

RESOLUTION 21-02

IN RECOGNITION OF EXTRAORDINARY SERVICE AND LEADERSHIP FOR RENT CONTROL, HOUSING AFFORDABILITY, RACIAL JUSTICE FOR TENANTS OF BERKELEY, THE RENT STABILIZATION BOARD PRESENTS THIS RESOLUTION IN HONOR OF BERKELEY MAYOR EUGENE “GUS” NEWPORT IN COMMEMORATION OF BLACK HISTORY MONTH

BE IT RESOLVED by the Rent Stabilization Board of the City of Berkeley as follows:

WHEREAS, Gus Newport, a Civil Rights Activist, recruited by Berkeley Citizens Action to run for political office and was elected Mayor of Berkeley in 1979, reelected and served until 1986; Gus Newport served on the Police Review Commission and Planning Commission;

WHEREAS, Gus Newport helped found the Organization of Afro-American Unity with Malcolm X in 1964, seeking to unify 22 million non-Muslim African Americans with the people of the African Continent;

WHEREAS, Mayor Newport was one of a handful of mayors nationwide who, along with Burlington, Vermont Mayor Bernie Sanders sought to use the levers of local government to adopt enlightened progressive policies;

WHEREAS, Mayor Newport re-organized the police department, hired mental health workers to assist the police, gave domestic-partner benefits to same-sex couples employed by the City, and made Berkeley the first city in the United States to divest from companies that supported South Africa’s apartheid regime;

WHEREAS, Mayor Newport led the council fight to place Measure D on the ballot in 1980, and campaigned for its passage, establishing the Rent Stabilization and Eviction for Good Cause Ordinance. In 1982, recognizing that many tenants were left without protections placed Measure G on the ballot, extending these important tenant protections to Berkeley tenants living in triplexes and four-plexes;

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WHEREAS, Mayor Newport also sought to protect commercial tenants from unjust rent increases and led the fight to place Measure I on the ballot in 1982 and campaigned for its successful passage giving Elmwood District merchants the benefits of commercial rent control and eviction for good cause, only to have those protections preempted by the state legislature in 1987;

WHEREAS, Mayor Newport ensured City Council’s approval of the construction of 61 units of public housing to be built on surplus school district land in several sites around the City including parts of North Berkeley, which unfortunately were never built due to neighborhood opposition;

WHEREAS, As a result of State and Federal cuts to mental health programs in the 1970s and early 1980s, the number of homeless persons increased in Berkeley and throughout California; in response Mayor Newport took action to assist and bring attention to the plight of homeless people by: (1) Providing access to his conference room to discuss issues of importance to them; (2) Allotting the first hour of City Council meetings he chaired to the issue of homelessness; (3) Placing old school buses at the Marina for shelter, along with portable facilities including showers; (4) Giving each homeless person a post office box so that they could apply for Supplemental Supportive Income (SSI);

WHEREAS, after leaving public office, Mayor Newport went to Boston and became a Senior Fellow at the University of Massachusetts, where he taught a class on alternative economics and public policy;

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WHEREAS, Mayor Newport became the Director of the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative in Boston, a non-profit project that pioneered the use of eminent domain to allow the residents of an impoverished community to purchase homes at affordable prices, creating a model for sustainable change;

WHEREAS, Mayor Newport served on many governmental and nonprofit agencies, including the advisory board to New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina; as a member of the faculty at Yale, MIT, and UC Santa Cruz; and as a member of U.N. delegations advocating for peace and justice;

WHEREAS, Mayor Newport is currently an active member of the National Council of Elders, an organization comprised solely of people over 65, each of whom played pivotal roles in the social justice movements of the 20th century, including the movements for civil rights, women’s rights, environmental rights, farm workers’ rights, and gay and lesbian rights;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, in commemoration of Black History Month, the Berkeley Rent Stabilization Board expresses its deepest appreciation for the many outstanding contributions made by Mayor Gus Newport, who during his tenure and 60-plus years as a racial justice warrior, social activist, and public servant, has strived to make the lives of working class people better.

Dated: February 18, 2021

Adopted by the Rent Stabilization Board of the City of Berkeley by the following vote:

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YES:

NO:

ABSTAIN:

ABSENT:

Leah Simon-Weisberg, Chairperson
Rent Stabilization Board

Attest: _____
Matt Brown, Acting Executive Director