential zone, as the Los Gatos mosque, or you call the
25

1 "the hub," the regional assembly center? Are any of the
2 other mosques in a residential zone like R-1:8? Most, I
3 found, are in a CH zone, which is a Commercial Highway
4 zone, so there is a difference there, and I think that
5 might be some of the issue.

6 RAZI MOHIUDDIN: Sure. There are a number of
7 mosques that are actually in residential zones. One of them
8 is, for example, in Evergreen in the San Jose area, called
9 Evergreen Islamic Center. There are a number of them in
10 Fremont, and in San Mateo as well; they are all in
11 residential areas. The first mosque that was here in the
12 Bay Area when I first came here was actually called Masjid
13 Al-Noor; it's on Catherine Street in Santa Clara, it is a
14 residential zone, and it still exists today and it is part
15 of the Muslim Community Association, MCA.

17 COMMISSIONER BURNETT: Just a follow-up. But the
18 position of the mosque is on a main highway, more of a
19 thoroughfare, instead of in a residential neighborhood is
20 what I looked at and examined. I didn't find any deep in a
21 residential zone.

22 RAZI MOHIUDDIN: The Catherine Street one is in a
23 residential zone, for sure.

24 COMMISSIONER BURNETT: The Catherine Street?
25

1 RAZI MOHIUDDIN: Yes, it's 1755 Catherine Street
2 in Santa Clara.

3 COMMISSIONER BURNETT: Yes, I looked at that.
4 It's a wide boulevard and there are plenty of lights.

5 RAZI MOHIUDDIN: No, it's in a purely residential
6 neighborhood.

7 COMMISSIONER BURNETT: Okay, thank you. Thank you
8 for that.

9 CHAIR BURCH: Are there any other questions for
10 the speaker? All right, thank you.

11 RAZI MOHIUDDIN: Thank you.

12 CHAIR BURCH: All right, obviously I have a lot
13 of speaker cards, and so what I'm going to do is I'll read
14 out three names at a time, just so you're prepared for who
15 will be coming up next. Again, you have three minutes. Our
16 first card is G. Brown, the second is Linda Swenberg, and
17 third is Lon Allan.

18 G. BROWN: Okay, if you looked at your card, that
19 would be Agenda Item 1, and I wanted to speak on the
20 minutes, but I'll... It was just a quick thing, because I
21 came in as Brown Act and I was saying (inaudible) and stuff
22 like that, but I'm going to go right into some of this
23 other stuff.
24
25

1 The basic thing that I see is if it overflows,
2 and since my experience with Lynn Avenue... I don't know if
3 you know this, but Lynn Avenue, we live right close to that
4 and the Town sent out a...somebody did flyers, and they
5 posted that people said that we were, you know, for the
6 project, and the Town was for it, and a lot of people, the
7 local residents weren't, and it's an easement and they want
8 to walk where safety, and I'm saying that the safety issues
9 are on the street first and it's a big thing.
10

11 But honesty is one of the biggest things, and
12 like I looked at some of the videos online and they showed
13 traffic and stuff like that, and it kind of... I mean, there
14 is traffic on Lynn when you back it up, and I don't see...

15 What I'm trying to say is, you know, like your
16 parking, Saratoga had the parking... I'm not a public
17 speaker, but Saratoga had extra parking, and so if they
18 could have an extra parking lot someplace far away and bus
19 them in, you know, would be a deal thing, and have maybe
20 for those hours have a one-way, because it's only... That
21 little road is really small. Have it one-way coming in and
22 then going out just quickly and having a crossing guard
23 person right there, and you could get it in and out. It's
24 like a school, and dropping off school stuff, so you can do
25 something like, if they can agree to something like that.

1 Another concern would be eventually if they get
2 over things they might sell the property, and what I... You
3 know, if it sells, we talked that what I wanted to bring
4 up, they're going to put three stories in there. The people
5 that are complaining now are going to complain ten times
6 more when they put three stories, or four stories, or ten,
7 you know, seven stories for this stuff, so you guys gotta
8 think about that stuff.

9
10 Those are just some of the issues that I brought
11 up, because nobody follows the rules. The project requires..
12 The one down the street, North Forty, 922 required, you
13 only got 768, so I'll leave it like that. Thank you for my
14 time.

15 CHAIR BURCH: Thank you. Are there any questions
16 for the speaker? All right, Linda Swenberg.

17 LINDA SWENBERG: Good evening, Commissioners.
18 Thank you for your time tonight.

19 I'm concerned that the Staff Report and draft
20 resolution for the WVMA Conditional Use Permit modification
21 may be missing some of the findings that the General Plan
22 explicitly requires. These are not only required, but it's
23 my understanding that the policies of your General Plan,
24 which are applied without discrimination, are your
25 compelling interest.

1 The 2020 Land Use Element, still enforced for
2 land use today, includes Goal LU-6 to "preserve and enhance
3 the existing character and sense of place in residential
4 neighborhoods." Its policies actually prohibit uses that
5 may lead to the deterioration of residential neighborhoods,
6 or adversely impact the residential character of a
7 residential neighborhood. And they state that non-
8 residential activity should be allowed only when the
9 character and quality of the neighborhood can be
10 maintained.

11
12 The draft resolution finds that the proposed use
13 would not impair the integrity and character of the
14 residential zone, because it has Conditions of Approval
15 that will be included. I respectfully note that this
16 appears to be more of a promise of future conditions than
17 the specific analysis and findings the General Plan calls
18 for. This is especially important, given the proposed
19 hours, which you are all aware of, and please look at also
20 the pre-dawn hours, because that has a huge impact on the
21 character.

22 The 2040 Noise Element in the Environment and
23 Sustainably chapter speaks to protecting our quiet
24 residential community. Peace and tranquility and noise
25 sensitive uses, like residences and sleeping areas. It

1 calls for a full acoustical analysis and additional
2 protections beyond the basic Noise Ordinance. While a basic
3 study was provided, the Salter Noise Study is not the
4 acoustical study that the Noise Element requires. It does
5 not fully address these stronger requirements at all.

6 I believe the General Plan policies explicitly
7 require findings on residential character, quality of life,
8 peace and tranquility, and protection of sleeping
9 conditions, and those detailed findings seem to be missing
10 here.

11
12 I respectfully ask that you consider denying the
13 modification, or continuing the item so Staff can provide
14 the proper compatibility study and the explicit findings
15 the General Plan calls for. Thank you so very much for your
16 service and for listening.

17 CHAIR BURCH: Thank you. Do we have any questions
18 for the speaker? All right, thank you. Lon Allan.

19 LON ALLAN: Thank you. Lon Allan. Even though I
20 hold elective office, I'm here speaking in my personal
21 capacity, and I'm speaking in favor of granting the
22 Conditional Use Permit.

23 I also should point out that while I think a lot
24 of people speaking in favor of this are of the Muslim
25 faith, I'm Jewish; my grandfather was a rabbi. I really

1 don't think it has anything to do with anybody's particular
2 faith, but we're all Americans and we facilitate the free
3 exercise of religion.

4 I don't think that having this mosque in a
5 residential neighborhood is a problem in Monte Sereno,
6 where I live. We've had the Baptist Church on Daves Avenue;
7 it's 100% residential. We have an elementary school across
8 the street. The traffic in and out of the church hasn't
9 been a danger to the students, and Mary and I have lived
10 there for 47 years just off of Daves Avenue; it hasn't been
11 a problem.

13 I think that, as the Supreme Court said, we
14 really have to go out of our way to allow what is necessary
15 for the mosque to operate the way a mosque is supposed to.
16 I've read the Conditional Use Permit. I think that they've
17 bent over backwards to be accommodating, and I would just
18 respectfully ask that the Commission grant the Conditional
19 Use Permit. Thank you very much.

20 CHAIR BURCH: Thank you. Are there any questions
21 for the speaker? The next three, I've got Musa Tariq, Hibah
22 Hammovdeh, and Bismah Jaffer.

23 MUSA TARIQ: Hello, Commissioners. I'll keep it
24 brief. My name is Musa with CAIR, the Council on American-
25 Islamic Relations, and we want to echo our Los Gatos

1 friends in urging you to approve the modified Conditional
2 Use Permit so the West Valley Muslim Association can
3 continue to serve its congregants in the community.

4 The right to gather and worship should be applied
5 equally and consistently. This project is not introducing
6 something new, it accommodates a growing community to
7 access necessary religious services, just as other faith
8 groups in Los Gatos do. We also hope the WVMA will be
9 evaluated under the same standards and expectations as any
10 other institution. The mosque has worked extensively with
11 the Town in good faith, following the same process required
12 of anyone else, if not considerably more stringent.

14 The Muslim families who attend WVMA are an
15 integral part of this community. They work here, go to
16 school here, run businesses here; they are your neighbors.
17 The right for a group of people without undue burden to
18 exist, gather, and worship belongs to everyone in Los
19 Gatos. That includes its Muslim residents. Please approve
20 the Conditional Use Permit. Thank you.

21 CHAIR BURCH: Thank you. Are there any questions
22 for the speaker? No. All right, Hibah Hammovdeh.

23 HIBAH HAMMOVDEH: Good evening and as-salamu
24 alaykum. My name is Hibah Hammovdeh and I'm on the civil
25 rights team at CAIR, the Council on American-Islamic

1 Relations. We strongly urge you to approve WVMA's request
2 to modify their Conditional Use Permit.

3 These modifications are critical to ensure the
4 WVMA is able to serve their congregants in Los Gatos. The
5 leadership at WVMA has gone above and beyond to ensure that
6 they are not only abiding by the law, but being considerate
7 of their neighbors.

8 WVMA is the reason that there was a speed radar
9 placed on Farley Road. They consistently checked in on
10 their neighbors throughout Ramadan for feedback and
11 received an extremely positive response. This just goes to
12 show that they have been operating in good faith and in
13 collaboration with their community consisting of both
14 worshippers and neighbors.

15 By denying their request for the modification you
16 would be placing an extreme burden on your Los Gatos Muslim
17 community, who would be barred from praying certain prayers
18 and practicing during Ramadan, which we have a spiritual
19 obligation to do.

20 The Muslim community in Los Gatos deserves to be
21 supported and nurtured. We should not have to fight for the
22 right to pray and worship. Also, Muslims and the practice
23 of our religion do not deteriorate the integrity or quality
24 of your neighborhoods. These worshippers are the
25

1 neighborhood. They are integral members of the community
2 regardless for your intolerance for our religion and
3 practices. Thank you.

4 CHAIR BURCH: Are there any questions for the
5 speaker? No. All right, Bismah.

6 BISMAH JAFFER: Hello. Good evening. Eid mubarak.
7 My name is Bismah Jaffer and I'm a civil rights attorney at
8 CAIR, the Council on American-Islamic Relations. It is the
9 largest Muslim civil rights organization, so I'm speaking
10 from that point of view.

11
12 The WVMA community members are part of the Los
13 Gatos community as much as they are the Muslim community,
14 and Muslims have been operating here for years as community
15 members and law-abiding people.

16 From a legal standpoint, WVMA applied for a
17 permit, was granted a permit, and then also applied.. Well,
18 they inherited the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized
19 Persons Act that was created specifically in our legal
20 system to address a pattern of discrimination against
21 minorities, and given the rising anti-Muslim climate, the
22 act should very much be respected here. Let's honor that
23 purpose tonight and keep Los Gatos a community that
24 welcomes all. Thank you.
25

1 CHAIR BURCH: Are there any questions for the
2 speaker? All right, Mitra Z.

3 MITRA ZARINEBAF: Hi, I'm Mitra. I'm also with
4 CAIR, if you could guess.

5 As you can see, the Los Gatos (inaudible) is a
6 place of community. Every place of worship has their First
7 Amendment right to pray and convene. Therefore, I'm in
8 favor of this item, as it will give practitioners the ease and
9 time accessible for worship.

10 WVMA has been in the Los Gatos community for over
11 30 years, and is an example of what it means to be a good
12 neighbor. Truly, neighborhoods benefit from having third
13 spaces, and a place of worship enriches the cultural fabric
14 of the community, actually increasing its integrity and
15 quality of life.

16 If I were to take this reasoning against the
17 ordinance, then why are we not making public comment about
18 garbage trucks in the morning. That wakes me up every
19 night, but yet they are still legal, as they have a duty.

20 As Islamophobia is at the highest it's been in
21 over 20 years, it is essential we can come together to
22 practice our faith. To reject this proposal would
23 undoubtedly hurt this practice. I urge you all to support
24 the wellbeing of our community and approve the
25

1 modification. Spaces like this are essential to a fruitful
2 and welcoming society, and it is crucial we support our
3 South Bay Muslim neighbors. If this is rejected, I can
4 assure you this will hurt the health of the Town, as an
5 entire community will not be available to properly pray
6 where we live.

7 Again, I speak to you with urgency and encourage
8 you to approve this permit. Thank you.

9 CHAIR BURCH: Thank you. Are there any questions?
10 The next two speakers will be Jeffrey Wang and Diane
11 Fisher.

12 JEFFREY WANG: Good evening. My name is Jeffrey
13 Wang. I'm a civil rights attorney with the Council on
14 American-Islamic Relations. I'd like to provide some
15 additional context on why approving this permit request is
16 important.

17 For those who do not know, the Council on
18 American-Islamic Relations is our nation's largest Muslim
19 advocacy and civil rights organization. Our work and
20 research have shown that for over two decades now American
21 Muslims have increasingly been the target of hate incidents
22 and hate crimes. Discrimination in schools and workplaces,
23 and even hateful rhetoric by public officials.

1 In the past year, officials at the highest level
2 of government have tried to redefine what it means to be
3 American by using discriminatory language, by implementing
4 exclusionary immigration policies, and attempting to roll
5 back civil rights protections for minorities. Essentially,
6 their message was if you don't look, speak, or worship a
7 certain way, then you don't belong.

8 Just a few weeks ago, Tennessee representative
9 Andy Ogles posted online that, "Muslims don't belong."
10 Florida representative Randy Fine called for all mainstream
11 Muslims to be destroyed. These manifestations of anti-
12 Muslim animus have real life consequences. Complaints made
13 to CAIR stayed at all-time highs last year.

14 And it's not just discrimination in the
15 workplace, or at school, or being the victims of hate
16 crimes, we've seen pretextual or permit denial weaponized
17 by municipalities across the country as a mask for anti-
18 Muslim discrimination. At bottom, such denials prevent
19 American Muslims from being able to fully exercise the
20 Constitutionally protected right to practice their faith.

21 Now, the Town of Los Gatos has stated in its 2040
22 General Plan that it wants to increase diversity and
23 inclusion to ensure that all members of the Los Gatos
24 community feel "valued, safe, respected, included, and
25

1 secure." And Los Gatos wants to be a special place for
2 community gathering.

3 So, our request is thus a simple one. Approve the
4 modified permit request and let Los Gatos continue to be a
5 place where Muslims can gather in community. Thank you.

6 CHAIR BURCH: Thank you. Are there any questions
7 for the speaker? No. Diane Fisher, and following Ms. Fisher
8 we will be taking a short break.

9 DIANE FISHER: Hello, my name is Diane Fisher and
10 I serve in the faith seat on the Diversity, Equity, and
11 Inclusion Commission for the Town of Los Gatos, although
12 this evening I am speaking in my own capacity. I'm also a
13 congregant at Congregation Shir Hadash, a Jewish synagogue
14 here in Los Gatos, where I serve on the board of directors
15 and have been a member for over 30 years.

16 I appeal to the Planning Commission to approve
17 the requested Conditional Use Permit with extended hours
18 for the West Valley Muslim Association for three reasons.

19 First, for legal reasons. The Religious Land Use
20 Act states that local governments must accommodate
21 religious practice in good faith, and are specifically
22 prohibited from imposing a substantial burden or
23 restriction on the land use of religious institutions.
24
25

1 Secondly, approving this request supports our
2 value of religious freedom. Beyond the First Amendment to
3 the Constitution, the 1993 Religious Freedom Restoration
4 Act focused particularly on safeguarding religious
5 practices for minority groups. As a member of another
6 minority faith community which has faced significant
7 discrimination, I've had the good fortune of being
8 supported by Muslim allies, especially from West Valley
9 Muslim Association, and likewise our Jewish community has
10 stood with our Muslim brothers and sisters at the West
11 Valley Muslim Association.
12

13 I previously ran a teen interfaith program with
14 Jewish students from Congregation Shir Hadash and Muslim
15 students from West Valley Muslim Association. This Star of
16 David necklace I'm wearing was a gift from a Muslim
17 student's parents to me to demonstrate our mutual
18 appreciation. We know that Los Gatos is culturally enriched
19 by its minority communities, and this land use will
20 profoundly demonstrate our genuine welcome and appreciation
21 for all.
22

23 The third reason I want to highlight for
24 supporting the Conditional Use Permit request is that West
25 Valley Muslim Association is a vital incubator for
democracy, just as all of our Los Gatos faith communities

1 are, by creating social capital and forming meaningful
2 networks of people who care about each other and mobilize
3 for community needs.

4 Los Gatos has the opportunity with this request
5 to provide for appropriate prayer opportunities for the
6 Muslim community, and thereby reducing negative stereotypes
7 and building bridges and social capital, and increasing the
8 wellbeing for us all. Thank you.

9
10 CHAIR BURCH: Thank you. Do we have any questions
11 for the speaker? Seeing none, we are going to take a brief
12 break, and we will return at 8:15.

13 (INTERMISSION)

14 CHAIR BURCH: Thank you, everybody, for the quick
15 break. We'll probably need to take another one in a couple
16 hours, but in the meantime, I'm going to go ahead and keep
17 going through these speaker cards, as we have quite a few.
18 Again, I will call the names three at a time just so you're
19 prepared.

20 The first one I have is Gareth Williams, and then
21 I have, I think it says David Kunin, and Karen Yamamoto,
22 but I think she just stepped out. I'm going to save her.
23 And Javed E. Is Gareth Williams here? Oh, no. We'll hold
24 onto him for a second then too. All right, what about David
25 is it Kunin? Excellent. And then Javed Ellahie.

1 RABBI DAVID KUNIN: My name is Rabbi David Kunin;
2 I'm the rabbi of Congregation Beth David. We have members
3 both in Saratoga, Los Gatos, and all through the area, and
4 our members all value our very close connection with the
5 West Valley Muslim Association. They actually use our
6 parking lot when they have services nearby, and we are
7 absolutely thrilled when the parking lot is filled on
8 Ramadan and the like.

9
10 We believe that freedom of religion goes to the
11 cornerstone of what it means to be American democracy, and
12 the free expression of that religion is really what's being
13 asked for in the changes that the West Valley Muslim
14 Association is asking for, allowing them to worship as is
15 necessary in the Islamic faith, and in order that they can
16 fulfill those religious obligations, which they have no
17 power to change. They come from God for the community, and
18 we share with them that obligation in the sense that they
19 need to be able to fulfill their religious obligations,
20 just as our community and many other religious communities
21 all can fulfill. You never turned the clock on, by the way.

22 DIRECTOR PAULSON: The clock isn't working. I'm
23 keeping time.

24 RABBI DAVID KUNIN: As well as other religious
25 communities are allowed to fulfill their religious

1 obligations, and we think it goes to the essential aspect
2 of American democracy.

3 We also value, and think that it's very important
4 that we value, all parts of our community. The Muslim
5 community brings a very important aspect of religious
6 diversity and cultural diversity to Los Gatos, to Saratoga,
7 to the whole Silicon Valley, and we would be all diminished
8 if that community isn't able to be able to fulfill its
9 religious obligations and be able to live here as members
10 of a community of the United States, so we call on the
11 Commission to make the waivers that are necessary so that
12 the Muslim Association and all the Muslims in this area can
13 worship as is necessary.
14

15 We think rather than being detrimental to Los
16 Gatos or the community, that this change will enhance the
17 community and enhance cooperation between religious
18 communities in our area, and we think that's hugely
19 important. Thank you very much.

20 CHAIR BURCH: Thank you. Are there any questions
21 for the speaker? Seeing none, all right. Javed. Oh. Javed,
22 is it all right if Gareth goes ahead and goes? Gareth can
23 go ahead and go—I had called your name a moment ago-and
24 Javed will follow.
25

1 GARETH WILLIAMS: Good evening, and thank you
2 very much for your attention to this matter. I have lived
3 on Izorah Way, a block off Farley Road, since 1967. At that
4 time the property now occupied by the WVMA was a Baptist
5 church, which after a number of years changed hands and
6 became a Jehovah's Witnesses kingdom hall. I have no
7 recollection of any traffic problems during this period of
8 almost 60 years.

9
10 However, things have changed. Izorah was once a
11 relatively quiet street, but now it sees much more traffic
12 than before, both moving and parked. However, I will say
13 that parking is not my main concern, though many times when
14 crossing Farley Road I can't see around parked cars, so I
15 have to be very cautious. I cross Farley at least four
16 times a day, typically around midday and in the evening. I
17 frequently have to wait for a dozen or more cars to pass
18 before I can cross. On a recent occasion after dark a
19 friend was good enough to stride out into the street to
20 halt traffic for me to cross.

21 Our neighborhood is a friendly one. Over the
22 years my wife and I attended weddings, graduations, garden
23 parties, and visited homes. For forty years (inaudible) our
24 neighbors, and now I stand here in support of my neighbors'
25

1 endeavor to curtail the extension of operating hours
2 proposed by the West Valley Muslim Association.

3 I have been invested in this community for a
4 lifetime. I came here when I was 32, and I am now 90, and
5 feel so sorry to see it ruptured. I sincerely hope that all
6 sides can come together to repair it. Thank you very much.

7 CHAIR BURCH: Thank you. Are there any questions
8 for the speaker? All right. Thank you. Javed.

9 JAVED ELLAHIE: Thank you, Honorable Chair Kendra
10 Burch, Vice Chair Jeffrey Barnett, and honorable members of
11 the Planning Commission. Thank you for providing the WVMA
12 and its neighbors the opportunity to address you today.
13 Thanks are also due to the Staff who engaged in an extended
14 effort with the community and neighbors so that this
15 measure is now before you, addressing the concerns as best
16 as possible.

