

**Election of Chair and Vice Chair for 2020-2021 7.c.**

**From:** Planning Commission 4

**Sent:** Sunday, June 21, 2020 3:55 PM

**To:** Hughey, Rosalynn <[Rosalynn.Hughey@sanjoseca.gov](mailto:Rosalynn.Hughey@sanjoseca.gov)>; Todorov, Vera <[vera.todorov@sanjoseca.gov](mailto:vera.todorov@sanjoseca.gov)>; Provedor, Jennifer <[jennifer.provedor@sanjoseca.gov](mailto:jennifer.provedor@sanjoseca.gov)>

**Subject:** Planning Commission Chair Selection

Hi Rosalynn,

Attached is a letter I would like circulated to my colleagues in advance of the Planning Commission meeting. Please let me know if there are any problems with that.

Thank you~

Shiloh

Dear Commissioners,

I wanted to take a moment to comment on the leadership of the Planning Commission, the selection of Chair.

I would like to recommend Mariel Caballero. Mariel is smart, has demonstrated an ability to get up to speed quick, and it is clear she takes her role seriously. For me personally, her values are in the right place as someone who understands the need for affordable housing, she lives a life not tethered to a car, and has a lived experience that is an important asset to the Commission and City.

Beyond that, I wanted to highlight the dearth of leadership over the years on the Commission of women of color. By my count, of 15 past chairs, only two have been women of color and only 5 have been women. That's not for lack of smart and capable women or women of color. It is because of patriarchy and white supremacy.

Why focus on advancing the leadership of women of color? Women of color are more likely to have experienced systemic racism and sexism. That lived experience is incredibly important in being able to see the problem and be motivated to fix it. As this City manages growth and development, it is critical that we have leaders in place who recognize how zoning, land use, gentrification and more play out along race, gender and class.

And so I implore my male colleagues to see their role as one that makes space for women of color to lead. To lead as a man at this time is to seek out and support women of color instead of insisting upon occupying positions of power. Unless you are completely amazing, there is no reason to take leadership roles that advance more men in power over women.

I say this with much respect and admiration for my well-intentioned male colleagues, knowing that men are boxed into roles and responsibilities that make it unmanly to cede power. I say

this recognizing my own privilege as a white woman who continues to struggle with understanding the appropriate ways that I can be helpful, knowing I will make mistakes as I try. I also say this with a lot of frustration at the lack of willingness of my male colleagues to take the steps needed to shift the balance of power in ways that will fix some of our most pressing challenges, racism, sexism and income inequality.

One last thing. There are always those voices that will say we should simply elevate the most qualified person, not a woman of color simply because she is a woman of color. That is not what I am suggesting. To reiterate, there are ample women of color who are just as qualified or more than the many men who have been elevated into leadership positions. However, our systems play out in ways that advance men over women. See that and take steps to change it by putting people in power who also see that and want to change it.

It was about a year ago that the appointment of Pierluigi sparked a backlash against the appointment of too many white people to the Commission. At that time I wrote [this](https://sanjosespotlight.com/ballard-step-aside-white-men-its-time-for-women-of-color-to-lead/) piece: <https://sanjosespotlight.com/ballard-step-aside-white-men-its-time-for-women-of-color-to-lead/> and many other people rallied to try to change the process. It has taken a while but the Council finally adopted a policy that attempts to handcuff them from making those same poor judgments. I am glad to see the Council move in the right direction and think it is the right time for me to not seek another term on the Planning Commission.

It has been wonderful working with you all, in particular the talented City staff.

Thank you~  
Shiloh Ballard  
Chair, San Jose Planning Commission