17 Living next to a facility approved for religious
18 activities—I thought it was 1990, but I just hear it was
19 even before that—the WVMA appreciates neighbors' concerns
20 as this same facility now provides an opportunity for an
21 American Muslim community of Los Gatos and adjoining
22 cities, such as Monte Sereno, to perform their required
23 prayers when none existed before.
24
25

1 I am from Monte Sereno, and all Monte Serenans
2 enjoy the sisterly relationship we share with the Town of
3 Los Gatos as they shop and dine and share the Los Gatos-
4 Monte Sereno Police Department, which has provided the
5 cities with excellent service.

6 I also want to thank Monte Sereno's mayor, Lon
7 Allan, who spoke before and has served this community for
8 more than 30 years, for coming here to express support for
9 Los Gatos in providing a prayer facility for Monte Sereno
10 residents.

11
12 As you know, Monte Sereno has one Baptist church
13 and Daves School. When I was mayor of Monte Sereno, I had
14 the pleasure of visiting Pastor Roger McCarthy at the First
15 Baptist Church and was moved by the Easter service and the
16 participation of the congregation where it brings a
17 tranquility and peace that surpasses all understanding.
18 American Muslims find this tranquility and peace at the Los
19 Gatos mosque.

20 I appreciate those neighbors who have civilly
21 pointed out the concerns to them, and to a large extent the
22 WVMA has addressed almost all of these concerns. What the
23 WVMA cannot do is to take actions directly opposite to the
24 mandates of its religion. I understand this results in car
25

1 lights through blindless windows, but to appreciate the
2 (inaudible) impact, consider the following:

3 You are stuck at a traffic light in Los Gatos
4 that refuses to turn green. You wait and wait, you start
5 praying for it to turn green, you get sidetracked, it
6 finally turns green, but you do not move. Does the car
7 behind you start honking, honk, honk, honk for you to move
8 right away, or does the driver give you a few seconds to
9 collect yourself? I believe the Los Gatos people are the
10 ones who care for others and are willing to sacrifice some
11 of those minutes.
12

13 There are 524,160 minutes in a year, and the 20-
14 minute traffic rush that happens for 30 days during
15 Ramadan, if analyzed over an entire year, would only come
16 to 1.64 minutes a day, or less than 1% of the total yearly
17 time, affecting just a minute or two each day. Even if you
18 double that, it becomes three minutes a day. This is a time
19 when American Muslims are praying for America, gathering
20 charity for those in need, praying for the health of their
21 parents and grandparents, for those who are sick, for
22 patience, for those who have loved ones, and to guide them.
23 Beside God's commandments to do good to parents, kinfolk,
24 orphans, those in need, neighbors who are near, neighbors
25 who are strangers, the companion by your side, we feel your

1 need. So, we ask our Los Gatos neighbors, give us a minute
2 or two of your time so that we may pray, hopefully not
3 while sitting at a green light. Thank you.

4 CHAIR BURCH: Thank you. Are there any questions
5 for the speaker? All right, the next three are Basil
6 Farooq, Junaid Bhaiyat, and Dr. Amina Darwish.

7 IMAM BASIL FAROOQ: Good evening, I am Imam Basil
8 Farooq and I serve as a Resident Imam and Religious
9 Director, or religious leader, of the West Valley Muslim
10 Association, the WVMA.
11

12 In Islam we have five obligatory prayers every
13 day whose timings are determined based on the position of
14 the sun. We start off with the pre-sunrise prayer, then we
15 have the noon prayer, the afternoon prayer, the sunset
16 prayer, and the night prayer.

17 The mosque is a spiritual center for Muslims and
18 is required to have congregational service for all five
19 daily prayers. But now, out of these five daily prayers,
20 the two that provide the most significant spiritual
21 grounding for an individual are the first and the last
22 ones, the pre-sunrise one and the night prayer.

23 Let me walk you through a typical congregant's
24 experience. You wake up a little bit earlier than you would
25 just for work. You want to start your day in a positive,

1 intentional, and grounded way. You join your fraternity and
2 congregational pre-sunrise prayer, turning your focus to
3 the force holding up the universe. You hear the melodious
4 verses of the Quran. You speak to your creator with your
5 heart, grounding yourself before the difficult day ahead of
6 you with work, family, and all the responsibilities that we
7 all shoulder.

8 After a day of stressful work in the heart of the
9 Silicon Valley, you again need a space to unwind and
10 discharge all of that accumulated stress and weight on your
11 shoulders. You join the congregation again, this time for
12 the night prayer. You leave after worship feeling grounded,
13 humbled, and healed.

14 This is the experience of a congregant who
15 attends the pre-sunrise and the night prayers every day.
16 Centering their day around God, allowing his mercy and his
17 love to carry them through the difficulties and challenges
18 of life.

19 We would like to request your approval for
20 hosting these critical daily prayers in congregation at
21 their religiously mandated times. I would like to ask the
22 Los Gatos Planning Commission to adopt the Staff
23 recommendations in approving this proposal. Thank you very
24 much.
25

1 CHAIR BURCH: Thank you. Are there any questions
2 for the speaker? All right, thank you. Junaid.

3 JUNAID BHAIYAT: Good evening, Planning
4 Commission members. I'd like to thank you very sincerely
5 for facilitating this hearing and this evening. My name is
6 Junaid Bhaiyat, and I speak in my own personal capacity.

7 I am a classically trained Islamic scholar. I
8 memorized the entire Quran, 600 pages, at the age of 12,
9 completed seven years of advanced study in theology and
10 divinity in Canada, and earned a master's degree with
11 highest honors in Quran and Islamic studies from the
12 International Islamic University in Malaysia.

13 This year I had the honor and privilege of
14 leading the Ramadan nightly prayers at the WVMA. I only
15 share this as a backdrop, so that you know that what I am
16 about to tell you is not opinion, rather it is over 1,400
17 years of settled religious practice.

18 Ramadan is the holiest month in the Islamic
19 calendar. Muslims believe that the first verses of the
20 Quran were revealed onto Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon
21 him during this blessed month. In response to that gift,
22 the Prophet himself, peace be upon him, established the
23 practice of extended nightly prayers during the holy month
24 of Ramadan. His companions and every generation of Muslims
25

1 ever since have continued this practice in an unbroken
2 chain.

3 The full Ramadan nightly prayer, if I may explain
4 so you have a good picture, consists of 20 cycles, and it
5 has been the standard in mosques around the world for over
6 1,000 years. Each night one full chapter of the Quran is
7 recited, and over the course of 30 nights the entire
8 scripture, all 30 chapters, are completed together as a
9 community.

10 So, picture the scene for a moment. For two to
11 two-and-a-half hours the congregation stands in rows,
12 listening to one person reciting the scripture. There are
13 no conversations, there is no celebration or socializing,
14 it is a time of deep reflection, of quietly absorbing the
15 verses that call us to serve humanity, to care for the
16 poor, to be honest, to be patient, to forgive. Each person
17 is alone with God, even while standing shoulder to shoulder
18 with their neighbor. When the prayers conclude, people
19 leave in the same spirit: quiet, contemplative, at peace,
20 and it is among the most peaceful gatherings that one can
21 imagine.

22 So, I respectfully urge all of you and request
23 that you support the full two and two-and-a-half hours of
24 the Ramadan nightly prayers so we can continue our
25

1 religious tradition of reciting one chapter of the Quran
2 every night of Ramadan. Thank you so very much for your
3 consideration.

4 CHAIR BURCH: Thank you. Are there any questions
5 for the speaker? Thank you. Dr. Amina Darwish.

6 DR. AMINA DARWISH: Good evening, everyone. My
7 name is Amina Darwish. I often lead services and special
8 programs at WVMA. For my day job, I serve as the Associate
9 Dean in the Office for Religious and Spiritual Life and
10 Advisor for Muslim Life at Stanford University. I am
11 speaking here today in my personal capacity as a community
12 member.
13

14 I have served as a Muslim Chaplin (inaudible) for
15 the past 12 years, and I've been working with youth in
16 Muslim and interfaith spaces for almost two decades. If you
17 think I don't look old enough to have had a 20-year career,
18 thank you, and you can be my best friend after this.

19 But because of despite being 20-30 minutes away
20 from campus, WVMA is my home mosque. The executive director
21 has my number in her phone, and when she calls, when she
22 says jump, I say, "How high?"
23

24 It's been a challenging time to be Muslim in
25 America, in a post-911 America, and with the loneliness
pandemic that was exacerbated by COVID, building community

1 is more critical than ever for everyone. A Stanford study
2 from our Psychiatry Department actually showed the
3 Americans who identify as Muslim had twice the suicide
4 attempt rate as their peers of other faiths.

5 Both faith and community are protective factors
6 that decrease mental health crises and save lives. Students
7 who have struggled with belonging often share feeling at
8 home at WVMA. This mosque has been a highlight for me
9 personally, for my Stanford students, and for the community
10 at large as a safe space to make friends, build community,
11 and create belonging.

12 Four years ago, I started a special program with
13 the WVMA board members that became a really popular class
14 on campus for students of all faiths and traditions to
15 design their spiritual lives. WVMA support was critical to
16 facilitate the first ever class and track. I have seen
17 tangible benefits for the Muslim students and students of
18 other faiths having a sense of agency and belonging on
19 campus, and it has resulted in service projects that have
20 expanded on and off campus. This is the beautiful healing
21 effect of WVMA.

22 For Muslim to be able to practice their faith
23 freely, as is a core ethic of the pluralism of Los Gatos
24 and America at large, they need to not just be tolerated,
25

1 but celebrated for their community building. My hope is
2 that my regular meetings with rabbis, reverends, and
3 Buddhist masters, Hindu priests, and Bahai worship leaders,
4 is not just a really long setup of a joke, but actually a
5 really awesome celebrated thing that we do in our community
6 regularly. Thank you for listening.

7 CHAIR BURCH: Thank you. Are there any questions
8 for the speaker? All right. Johanes Swenberg, Saugher
9 Nojan, and Anas Syed.

10 JOHANES SWENBERG: Thank you. My name is Johanes
11 Swenberg, and you said it right, thank you very much.
12 Ladies and Gentlemen of the Commission, the Staff, and Town
13 Council, I appreciate your service.

14 I'm a 30-year resident of the Town, and I'm
15 speaking on probably something a little bit different from
16 what I've just been hearing, and that's specifically about
17 noise.

18 My concern, even though I live on the other side
19 of town, is excessive noise doesn't just annoy, it can
20 possibly harm community in profound and lasting ways. It
21 shatters a peace that makes a residential community a true
22 home.

23 Twelve years ago, I suffered a traumatic brain
24 injury. The world became overwhelming, and loud sounds
25

1 triggered intense pain and set back my recovery.

2 Fortunately, a quiet neighborhood in the Town of Los Gatos.
3 was a blessing, a gentle space where healing could happen
4 without constant assault on my senses. Simple things like
5 resting, concentrating, or even sleeping became possible.

6 I think of the residents on Farley Road and those
7 around there, and others like them who may be suffering
8 from noise and the loss of a quiet neighborhood, with a
9 great deal of empathy for that situation. For some, it is
10 not just discomfort, it is isolation. People who are
11 vulnerable, living alone, or dealing with their own health
12 challenges have no one to share the burden with. They
13 endure the constant intrusion in their silence. Their
14 quality of life can be eroded, their sense of safety and
15 comfort stolen.

17 Noise disrupts sleep, raises stress, worsens
18 medical conditions, and drives people indoors and away from
19 their neighbors and community life. It can turn evenings
20 into endurance tests. I think we deserve better.

21 Our existing Noise Ordinances exist to protect
22 exactly this: the right to reasonable quiet in a
23 residential area. Enforcing them fairly and firmly isn't
24 about stopping activity, it's about preserving a livable,
25

1 healing environment that drew all of us to Los Gatos. This
2 is a main element of the Town Plan.

3 Please stand with the residents, protect our
4 community, and I ask that you at least delay and do further
5 study on this topic. Thank you.

6 CHAIR BURCH: Thank you. Are there any questions
7 for the speaker? Thank you. Saugher Nojan.

8 SAUGHER NOJAN: Good evening, everyone. Also, I
9 am so sorry for your injury.

10 A few weeks ago, I visited one of our neighbors.
11 They smiled at me and said, "Hey, it's you again. Saugher,
12 Right?" That's when I knew our efforts were making a
13 difference.

14 I'm Dr. Saugher Nojan, a sociology professor at
15 San Jose State University and a board member at the West
16 Valley Muslim Association, where I support spiritual growth
17 and neighborhood outreach.

18 In both my work and my faith my purpose is
19 simple: to listen, understand, and help build stronger
20 communities. Last year I was honored to receive the
21 Congressional Recognition Award from Congressman Sam
22 Liccardo for my community service.

23 I believe this: when people feel heard,
24 communities change. For the past couple of years, I
25

1 personally have visited over 60 houses in our neighborhood,
2 knocking on doors, talking to people multiple times, having
3 conversations on sidewalks, even in living rooms, porches,
4 and garages. We listened, adapted, and followed up.

5 One conversation stayed with me during last
6 year's Ramadan check-in. Our neighbor Michelle asked, "Is
7 this the new normal?" She noticed Ramadan was quieter that
8 year and wondered if we had moved it to our other facility.
9 I said, "No, we're still here. We're just making changes."
10 Being good to our neighbors is part of our faith. Those
11 changes matter. Many told us it was noticeably quieter and
12 more respectful.
13

14 A few weeks ago, I revisited nearby homes on
15 Farley Road and Flintridge Drive. Neighbors asked me how we
16 were doing. One shared, "We don't want you to feel
17 unwelcome here." John even offered his driveway for us to
18 park whenever we needed. That's the true spirit of Los
19 Gatos.

20 Beyond our community cafes, we began sharing
21 meals with neighbors through small gatherings and
22 community-wide dinners, both at our facility and as box
23 meals during community nights. It's been a joy to serve
24 dishes like buttered chicken and biryani with our closest
25 neighbors such as Kim, Bill, the Yings, and others.

1 Our faith calls us to spread peace, nourish
2 others, and strengthen relationships. These simple acts
3 produce genuine connection. This is the community we
4 believe in, not just simply co-existing, but truly caring
5 for one another.

6 Today I'm asking you for your support to extend
7 WVMA's hours. This is more than just a building. It's about
8 continuing to listen, adapt, and give back. Our
9 conversations do not end here tonight. We're committed to
10 being thoughtful neighbors and long-term partners here, and
11 I thank our neighbors for making us better Muslims and
12 caretakers of our neighborhood. Help us build trust, foster
13 belonging, and strengthen our neighborhood together. Thank
14 you.
15

16 CHAIR BURCH: Are there any questions for the
17 speaker? All right, Anas Syed.

18 ANAS SYED: Good evening, Commissioners. My name
19 is Anas. I've been an engineer at Google for the past eight
20 years and oversee their financial operations. I serve on
21 the board of directors at WVMA, but today I am here in a
22 personal capacity.

23 Dr. Saugher talked about our outreach. I will
24 talk about the actions that we have taken as a result of
25 the feedback that we received. We have prioritized taking

1 action, often at our own significant expense, based on the
2 feedback we have received from our neighbors. To date, we
3 have executed over 25 specific actions in response to
4 neighbor input in four key areas.

5 One, privacy and noise. We replaced aging fences
6 with new good neighbor wood fences and lattices, in some
7 cases, covering the full cost. And we've planted ten trees
8 to provide natural light and sound barriers. We've even
9 carefully considered the impact from falling foliage during
10 the colder months.

11 Two, acoustic adjustments. We temporarily removed
12 our own \$50,000 gate track simply to eliminate noise for
13 immediate neighbors while sacrificing the security of our
14 community.

15 Three, light and traffic. We've redirected and
16 dimmed parking lot lights and hired traffic safety guards
17 during Ramadan to ensure an orderly, quiet departure.

18 Four, proactive communication. We provided
19 neighbors with direct phone and email contact for board
20 members, and initiated mid-Ramadan check-ins to address any
21 emerging issues in real time.

22 Our commitment to this community is shown in our
23 willingness to adapt, even holding our Eid holiday prayer
24 offsite for the past few years in a cold, concrete Valco
25

1 parking garage to minimize neighborhood impact during our
2 busiest day.

3 At WVMA, being a good neighbor is more than a
4 polite phrase. It is a paramount virtue of our faith. We
5 recognize that for our presence to be a benefit to Los
6 Gatos, we must not only listen to feedback, but we are
7 intentional about executing on it.

8 We are not just asking for a permit modification,
9 we are asking to contribute, building a partnership based
10 on transparency, mutual respect, and a proven track record
11 of addressing the concerns of those who live alongside us.
12 Thank you.

13 CHAIR BURCH: Thank you. Are there any questions
14 for the speaker? I do have one.

15 I sounds like you went through four main points
16 of, I guess, what feedback you're gotten and some
17 concessions or changes that you've made following these.
18 Have you had follow-up conversations with your neighbors to
19 discuss the changes, the landscape, the change in the
20 lighting, and the removal of the gate, to see if those have
21 been positive changes and are they making, in your opinion,
22 progress?

23 ANAS SYED: Yes. I think like Dr. Saugher said,
24 these discussions are always ongoing, so once an action is
25

1 taken, it's not like we're gone, right? That feedback loop
2 is still there, the opportunity to provide feedback is
3 still there. We are constantly knocking on doors; that is a
4 part of just the regular cadence of what we are doing.

5 CHAIR BURCH: Thank you.

6 ANAS SYED: Thank you.

7 CHAIR BURCH: The next three speakers, I have
8 Osman Ghafoor, Dr, Omar Ali, and Dr. Mohammed Subeh.

9 OSMAN GHAFOR: Chair Burch, Vice Chair Barnett,
10 and Commissioners, my name is Osman Ghafoor. I am the
11 president of West Valley Muslim Association, but I'm here
12 in a capacity to talk in this discussion here.

13 I really want to address a question that has
14 surfaced in the public discourse, and that is does this
15 facility belong here, on Farley Road, in this neighborhood?
16 That question was answered more than 36 years ago. We
17 researched the archives here at the Town and we can
18 actually see evidence of a stamped approval for a 682-seat
19 religious assembly facility, with 186 parking spaces at
20 this address in an R-1:8 residential zone. That came with
21 the application of U-89-11.

22 The Planning Staff and Commission knew exactly
23 what that meant. Hundreds of cars possibly coming in
24 whenever there is a service, whether it is evenings,
25

1 whether it is holy days, into the property. They approved
2 that, and that suitability was a settled matter. So
3 settled, that that is what God asked to purchase this
4 property in 2018, where the community invested over \$11
5 million to purchase this facility specifically because that
6 approval existed at that scale for religious assembly. We
7 didn't create this footprint. It was already there. We just
8 relied on the Town's own determination when we made that
9 investment.

10
11 Further to that, in 2020, when we had the
12 modification in U-20-001, the Commission here recognized
13 that Ramadan warrants extended hours. Tonight we are asking
14 for a modest extension of that same recognition, but what
15 we didn't have then at the time, we have now. We've done a
16 sound study by Salter, a qualified acoustical consulting
17 firm which confirms that our use meets all applicable Town
18 noise standards, and this is a firm that is so reputable in
19 this area that many, many municipalities actually use
20 Salter.

21 These same vehicles making the same sounds that
22 are lawful at 9:00pm remain the same noise standards at
23 10:30pm or 11:00pm. The science confirms it, the history of
24 the Town supports it, and our right to gather for
25 congregational prayer is not merely a preference, it is a

1 fundamental religious obligation that federal law
2 recognizes and protects.

3 The only question tonight is whether that modest
4 further extension creates new impacts. The evidence shows
5 it does not. We respectfully ask for your approval. Thank
6 you.

7 CHAIR BURCH: Thank you. Any questions for the
8 speaker? Thank you.

9 COMMISSIONER STUMP: Chair, this is Rob. You
10 probably can't see my hand.

11 CHAIR BURCH: Oh, I'm so sorry. No, thank you,
12 Commissioner Stump. Do you have a question for the speaker?

13 COMMISSIONER STUMP: No problem. Yes, I did want
14 to ask about the noise study, and it sounds like you've got
15 a pretty good command of this subject.

16 You commissioned a noise study through Salter in
17 early 2025. What timeframe does this study cover?

18 OSMAN GHAFOR: This was prior to Ramadan, if
19 you're asking for that, but however, it covers all of our
20 daily prayers. I don't know if we have the exact date. It
21 covers the Jumuah, the Friday prayer, which is actually at
22 one of our peak times. It covers the morning prayers and
23 the evening prayers, and we also made sure it covered an
24
25

1 event. Here is the answer here. It was between January 31st
2 and February 11th.

3 COMMISSIONER STUMP: If the study was not done
4 during Ramadan at all, what was your thinking, especially
5 when you would know that, and we've already been told
6 tonight, that at least this year there were as many as 280
7 vehicles coming into the neighborhood in March on one
8 evening. That would seem to be a peak period. Again, what
9 was the thinking for not doing this noise study during
10 Ramadan itself?
11

12 OSMAN GHAFLOOR: One thing to be clear, sound
13 science is very different in terms of it doesn't matter if
14 there are 1,200 cars coming in, which there never are, or
15 people, but even if there are 600 cars, the same cars go
16 by, right? Whether it's a period of five minutes or ten
17 minutes, the noise level never goes above the Los Gatos
18 standards, and that's something that's very clear.

19 But just to go back on what your question was, we
20 could actually redirect. We do have somebody coming who can
21 actually talk more on the science of this, so it would just
22 be (inaudible) he'll be talking later on. But just to say
23 though, if you remember, we applied some time ago. We just
24 wanted to make sure we got this noise study in. We were
25 hoping this had come through before we got to Ramadan, so

1 that was the main reason why we wanted to do this prior to
2 having that, prior to Ramadan, because I know the neighbors
3 also wanted to have this resolved before Ramadan came, so
4 that's the actual direct response.

5 COMMISSIONER STUMP: Thank you.

6 CHAIR BURCH: Commissioner Stump, do you have any
7 follow-up questions?

8 COMMISSIONER STUMP: No.

9 CHAIR BURCH: All right, thank you. Dr. Omar Ali.

10 DR. OMAR ALI: Good evening, my name is Omar Ali
11 and I'm a resident of Los Gatos. My family chose to move
12 here because of the welcoming culture and diversity that
13 Los Gatos represents. The mosque is an important part of
14 that fabric, and is the only mosque serving this area.

15 I was born and raised in Minnesota, and later
16 lived in Michigan and Boston, and in each of these
17 communities I regularly attended mosques in residential
18 neighborhoods and saw firsthand how they can positively
19 contribute to the community life.

20 In Los Gatos, I lived as an immediate neighbor of
21 the mosque. The home that I lived in was adjacent to the
22 entrance of the mosque itself, so I experienced the traffic
23 and activity directly. We would regularly walk to the
24 mosque as a family through the entrance; I never felt
25

1 unsafe. My younger boys would also walk there, being
2 mindful of traffic, and were able to do so safely.

3 Attendance for the early and late evening prayers
4 were hardly noticeable. During Ramadan, I observed activity
5 that was temporary, predictable, and managed with care. At
6 the mosque, a significant portion of the announcements are
7 about our neighbors and how we can be respectful to them,
8 and how we can help mitigate concerns around traffic and
9 noise. That message is consistent and taken seriously by
10 the congregation. In my opinion, the neighbors' concerns
11 are being taken seriously and actively addressed.
12

13 I respectfully ask that the Town continue to
14 support reasonable mitigation efforts while allowing the
15 mosque to operate in a way that serves its community. Thank
16 you for your time and service.

17 CHAIR BURCH: Thank you. Any questions for the
18 speaker? Thank you.

19 DR. MOHAMMED SUBEH: Bismillah hir-Rahman. In the
20 name of God, the most gracious, the most merciful. Good
21 evening, Commissioners. My name is Mohammed Subeh; I'm a
22 local ER doctor here in Los Gatos, and I'm speaking not
23 only as a local doctor here tonight, but as someone whose
24 ability to continue doing my work depends in part on spaces
25 like WVMA.

1 Recently, during a busy ER shift I took care of a
2 75-year-old woman who came into the ER with severe
3 abdominal pain. She was, I noticed, more concerned about
4 getting home quickly, so I asked her why. She told me she's
5 the sole caregiver for her husband who has advanced
6 dementia. After imaging and labs, I discovered she had
7 metastatic ovarian cancer. It was advanced. I knew her time
8 left on earth was likely short. I took her to a quiet area
9 of our ER and I sat with her, explained the diagnosis and
10 the unfortunate prognosis. She listened quietly, and then
11 she began to cry. Not because she was afraid of dying or
12 the pain she was experiencing. Her first words through her
13 tears were, "What will happen to my husband? Who will take
14 care of him when I'm gone?" I held her hand tightly,
15 knowing this was a profoundly life-altering moment for both
16 my patient and her husband. In that moment of connection, I
17 felt helpless.

19 I left the hospital that night emotionally
20 drained. The decision to carry that weight, to share in the
21 grief and the suffering of others, is something we do in
22 the ER every single day. But that night I found myself
23 unable to shake the emotional heaviness. I knew I needed a
24 space to process, so I drove over to WVMA.
25

1 I entered the prayer hall, a tranquil space that
2 has become a sanctuary for me, and I sat there in the
3 stillness, reflecting on my existence and my mortality. I
4 prayed for my patient, I prayed for her husband, and I put
5 myself in her shoes and found myself crying from a deep
6 innate need to release emotions I had been holding in.

7 It was at that moment that I realized how crucial
8 WVMA is, not just as a place of worship, but as a place of
9 emotional healing, a refuge where we can ground ourselves
10 and confront our grief, our fears, and our pain.

11 By approving this CUP, you are recognizing the
12 vital role that spaces like this play in the mental,
13 emotional, and spiritual wellbeing of your community. This
14 space provides comfort and a sense of belonging, especially
15 for those of us who give so much of ourselves to others. It
16 allows us to heal so that we can continue to serve our
17 community and to be there for those who need us most. Thank
18 you so much.

19 CHAIR BURCH: Thank you. Are there any questions
20 for the speaker? No. All right, I have, I believe, it's
21 Manel Khan, Amber, and Adam and Ameen.

22 MANEL MAHROUGH KHAN: Good evening,
23 Commissioners. My name is Manel Khan, a resident of Los
24
25

1 Gatos. I am a board member of Haven Federal Credit Union,
2 I'm a data scientist, and I am a proud member of WVMA.

3 Before moving to Los Gatos, my family and I lived
4 in Mountain View. I remember the day my husband came home
5 and told me about this incredible mosque he just
6 discovered. He described it as a place where people gather,
7 not only to pray, but to reflect, share ideas, and engage
8 in thoughtful conversations. I distinctly remember his
9 saying, "I think we may have found our home."
10

11 When I came to Los Gatos to see the town for
12 myself, something immediately stood out to me. I saw the
13 banner downtown that reads, "You belong in Los Gatos." For
14 many people, it may simply be a banner, but for our family,
15 it was a promise. Between that message and the community we
16 found at WVMA, that sense of belonging became very real.

17 As a family, that feeling of belonging has
18 inspired us to give back to our community we now call home
19 in numerous ways, one of which is a small Ramadan tradition
20 where our ten-year-old daughter, Sophia, and I bring
21 cupcakes from Icing on the Cake to the staff at the Los
22 Gatos Library, and the staff and teachers at her elementary
23 school, Alta Vista. It's a small way for us to share the
24 spirit of the month and to say thank you to all the
25

1 wonderful people who help make Los Gatos such a great place
2 to raise a family.

3 In our faith, some of the most important prayers
4 happen early in the morning and later in the evening.
5 Extending the hours would simply allow our community to
6 practice our traditions in a way that aligns with our faith
7 while continuing to be good neighbors, and respectful
8 neighbors.

9 For our family, that banner in downtown that
10 says, "You belong in Los Gatos," really meant something.
11 Approving this request would help ensure that promise
12 continues to be real for families like ours. Thank you so
13 much for your time and for your service to Los Gatos.

14 CHAIR BURCH: Thank you. Are there any questions
15 for the speaker? No. Thank you. Amber.

16 AMBER: Hi, Commission members and the Town of
17 Los Gatos, my name is Amber and I am so proud to say that I
18 grew up in Los Gatos, California. Go Cats.

19 Los Gatos shaped me as an individual. It was part
20 of my foundation. My first job was at LGSRC as a lifeguard,
21 later I became a swim instructor, and then was promoted as
22 a swim coach for their club team. I went on to complete my
23 education at UC Berkely, and now I'm currently a PM at one
24 of the world's leading cyber security companies.
25

1 As an athlete who participated in NJB at Calvary
2 Uptown, swam, water polo, swam competitively every summer
3 at the high school, and even swam club at LGSRC during by
4 adolescent years, and now still very active and a member at
5 Bay Club, at Yoga Source, and will do drop-Ins at X2o
6 Studio, if you see me at any of these places, please feel
7 free to say hello, unless I look like I'm fighting for my
8 life or completely out of breath, then let's pretend like
9 we didn't make eye contact.
10

11 I mentioned sports, because sports and community
12 are deeply connected. They create spaces that teach
13 teamwork, discipline, and resilience. It gives people a
14 sense of belonging, which allows them to grow into strong,
15 contributing members of society. Sports have been a place
16 where I take care of my body, but WVMA is a place where I
17 nourish my soul.

18 Just like we invest in physical spaces for health
19 and growth, we need spaces that support our sense of
20 belonging, identify, and community. The mosque is just
21 that. It represents belonging and identify, something I did
22 not have growing up, but something that has now made me
23 feel whole.
24
25

1 I ask that we continue to support spaces that
2 foster a sense of belonging for all, as that is what Los
3 Gatos has always stood for. Thank you.

4 CHAIR BURCH: Thank you. Any questions for the
5 speaker? All right. State your name, and then if you guys
6 could just make sure you speak into the microphone.

7 ADAM AND AMEEN: Good evening, members of the
8 Planning Commission. My name is Adam. And my name is Ameen.
9 We are 11 years old. We are here today to show our
10 experience growing up in this community, and to explain why
11 the WVMA is important to our family and many others.
12

13 I was born and raised here in Los Gatos. My
14 parents always tell me how lucky we are to live in a town
15 where people care about their neighbors and support each
16 other. This town is where we are learning how to become
17 good members of society. Though WVMA is one of the places
18 that has helped us grow, it is not only a place where we
19 pray, but also where we learn about kindness, respect,
20 helping others, and being responsible members of our
21 community.

22 We learn about the teachings of prophets like
23 Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad, peace be upon them,
24 and how these teaching encourage people to care for others
25 and do good in the world. At WVMA, we also meet friends,

1 attend educational programs, and participate in activities
2 that teach us how to give back through charity and service.
3 This is a place where families come together and where
4 children like us feel safe and welcomed. One of the best
5 parts is that they let us play Pokemon and eat ice cream
6 with our friends, which makes it even more fun to spend
7 time there.

8 Please allow WVMA to continue serving families in
9 Los Gatos. It helps many kids grow up with strong values
10 and sense of community. Thank you for listening to us.

11 CHAIR BURCH: Thank you, boys. Do we have any
12 questions? No. I have Ahmed Zaafran, Omair Ali, and Zahra
13 Kassam.

14 DR. AHMED ZAAFRAN: Good evening, Commissioners
15 and fellow neighbors. Thank you so much for the opportunity
16 to speak with you tonight.

17 My name is Dr. Ahmed Zaafran. I'm a practicing
18 clinical anesthesiologist and entrepreneur in our
19 community. You'll often find me at a bustling surgery
20 center down the street taking care of patients. I've been
21 honored to take care of medical and surgical patients in
22 Los Gatos for the past 14 years, initially at Stanford
23 serving surgical cancer patients, then in Palo Alto Medical
24
25

1 Foundation focusing on women's health, and now in private
2 practice.

3 My days are quite long, often 14-plus hours,
4 typically starting before the sun rises and ending long
5 after it sets. This is time away from family, so WVMA is
6 often my first stop before work and my last stop before
7 heading home. It's a rigorous and demanding schedule, and
8 accordingly, I need a refuge, a safe haven of worship where
9 I can seek spiritual and emotional strength. West Valley
10 Muslim Association is that place for me.

11 From seeking comfort and centering myself to
12 start the day, to breaking bread with fellow worshippers
13 late into the evening, WVMA consistently fills my cup with
14 joy and peace and the motivation to take better care of my
15 patients. What I gain at WVMA directly improves my
16 wellbeing, and subsequently improves patient care. I know
17 that after a long day at the hospital, I can count on WVMA
18 to be a place of solace and tranquility for me. It is full
19 of loving, comforting, diligent, and warmhearted people
20 that earnestly seek to serve the community. I am grateful
21 for that, because not all communities have that privilege.
22 I certainly don't take it for granted, and I feel a strong
23 sense of price, urgency, and peace sharing that with you
24 tonight. Thank you so much for your time.
25

1 CHAIR BURCH: Thank you. Any questions for the
2 speaker?

3 OMAR ALI: Good evening, Commissioners. My name
4 is Omar Ali and I've been a Sunday School teacher at WVMA
5 for the past three years, which has been one of the worst
6 decisions for my mental health and self-esteem, because I
7 teach teenagers.

8 Just a few weeks ago, a student asked me to take
9 off my glasses so she would see what I look like, and the
10 moment I did, she said, "Eww, you can put them back on,"
11 which I did. I have not recovered since. My morning
12 affirmations no longer help me, but what has helped me is
13 this community.

14 It's the moments after the early morning prayers,
15 sipping coffee with other parents, talking about life, our
16 teenage kids, back pain, and what it's like to be born in
17 the 1900s. That's what WVMA is for us, and that's why the
18 morning and evening prayers are so important to us. They're
19 not just rituals; they're anchors in our day. They give us
20 a place to reconnect, reflect, and build real relationships
21 with people trying to be better parents, neighbors, and
22 members of this community.

23 As someone who works closely with youth, I try to
24 instill one thing above all: empathy and respect. Respect
25

1 for others, including our neighbors, and I try to live that
2 myself. I have a 700 horsepower BMW sitting at home that I
3 do not bring to the mosque, because I know it will disturb
4 the neighbors, so I adjusted. I now drive a Tesla, and
5 honestly, a lot of us in this room do too, because we care.
6 We listen; we adapt.

7 Last year I took my students to meet our
8 neighbors. We dropped off sweets and cards during Ramadan
9 just to introduce ourselves and give some smiles. We are
10 not asking for something unreasonable. We are asking for
11 the ability to observe something deeply meaningful to us in
12 a way that is already quiet, respectful, and mindful to
13 those around us.
14

15 WVMA is where I teach my students, not just
16 through words but through actions, that being a good Muslim
17 also means being a good neighbor, and I'm grateful to Los
18 Gatos for allowing us to be part of this beautiful and
19 diverse community. Thank you for your time and
20 consideration.

21 CHAIR BURCH: Thank you. Are there any questions
22 for the speaker? No. Zahra.

23 ZARHA KASSAM: Good evening, my name is Zahra
24 Kassam. I live in Los Gatos just a few houses away from the
25 WVMA. I run an educational farm in Pescadero where we teach

1 about regenerative, organic farming and ecological
2 restoration as solutions for the challenges facing our
3 climate.

4 Before living in Los Gatos, we lived in Oakland,
5 where our seven-year-old son was bullied at school. He was
6 targeted because he's Muslim, sadly a very common problem
7 for Muslim students these days. The situation got so bad
8 that his mental health suffered and we ended up moving to
9 Half Moon Bay for a complete change. Living by the beach
10 was lovely, but there was no mosque, and we felt
11 disconnected from our faith community. We began researching
12 options, visiting mosques all around the Bay Area. When we
13 found the WVMA, we found our home, and rearranged our lives
14 to move nearby.
15

16 The WVMA is a very special place. It's the
17 perfect sized congregation where you can have a diverse
18 community and everyone still knows each other. We have no
19 extended family in the Bay Area, but it feels like we now
20 have the village we need to help raise our children.
21 Because of the WVMA, our son is now thriving.

22 Congregational prayer at the five fixed times of
23 day is the most important part of being a mosque, and the
24 primary way we keep connected to our faith. With work and
25 school during the day, the morning and evening prayers are

1 the only ones we can attend. Our Ramadan prayers are also
2 extremely important, as this is the month when we focus
3 most on cultivating faith and community. Without morning,
4 evening, and Ramadan prayers, a mosque is not really a
5 mosque anymore. I implore you to allow us to practice our
6 faith freely and to keep our community intact. I implore
7 you to support a rich and diverse Los Gatos. Thank you.

8 CHAIR BURCH: Thank you. Any questions for the
9 speaker? All right, the next three speakers are Omar
10 Shahid, Hamid Shahid, and Lucia Contreras.

11 OMAR SHAHID: Good evening, members. My name is
12 Omar Shahid and I'm a student in the seventh grade. I am a
13 young Muslim who is proud to call the WVMA my local mosque.

14 You may ask how does a small building of this
15 size bear this much importance to a young child like me?
16 Well, this is where I can work on my relationship with God.
17 Every single time I come to WVMA, I learn something new
18 about my faith. What it means to be Muslim, the blessings
19 that God has given us, and how we should share those gifts
20 and blessings we have been given with those less privileged
21 in society. These learnings help me, and as my father said
22 when I was a much smaller kid, "Small steps. Big progress."

23 I'm sure you guys love hanging out with your
24 friends. For me, there is no better way to start the day
25

1 and end the day than seeing a smile on my friend's face.

2 WVMA is the perfect place for that.

3 Another thing I love about WVMA is oftentimes
4 after the daily morning prayer, before sunrise, and the
5 daily nightly prayer are lectures, talks, activities, and
6 food, which is a lot of fun. I learned a lot of things from
7 these and have a good time.

8 In short, it is the best place to learn to enjoy
9 and connect to God. My father takes me to the nightly
10 prayers every day, and whenever given the opportunity,
11 given that I don't have school, I go to the morning prayers
12 as well.

13 I ask for a simple offer, to extend WVMA's
14 nightly hours, because within these walls is more than just
15 a building, it's our home away from home. Thank you for
16 listening to me.

17 CHAIR BURCH: Thank you. Any questions for the
18 speaker? No. Thank you. Hamid Shahid.

19 HAMID SHAHID: Good evening, my name is Hamid
20 Shahid. (Inaudible) at Netflix here at Los Gatos, where for
21 the last seven years I have led many initiatives that have
22 resulted in significant growth of the business, but here I
23 am in my own capacity as a father.
24
25

1 As the father of two beautiful kids I (inaudible)
2 excel in all walks of life. I've always dreamt that my
3 children would be raised in a community that embraces
4 plurality, harmony, and mutual respect.

5 The WVMA is a vibrant and welcoming community of
6 diverse Muslims. People of various ethnicities, those who
7 grew up here in the Bay Area and those who chose to move to
8 this mecca of technical excellence. It is a community of
9 achievers, well respected in their disciplines.

10 I've also found WVMA to be a community that
11 embodies and champions social responsibility, to be mindful
12 of each other, of the environment, of neighbors, and to
13 give back to society. It is the perfect community for me to
14 raise my children in.

15 For me and my family, the WVMA is more than just
16 a mosque. It is our home away from home. It is a
17 foundational space where my children are learning what it
18 means to be a proud, engaged, American Muslim. Within these
19 walls they aren't just practicing their faith, it is a
20 place where they are building their (inaudible) as an
21 upright, responsible, and caring member of society.

22 As a father, there is no greater peace of mind
23 than seeing our youth grow with understanding that they can
24
25

1 and must strive in all walks of professional and public
2 life by remaining true to their values.

3 For me, the dawn and the night prayers are more
4 than just rituals, they are anchors that steady my day, and
5 I want to pass on this discipline to my children as well,
6 showing them that our days begin and end with a purpose.

7 I urge the Planning community to please support
8 the CUP so the WVMA can continue to provide these services
9 to the community. Thank you so much for your consideration.

10 CHAIR BURCH: Thank you. Any questions for the
11 speaker?
12

13 LUCIA CONTRERAS: Good evening. My name is Lucia
14 Contreras. Los Gatos has been my family's home for ten
15 years now. We are a family of five; my husband, our three
16 kids, and me. I am a teacher at Los Gatos High School where
17 I have been teaching Spanish for the past four years, and
18 before that I spent five years teaching at Fisher Middle
19 School, so being an educator in this town has been such a
20 gift. I get to work with truly amazing students every day,
21 helping them grow not just academically, but as people.
22 This town has been the heart of both my family life and my
23 professional life for a decade.

24 But as much as I love my work, I know it wouldn't
25 be possible without a solid foundation at home. For my

1 family, WVMA plays a huge part in that foundation. WVMA is
2 where my family comes together. We go there to pray, to
3 celebrate Ramadan, to make memories that keep us connected
4 to our faith. It's more than just a place of worship, it is
5 where we pass on the traditions and values that are
6 important to us: kindness, gratitude, and service. These
7 are also the values that I share with my students every
8 day.

9
10 As a Spanish teacher, I work with students to
11 open their minds to new perspectives, to appreciate other
12 cultures, traditions, and celebrations, and to understand
13 the importance of community. Those same values are nurtured
14 at WVMA where my family stays connected to our traditions.
15 That connection makes me a better teacher and a better
16 parent. When my children feel they belong, they carry that
17 confidence into school, friendships, and their community.

18 That's why I'm here asking for your support in
19 modifying WVMA's operating hours. It's a small change that
20 will allow families like mine to continue living our
21 traditions, staying connected, and contributing to the
22 community we love. Thank you so much.

23 CHAIR BURCH: Thank you. Are there any questions
24 for the speaker? All right, the next three speakers, I have
25

1 Zayn Zaafran, and it looks like there are two names on it.
2 Aadil Shaihu, also. And then Leslie Rohn, and Ayah Z.

3 AADIL SHAIHU: Good evening, everyone. My name is
4 Aadil and I'm an Eagle Scout from Troop 399, the largest
5 Muslim Scout troop in California. When people ask me what
6 Scouting gave me, I could talk about the many skills like
7 leadership, responsibility, and service, but more than
8 anything, Scouting gave me a sense of belonging.

9 For years, Troop 399 met every single week,
10 whether it was a meeting, a campout, or a service project.
11 Then, in 2023 our meeting place had burned down. At a time
12 when we were searching for stability, WVMA opened its doors
13 to us. Because of WVMA, our troop still had a place to
14 gather, to grow, and to lead. It became a place for our
15 ceremonies, our mentorships, and experiences that shaped
16 us. WVMA doesn't just serve as a place of worship, it
17 invests in young people and gives them a space to become
18 leaders.

19 Because of Scouting, and because of WVMA, I stand
20 before you today, first and foremost as a Muslim, as an
21 Eagle Scout, and as a leader committed to serving this
22 community, and proud to pass it to my fellow Scout and good
23 friend, Zayn.
24
25

1 ZAYN ZAAFRAN: Like Aadil mentioned, my name is
2 Zayn. I'm currently studying biomedical engineering at UC
3 Davis, and I would like to just share a couple of things
4 that WVMA has done for me.

5 I'm here as somebody whose life was shaped by
6 WVMA. WVMA gave me more than a place to be, it also gave me
7 opportunities to lead. Through the WVMA Youth Council, I
8 learned how to organize, communicate, and serve others,
9 which are skills I carried with me into my high school,
10 Bellarmine College Prep, and skills that I continue to use
11 to this day.
12

13 During my years serving on the Youth Council, I
14 was able to help lead events that raised over \$5,000 for
15 charity and brought together more than 300 people from
16 across the Los Gatos community. That's the impact of a
17 place like WVMA. It helps young people grow into leaders
18 who strengthen the broader community. I'm grateful to stand
19 here as an example of that impact. Thank you.

20 CHAIR BURCH: Thank you. I don't think there are
21 any questions. All right, Leslie Rohn.

22 LESLIE ROHN: Good evening. I'm Leslie Rohn, and
23 I'm a retired CPA. After helping build and grow San Jose
24 State University's philanthropic foundation as it's COO, I
25 served as CFO for a startup where we were able to realize

1 the dream. When choosing where to settle for my next
2 chapter, I chose Los Gatos. Our mosque was key to my
3 decision.

4 As a convert, you often feel that you don't
5 belong anywhere. Our choice to follow this beautiful
6 system, this faith that is more than a religion, separates
7 us from what is comfortable and familiar. In a large
8 mosque, there is so much of everything that it is easy to
9 get lost in your aloneness. With so many people around you,
10 how do you ask for help?

11 At WVMA, the feeling of figuring things out alone
12 is gone, replaced by members who reach out to me. More a
13 family than an institution, each person is behind you to
14 help you when you need it, which is a cornerstone of our
15 faith.

16 Our holy book, the Quran, is written in Arabic.
17 After multiple attempts, Arabic didn't come to me. There
18 are interpretations in English, but they don't capture the
19 meaning or the nuance of the language. Ramadan is known as
20 the month of fasting, but in reality it's the month of the
21 Quran, and we fast.

22 Muslims strive to read the entire Quran during
23 the month of Ramadan, an impossibility if one doesn't read
24 Arabic. You can read a transliteration, as I was doing last
25

1 June after morning prayers. A woman heard me struggling to
2 read, and told me, "I can teach you to read Arabic." I'm in
3 my late sixties, and learning to read another language with
4 a different alphabet has not been easy, but it made this
5 Ramadan a lot different, as now I can slowly read the
6 letters and the words they form and the sentences that I've
7 been listening to being recited for the last two decades of
8 my life. I can't tell you how incredible that feels. Thank
9 you.

10
11 CHAIR BURCH: Thank you. Any questions for the
12 speaker? No.

13 AYAH Z.: Good evening, my name is Ayah, I'm 12
14 years old, and I'm in the seventh grade.

15 For me, the West Valley Muslim Association is
16 more than just a building, it's a place where people come
17 together, support one another, and build a strong sense of
18 community. During special times of the year, I practically
19 beg my parents to bring me here. Seeing familiar faces,
20 sharing time together, and being a part of something much
21 bigger than myself is a very special aspect of my life.

22 I've been in Girl Scouts Troop 61464 since I was
23 five years old, and many of the values I've learned there,
24 including leadership and service, are the same values I've
25 learned to practice in my everyday life. These lessons are

1 helping prepare me to complete my Gold Award project in the
2 future and give back to the Los Gatos community in
3 meaningful ways.

4 One activity that has been extra meaningful to me
5 is making blankets for people in need through WVMA. These
6 blankets are donated to people could use warmth and comfort
7 through hard times. This act of service has taught me that
8 even young people can make a real difference in someone
9 else's life.

10 I have also discovered my love for the arts at
11 WVMA. I started by entering small art contests at the
12 center, and was also published in the Youth Anthem Writing
13 Journal. I'm planning to organize a poetry night at WVMA,
14 so kids like me can share our creativity and ideas.

15 This community has encouraged young people like
16 me to explore their creativity and try new things. My very
17 first performance happened to be here, and I remember
18 feeling nervous, but the people around me encouraged me to
19 show bravery and believe in myself. Since then, I've been
20 in four major productions and helped WVMA manage props and
21 stage directions. These experiences have helped me grow
22 confidence and they're part of the reason I feel
23 comfortable speaking with you today.
24
25

1 What matters most to me is having a place where
2 young people feel like they belong. This center creates a
3 space where we can learn, grow, express ourselves, and feel
4 supported by the people around us. Thank you.

5 CHAIR BURCH: Thank you. Any questions for the
6 speaker? Thank you. Next I have Dr. Hesham Younis, Maya
7 Younis, and Farman Syed.

8 DR. HESHAM YOUNIS: Good evening, Commissioners.
9 My name is Hesham Younis; I've lived in Los Gatos for ten
10 years with my wife and our three children. My youngest
11 daughter is a senior at Los Gatos High, and our older two
12 sons graduated recently. I'm a healthcare entrepreneur with
13 a PhD in engineering from MIT, and I serve as a chief
14 business officer at NR Health, where we help people
15 struggling with obesity to improve their health and improve
16 their lives. I also volunteer with the MIT Club of Northern
17 California, where for the past nine years I've organized
18 events and conferences that help raise scholarship funds
19 for six under-resourced Bay Area students each year to
20 attend MIT on full scholarship.
21

22 But what I want to share here tonight is more
23 personal. It's about how WVMA has been essential to our
24 family's sense of belonging and growth here in Los Gatos.
25

1 We moved here in 2017, looking not just for good
2 schools, but for a community, until a year later, when WVMA
3 opened and became that community. It's where we found a
4 space that helped us stay grounded in values and our faith,
5 and helped our children grow in theirs. For our teens, it's
6 a place of connection; they've built real friendships,
7 stayed close to their faith, and had strong role models
8 during the critical high school years.

9
10 For me, it's where I often go for evening prayer
11 after long workdays, a place to sit and reflect and
12 reconnect, and more than that, it's become a place of
13 mentorship and leadership. As someone who works in tech and
14 healthcare innovation, I'm often approached by young
15 people, students, aspiring engineers, entrepreneurs, many
16 from our own Los Gatos schools, who want advice on careers,
17 startups, or college. We meet in the mosque sometimes after
18 prayer or at youth events. It's a natural place for
19 mentorship, and it's helped cultivate a new generation of
20 Muslim American leaders who are confident, civic minded,
21 and ready to give back.

22 That's why I'm asking for your support tonight.
23 We're requesting a simple but meaningful adjustment to the
24 operating hours to allow early morning prayer before
25 sunrise, and to extend the evening hours just 30 nights a

1 year during Ramadan. Thank you for your time and for
2 supporting a Los Gatos that welcomes and grows with all its
3 residents. Thank you.

4 CHAIR BURCH: Thank you. Any questions for the
5 speaker? No. Thank you. Maya.

6 MAYA YOUNIS: Good evening, my name is Maya and I
7 am a senior at Los Gatos High School. My family has been
8 living in Los Gatos since 2016. We started to attend the
9 West Valley Muslim Association as soon as we could.

10
11 When we found out about the Islamic center
12 beginning to develop in our town, I was thrilled that I had
13 the chance to visit the WVMA far more frequently than I was
14 ever able to at other locations because of its vicinity to
15 my house.

16 The WVMA itself has helped me build my strength
17 in my religion in unimaginable ways. After meeting a Muslim
18 friend at school during my freshman year, I helped develop
19 a Muslim Student Association at school with her and several
20 others. Having met someone who helped me visit the WVMA
21 more frequently, I realized how much I really appreciated
22 every moment I spent there. I've built relationships and
23 expressed myself freely in ways I know I wouldn't be able
24 to achieve had this WVMA, so close to my house, not been
25 established. It's the calmest environment I know, and for

1 me, it provides the truest way to ground myself. As a
2 student in high school, the stress of school is
3 overwhelming and oftentimes highly intense. A lot of the
4 stress I feel daily fades when I am at the WVMA.

5 For me and many, many others, increasing the
6 operating hours at our safe place is very important. The
7 opportunity to gather there, whether it be for late night
8 prayers during the month of Ramadan, or for other events,
9 is impactful. My dad goes nearly every day to the WVMA, and
10 it's comforting to see him go to practice our religion with
11 other Muslims, meet people, and interact. I know if we
12 didn't have this change we'd be spending a lot more time at
13 home where we aren't social and aren't being an active part
14 of a community.

16 When I'm alone, or even when I'm overly stressed
17 with schoolwork, I can always find a sense of comfort with
18 an easy and convenient visit to the WVMA. Thank you.

19 CHAIR BURCH: Thank you. Any questions for the
20 speaker? Thank you.

21 FARMAN SYED: Good evening, honorable members of
22 the Commission. My name is Farman Syed. I'm a technology
23 executive of over 25 years in Silicon Valley. I hold
24 degrees from both UC San Diego and Duke University, and I'm
25 proud to call this area my home. My wife is a personal

1 trainer who runs a small, local business, and both of my
2 children were born just down the road at Good Samaritan
3 Hospital.

4 I came to the South Bay with my family when I was
5 just six years old, and we have lived here for over four
6 decades. When I was growing up, the Muslim community had
7 few natural gathering places. As a result, I grew up
8 feeling that I was different, and sadly, was embarrassed of
9 my Muslim faith amongst friends who were almost all non-
10 Muslim.

11
12 Now, though, my heart beams with how this area
13 has grown so inclusive and beautiful. In the forty years
14 that I have been part of this community, many local mosques
15 have opened, but none is dearer to me than WVMA. WVMA is
16 not just where I come to pray, it's where I come to meet
17 friends for coffee on weekends, where my wife has taught
18 fitness classes to women who have no gyms that serve their
19 need for privacy, and where my children have attended
20 Sunday School, not just to learn about their faith, but to
21 learn to normalize it.

22 WVMA has always sought to be a place for kindness
23 and inclusivity, and that includes with our neighbors. In
24 fact, my own non-Muslim neighbor has joined us to attend
25 multiple events at WVMA, just because she sees the joy on

1 the faces of the children here. My own father who helped
2 build many community centers across the bay still asks me
3 to bring him to WVMA from Palo Alto during Ramadan, just
4 because he loves the intimate nature of praying there.

5 Now, I'm not asking this community to help me
6 drive my dad from Palo Alto, I'll continue to take care of
7 that myself, but I am asking to provide the accommodation
8 for WVMA to allow early morning prayer before sunrise, for
9 one hour extra in the evening, just during the month of
10 Ramadan. These seemingly simple adjustments would make a
11 world of difference for those Muslims in this area who,
12 like me growing up, are simply looking to find their
13 community. I thank you deeply for your consideration.

14 CHAIR BURCH: Thank you. Are there any questions
15 for the speaker? All right, our next three speakers are
16 Rabee Ikkawi, Dirci Souza, and Musa Abbassy.

17 RABEE IKKAWI: Good evening, my name is Rabee
18 Ikkawi; I'm an engineering scientist with a PhD in
19 electrical engineering from the University of California. I
20 dedicated over ten years of my life designing next
21 generation memory devices, then took a sabbatical to help
22 my wife grow her business, Kids Atelier, which is actually
23 headquartered right here in Los Gatos, 210 North Santa
24 Cruz. Today it's a national business with 16 locations and
25

1 over 200 people, 12 of which are actually working out of
2 downtown Los Gatos.

3 More importantly, I'm actually a father of two
4 girls, Yasmina and Tuleen. Both did all their education
5 here in the Los Gatos School District, and both captained
6 the varsity tennis team at Los Gatos High School, actually
7 taking them to a 13-win streak last year, finals in CCS.
8 Both absolutely love WVMA.

9
10 Our passion to this beautiful town, not only
11 because of how whimsical and beautiful it is, and he
12 reflected that, and actually the fashion collection my wife
13 designs, every single collection is named after a street in
14 Los Gatos. Today we sell in over 75 countries, and the
15 story of the brand is a brand from Los Gatos, so the day
16 Vogue magazine will highlight a brand from Los Gatos is
17 coming soon, hopefully.

18 Our love to the Town, although we loved the Town
19 prior to WVMA, but as a minority, once you know that you
20 have a place to belong to, it was really boosted, so it
21 actually made it complete. We no longer have to drive to
22 Saratoga or to MCA, which are the other places where there
23 are mosques, so it just feels so beautiful to belong in the
24 community where we dedicated our professional and family
25 lives. We want to continue to grow in Los Gatos. We want to

1 continue to call Los Gatos home, and we just feel that it's
2 just an amazing feeling to be embraced by a Town that we've
3 given so much to, and we will continue to give.

4 The ask is very clear, it's very humble, but it
5 means a lot to every single one in this room to be
6 embraced, more importantly, by our neighbors, and then our
7 extended neighbors, and by the majority of the Town. We add
8 so much value and will continue to add value to this town,
9 so we would love to be just reciprocated with the love and
10 passion we show to this town. Thank you so much.

11
12 CHAIR BURCH: Thank you. Are there any questions
13 for the speaker? All right, thank you.

14 DIRCI SOUZA: Good evening, Commissioners. My
15 name is Dirci Souza. I'm a mom, wife, and business owner
16 living and working in Los Gatos since 2008. I've been
17 serving this community with dedication and gratitude. All
18 three of my children were born here and attended the
19 schools in Los Gatos. Their friendships, education, and
20 social lives are deeply rooted in this town.

21 I'm also a convert to Islam. I've been to
22 different community centers in Los Gatos and want to point
23 out why, in today's time, it is so important for any family
24 to have WVMA in Los Gatos.

1 Number one, because with WVMA children can
2 connect with other children, share the faith of their
3 parents, and feel at home in a community gathering space.

4 Number two, with WVMA there is a local religious
5 leader to guide, answer questions, and offer support.

6 Number three, with WVMA there is a place for
7 charitable donations, social service, and community
8 outreach.

9 Number four, with WVMA Friday prayers, a central
10 part of our whole week, have a home.

11 Number five, with WVMA we find the joy and
12 communal beauty of celebrating our holidays, like Eid. Just
13 as other houses of worship offer meaning and belonging for
14 their families, a mosque does the same for our Muslim
15 families.

16 Number six, with WVMA we can fully practice
17 Islam.

18 Finally, WVMA is more than a place of worship, it
19 is a hub for education, communication, problem solving, and
20 community building. It empowers our children to feel
21 connected to, confident in, and responsible for their
22 community, especially when that community is also their
23 birthplace. With WVMA this town feels complete. Thank you
24 very much.
25

1 CHAIR BURCH: Thank you. Any questions for the
2 speaker? Thank you.

3 MUSA ABBASSY: Good evening, Planning Commission.
4 My name is Musa Abbassy, and I'm a student at Los Gatos
5 High School. I live just down the street from WVMA, so I'm
6 not only a resident of Los Gatos, but of this neighborhood
7 as well.

8 When I first moved here as a freshman, adjusting
9 to a new school and environment was challenging. Around
10 that time something happened in my personal life that made
11 me reflect deeply on my faith. I realized that being born
12 into a religion was not enough, I needed to find it for
13 myself.
14

15 During Ramadan of my freshman year, I began
16 spending a lot of time at WVMA. I prayed, read our holy
17 book, the Quran, and reflected for hours each day. Some
18 days I spent more time at the mosque than at my own home.
19 Walking there, being a part of the community that welcomed
20 me without judgement, and witnessing the care and support
21 around me transformed WVMA into a sanctuary. It became the
22 one place where I could truly feel at peace and grounded,
23 no matter what challenges I faced outside its walls.
24

25 Over time, I also worked with my sister to help
establish an MSA, Muslim Student Association, at our

1 school, creating a space where Muslim students could
2 connect with their faith and support one another. Since my
3 sister has graduated, I have become the president of the
4 MSA. This role has allowed me to bring what I learned at
5 WVMA into the school community, giving others a place to
6 grow in their faith.

7 WVMA has also allowed me to support friends in
8 their own journeys. Some of my Muslim friends at school
9 were trying to strengthen their understanding of their
10 faith, and I was able to help them learn things like how to
11 pray and begin reading the Quran. When I brought them to
12 the mosque, the community welcomed them and helped guide
13 them as well. Seeing them find support and a sense of
14 belonging strengthened my own sense of purpose and
15 connection.

16 WVMA has not only been a place for me to grow in
17 my faith, but also a space where I've learned leadership,
18 empathy, and responsibility. It shaped me as a student, as
19 a member of my school community, and as someone who can
20 give back. Being able to practice my faith, and help others
21 do the same, has been life changing.

22 Approving the Conditional Use Permit adjustments
23 will allow WVMA to continue serving as a safe and
24 accessible space for reflection, prayer, and community
25

1 support. Extended hours for early morning and evening use
2 are especially important for students like me. Thank you
3 for your time and consideration.

4 CHAIR BURCH: Thank you. Are there any questions
5 for the speaker? All right, thank you. Our next three, Dale
6 Gustafson, Mariam Farooq, and Nada Attar.

7 PASTOR DALE GUSTAFSON: Good evening, my name is
8 Dale Gustafson and I'm the at Calvary Church in Los Gatos,
9 as well as the Chaplain for the Los Gatos Police Department.

10 I'm encouraging you to support the request of the
11 WVMA to expand their Conditional Use Permit hours to
12 accurately support their historical faith practice, one
13 that goes significantly deeper than the manmade schedules
14 of our society, but they are actually connected to the
15 rhythms of the natural world, something that we cannot
16 control or regulate, no matter how often we have tried.

17 A gathering of a faith community is not just a
18 scheduled event; it is a central expression of faith.
19 Practices like prayer, worship, and seasonal observances
20 don't always fit neatly within limited time windows.
21 Expanding these hours would allow them to practice their
22 faith and belief to the fullest.

23 Places of faith quietly strengthen our town each
24 and every day. They do so by caring for people in crisis,
25

1 supporting families, mobilizing volunteers, and building
2 community. They don't just serve their members, they reduce
3 strain on public systems and help create a healthier, more
4 connected town for everyone.

5 This request is not about growth for its own
6 sake; it's about freedom for people to practice faith in a
7 way that aligns with the tenets of their beliefs. A faith
8 community needs the ability to fully express its beliefs,
9 not just privately, but together and in rhythm with its
10 practices, and when that happens, people are more grounded,
11 they're more connected, and they're better able to
12 contribute positively to the wider community of Los Gatos.

13
14 CHAIR BURCH: Thank you. Question with
15 Commissioner Burnett.

16 COMMISSIONER BURNETT: Yes, thank you. Could you
17 tell me your hours for your church, Calvary? When is the
18 earliest morning hour that you have congregants come, and
19 what is the latest hour?

20 DALE GUSTAFSON: Yes, we have time within our CUP
21 with exceptions that we can have people within our building
22 past 10:00 o'clock. It depends on what we're doing. We
23 submit it to the Town, we have up to 30 different times
24 were we can do that, but most of our hours are within the
25 timeframe of the Town hours, but we do have extensions.

1 COMMISSIONER BURNETT: And what would be your
2 earliest morning hour?

3 DALE GUSTAFSON: The earliest morning hour that
4 we would have people come and gather under one of the
5 exceptions?

6 COMMISSIONER BURNETT: Yes.

7 DALE GUSTAFSON: Probably 7:00am.

8 COMMISSIONER BURNETT: Thank you.

9 CHAIR BURCH: Commissioner Stump.

10 COMMISSIONER STUMP: Pastor, I know over the
11 years that Calvary has had issues that neighbors have
12 raised, and Calvary has addressed them. Could you just
13 address what some of those issues were and how Calvary went
14 about addressing them with the neighbors?
15

16 DALE GUSTAFSON: There have been a lot.

17 COMMISSIONER STUMP: Yes.

18 DALE GUSTAFSON: I would say that how we address
19 them with the neighbors, we strive to be in good
20 communication with them always. I think that whenever there
21 is an exception to what we need to do, we try to
22 communicate it quickly. Some of our restrictions have been
23 where we warm up our buses, where we load our buses, so we
24 try to move them to the front of our building. Even though
25 it's been a risk at times for us, we do those things. We

1 are incredibly limited in how we use a major section of our
2 church though, it's a parking lot, and we can only use it
3 under extreme care in situations, and we've done so because
4 that's what the neighbors solidified to get our CUP in the
5 early 2000s, so we do that to maintain, and even though we
6 often are engaging with neighbors over the walls and
7 sitting on their roofs when we host Town events like the
8 safety commissions and things, we still just try to
9 communicate best we can. So, that's the best way we do, and
10 we are on a first name basis with all our neighbors, so we
11 do our best. We just do our best.

12
13 COMMISSIONER STUMP: Appreciate it.

14 CHAIR BURCH: Mariam.

15 MARIAM FAROOQ: Good evening, my name is Mariam
16 Farooq. I'm an occupational therapist working with students
17 with special needs in the Los Gatos-Saratoga Union High
18 School District. I'm also a resident of Los Gatos. My
19 husband and I moved here nearly three years ago with our
20 daughter, and we now have another baby on the way.

21 I grew up in a small town on Long Island, New
22 York very similar to Los Gatos, and just minutes from our
23 local mosque. It wasn't just a place of worship, it was
24 where families gathered, where children grew up together,
25 and where a real sense of belonging existed. As I became a

1 mother, I hoped my children would grow up with that same
2 sense of community.

3 Before moving to Los Gatos, we lived in South San
4 Jose and Palo Alto. They were wonderful places, but we
5 never quite found that feeling, that kind of place where
6 community naturally forms and families connect.

7 When my husband first showed me the listing for
8 the home we live in now, one of the first questions I asked
9 was how far the mosque is, because after living in other
10 parts of the Bay, I knew that was a piece that had been
11 missing. When we found WVMA, everything changed.

12 WVMA has become a second home for my daughter
13 where she has made friends and is experiencing the same
14 sense of belonging as I had as a child. It's also where
15 I've met people who started as neighbors and friends, but
16 have truly become like family.

17 As an occupational therapist, I spend my days
18 helping students feel supported and included in their
19 community. During Ramadan especially, spaces like WVMA show
20 how powerful that sense of belonging can be for families.
21 WVMA is one of the reasons Los Gatos truly feels like home
22 for us.
23
24
25

1 I respectfully ask the Commission to support the
2 CUP so this community space can continue to serve families
3 like mine for years to come. Thank you for your time.

4 CHAIR BURCH: Are there any questions for the
5 speaker? No. Thank you. Nada.

6 NADA ATTAR: Good evening, my name is Nada Attar.
7 I'm a Los Gatan, a mother, and tenured professor at San
8 Jose State University. I live six minutes from the WVMA.
9 Truthfully, I bought a house in Los Gatos because of WVMA.

10 WVMA is very special. It has a uniquely warm and
11 inviting ambiance where anyone new is immediately embraced
12 by the community. It's also a place of quiet solace for me
13 personally, especially during the morning prayer, from an
14 otherwise hectic and busy lifestyle. It's really important
15 to me that the WVMA continues to operate, especially at the
16 time of the morning prayer.

17 I'm a mother to twin six-year-old girls. They
18 will start first grade at the local public elementary
19 school, and are already regulars at local institutions for
20 fencing, gymnastics, reading, and so forth. But they are
21 also students at the WVMA, learning about their identity,
22 religion, and how to grow to be upright and contributing
23 members to the Los Gatan community. Their closest friends
24 are also members of WVMA, and they often come to it during
25

1 the evening. It's therefore important to my children that
2 the WVMA operates during the evening prayers.

3 Professionally, I'm proud to be an educator in
4 service of the community at the closest State University to
5 Los Gatos. Many past and current students from Los Gatos
6 High School study and do research with me. I see this as a
7 way to give back to the Los Gatos community that has
8 welcomed me as a resident.

9
10 SJSU has also benefited from WVMA. They have
11 invited the Imams to the campus many times, and I often see
12 my students here are WVMA. WVMA is not just a religious
13 space, but a critical artery for cultural and educational
14 activities for Los Gatos. WVMA needs your support. Thank
15 you.

16 CHAIR BURCH: Thank you. Are there any questions
17 for the speaker? Thank you. The next three are Fouzia
18 Babar, Ahmed Moneim, and Salma Farahat, and following these
19 three, we will be taking another break.

20 FOUZIA BABAR: Good evening. My name is Fouzia
21 Babar. I lived in Los Gatos for over six years, and my two
22 kids attended Saint Mary. They spent their childhood at
23 Lolli & Pops and WVMA.

24 During that time, I also served as vice president
25 at Avive Solutions. Avive is a medtech company building the

1 first and only 911-integrated AED designed to get
2 lifesaving care to people during a sudden cardiac arrest.
3 Before that, I spent eight years working in hospitals, so
4 I've spent a large portion of my career thinking about real
5 world problems and what would or wouldn't be detrimental to
6 public health and safety. I've seen firsthand what happens
7 in critical moments, and public health and safety matters
8 often depend on what a community already has put into
9 place. After we received our FDA approval in 2022, the very
10 first organization to purchase an AED wasn't a school or a
11 corporate campus, it was purchased by the leadership at
12 WVMA right here in Los Gatos, and it is affixed in our
13 prayer hall.
14

15 Every time I walk into the prayer hall, I'm
16 reminded how WVMA showed us what it means to lead by
17 investing in something that could save a life, not just for
18 the people inside of the building, but for anyone in the
19 surrounding community who might need, because when an
20 emergency happens, it doesn't ask where you are, it happens
21 wherever you are, ready or not. In those moments, every
22 minute matters, so the real question becomes will help be
23 arriving in time, or will somebody nearby already be ready
24 to act.
25

1 With a connected AED, WVMA leadership has made
2 that choice to be ready, not just for themselves, but for
3 the community and its vicinity. This is what safety looks
4 like, and this is what leadership looks like. When the
5 unexpected happens, as it always does, wouldn't you feel
6 comforted knowing that help is right there in your own
7 community? Thank you.

8 CHAIR BURCH: Are there any questions for the
9 speaker? All right, thank you. Ahmed.

10 AHMED MONEIM: Good evening, honorable members of
11 the Commission. My name is Ahmed Moneim. I speak to you
12 today not just as a resident, but as someone deeply rooted
13 in this community. I am very proud to own two homes here,
14 and two clinics in Los Gatos, and for the record, I have
15 only one WVMA.

16 For more than 20 years, our family has proudly
17 called Los Gatos home. Our three children were born and
18 raised here; our son Adam, our twin daughters Alexandria
19 and California—yes, her name is truly California—who
20 attended Daves Avenue Elementary School and Van Meter. I
21 have the privilege to monitor the (inaudible) of health
22 care profession in our two clinics as Associate Professor
23 at UCSF. When my wife moved here from Brazil, we chose Los
24 Gatos to plant our roots, and we found home. We have always
25

1 felt a strong connection to this town, which as many of you
2 know, it was the base for the 1994 Brazilian winning team.
3 We wish our USA team all the best in this coming World Cup.

4 Our love for this town has led us to open a
5 small, free dental history museum in downtown Los Gatos
6 from 2010 to 2015. It is our way to giving through
7 education and community engagement.

8 A center like WVMA strengthens the fabric of Los
9 Gatos by bringing families together and encouraging the
10 spirit of community. WVMA is a vital part of the family
11 life. After a long day at work, when my children ask me to
12 go out, it's the safest place and closest place to our
13 home. Attending the final evening prayer at this mosque has
14 become a peaceful, grounding tradition for us. Because our
15 faith tradition and family schedule often extend to the
16 evening, I respectfully ask the Commission to approve the
17 extension of the use of their permit hours, and I sincerely
18 appreciate your time and thoughtful consideration for this
19 request. Thank you very much.

21 CHAIR BURCH: Thank you. Are there any questions
22 for the speaker? Thank you. Salma.

23 SALMA FARAHAT: Good evening, Commissioners. My
24 name is Salma, and I'm currently a college student at UC
25 Davis. In the past couple of years WVMA has played a very

1 critical role in shaping my leadership and sense of
2 responsibility.

3 During my high school years, I completed my Eagle
4 Scout project for the highest rank of Scouting by building
5 a storage shed for the mosque. What made that experience
6 especially meaningful is that WVMA was the only mosque that
7 gave me the opportunity to take on that project and lead it
8 with over 20 other community members from start to finish.
9 That experience was not just about construction, it was
10 learning how to lead, how to organize, and how to give back
11 to a community that believed in me and trusted me with that
12 responsibility as a high schooler.
13

14 During that project, I also had the opportunity
15 to grow in another very important way. Some of our
16 neighbors shared concerns about noise and disruption, and
17 I'm genuinely grateful for that feedback. I immediately
18 took the feedback into account, shifting our working hours
19 and using quieter tools. It taught me how to listen, how to
20 adapt, and how to be more mindful of the people around me
21 as a leader. I learned that leadership isn't just about
22 completing a project, it's about being responsive, being
23 respectful, and minimizing negative impact on others.
24

25 This is what WVMA represents to me: a place that
actively builds leaders. It provides young people like me

1 with the structure, the mentorship, and the opportunities
2 to serve, helping us grow into individuals who are
3 thoughtful, who are accountable, and committed to
4 contributing beyond just ourselves. Today, as I continue my
5 education, I carry these skills into my work on campus, in
6 the organizations I'm a part of, the leadership roles that
7 I take on, and the way that I engage with others.

8 I respectfully ask you to support the proposed
9 modifications to WVMA's operating hours so that this space
10 can continue providing opportunities like the one that I
11 was given in high school, opportunities that develop young
12 leaders who contribute meaningfully and responsibly to the
13 Los Gatos community. Thank you.

14 CHAIR BURCH: Thank you. Are there any questions
15 for the speaker? We are going to take a break.

16 DIRECTOR PAULSON: Through the Chair, those of
17 you who are patiently waiting on Zoom, we still have a
18 number of cards here in the room, and then we will provide
19 an update later, but we do see your hands raised; we're
20 just trying to get through the cards in the room.

21 CHAIR BURCH: Thank you, Mr. Paulson. We'll be
22 back in about ten minutes.

23 (INTERMISSION)

1 CHAIR BURCH: All right, everybody. We still have
2 quite a few to go, so I'm going to keep going through them
3 in threes. It's been really helping that you guys have been
4 lining up and queueing up like that, so I think we'll keep
5 doing that and it will help us to keep moving through
6 quickly. My first three are Naiema Din, Chivon Blanton, and
7 Mohammed Harrim.

8 NAIEMA DIN: Good evening, members of the
9 Planning Commission. My name is Naiema Din and I am the co-
10 owner of Kenz Coffee Roasters, and we run Kenz Coffee Bar
11 on Leigh Avenue in Los Gatos. Our outdoor coffee bar serves
12 as a local small business that the neighborhood cherishes
13 as a place to get their daily coffee drink, a pitstop on
14 their morning dog walks, or a meetup to catch up with
15 friends. On the days when our coffee shop is closed for
16 maintenance or staff breaks, we will get frantic messages
17 from the locals asking when we will reopen, because they
18 need their Kenz! We feel gratified to serve local residents
19 who have been phenomenal in their support through continued
20 patronage. Kenz Coffee Bar has become a fabric of the Los
21 Gatos neighborhood and one of the main reasons we chose Los
22 Gatos to open our coffee shop is because of its close
23 proximity to WVMA.
24
25

1 Recently, our coffee shop was the target of anti-
2 Islam and anti-Arab hate, given our ownership of the
3 business. It began with coordinated negative online
4 reviews, and eventual vandalization of our premises,
5 labeling us as, "terrorists." I was shaken when I woke up
6 to this news, and the first people I reached out to was our
7 community at WVMA. After I checked out the shop to make
8 sure everything was okay, I drove straight to WVMA and
9 prayed, and then checked in with my friends there. When
10 acts like this happen, it helps to have our community there
11 to support us, and I have never felt more grateful to have
12 the WVMA there as our support.
13

14 And that is the beauty of the WVMA: it brings
15 people to the beautiful town of Los Gatos and becomes an
16 extension of the community that we foster in Los Gatos. We
17 are lucky to be able to provide that for the community
18 here, and we hope that the Town continues to celebrate this
19 as well. Thank you.

20 CHAIR BURCH: Are there any questions for the
21 speaker? Thank you.

22 CHIVON BLANTON: Good evening, my name is Chivon
23 Blanton. I'm a data scientist at Intel. This is a love
24 story. When my family moved to California almost 14 years
25 ago, we came without attachments, so we explored

1 communities from San Francisco to Santa Cruz. Los Gatos
2 called us home.

3 In the following years, my four children have
4 grown up in the Los Gatos schools. My two oldest recently
5 graduated from Los Gatos High School, and my two youngest
6 are currently at Fisher. We spent ten consecutive years at
7 Daves Avenue. While there, I served on the Home and School
8 Club board, and my husband served on the Financial Advisory
9 Committee.

10
11 Being part of the Los Gatos community has been an
12 incredible blessing, but not without challenge. At times my
13 children have struggled to fully embrace their
14 multicultural identity, being teased for having Arabic
15 names or for fasting during Ramadan.

16 So, when WVMA was established in Los Gatos, I was
17 so thankful for the fundamental message it sent to my
18 children. We belong here. Over the years we have attended
19 so many activities at the mosque. One of our favorites was
20 improv classes that we attended as a family.

21 Ramadan, though, is the most important time of
22 year for our family. At home, we slow down as much as
23 possible, we spend time reflecting on our faith and our
24 values, and we prepare special foods to break our fast.
25 During the day we endeavor to patiently fast while working,

1 going to school, and honoring our commitments. In the
2 evening, attending prayers at WVMA is absolutely a
3 highlight. We pray for our families, we pray for our
4 community, we pray for our government, we pray for peace.

5 I didn't grow up Muslim and first fell in love
6 with Islam during Ramadan, so to fully share this
7 experience with the loves of my life, my husband and my
8 children, and the community that we love, Los Gatos, is
9 something I cherish.

10 Please approve the accommodation for extended
11 prayer hours and reinforce the message to our children that
12 we fully belong here. Please, let us pray. Thank you.

13 CHAIR BURCH: Thank you. Any questions for the
14 speaker? Thank you.

15 MOHAMMED HARRIM: Good evening, Commissioners. My
16 name is Mohammed. I am a husband, a father of four, and an
17 active member at WVMA. I also work in tech here in Silicon
18 Valley, and like many others in this area, my life is fast
19 paced, demanding, and often overwhelming. Before moving
20 here, I spent years on the East Coast and globally, but
21 Silicon Valley is different. It's uniquely intense. It's a
22 place where people are constantly chasing deadlines,
23 promotions, and wealth, and while that drive builds
24 innovation, it also creates stress, burnout, and at times,
25

1 a very toxic pace of life. I see it every day in my
2 coworkers: exhaustion, pressure, and a constant sense of
3 running without (inaudible).

4 And yet, they often ask me something surprising:
5 "Mohammed, how do you always have this energy, this calm,
6 this positivity?" The answer is simple: it's WVMA. It's the
7 rhythm it gives my life through prayer. The night prayer is
8 where I go to unload, to empty everything I've been
9 carrying, the stress and the backlog of the day. It's where
10 I reset so I can go home with peace. And the morning prayer
11 is where I recharge before all the chats, emails, and
12 meetings. I start grounded, focused, and intentional. It
13 really sets the tone for everything that follows.

14 This balance does not just help me; it also
15 shapes my family. My wife and my children love WVMA.
16 Through its programs and community, they are growing with a
17 sense of belonging, purpose, and values that are hard to
18 find elsewhere. Because of WVMA, we don't just live here,
19 we feel alive here. We feel connected, we feel that our
20 lives have a meaning beyond just work and routine. That's
21 what these prayers provide. Not noise, not destruction, but
22 grounding, healing, and purpose.

23 I respectfully ask for your support so families
24 like mine can continue to live balanced and meaningful
25

1 lives. Thank you. And I respectfully ask at this point to
2 give the opportunity to our neighbors, so hopefully we can
3 potentially change the order of cards.

4 CHAIR BURCH: Yes, they're stacked in the order
5 they came, but I think that that's coming, so yes, thank
6 you. Are there any questions for the speaker? All right,
7 our next three speaker cards are Naheed Vora, Razi
8 Mohiuddin, and Jim Ratcliff.

9
10 NAHEED VORA: Good evening, Commissioners. My
11 name is Naheed Vora. Professionally, I'm a product leader
12 at Google, where I've been serving for the past ten years,
13 and I focus on protecting users around the globe. I bring
14 the same level of professionalism as a board of trustee
15 member at the WVMA, where I also have served as a
16 treasurer, and a Chair of Endowment for the past five
17 years. But today I'm speaking on a personal basis.

18 What I want to do is our faith in particular
19 teaches us to be respectful to our neighbors. It is our
20 fundamental duty; it is a core principle. It's not a
21 cliché, it's a core principle, and I think one of the
22 things that's repeated again and again 30 days in Ramadan
23 this past month is we need to take care of our neighbors.

24 We recognize the challenge between taking care of
25 the congregation's religious obligations, and also

1 respecting the rights of our neighbors. It's a hard
2 problem, and we welcome the opportunity to try to problem-
3 solve this in a respectful manner. To that effect, this
4 Ramadan and the past couple of Ramadans we have implemented
5 major changes, and I'm going to talk about three big ones.

6 The first one is prayer, the second one is
7 processes, and the third one is people.

8 The first one, the prayer. Our religious scholar,
9 he talked about the need of praying the full Quran each
10 night every day, one chapter of the Quran every night. We
11 got a religious exemption to make it half. That's a big
12 deal. It's religiously a very big deal to everybody here
13 who goes and wants to pray and listen to that whole Quran.
14

15 The second is the process. We had the Rawdah on
16 the Los Gatos Boulevard so that the people who are driving
17 to can slow down. We had guards who are taking care of the
18 traffic management. We also had both the drivers during the
19 exit, and as an engineer originally, that's multiprocessing
20 right there. Exit and entry at the same time at night.

21 And the people. We reached out to Los Gatos
22 Police to make sure that we are doing the right thing, and
23 we also reached out to neighbors again and again to make
24 sure that we are listening, and we got really positive
25 feedback, and then repeatedly we told the members of our

1 community, "Hey, make sure you are carpooling. Make sure
2 you are not driving fast, and you leave quietly after the
3 prayers."

4 At the end of the day, what I want to conclude on
5 is that we request the Commission to approve the CUP,
6 please. Thank you.

7 CHAIR BURCH: Thank you. Don't leave yet. Are
8 there any questions for the speaker? I have one. So, the
9 first thing that you talked about was prayer, and I had a
10 note from earlier that this standard is 20 prayers in a
11 night.
12

13 NAHEED VORA: That's right.

14 CHAIR BURCH: So, is what you're saying is you
15 guys now have an exemption to do ten?

16 NAHEED VORA: No.

17 CHAIR BURCH: Or how does that work? How does
18 that relate to us, to like timing or whatever?

19 NAHEED VORA: It's a good question. Either you
20 can pray 20, but in each prayer how much Quran you read is
21 you can decide. And ideally speaking, what happens is that
22 you can reduce the amount of content that is being read.
23 Ideally speaking, you will try to finish that chapter
24 within those 20 prayers. If you cannot, then you are
25 actually not finishing. Actually, there is a celebration on

1 the 27th night; that's why there are a lot of people who go
2 to the (inaudible) and I think that the traffic problem
3 exists. You know why? Because we finish the Quran, and at
4 that finish, that's the culmination of reading the whole
5 chapter, and everybody comes and celebrates. That's a big
6 deal, and that kind of shows the emphasis that people do
7 care a lot about completing that whole 30 chapters.

8 CHAIR BURCH: All right, thank you.

9 NAHEED VORA: You're welcome.

10 CHAIR BURCH: I think it might be Razi.

11 RAZI MOHIUDDIN: Chair, I think that my card may
12 have been recycled.

13 CHAIR BURCH: Oh, you got it twice, didn't you?

14 RAZI MOHIUDDIN: Yes.

15 CHAIR BURCH: Sorry, I didn't even pick up on
16 that. Jim Ratcliff, and then the next is Michele S.

17 JIM RATCLIFF: Hi, I'm Jim Ratcliff. I am the
18 next-door neighbor to the facility. Thank you, Planning
19 Commission, for reading all the documents and viewing the
20 videos, and conducting site visits. I know that was pretty
21 labor intensive.

22 I was born and raised in Los Gatos, and I raised
23 two sons here. Both my wife and I went to Fisher and Los
24 Gatos High. My two sons went to Van Meter and Fisher and
25

1 Los Gatos High. We've lived in our home for 26 years, and
2 it's been great. We love the neighborhood.

3 But in the last two to three years, it's been
4 difficult. We've been asking the Town to help deal with the
5 increased activity at the facility, the unsafe neighborhood
6 streets, the constant code violations, without any help.
7 I've had to call Los Gatos PD and document multiple
8 violations to get it on record. I've had to download videos
9 of curfew violations submitted to the Town. This is very
10 labor intensive. But nothing has changed in the behavior of
11 the facility. No repercussions from the Town. The Town
12 seems to be ignoring this.
13

14 The Town has a duty to protect the public safety
15 for the residents. Why am I doing the Town's job? I'm not a
16 police officer. I'm not someone that is conducting
17 violations. I am a podiatrist. I have worked in this
18 community for three decades serving the community. I love
19 my job. I love helping people. Why isn't the Town helping
20 me?
21

22 This didn't have to happen. My wife and I have
23 met with the founder and the leadership of the facility
24 three times over the past two years. We come up with some
25 suggestions, some solutions, some compromises. We asked for
some compromises. He denied every one of them. Is that what

1 a good neighbor does? Aren't we supposed to work things
2 out?

3 Now the facility wants to expand their hours.
4 That's going to be a very big hardship. We have older
5 patients, older residents with chronic health conditions.
6 That's going to affect their sleep. It's documented that
7 people need eight hours of sleep a day to maintain their
8 health. We have people with diabetes, chronic pain. Please
9 do the right thing and deny this modification.
10

11 I know the members of the facility love the
12 neighborhood. Let me love the neighborhood. Thank you.

13 CHAIR BURCH: Don't leave yet. I think there are
14 going to be questions. Commissioner Sordi.

15 COMMISSIONER SORDI: You mentioned code
16 violations. Can you provide a little bit more background
17 about what code? You mentioned curfew, I think.

18 JIM RATCLIFF: Curfew during Ramadan. Curfew
19 during... They've done construction on weekends. It's been
20 exhausting.

21 COMMISSIONER SORDI: Was it documented and
22 submitted to the Town?

23 JIM RATCLIFF: Yes, multiple times. I'm like
24 invisible.
25

1 COMMISSIONER SORDI: Do you have any dates on the
2 construction?

3 JIM RATCLIFF: The Town has everything.

4 COMMISSIONER SORDI: You've got all the
5 correspondence.

6 JIM RATCLIFF: Paul has got it.

7 COMMISSIONER SORDI: Then you mentioned
8 compromises that you suggested that were rejected. Can you
9 list...
10

11 JIM RATCLIFF: We talked about the shuttle. We
12 talked about carpooling, different parking strategies.
13 We're reasonable people. I've lived here my whole life.
14 This has been really disturbing from my point of view from
15 the Town. The Town has just abandoned me.

16 COMMISSIONER SORDI: Okay, thank you.

17 CHAIR BURCH: Commissioner Stump.

18 COMMISSIONER STUMP: Thank you for your comments
19 this evening. I wanted to ask you about curfew violations
20 during Ramadan. What is your understanding of the curfew
21 currently during Ramadan?

22 JIM RATCLIFF: They need to exit the building by
23 11:00pm.
24

25 COMMISSIONER STUMP: And what does that mean to
exit the building by 11:00pm?

1 JIM RATCLIFF: It just means that no cars should
2 be exiting the complex at that time, and this year they
3 violated that.

4 COMMISSIONER STUMP: Commissioner Sordi may have
5 asked this question, but you mentioned that you proposed a
6 number of compromises, obviously one of them around parking
7 and the potential for carpooling, shuttle, other maybe
8 offsite parking options. What else, Mr. Ratcliff, have you
9 suggested to the community?

10 JIM RATCLIFF: There could be something like
11 permit parking, because Farley Road is a street without
12 sidewalks and limited lights. When they have cars parked on
13 both sides of the streets there are people walking down the
14 street in the middle of the street. That is not safe. I
15 don't understand why the Town is not recognizing this. This
16 is not safe for the members, it's not safe for the
17 neighborhood.

18 COMMISSIONER STUMP: Chair, one last question, if
19 I might.

20 CHAIR BURCH: Yes.

21 COMMISSIONER STUMP: Mr. Ratcliff, you mentioned
22 that you've lived there for 26 years, and I'm assuming at
23 this point in time, if my math is correct, that you had
24
25

1 experience with the prior religious institution that was
2 located there?

3 JIM RATCLIFF: Yes.

4 COMMISSIONER STUMP: What sort of issues did you
5 have with that institution?

6 JIM RATCLIFF: None. I never had to call LGPD or
7 report a compliance violation in the whole time that they
8 were there.

9 COMMISSIONER STUMP: Mr. Ratcliff, thank you.

10 CHAIR BURCH: Commissioner Burnett.

11 COMMISSIONER BURNETT: Yes, thank you. Do you
12 know, is their current CUP in compliance with...

13 JIM RATCLIFF: No, they have people coming in
14 early in the morning, as early as 5:30 in the morning, and
15 this really affects my neighbor down the street, and my
16 understanding is they're not supposed to be coming in
17 before 8:00am.

18 COMMISSIONER BURNETT: So, the present CUP they
19 are out of compliance with?

20 JIM RATCLIFF: For three years, yes.

21 CHAIR BURCH: Vice Chair Barnett.

22 VICE CHAIR BARNETT: My understanding from the
23 prior comments is that WVMA has encouraged its congregant
24 members to carpool as an ongoing effort to assuage the
25

1 neighbors. Is that something that you find insufficient,
2 and if so, why?

3 JIM RATCLIFF: If they've been carpooling, it's
4 not really working, because there is still a tremendous
5 amount of cars parked on our street, and again, I can't
6 emphasize enough, when you get cars parking on both side of
7 Farley Road, people have to walk in the middle of the
8 street to get to the facility. There are videos documenting
9 all of this; it's very unsafe.

10 VICE CHAIR BARNETT: A follow-up, please. Could
11 you articulate, give us an idea of what kind of a carpool
12 condition you would like in the Conditional Use Permit.

13 JIM RATCLIFF: Well, it would be efficient if
14 they could get as many people in a car as possible. They
15 only have 180 parking spaces. I would propose limiting the
16 parking to 180 in the facility, and then having some sort
17 of a permit parking on Farley Road, just to give us a
18 little bit of respite, especially during Ramadan.

19 VICE CHAIR BARNETT: Okay, thank you very much.

20 CHAIR BURCH: Any further questions? Thank you.
21 Michele.

22 MICHELE S.: Good evening, and thank you for the
23 opportunity to address the Commission today.
24
25

1 As a child of immigrants parents, I understand
2 the importance of belonging. My parents instilled in me to
3 treat others as you wish to be treated, respect
4 individuals, and practice kindness. My father always had an
5 extra space at the table for friends, for family, and for
6 strangers.

7 Throughout my life I have been blessed with a
8 culturally rich life and a career, and as such, I've been
9 enriched with working with many diverse colleagues. Finding
10 appropriate settings for my Muslim coworkers during
11 business trips in order for them to pray while away from
12 their home and participate in strategically important
13 meetings was very, very special to me.

14 I respectfully ask that my sanctuary, my home,
15 provides me with the solace that I need without me having
16 to go to a place of worship. It's just as sacred to me.

17 The Town's approval for a religious facility came
18 with the disclosures about the hours. The Muslim religion
19 has been around for a long time, and I respect that and all
20 the tradition that comes with it, but asking the neighbors
21 in a quiet environment to bear the burden of the oversight
22 of WVMA's purchase decision and investment for a facility
23 that would not support critical hours necessary for five
24 daily prayers and 30 days of Ramadan should not constitute
25

1 our neighborhood changing the culture and character that
2 we've enjoyed for over 30 years.

3 My home is my version of a mosque, and the
4 ability to rest peacefully, mentally nourish my soul, and
5 physically thrive during quiet hours to support obtaining
6 my Nirvana in life is important. This is what supports the
7 rhythm of basic human needs for me, like sleep. Adding an
8 additional 1,962 hours with the current application is
9 onerous for the residents.

10
11 I would like to say that this is not about
12 religious use, it's about land use, the intensity, and
13 compatibility, which you are required to evaluate under the
14 Town Code, Section 29.20.190. The real-world impacts and
15 intensification are going to impact the wellbeing of our
16 people in our neighborhoods and our community, so I hope we
17 can find a way to resolve this together. Thank you.

18 CHAIR BURCH: Thank you. Any questions?
19 Commissioner Stump.

20 COMMISSIONER STUMP: Like Mr. Ratcliff, you've
21 been a longtime, long-term resident of that neighborhood.
22 Can you just answer what street you live on?

23 MICHELE S.: We live on Chirco Court, which
24 shares the adjacent fence along the parking lot, 100 linear
25 feet.

1 COMMISSIONER STUMP: So, you share a property
2 line with the mosque?

3 MICHELE S.: Correct.

4 COMMISSIONER STUMP: Okay. You also mentioned
5 sleep, and that your sleep, I'm assuming, is being
6 impacted. How is it being impacted?

7 MICHELE S.: At nighttime prayer all the
8 headlights come into our property, and our bedroom faces
9 the backside of our property, so we are constantly
10 interrupted. And then the lighting, the tall stadium
11 lighting in the parking lot, is on quite late and it's
12 very, very vibrant, so we don't have the option to leave
13 our windows or anything open at night to avoid the noise
14 and the light pollution.

15 COMMISSIONER STUMP: Do you know what time those
16 lights go off in the parking lot, by any chance?

17 MICHELE S.: They should go off at 11:00, but
18 under the new CUP application they could go as late as
19 12:30 and as early as 4:00am. That's problematic. That
20 gives me four hours or quiet time to sleep.

21 COMMISSIONER STUMP: So, again, you said that
22 because light has been penetrating through the fence, I
23 suppose, that you are actually seeing headlights in your
24 bedroom.

1 MICHELE S.: Headlights and noise.

2 COMMISSIONER STUMP: Okay.

3 MICHELE S.: And then also the parking lots are
4 even more problematic than the headlights.

5 COMMISSIONER STUMP: Thank you very much.

6 CHAIR BURCH: Any further questions? No. Thank
7 you. The next three speakers are Kim Ratcliff, Rich Seger,
8 and Christine Kerst.

9
10 KIM RATCLIFF: Hello, Planning Commission. I'm
11 Kim Ratcliff and I live next door to the Applicant. Our
12 property surrounds theirs on two sides, including their
13 only exit and parking lot. I also want to echo my husband's
14 disappointment that for the past two years the Town of Los
15 Gatos has left us feeling abandoned. I also want to preface
16 my statement to say that we welcome everyone in our
17 neighborhood, and believe in freedom of religion.

18 I'm a mother, a writer, and I'm currently
19 surviving stage 3 melanoma. While my scans have been clear,
20 I'm still in recovery, and my home is not just where I
21 live, it's where I heal. The safety and peace of our
22 neighborhood are essential to my wellbeing.

23 We never wanted to make this story public. We
24 never wanted to make it an us versus them, but after
25 waiting for two years for action we spoke at a Planning

1 Commission meeting, and suddenly we were facing media
2 attention, harassment, and hate messages, and through it
3 all we've tried to explain this is not just about 30 days
4 of Ramadan.

5 The destruction happens year-round, often up to
6 18 hours a day. During Ramadan, our quiet street becomes
7 unsafe. Cars speed and pass recklessly. One nearly hit us
8 while we were walking our senior dog. Vehicles block our
9 driveway. Traffic is directed with LED traffic batons,
10 blinking cones; it feels like you're at the Mountain Winery
11 concert parking lot night after night. That's outside.
12

13 Inside our home, late at night up to 200 cars
14 exit just 30' from our bedroom, and like the members, we,
15 too, have to prepare for work. The noise, lights, and
16 constant movement make sleep extremely difficult. It sounds
17 like a freight train is coming through our home, no matter
18 which of our three bedrooms we sleep in. And early the next
19 morning it starts again at dawn. On Friday afternoons and
20 during events we sometimes have to leave our own home just
21 to avoid being trapped.

22 I also want to mention that we left our home for
23 Ramadan for ten days, and when we came back, the rest of
24 the 20 days was a grueling marathon. I can't emphasize
25 enough how much it affects your mental health. On Fridays

1 and during events we sometimes have to leave your home. We
2 get trapped. Our driveway is right next to WVMA's narrow
3 driveway, and I've shown you videos where I am trying to
4 back out and it's car after car after car. I'm honking,
5 nobody sees me.

6 It's like there is a disconnect. It doesn't seem
7 like people understand that somebody lives next door, and I
8 am not seeing the connect with like coming by our house,
9 checking in during Ramadan. I haven't heard from anyone for
10 a year. The last time we met the founder was a year ago,
11 and we have offered to compromise, and it hasn't gotten
12 anywhere.
13

14 CHAIR BURCH: Thank you. Are there any questions
15 for the speaker? Vice Chair Barnett.

16 VICE CHAIR BARNETT: I have two questions. The
17 first question is what specific noises do you hear?

18 KIM RATCLIFF: Well, we hear the humming of the
19 Teslas and the EV cars that they try to drive. We hear
20 talking. We hear people outside. We hear engines revving.
21 They have a Right Turn Only sign on their property, so we
22 take the brunt of every single car that turns right and
23 goes by our house, so it rumbles. We especially hear the
24 200 cars trickling down the narrow exit drive; we can hear
25 that in our house. We hear honking horns, we hear people

1 putting their strollers together, we hear car alarms
2 beeping, and a lot of street traffic is causing that sort
3 of noise.

4 VICE CHAIR BARNETT: Thank you for those
5 specifics. My second question has to do with the frequency
6 that your driveway may be blocked.

7 KIM RATCLIFF: Every Friday afternoon. There are
8 several prayer sessions, and so there is a mad rush to come
9 in, and then there are 200 cars that exit, and there are
10 people, again, walking in the middle of the street, walking
11 on the driveway, on their driveway, and it's chaotic.

12 VICE CHAIR BARNETT: If I may, I just want a
13 clarification. Has there been any parking that has
14 physically blocked your driveway?

15 KIM RATCLIFF: Yes, there was a car during
16 Ramadan where someone parked their car in front of our
17 driveway, got out of their vehicle unattended, walked
18 across the street, was chatting with somebody for a couple
19 of minutes, and then came back and got in and drove away.

20 VICE CHAIR BARNETT: I see. Okay, thank you.

21 CHAIR BURCH: Any other questions? Thank you.

22 KIM RATCLIFF: Okay, thank you.

1 RICH SEGER: Thank you, Planning Commission. My
2 name is Rich Seger. I've been a Los Gatos resident for 25
3 years. I've lived in the same house with my wife.

4 Again, we're adjacent to the parking lot. I
5 really want to reiterate, this is not culture, this is
6 compatibility. I've met with the founding member, and I
7 think he can remember, I was like the kids that you have
8 screaming on weekends, turn it up. I mean, all the
9 impromptu games you guys play, I love it. Love all that
10 stuff, so this is not about an existence question, this is
11 about a compatibility question.
12

13 Since the CUP has been changed we've seen a
14 dramatic increase. We never had a problem with the church
15 before. We've seen a dramatic increase. One hundred and
16 eighty cars, doors opening, car alarms going off,
17 accidental car alarms themselves going off, honks. Most of
18 these are accidental. They try to be quiet, but it's just
19 physically impossible for 180 cars starting up with doors
20 (inaudible), especially if they're going to start
21 carpooling, that's four doors. It's just a cacophony of
22 noise, and it's really tough.

23 It's funny, we used to go for walks and we'd feel
24 sad for the people that live next to the Jack in the Box,
25 like God, that must be tough. And here we are living next

1 to Jack in the Box. In fact, I think these hours are
2 probably more than Jack in the Box; it's ridiculous.

3 I think you probably can understand the concern
4 of parents about their kids walking and riding to school
5 during these times. This is tough. I mean, there are no
6 sidewalks, there are very few streetlights, and as we
7 talked about, when you have cars on both sides you have to
8 go out into the street. That's scary. I walk my dog twice a
9 day. There were a couple of times I kind of forgot Ramadan
10 was happening. I thought they closed Los Gatos Boulevard
11 and they were just putting people through my neighborhood;
12 it was just car after car after car. Really tough.

14 And again, if you have any doubt about this, KTVU
15 did a really good report. They were filming it and you see
16 the row of headlights, and all of a sudden, out of nowhere,
17 somebody just gets frustrated and starts driving down the
18 lefthand side of the road. I mean it's right there in front
19 of you, and that was just happenstance, so I would just ask
20 you guys to really think about that and take a look.

21 The other one I have a problem with, I was in
22 negotiations for 30 years of my life, and the fact that
23 we're here doing another CUP revision, I don't understand
24 how that transaction ever happened when they kind of went,
25 oh yeah, Ramadan. I just have a hard time with that. If one

1 of the people that worked for me did that, they wouldn't
2 work for me. I mean, that's just a ridiculous thing, to buy
3 and then suddenly turn around and go the most important
4 days of the year are not covered? I just don't understand
5 it.

6 I would just ask the Commission to really lean
7 back and think about this. I mean, I would say deny, but
8 I'm really more interested in working with the mosque, and
9 working with you, and working with the other residents to
10 get something that makes sense for everybody. We like them
11 here. We do. We just don't think what they're asking for is
12 compatible with what we want or what we have in our
13 neighborhood. Thank you.

14
15 CHAIR BURCH: Thank you. Are there any questions
16 for the speaker? Commissioner Burnett.

17 COMMISSIONER BURNETT: Yes, thank you. Do you
18 think maybe permit parking would be something that would
19 help solve...

20 RICH SEGER: Yes. I mean, let's understand that
21 we're still talking about no sidewalks, three streetlights
22 on all of Farley Road, I think. We're hemmed in. We've got
23 Highway 17, Lark Avenue, Blossom Hill Road, and Los Gatos
24 Boulevard. It's a very small neighborhood, so anybody who
25 wants to walk in that neighborhood almost has to walk on

1 Chirco or Farley if they want to get anywhere in any kind
2 of half-a-mile or mile walk. Well, you stuff that in and
3 you start having people walking outside those cars, it's
4 just dangerous.

5 I don't mind permit parking. I'd be happy to look
6 at it. I don't know enough about the numbers to know if
7 that makes sense. We just want something that's reasonable,
8 that maintains the neighborhood we've always loved. We want
9 them to stay. I'm not here to say their existence is in
10 question, it's not. It's just we've got to figure out how
11 to work together.
12

13 CHAIR BURCH: Thank you.

14 DIRECTOR PAULSON: Chair, I believe Commissioner
15 Stump.

16 CHAIR BURCH: Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't see. Sorry.
17 Commissioner Stump, apologies.

18 COMMISSIONER STUMP: Thank you, again, for
19 speaking to the Commission tonight. You did talk about,
20 from your perspective, perhaps a possible solution, which
21 would involve permit parking. What other things have you
22 thought of over the past couple of years as you have dealt
23 with this situation that you would see as being solutions?
24

25 RICH SEGER: Well, I think when I met with Razi,
who is great gentleman, wonderful guy, he kind of gave the

1 sense of well there are very few people that show up at
2 these particular services. I'm like okay, great, let's
3 limit the number of people who can show up to these, and he
4 kind of, for reasons unto him, he's like that won't work.
5 I'm like okay. Then we did talk about shuttles, or he
6 brought it up or I brought it up, and he was kind of
7 reluctant to do that; that didn't work for some of the
8 reasons he mentioned earlier.

9
10 I think it was brought up about permits. I think
11 that's something we would consider. I think ultimately I am
12 more interested in the outcome than the process. I'll do
13 anything to get the process, to maintain our neighborhood
14 and keep our residents safe. That's really what all this is
15 about.

16 Like sidewalks. I don't know. I mean, I'm willing
17 to think about anything, and try to help preserve this
18 community and our community. They can coexist; we just have
19 to be committed to it. I don't know if that answers your
20 question.

21 COMMISSIONER STUMP: Yes, thank you very much.

22 CHAIR BURCH: Thank you. Christine.

23 CHRISTINE KERST: Good evening, my name is
24 Christine. I live with my family on Frank Avenue near the
25

1 intersection of Frank and Izorha Way, so we are around the
2 corner from the mosque, if you can envision that.

3 This issue is 100% a zoning issue. It is not an
4 issue about a place of worship. It is about the use; it is
5 about use of space in a neighborhood. I am very
6 uncomfortable speaking about this, and I am very resentful
7 that I have to. I believe it is the fault of the Town that
8 we are in the position where we are now pitting against our
9 lovely neighbors, who have been very additive to the
10 neighborhood.
11

12 However, I don't understand, again, why we are
13 allowed to have this capacity and this many in this very
14 small neighborhood. I don't know if you're familiar with
15 our neighborhood. As was just mentioned, it is tiny.
16 Usually, the only reason to go into it would be because you
17 live there.

18 What I would like to talk further about is use.
19 Although the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized
20 Persons Act provides important protections for religious
21 exercise, at the same time, the courts, including the
22 United States Courts of Appeals for the 9th Circuit, have
23 consistently recognized that these protections do not
24 override neutral, generally applicable zoning regulations.
25 We are a neighborhood, a small neighborhood.

1 One example of this comes from the US District
2 Court of Oregon, Eugene Division, in the case of Coles
3 Valley Church v Oregon Land Use Board of Appeals. In that
4 case, the court reaffirmed that local zoning laws and land
5 use planning remain essential tools for maintaining a
6 community and in assuring that a community is not adversely
7 impacted by something that shouldn't be part of that
8 community zone.

9
10 So, you can do something within zoning rules, and
11 again, it is uncomfortable and unnerving to be put in the
12 position of having to be in conflict with our neighbors. It
13 is not anything that any of us want. I feel resentful that
14 we've been put in this position by the Town, and what's
15 more, I feel like we've been repeatedly asked this evening,
16 once we finally have the opportunity to speak, about what
17 we suggest the solutions are. I don't think that is our
18 responsibility to provide the solutions. Thank you.

19 CHAIR BURCH: Thank you. Are there any questions
20 for the speaker? Commissioner Stump.

21 COMMISSIONER STUMP: Thank you. First, I'm sorry
22 you feel like you've been put in this position and feel
23 resentment towards the Town of Los Gatos, the town you live
24 in. If I could ask you, what sort of outreach efforts have
25 you made to the Town in the past couple of years?

1 CHRISTINE KERST: I have not personally made any
2 outreach efforts. I am part of group who have made outreach
3 efforts, and you've already discussed some of the material
4 and information that's been provided to you by the other
5 speakers earlier this evening.

6 One thing I didn't mention is that I gave you an
7 idea of where we live. During Ramadan especially, parking
8 extends all the way down our street. So, again, this is a
9 high-density situation in a very small neighborhood, and
10 it's not appropriate.

11
12 COMMISSIONER STUMP: Thank you very much.

13 CHAIR BURCH: Commissioner Burnett.

14 COMMISSIONER BURNETT: I just wanted to ask, on
15 your street are there sidewalks, are there lights?

16 CHRISTINE KERST: It's inconsistent. There are
17 sections of our street that do have sidewalks and sections
18 that don't, and the same with streetlights.

19 COMMISSIONER BURNETT: Thank you.

20 CHAIR BURCH: All right, thank you. All right,
21 the next three speakers are Courtney Bui, Alieza Daryan,
22 and Mark Leonard.

23 COURTNEY BUI: Good evening. We know that you
24 have a tough job tonight, so I just want to say thanks for
25 hearing us out.

1 Now, let's look around this room, outside, and
2 probably on Zoom. Many people are here tonight. The
3 Applicant has brought many here to actually prove a point,
4 but actually they have proven our point. This massive
5 turnout is a living demonstration of the intensity of use
6 we are talking about.

7 Imagine a narrow street, unlit, at 4:30am.
8 Picture a line of cars stretching past six houses, engines
9 vibrating in the dark, headlights shining into your
10 bedroom, people walking in the middle of the street, some
11 blocking fire hydrants, which I called numerous times to
12 the cops, and more vehicles continue to squeeze into it.
13 This infrastructure is simply not made for this size. In
14 fact, one of the 13 collisions in the last five years I
15 talked about was actually on WVMA property.

17 And to be clear, this isn't about who is using
18 the property or the building, but where it is located. Our
19 narrow streets simply cannot handle this level of traffic,
20 whether this were a school, stadium, or shop. The physical
21 reality is the same for the street, that is an unsafe
22 location for 180 vehicles at 4:00am or at midnight.

24 I also have to honest; I am too afraid of being
25 mislabeled. In todays climate, simply asking for traffic
safety can be twisted into an accusation of discrimination.

1 As a minority myself, I find that heartbreaking. We should
2 not have to choose between our children's safety and the
3 fear of being unfairly labeled for speaking up.

4 The regional scale impact is exactly what we
5 experience every week. We are here to support the Town to
6 enforce its own laws. To approve this, the law requires you
7 to find it safe, but given our infrastructure deficit and
8 constant noise, this project is a detrimental risk. Our
9 General Plan and Town Code both mandate noise curbing from
10 10:00pm until 8:00am. Asking for 4:00am and 12:00am is
11 outside that range.
12

13 The Applicant has the right to pray, and we have
14 the right to sleep. We're asking you to join us and the 70
15 neighborhood households who have signed the petition to
16 oppose, to deny this ask, because it is really out of the
17 violation of quiet hours. Thank you.

18 CHAIR BURCH: Are there any questions for the
19 speaker? Vice Chair Barnett.

20 VICE CHAIR BARNETT: You don't have to answer the
21 question, but are you willing to give your address?

22 COURTNEY BUI: Yes, I live on Flintridge right at
23 the corner of Farley and Flintridge, so like Kim Ratcliff
24 said, everybody has to turn right to come out of the
25 facility, where they always go to my street to get to Los

1 Gatos Boulevard, and during that, if you recall, I just
2 shared that, that's a very dangerous curve, and speed
3 through it constantly, and even before this, I have asked
4 for speedbumps because of this situation.

5 VICE CHAIR BARNETT: I have two follow-ups, if I
6 may.

7 CHAIR BURCH: Please proceed.

8 VICE CHAIR BARNETT: The first one, I noticed
9 that a number of the neighbors were interested in
10 speedbumps to address the speeding issue, but some have
11 pointed out that they create a noise hazard, or a noise
12 problem. Have you thought that through, or what are your
13 comments about possible noise from cars going over
14 speedbumps?
15

16 COURTNEY BUI: In order to get the petition and
17 to get the Town to come out to do the noise measurement,
18 the neighbors did actually have to sign the petition and it
19 had to be more than 50%, so I think they are actually in
20 agreement that having noise is a lot better than being hit.

21 VICE CHAIR BARNETT: Okay, thank you for that. I
22 have one last question. You spoke about noise nuisance and,
23 I guess, traffic nuisance in the early morning hours. Can
24 you speak more to that, because I guess I assumed that
25 there are fewer cars at that time.

1 COURTNEY BUI: Well, you know, my son bikes to
2 school with his group of friends. The kids come; they all
3 get together. It's a really small community, charming
4 little neighborhood, so the boys would bike to school, and
5 every time we are so afraid. We make sure that they cross
6 the street okay, and it's like they're no longer biking
7 alone anymore. We're actually walking side-by-side with
8 them, just to make sure they cross the street okay, be able
9 to turn the curve all right.
10

11 And even when they're going home, we're also
12 nervous too, because like Kim said, during that Friday a
13 lot of cars, a lot of traffic, and there are no Stop signs
14 in our streets. Not just no sidewalks, no lights, no Stop
15 signs, no speedbumps. It's a freeway.

16 VICE CHAIR BARNETT: One more follow-up?

17 CHAIR BURCH: Yes, please.

18 VICE CHAIR BARNETT: With respect to the times
19 that you're using the street in the neighborhood, can you
20 give me some estimate of the range, for example, when the
21 kids are going to school?

22 COURTNEY BUI: Yes, so my kids bike to school
23 around 7:00-something, and then they will go home around
24 2:00pm to 4:00pm. That's just really traffic hours for the
25 kids that are biking.

1 VICE CHAIR BARNETT: Thank you very much.

2 CHAIR BURCH: Thank you. Any further questions?

3 All right, thank you.

4 ALIEZA DARYAN: Good evening, my name is Alieza
5 Daryan. I live on Farley Road, and my wife and I, we have
6 lived there for 26 years. We raised two daughters there.
7 Now they are adults and they are working and they have
8 their own homes.

9
10 We want to live in a harmonious way with the
11 facility and the members. We have no issue, no problem with
12 them, but my main concerns are the neighborhood integrity,
13 compatibility, and zoning, because we have big issues, as
14 the other residents have mentioned, with the parking. For
15 example, Fridays between 2:00pm to 3:00pm our gardener
16 comes. There is no place to park, so in the past few years
17 now we have anxiety. We have to put one of our cars on the
18 street and look out for the gardener when he comes, then
19 move our car, then he can park and unload his equipment.

20 Basically, the facility doesn't have enough
21 parking, and during Ramadan, even in the evenings our
22 relatives or other friends cannot visit us, or if they do,
23 then they also have to look for parking. My daughter, if
24 she is visiting, the same story, so there is a parking
25 issue.

1 So, that is the problem that we feel the Town
2 needs to address, and the community needs to address,
3 because I agree with everything else that the other
4 residents mentioned, because we live there and we love the
5 neighborhood and we love the facility to be there, but the
6 problems need to addressed and solved in order for
7 everybody to live comfortably and enjoy the environment.
8 Thank you for your time, and I appreciate the Commission
9 listening to me.
10

11 CHAIR BURCH: Thank you. Are there any questions
12 for the speaker? Thank you. Mark Leonard.

13 MARK LEONARD: Hello, my name is Mark Leonard.
14 I've lived on Farley Road for the last 26 years. I love the
15 neighborhood. It's a safe, quiet, friendly neighborhood.

16 Before I start, I wanted to thank everyone on the
17 Commission for your dedicated service to the residents of
18 Los Gatos, from the bottom of my heart. This is probably a
19 thankless job, and so the number of hours that you guys are
20 putting in, I appreciate and we appreciate. I'm just going
21 to touch on a couple of quick points here.

22 The first one, we had talked about a sound study
23 that was done, but it was done during a non-Ramadan time.
24 My next-door neighbor, Fong Zhou (phonetic), did a study
25 that he actually submitted to the Town in May of 2025, so

1 almost a year ago, give or take. Basically, the bottom line
2 was that there is a lot of noise, driving by our houses, as
3 people are going either into the facility or coming out of
4 it, or walking to it. I just want to tell you that there is
5 that information; you guys have access to it.

6 And this is the biggest one for me. I've met with
7 the leadership of the facility and spoken with them, and
8 I'm going to be very, very specific. When I spoke with
9 Razi, who I respect very much, he's a wonderful man, the
10 very first time I talked to him about my concerns regarding
11 the hours, he willingly admitted that they disregard the
12 time limits, and he had no intention to stop that, which
13 was a problem for me. I actually reported this in an email
14 in 2024 to Jocelyn Shoopman, and I'm disappointed that the
15 Town of Los Gatos hasn't enforced this. So, my concern is
16 extending the time limits will only exacerbate this
17 problem, it won't solve it.

18
19 I implore you to please decline the modification
20 of the CUP. Our goal is to live harmoniously with the
21 facility and with our neighbors.

22 CHAIR BURCH: Thank you. Commissioner Burnett.

23 COMMISSIONER BURNETT: I have a question. I know
24 there are five prayers a day, and I highly respect your
25 religion, it's really interesting. Anyway, with the five

1 prayers a day, are cars coming in and leaving five times a
2 day?

3 MARK LEONARD: Yes.

4 COMMISSIONER BURNETT: So, you have the morning
5 prayer...

6 MARK LEONARD: They start in the morning, and
7 it's every couple of hours.

8 COMMISSIONER BURNETT: So, you have the morning,
9 you have the midday, then noon, the midday, the evening,
10 and that's the five prayers.

11 MARK LEONARD: Yes, give or take.

12 COMMISSIONER BURNETT: Then this is constant.

13 MARK LEONARD: Yes. Yes, and during Ramadan it's
14 literally hundreds of cars at each one.

15 COMMISSIONER BURNETT: I see. Thank you.

16 CHAIR BURCH: Any other questions? Thank you.

17 MARK LEONARD: Thank you for your time.

18 CHAIR BURCH: All right, our next three speakers
19 are David Watermulder, Gordon Yamate, and Rasha Lashin.

20 PASTOR DAVID WATERMULDER: Good evening, I'm
21 David Watermulder, Pastor of the Presbyterian Church of Los
22 Gatos. I'm part of the interfaith clergy group here in Los
23 Gatos that submitted a letter to you all as part of this
24 meeting. I'm also a Chapin with the Polce Department, along
25

1 with my colleague, Pastor Dale Gustafson, who spoke
2 earlier. I also live in Los Gatos here with my family,
3 where my kids are in schools and sports and Scouts and all
4 the rest of it. I guess I'm saying I'm coming to you
5 tonight as a neighbor.

6 In a lot of ways, the questions that the Town is
7 dealing with tonight have to do with that word, neighbor.
8 We've been hearing it a lot in all the sharing really, and
9 all the written materials. Neighbor, neighbors, and
10 neighborhood comes up a lot.

11 I want to acknowledge that you and Council are in
12 a hot seat, a hard place to be where you have to make
13 decisions on behalf of the whole community, and take the
14 varying needs of neighbors into account, so I really
15 appreciate your care and your concern for this process.

16 We're here tonight partially because the
17 questions around the neighborhood have not been resolved in
18 a really local way, just a few blocks that we're talking
19 about, but I think that the bigger questions are about what
20 it means to be a community of neighbors in our whole town,
21 our whole community.

22 In the Bible, in the tradition that I serve as a
23 pastor, this question is asked to Jesus, "Who is my
24 neighbor?" and that's the one that we often explore in our
25

1 faith tradition. You don't have to be a Christian like me
2 to want to be a good neighbor. In fact, I think most of us
3 here do want to be good neighbors, and we've heard that
4 again and again.

5 In the story that I'm referencing, the Good
6 Samaritan, which is from the Bible, being a neighbor
7 crosses lines of ethnic background, race, national origin,
8 and religion. It's hard to be a neighbor. It's costly to be
9 a neighbor. It's part of being a good neighbor, and I think
10 that in our town we have that question before us: what is
11 the nature of our community and our neighborhood?
12

13 I'm here tonight in support of this extension for
14 our Muslim neighbors seeking that they might have a chance
15 to fully express their faith. As a faith leader in our
16 community, I'm in communication with them and in solidarity
17 with them. I want to do it in a way that is neighborly, and
18 I think the process you're pursuing brings that forward, so
19 I really appreciate it.

20 The sense of neighbor that we're talking about
21 where we are able to give and receive freely is hard to do
22 in this modern age, especially when issues like this come
23 up, so I thank you for your time, and I'm speaking in
24 support of this motion.
25

1 CHAIR BURCH: Thank you. Hold on, I think
2 Commissioner Burnett has a question for you.

3 COMMISSIONER BURNETT: Yes, a question. Could you
4 give me the hours of your church, please, in the morning
5 and the evening?

6 PASTOR DAVID WATERMULDER: Typically, we get into
7 the office maybe around 8:00 or 9:00 in the morning. In the
8 evening, our programs might run... Typically, I think we have
9 different faith traditions. Maybe like in our church we
10 would have, you know, office hours, basically, until 5:00
11 o'clock, and then we have some evening programs in the
12 evening, so we might be there until 9:00 o'clock or
13 something like that typically.
14

15 COMMISSIONER BURNETT: Thank you.

16 CHAIR BURCH: Any other questions?

17 COMMISSIONER STUMP: Chair?

18 CHAIR BURCH: Yes, Commissioner Stump.

19 COMMISSIONER STUMP: Thank you very much. Pastor,
20 you have a significant facility, a significant parking lot.
21 I think, in fact, part of it might even be leased out to
22 The Terraces. You've got two major streets, Shannon Road
23 and I believe it's Cherry Blossom Lane, parking lots on
24 Cherry Blossom, easy parking even on the street side for
25 Shannon and Cherry Blossom. Have you had any issues with

1 your neighbors related to your use, and in particular,
2 anything related to public safety as it relates to your
3 neighbors?

4 PASTOR DAVID WATERMULDER: Through the years,
5 we've tried to maintain good neighbor relationships, kind
6 of like what we're talking about here tonight. We have had
7 differences of opinion with people along our property line,
8 and similar, I would say the main thing is communication
9 and both parties trying to figure something out.

10 A long time ago, some of you remember, the Google
11 buses were in our neighborhood, and they parked in our
12 parking lot on the way to drop off people for Google, which
13 was a good thing in a lot of ways, but it was trouble in
14 other ways. Recently, the Town improved the streets along
15 Shannon Road, which you know has bike lanes now, and they
16 kind of built in some safety measures like that. I think
17 that we're hearing a little bit of maybe that's on the
18 future docket for something as well.

19 COMMISSIONER STUMP: Thank you very much.

20 CHAIR BURCH: Thank you.

21 GORDON YAMATE: Good evening, members of the
22 Planning Commission. My name is Gordon Yamate, and although
23 I chair the Town's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
24 Commission, I'm here in my personal capacity.
25

1 I'm here to support the CUP application of the
2 West Valley Muslim Association. The Religious Land Use Act
3 imposes a very high legal standard where there are attempts
4 to prevent individuals from practicing their religious
5 faith. If the CUP application is denied, the Town would be
6 imposing a substantial burden on the WVMA, because members
7 of the mosque would not be able to fully engage in prayers,
8 particularly during Ramadan, as prescribed by their
9 religion.

10
11 The meeting materials outline the extraordinary
12 constructive efforts that the association has taken to
13 mitigate neighborhood disruption. I believe they have
14 demonstrated their sincerity and good intentions in those
15 efforts, often going beyond what might otherwise be
16 expected.

17 There were references in the record to traffic
18 issues involving a residential neighborhood and a private
19 school. To my knowledge, that matter did not fall under the
20 Religious Land Use Act, and unlike the association's CUP
21 application, the school's request includes a significant
22 expansion of the school itself. But while both sides
23 probably felt that the other side got the better result, I
24 think the residents are still pleased with the traffic
25 mitigation efforts taken by the school.

1 When neighbors are watching out for each other,
2 there is mutual trust and the community is safer and works
3 better. When I see the West Valley Muslim Association
4 reaching out to their neighbors, and vice-versa, that
5 communication can and will make that relationship stronger,
6 and may result in even more innovative ways to address the
7 concerns of all.

8 I urge you to approve the CUP application, and I
9 thank all parties for making Los Gatos welcoming to a
10 diverse and inclusive community. Thank you.

11 CHAIR BURCH: Thank you. Are there any questions
12 for the speaker? Thank you.

13 RASHA LASHIN: Hi there, Commissioners. Thank you
14 so much for the opportunity and the time that you have
15 spent today to listen to all of us. We really appreciate
16 it.

17 I just want to share with you my experience
18 coming to Los Gatos. I've been here for the last seven
19 years. I moved from the Republic of Ireland with my four
20 kids. They all graduated from Los Gatos High School. It's a
21 lot of belonging for us and how much the Town has been
22 diverse and inclusive over the years, and bringing in WVMA
23 has brought a lot of belonging for me and my family, as
24 such.
25

1 WVMA did not just serve my family, it serves the
2 neighbors around quite positively in all aspects. We listen
3 to our neighbors. On one of the mornings that we gather for
4 coffee on a Saturday I found one of the neighbors walking
5 their senior dog, which was really nice to see. We as
6 Muslims don't bring our dogs to our sacred place. We don't
7 bring our dogs to the mosque, but because our neighbor felt
8 safe at ease to be at that mosque, on the grounds of it
9 with their dog or their pet, we were very accommodating. We
10 support our neighbors in being able to feel the ease and
11 safety and respect being with us on our premises.
12

13 And so, seeing that, and learning around how much
14 we open our doors to our neighbors to learn more about our
15 culture, to support us as we grow and help our community,
16 while we're helping also in the Los Gatos community and
17 elsewhere, it is key for our continued diversity in the Los
18 Gatos town, so I really encourage and support for you to
19 support the CUP application that we have. Thank you so
20 much.
21

22 CHAIR BURCH: Thank you. Are there any questions
23 for the speaker?
24

25 RASHA LASHIN: I'm a neighbor too. I live on
Frank Avenue.

1 CHAIR BURCH: Oh, Frank. Thank you. All right,
2 the next three I have are Ben Piper, Rabbi Rafi Ellenson,
3 and Hana Itani.

4 BEN PIPER: Good evening, Commissioners. My name
5 is Ben Piper. I'm an acoustical consultant with Salter for
6 the last 15 years, and last year I conducted noise analysis
7 on behalf of the WVMA.

8 Since noise has been an ongoing topic of
9 conversation tonight, I wanted to let you know that I'm
10 here to answer questions as available, either during this
11 three-minute window or at a later time.

12 I think at a very high level the Town Noise
13 Ordinance contains maximum noise level goals for vehicle
14 noise, and our analysis has indicated that the traffic
15 associated with WVMA ingress and egress is within those
16 limits.

17 I think when we are considering cumulative noise
18 impacts as related to the General Plan Noise Element, which
19 is a 24-hour average noise level, it's worth considering
20 that the CUP does not request an increase in occupancy or
21 overall number, it only shifts the hours of ingress and
22 egress, and so therefore would not be expected to have a
23 cumulative 24-hour average noise level increase.
24
25

1 Now, it does shift these to be more within the
2 nighttime 10:00pm to 7:00am hours, however, my
3 understanding is that within the current operation of the
4 WVMA, event egress and ingress already occurs within those
5 hours, so the ten decibel penalty that this standard
6 applies to off hours noise levels would already apply to
7 vehicles coming and going from the site during those hours.

8 I'd be happy to take any questions. Sorry, I
9 talked for two minutes.

10 CHAIR BURCH: That's good. Yes, I think we're
11 going to have quite a few for you. Commissioner Burnett.

12 COMMISSIONER BURNETT: Our Noise Ordinance, we
13 have quiet hours from 10:00pm to 8:00am, so when we talk
14 about quiet hours, how can there be quiet hours if you're
15 having 40 cars coming in a driveway at 4:00 o'clock in the
16 morning and leaving at 10:30 after prayer service? That's a
17 little different than that. I mean, it's from 10:00pm to
18 8:00am, but I'm saying that those early morning hours, how
19 can that be quiet time when you have so many cars?

20 BEN PIPER: That standard prohibits noise that is
21 unreasonably disturbing, or not associated with an activity
22 that is otherwise lawfully conducted, so it is going to
23 depend on how that is chosen to be defined, but typically
24 depend on how that is chosen to be defined, but typically
25

1 vehicle traffic on a public roadway, anyone would be
2 allowed to drive on that street at those times.

3 COMMISSIONER BURNETT: Is a driveway a public
4 roadway, I mean, going in? The driveway into the facility.

5 BEN PIPER: The driveway into the facility?

6 COMMISSIONER BURNETT: Right.

7 BEN PIPER: Obviously, that's not a public
8 roadway. There are barriers, fences around those drive
9 aisles to help mitigate noise.
10

11 COMMISSIONER BURNETT: I was just trying to get
12 sort of a definition of quiet hours, and then with many
13 cars, so I was trying to get your definition.

14 BEN PIPER: That's a very qualitative type of
15 statement, you know, things that are annoying to people of
16 normal sensibilities. Certainly, the neighbors would think
17 they are people of ordinary sensitivity and find it
18 annoying, but the members of the WVMA feel like they are
19 people of ordinary, normal sensitivity and that they are
20 not generating noise that is unnatural or unusual in
21 association with their use.

22 COMMISSIONER BURNETT: Okay, thank you.

23 CHAIR BURCH: Commissioner Sordi, and then Vice
24 Chair Barnett.
25

1 COMMISSIONER SORDI: Yes, thank you for being
2 here to speak technically to the noise question. I want to
3 get a little bit technical here.

4 I'm reading from the executive summary written by
5 the Applicant about the noise study, so it's not your
6 writing, but there was a reference to "nighttime criterion
7 54 dBA." It says, "The Town's weekday nighttime criterion
8 is 54 dBA," so that's the maximum at night?

9
10 BEN PIPER: There is some interpretation there as
11 well, because it's not exactly defined. I think that that's
12 in relation to a city noise map figure that provided hourly
13 ambient noise levels. My interpretation is that that is an
14 hourly average noise level at different times.

15 COMMISSIONER SORDI: And that's set for more
16 sensitive time of night as opposed to what might be a
17 maximum dBA in the daytime?

18 BEN PIPER: Correct. It's in relation to expected
19 ambient noise levels in different parts of the Town,
20 although that specific threshold is more primarily in
21 relation to things like fixed noise sources, which would be
22 like HVAC equipment, or amplified music or speech coming
23 from a speaker system. The Municipal Code has a specific
24 section for vehicle noise, which has its own criteria.
25

1 COMMISSIONER SORDI: And then it makes the
2 statement that says, "Specifically, noise levels were
3 within one to three decibels of ambient, a difference that
4 acoustic experts consider unnoticeable." An ambience is not
5 a standard, that would be a baseline that was measured in
6 the neighborhood?

7 BEN PIPER: Correct. We conducted long-term noise
8 measurements over approximately ten days.

9 COMMISSIONER SORDI: My other question is, this
10 is just in the past having been a little bit involved and
11 reading a lot of Environmental Impact Reports, I recall
12 when it comes to measuring noise—correct me if I'm wrong—
13 there is noise measurements where you capture the moment in
14 time, a point source of noise, but there are also ways of
15 measuring something over the course of the day. I think you
16 mentioned that you would be inclined to use that, because
17 the incremental increase in the use isn't all that
18 significant, but I guess what I'm wondering, is there just
19 a way to, say, set up a system where you're measuring the
20 noise and you are able to capture the rise and fall and the
21 intensity level of it over, say, a 10-hour period of time?
22 The term CNEL comes to mind.

23
24 BEN PIPER: Sure.

1 COMMISSIONER SORDI: There are like these
2 different ways of measuring noise, right?

3 BEN PIPER: Yes.

4 COMMISSIONER SORDI: There are decibels, and then
5 there is...

6 BEN PIPER: Our noise measurements are capturing
7 one-second intervals that are then averaged over different
8 lengths of time, depending on what is set forth in the
9 standard. So, when we look at the vehicle noise section of
10 the Municipal Code, that is a maximum noise level standard,
11 so we would look at the instantaneous noise generated by
12 something like a car pass-by. When we look at the LDN or
13 CNEL standard, which is in the Noise Element of the General
14 Plan, that's an averaged noise level over a 24-hour period
15 with a penalty applied to nighttime noise, because people
16 are more sensitive at that time.

18 COMMISSIONER SORDI: So, that wasn't really done,
19 because of the nature of the expansion or the use being
20 marginal?

21 BEN PIPER: Correct, because the CUP request is
22 not an occupancy increase, and it doesn't shift egress and
23 ingress for events from daytime to nighttime. Those things
24 already occur between 10:00pm and 7:00am.

25 COMMISSIONER SORDI: Okay, got it. Thank you.

1 CHAIR BURCH: Any other questions? Vice Chair
2 Barnett.

3 VICE CHAIR BARNETT: Who specifically engaged
4 Salter to do the tests that are in the Staff Report?

5 BEN PIPER: I was originally contacted by Reuben,
6 Junius & Rose, a law firm that is engaged by the WVMA.

7 VICE CHAIR BARNETT: I see. And of course, a lot
8 of the comments in the Staff Report and tonight relate to
9 the Ramadan season. Would it in your professional opinion
10 be important to capture noise levels during those 30 days?
11

12 BEN PIPER: Not necessarily. The timing of our
13 report was due to the fact that the WVMA was trying to,
14 last year, provide analysis for review prior to Ramadan. I
15 don't know, perhaps the thinking was that CP acceptance
16 might happen in advance of the Ramadan season, so we were
17 engaged to measure events that we're of the understanding
18 had similar attendance as a typical Ramadan service, and I
19 guess further, in terms of the cumulative noise impact,
20 reiterating that because it's not an increase in overall
21 attendance numbers, only a shifting of times. I don't see
22 measurements during Ramadan as a requirement.

23 VICE CHAIR BARNETT: If I may, can you identify
24 the specific holidays or occasions where this higher level
25

1 of traffic occurred that you are using sort of as a
2 baseline related to Ramadan?

3 BEN PIPER: Yes, we were provided with a calendar
4 of facility events. Specifically, we measured an event on
5 the evening of Friday, February 7th. I think it was just
6 labeled for our purposes as "community event," and we also
7 measured a sunrise prayer on the morning of Thursday,
8 February 6th.

9
10 VICE CHAIR BARNETT: One last question?

11 CHAIR BURCH: Yes.

12 VICE CHAIR BARNETT: Can you correlate the number
13 of vehicles that were involved during the testing days to
14 your test results? In other words, were you counting cars?

15 BEN PIPER: No, because we were not onsite. We
16 were employing sound level meters that are in environmental
17 boxes over a ten-day period.

18 VICE CHAIR BARNETT: I recall that now. Thank
19 you.

20 DIRECTOR PAULSON: Chair Burch, Commissioner
21 Stump.

22 CHAIR BURCH: Yes, Commissioner Stump.

23 COMMISSIONER STUMP: Thank you, Chair. And thank
24 you, again, for being here with us so late into the
25 evening.

1 One of the residents did report that, although
2 they don't believe it's intentional, they hear horns, they
3 hear beeps, they hear backup noises coming from electric
4 cars, sometimes they hear alarms. What is it that the
5 residents are hearing? Are they being overly sensitive? The
6 other thing too is that it's one thing to have one car
7 going down the street at a time, it's another thing to have
8 a whole line of cars, so what is it that the residents
9 might be hearing that the sound tests don't pick up? Are
10 they just imagining this?

11
12 BEN PIPER: I certainly don't think that anyone
13 is imagining anything. I imagine it's a combination of
14 those factors. I think that something like excessive horn
15 honking or revving would fall under the curfew description
16 of sort of unnatural and egregious noise, and I think that
17 the WVMA's efforts to provide traffic direction are an
18 effort to reduce that type of noise.

19 COMMISSIONER STUMP: Thank you for that.

20 CHAIR BURCH: Questions? No.

21 DIRECTOR PAULSON: Chair, we're at 11:27, so we
22 probably need a motion to extend, or some other action.

23 CHAIR BURCH: Thank you.

24 BEN PIPER: If I might quickly. The maximum
25 standards that are outlined in the code for vehicle noise,

1 I wanted to quickly make the point that those are
2 independent of how many cars go past. The maximum level of
3 a car pass-by would be the same regardless of how many
4 times that occurs. Now, obviously the cumulative noise
5 changes, because of the frequency of occurrence, but the
6 maximum level of a car pass-by does not increase depending
7 on how many cars are passing by. Thank you.

8 CHAIR BURCH: Thank you. Mr. Paulson, I will call
9 these two, and then...

10 DIRECTOR PAULSON: You still need to make a
11 motion currently.

12 CHAIR BURCH: Like now?

13 DIRECTOR PAULSON: Yes.

14 CHAIR BURCH: I'm sorry, could you give us a
15 moment?

16 RABBI RAFI ELLENSON: Of course. Please, take
17 your time.

18 CHAIR BURCH: We still have a decent handful of
19 cards here, fellow Commissioners, and we have people on
20 Zoom. It's 11:30, and we have to make a motion if we want
21 to extend, if we do, for how long, or if we want to
22 continue, and at that point, then we'd be asking the
23 question on if that's a date certain, or what? Yes, Vice
24 Chair Barnett.

1 VICE CHAIR BARNETT: Due to the number of the
2 members of the community that are here, I would move to
3 extend the closing time to midnight.

4 CHAIR BURCH: Any other thoughts on that?
5 Commissioner Stump.

6 COMMISSIONER STUMP: Yes, I was going to propose
7 the same thing. It would seem like if we could capture as
8 many as are here tonight and have taken their time, that
9 would be a good thing, but I would not be in favor of
10 extending past midnight.
11

12 CHAIR BURCH: No, agreed. Any other thoughts on
13 that. All right. So, first I want to make sure I'm doing
14 this properly. If we're going to make a motion on just
15 extending to midnight, and then at midnight are we going to
16 have the discussion about the next step?

17 DIRECTOR PAULSON: You should have that before
18 midnight.

19 CHAIR BURCH: True, true. I'm getting tired. But
20 at that point we will have that discussion.

21 DIRECTOR PAULSON: Correct.

22 CHAIR BURCH: Not in this moment. Okay. So, there
23 is a motion to extend till midnight, and we have a second?
24

25 COMMISSIONER BURNETT: Second.

1 CHAIR BURCH: Okay, so I need to call the roll.
2 Commissioner Sordi.

3 COMMISSIONER SORDI: Yes.

4 CHAIR BURCH: Commissioner Mayer.

5 COMMISSIONER MAYER: Yes.

6 CHAIR BURCH: Vice Chair Barnett.

7 VICE CHAIR BARNETT: Yes.

8 CHAIR BURCH: Commissioner Burnett.

9 COMMISSIONER BURNETT: I agree.

10 CHAIR BURCH: Commissioner Stump.

11 COMMISSIONER STUMP: Yes.

12 CHAIR BURCH: I also agree, so this is unanimous
13 with one absent. I'm sorry for the interruption. Please go
14 ahead.
15

16 RABBI RAFI ELLENSON: Totally fine. Hi. Good
17 evening, I'm Rafi Ellenson, and I serve as the rabbi at
18 Congregation Shir Hadash in Los Gatos. I'm here tonight to
19 share my unequivocal, full hearted support in favor of the
20 West Valley Muslim Association's pursuit of a modification
21 to their Conditional Use Permit.

22 This past weekend Jewish people across the world
23 began reading Sefer Vayikra, the book of Leviticus, and in
24 this book we find the Holiness Code. Central to this guide
25 for how to live sacred lives of meaning is the commend to

1 love your neighbor as yourself. We are blessed at Shir
2 Hadash to have a building in a residential area where we
3 are able to hold our community gatherings and to observe
4 our tradition freely and with dignity.

5 The West Valley Muslim Association is entitled,
6 just as we are, to the same exact right. Our Muslim
7 siblings deserve a home to practice and celebrate Islam
8 fully, to fulfill their obligations as people of faith.
9 Approving the West Valley Muslim Association's Conditional
10 Use Permit for extended hours is a commonsense decision,
11 and it is my joyful religious duty as a rabbi to stand up
12 and love my neighbor as myself and support their modest
13 request, and I invite you all to do the same. Thank you for
14 your time.
15

16 CHAIR BURCH: Are there any questions for the
17 speaker? No. Thank you.

18 HANA ITANI: Good evening, honorable
19 Commissioners. Almost good morning, and thank you all.
20 Thank you for your time, your services, and your dedication
21 to serve this community. My name is Hana Itani. I have
22 served as president of the League of Women Voters for four
23 years in the Town of Los Gatos.
24

25 I would like to share something personal, a
moment that has stayed with me for over 50 years. On

1 September 30, 1974 I was walking down from our summer home
2 on my way to the airport in Beirut, leaving to come to
3 America as a student and as a new wife. And then, without
4 warning, I froze. My mother noticed and asked what was
5 wrong. "I don't know where I'm going," I told her. She
6 looked at me calmly and said, "Hana, don't be afraid. You
7 are going to God's land." All these years this stayed with
8 me. Those words have guided me for more than half a
9 century.
10

11 I have now lived in the United States for over 52
12 years, and the last 21 of them right here in the Town of
13 Los Gatos. This country gave me something I treasure
14 deeply: the genuine freedom to practice my religion, my
15 faith. That's not something to be taken for granted. Even
16 in some Islamic countries that freedom is not always fully
17 granted, guaranteed. Here, it has never been in question.

18 I have three children and ten grandchildren, and
19 we all use the masjid. Our religion requires us to be
20 considerate to our neighbors and be thoughtful of them. We
21 do respect them, we do understand their feelings, and we
22 feel with them, but changing the way and how we worship is
23 not a good solution. In my family, we do carpooling, and
24 sometimes we park away to be picked up by one of our
25 children. And in special events we have to sign in advance

1 to be able to attend, and sometimes we were not able to
2 join the event because of the capacity.

3 Having a masjid here in Los Gatos and only eight
4 minutes away from my home is not a small thing, it is a
5 symbol of peace, of belonging, and of a community that
6 lives up to the promise that this country has always made
7 to those who come to it with hope in their hearts.

8 Humbly, I ask you to consider extending the usage
9 of this house of God while the administration keeps working
10 on acceptable solutions. Again, thank you for your sincere
11 consideration.

12
13 CHAIR BURCH: Thank you. Are there any questions
14 for the speaker? No. Thank you. All right, the next three
15 cards I have are Sigrid Jacobsen, Jeff Suzuki, and Nigel
16 Chandler. Oh, got a little late? All right, you can go
17 ahead, Jeff.

18 JEFF SUZUKI: Good evening, Commission members.
19 First, I will preface by saying that I am not speaking in
20 my capacity as a Complete Streets and Transportation
21 Commissioner, but as a private resident, and the president
22 of the Los Gatos Anti-Racism Coalition.

23 I want you all to consider a question seriously.
24 Are we as a town willing to deploy the Monte Sereno-Los
25 Gatos Police Department to stop the peaceable assembly of

1 our neighbors engaged in prayer, because that is
2 effectively where this goes. It is easy to see that we
3 should enforce the law, but that could be a bit abstract.
4 What enforcing the law means is using our police service
5 against those who want to use their facilities to pray, and
6 that is what this Conditional Use Permit specifically is
7 for. It is for conducting prayer services, and I think that
8 it would be tragic if this Town could not find a way to
9 allow this right to access their facility for religious
10 use, a right affirmed by the Religious Land Use and
11 Institutionalized Persons Act, a view that has been backed
12 by the ACLU and the NAACP.

14 As Planning Commissioners, your roll is quasi-
15 legislative, quasi-judicial, and I know, because I served
16 on this Commission five years ago in 2021. Your approvals
17 and denials carry the weight of law, at least until an
18 appeal. You have the power to acknowledge right now that an
19 organization like West Valley Muslim Association is
20 entitled to the right to practice their religion at their
21 facility. You also have the power to state that we respect
22 some of their activities, we just don't want them here. You
23 have the power to make this a lot more difficult than it
24 should be to compel Muslims in our community into a
25 situation where they are forced to assert their rights,

1 spending time on advocacy that they could otherwise be
2 spending time with their family, spending resources on
3 legal fees that they could otherwise spend on our
4 community.

5 Over the last two years I've had the privilege of
6 meeting and breaking bread with my neighbors at West Valley
7 Muslim Association—I live about a mile-and-a-half away from
8 there—and they have demonstrated at every turn charity,
9 neighborly goodwill, and an alacrity to communicate and
10 accommodate their neighbors.
11

12 The agenda packet is just chock-full of examples
13 of how hard they have tried, and reading it all, all the
14 installations and all their efforts to engage with their
15 neighbors, I find it immensely impressive. I hope to see
16 that my town, the town that I grew up in, actively work
17 with and build a relationship, a partnership, with West
18 Valley Muslim Association to address potential issues in
19 traffic and noise to match their effort and courtesy,
20 rather than alienate them and our Muslim neighbors by
21 flatly denying them access to their space and their rights.
22

23 Many of those who attend the Los Gatos Islamic
24 Center are our residents, all of them are our neighbors,
25 and they should be our friends and our partners, and we
should treat them as such. Thank you.

1 CHAIR BURCH: Thank you. Are there any questions
2 for the speaker? Jeff, hold on. Vice Chair Barnett.

3 VICE CHAIR BARNETT: I'm afraid I missed part of
4 what you said, because you were making reference to the
5 legitimate concerns of the neighbors, as well as of course
6 supporting the Applicant, so do you have some way to
7 elaborate on that statement?

8 JEFF SUZUKI: Sure. I think that this is an
9 ongoing project. I don't think that this is a sort of one
10 and done deal where we either decide whether we should
11 extend the timeline indefinitely here, or we must deny it.

12 I do think that there is a very strong legal
13 basis for why we should extend the timeline, but the Town
14 should be actively involved in ensuring that the
15 transportation issues, where they are present, are
16 addressed, and this is a continuous work in progress. This
17 isn't something that is just an intractable issue.

18 CHAIR BURCH: Any other questions? Thank you.

19 NIGEL CHANDLER: Good evening, Commissioners. My
20 name is Nigel Chandler. I'm a part of the Complete Streets
21 and Transportation Commission, but today I'm not speaking
22 as a Commissioner, but as a private resident of Los Gatos.

23 I am personally not a Muslim, but I first got
24 acquainted with the Los Gatos Islamic Center mosque in Los
25

1 Gatos when I was invited to a public community coffee back
2 in the fall of last year, one of many events that the
3 mosque holds to reach out to the broader community.

4 When I heard at a recent City Council meeting
5 that the parking is, "like Disneyland," and that there is,
6 "not enough space for emergency vehicles," I thought it
7 would be a good idea for me to go and personally check it
8 out and see if I could get myself more informed on the
9 matter, and so I did decide to spontaneously visit, two
10 weeks ago on March 10th, on a Tuesday during Ramadan, at
11 about 9:30pm.
12

13 What I saw were two volunteers in yellow vests
14 who were stationed outside to monitor traffic and noise,
15 and to ensure that there aren't any mosque visitors that
16 are using street parking when they should be parking inside
17 the onsite parking.

18 When I personally went up to ask them about the
19 situation, one of them, Mohammed, had asked me to come
20 inside, not making any noise on the street, to have some of
21 their leftover food that they were serving, and he was kind
22 enough to share his perspective as an unpaid volunteer,
23 that being a good Muslim is about being a good neighbor,
24 and that this is exactly why we volunteers, to minimize the
25 disturbance to their neighbors.

1 When it did come time to leave, people were
2 totally out in less than 15 minutes on the day that I went.
3 I came expecting a so-called Disneyland, but to be honest,
4 that's not what I saw, and I certainly can't imagine any
5 emergency vehicles having a hard time getting by.

6 I think I will let others, as we have seen
7 tonight, speak to the importance of tolerance and inclusion
8 in Los Gatos, and to the rights people have to practice the
9 well-established tenets of their religious freely. I can
10 just say that from what I saw, I think the mosque is a
11 great neighbor and I would personally support their
12 application for the Conditional Use Permit. Thank you.
13

14 CHAIR BURCH: Thank you. Are there any questions
15 for the speaker? Thank you. All right, the next three I
16 have are Anne Griffin. I have Karen Yamamoto. Is she on
17 Zoom? Yes. And I now have Tiriq Abed. Is Anne here? May
18 have left. Is Karen able to speak on Zoom?

19 KAREN YAMAMOTO: Good evening. I'm surprised you
20 guys got to me. I've lived on Benedict Lane for 27 years
21 and I've never had a problem with the Muslim Association. I
22 love my Muslim neighbors, they're great, never had a
23 problem. I'm neither for nor against this permit, just to
24 let you know.
25

1 With that said, I would like you to consider the
2 following: After 30 years of the Muslim facility being on
3 Farley Road, why is there all of a sudden a need to change
4 the hours? It's always worked for over 30 years. Is it
5 because of the number of people that have to attend, or is
6 it just because now they want to extend it for some other
7 event happening? So, keep that in mind.

8 My other concern is our neighbors. The people who
9 live there have houses next to the facility. My heart goes
10 out to them, because I know what it's like to be bombarded
11 with lights at night, constantly, because I live behind
12 Erik's Deli. So, that's annoying, but I can't imagine car
13 noises and everything else.

14 We've really got to actually come up with either
15 a better solution for this, or keep the hours the same, you
16 know? It is important that everybody be respected, not just
17 one side or the other, and I do believe that the Muslim
18 religion has always been able to adjust to their
19 environment, and I don't understand why this has been such
20 a big deal.

21 But the other concern that popped up tonight that
22 I really want to address—all the other ones have been
23 addressed—I think the bigger situation that you need to
24 actually keep in mind is all of the other religious groups
25

1 supporting this. Because if you open the door to extend the
2 hours to one religious group year-round, you've got to do
3 it for all of them. Not just that, but other community
4 events and stuff like that that people want to do, so that
5 is a major thing. That means we have to change our whole
6 Town Code about hours of quietness.

7 CHAIR BURCH: That was three minutes, Karen.

8 KAREN YAMAMOTO: Okay. Oh, and Rich Stephens
9 couldn't make it, so he left papers for you to read.

10 CHAIR BURCH: All right. Are there any questions
11 for the speaker? No. All right, thank you. Is Tariq still
12 here? All right, thank you. Then I have two more, Chris
13 Wiley and Beth Grimes.

14 CHRIS WILEY: My name is Chris Wiley; I'm a local
15 resident for 50 years. This is a tough one, folks. Last
16 time I saw the chambers filled like this was for a business
17 that people didn't want here; it went way outside and down
18 the road. That business isn't here because they thought it
19 would work here, but it didn't work here. Let me go
20 backwards a little bit.

21 I'm for the Muslim community. There are speakers
22 who came up here that have helped me when I'm overseas, for
23 example, and I lived in Muslim communities for many, many
24 years. I even asked for a gentleman here who spoke, his son
25

1 spoke, his wife spoke; they sent me my first Quran in
2 English, along with papers that I needed to understand the
3 culture, because I dealt with it, so I understand. I
4 attended the festivities. They were wonderful.

5 But we have a problem here that with all this
6 goodness, we're forgetting there are neighbors. I live
7 across from one of the busiest night events, and that is
8 the bocce court, and I haven't had a night's sleep for
9 years when they are open. I don't think there is any other
10 business, other than what you guys are asking today, that
11 are open late at night, especially in a residential
12 community.
13

14 So, what I think, rather than some people are
15 part of a problem, some people are part of a solution, and
16 they were both here tonight, but what I think has to be
17 taken back to you. This has to totally be readdressed and
18 started over with the neighbors and the noise. And I know
19 about alarms. I know about people who don't think their
20 cars are locked, so they've got to press it one more time
21 for that beep. I know about the strollers. I've actually
22 oiled a few in front of my place when people go by.
23

24 I want you to know I support you guys, but your
25 time is off, and maybe you're in the wrong neighborhood.
The last business was the gun shop. It was running just

1 fine, everybody thought it was cool, and suddenly they
2 didn't think it was cool; it was time for them to leave.

3 And there are churches here that outgrew the
4 church. The Baptist church outgrew that church. The
5 Jehovah's Witness went in, then they outgrew that. Maybe it
6 has happened that this has outgrown it, and there may be a
7 possibility as an alternative also that when you have your
8 big festivities you find a place to hold it, such as some
9 churches do when they get too big for Easter and they go to
10 a stadium. I know in New York City a lot of temples and a
11 lot of mosques, instead of having their festivities,
12 they'll go to a bigger place that's away from the
13 neighborhoods.
14

15 But I would not vote tonight if I was in your
16 position. I think it needs to be readdressed and more
17 research needs to be done.

18 CHAIR BURCH: Thank you. Are there any questions
19 for the speaker?

20 BETH GRIMES: Hello. I am Beth Grimes, and I've
21 lived in this neighborhood for over 30 years with a lot of
22 these other people. I accepted an invitation from WVMA to
23 one of the celebrations, the last day of Ramadan, and it
24 was so welcoming and educational, and I still remember it
25 as a very positive experience.

1 And this issue, like the preview speakers and
2 others have said, is so difficult. Los Gatos is better
3 because all of us are in this room, and in this town, and
4 it's like it's obvious that WVMA is very important to many
5 families in this room. I'd love to hear how there are so
6 many collaborations between WVMA and other groups. It's
7 beautiful, and it makes Los Gatos so much better.

8 But we still have an issue here with this
9 particular proposal, and the Los Gatos Weekly article a few
10 months ago was very telling when they said—and it was the
11 WVMA that was saying it—that the volume originally was
12 around 75 people, and it was up to 300 to 500. That's
13 overwhelming, like tonight has been overwhelming. And we
14 have our little neighborhood. We have the 90-year-old
15 gentleman who came up here and he's lived in our
16 neighborhood for so many years.

17 This is the first organization that's been in
18 that facility where this has been a problem, and it's like
19 I can't imagine that extending this is going to make the
20 situation any better. Why wasn't this facility in the North
21 Forty next to a freeway? Easy in and out, you don't care
22 about the noise. That's where it should be, not in our
23 little neighborhood.
24
25

1 I was bicycling to work the other day, right past
2 your house, and it's like at 6:45am, and there were cars
3 coming out of the WVMA facility, so I can attest to them
4 not following not starting before 8:00 o'clock, because
5 there were cars coming out then. Not a lot, but they
6 definitely were coming out of there, and it's like I can't
7 imagine that this situation is going to get any better, and
8 I would hope that you would listen to the neighbors and
9 find a solution that works for them.
10

11 CHAIR BURCH: Thank you. Are there any questions
12 for the speaker? Yes, Vice Chair Barnett.

13 VICE CHAIR BARNETT: Two questions: what street
14 do you live on, and what specific inconveniences or
15 nuisances have you been subjected to?

16 BETH GRIMES: I'm here basically to be supportive
17 of my other neighbors on Farley Road. I am on Corrine
18 Drive, and luckily when everybody exits, they're exiting
19 out Chirco and going out to the light, and not coming down
20 my street.

21 VICE CHAIR BARNETT: Thank you for that.

22 CHAIR BURCH: Any other questions? No. Thank you.

23 We are right before midnight, so I think at this
24 point we need to determine are we going to stay longer, or
25

1 are we going to move this to a future date, and I would be
2 looking to Staff for guidance on that.

3 DIRECTOR PAULSON: Thank you. Looking at the
4 calendar, it looks like the soonest would be March 31st or
5 April 2nd as a special meeting to continue public comment.

6 CHAIR BURCH: And we need to probably make the
7 determination for a date certain tonight, so I'm asking my
8 fellow Commissioners, of those special meeting dates, what
9 is your preference?

10 DIRECTOR PAULSON: Commissioner Stump.

11 COMMISSIONER STUMP: Either date would work for
12 me.

13 CHAIR BURCH: Either day? All right. Commissioner
14 Burnett, you said either day? Either day. Vice Chair
15 Barnett?

16 VICE CHAIR BARNETT: I can only do the 31st.

17 CHAIR BURCH: 31st, okay. I guess then
18 Commissioners Mayer and Sordi, does the 31st work?

19 COMMISSIONER MAYER: The 31st, yes.

20 CHAIR BURCH: Commissioner Sordi.

21 COMMISSIONER SORDI: I think a slight preference
22 for the 31st, but I can be there.

23 CHAIR BURCH: That's okay, I think we're narrowed
24 on the 31st then. That way everyone can attend, and we'll
25

1 have to follow-up with Commissioner Thomas. Oh, that's
2 right. I'm sorry, she's recused. I guess I'm getting a
3 little tired.

4 ATTORNEY WHELAN: Chairperson, are you thinking
5 of a 7:00pm start time, or an earlier start time?

6 CHAIR BURCH: Honestly, I would recommend an
7 earlier start time, everybody. I don't know if there are
8 going to be more speakers from the Zoom.

9 DIRECTOR PAULSON: There definitely will be more
10 speakers on Zoom.

11 CHAIR BURCH: Yes, so you guys feel all right
12 with a 6:00 o'clock start time? Yes? No problem.
13 Commissioner Stump, 6:00am? Or 6:00pm? Oh, my goodness. Can
14 you tell? Okay, so the 31st at 6:00pm, not 6:00am.

15 COMMISSIONER STUMP: And I'll be there at 6:00am.

16 CHAIR BURCH: Perfect. Bring me coffee. All
17 right, do we need to make a motion then?

18 DIRECTOR PAULSON: Yes.

19 CHAIR BURCH: Does anyone want to make a motion?

20 VICE CHAIR BARNETT: So moved.

21 CHAIR BURCH: I'll second. I'll call the
22 question. Commissioner Sordi.

23 COMMISSIONER SORDI: Yes.

24 CHAIR BURCH: Commissioner Mayer.

1 COMMISSIONER MAYER: Yes.
2 CHAIR BURCH: Vice Chair Barnett.
3 VICE CHAIR BARNETT: Yes.
4 CHAIR BURCH: Commissioner Burnett.
5 COMMISSIONER BURNETT: Yes.
6 CHAIR BURCH: Commissioner Stump.
7 COMMISSIONER STUMP: Yes.
8 CHAIR BURCH: And I also agree, so it passes
9 unanimously. I think we're wrapping up this evening. Thank
10 you, everybody. We will see you on the 31st.
11

12 (END)
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